

Good governance and public goods: the challenges of efficient service delivery in the developing world

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Research shows that efficient provision of public goods plays an important role in a society's overall quality of life. Key services, such as education, health, infrastructure, and security not only facilitate increased wellbeing within communities, they are also vital components required for improved economic, political and social development. Indeed, factoring public goods and services into measurements of household poverty and income often reveal a different outlook when assessing levels of poverty and development within a society, sometimes significantly increasing the standards of living enjoyed by households. However, delivery of public goods and services is not even, either at the national level or the local level. Households and individuals often compete with each other for access to limited public resources, with this competition giving rise to inequality and social strains. In recognition of its importance, scholars of political science have paid increasing attention to the politics of service delivery in low- and middle-income countries. These studies provide new and important insights, often touching upon a wide range of areas including, democratic accountability, government responsiveness, measurement of outcomes, social networks, local governance and inequality.

This panel offers analyses into the key determinants affecting effective and efficient delivery of public goods in the developing world. Drawing from both theoretical and empirical backgrounds the papers presented in this panel focus primarily on "demand side" factors affecting service delivery. These factors deal primarily with the ways in which citizens make claims on the state, as opposed to "supply side" factors, dealing with the calculus of politicians and other state actors.