



## RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Building Bureaucracies That Work

July 2019

### FEATURE STORY



From left to right: Dan Rogger, Debbie Wetzel, Aart Kraay.

#### Mission Driven: What James Bond Can Teach Us About High-Performing Bureaucracies

Imagine you wanted to build the most effective bureaucracy possible. Where might you look for inspiration? According to [Daniel Rogger](#), a researcher at the World Bank, one of the best sources has been on our movie and television screens for over five decades—James Bond. Perhaps the most famous civil servant of

all time, Bond's approach to public service reflects a strong sense of autonomy, high mission orientation, and a culture of strong professional relationships. At a Policy Research Talk [delivered](#) earlier this year, Rogger unveiled findings from a growing body of research and data that is changing our understanding of the way government functions and how we might make it work better.

[Story](#) | [Presentation](#) | [Video](#)

### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

#### ✓ [Improving Governance through Enhanced Citizen Engagement: The Case of Malaysia](#)

*Shahridan Faiez and [Vijayendra Rao](#), Research & Policy Brief 22, June 2019.*

This brief provides a framework for understanding why it is important to pay attention to the demand side of governance, particularly in Malaysia where governance initiatives and reforms have primarily focused on the supply side.

#### ✓ [Implementing Adaptive Approaches in Real World Scenarios: A Nigeria Case Study with Lessons for Theory and Practice](#)

*Kate Bridges and [Michael Woolcock](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8904, June 2019.*

A pilot project in Nigeria contrasts the ways in which an adaptive component of a major health care project was implemented in three program and three matched comparison states. The paper documents the adaptive approach taken, draws conclusions about the impact of that approach, and presents guidance for development staff on how to operationalize adaptive programming in

their own contexts.

### ✓ [Innovating Bureaucracy for a More Capable Government](#)

Zahid Hasnain, [Daniel Rogger](#), Daniel John Walker, Kerenssa Mayo Kay, and Rong Shi, World Bank Group, Washington, DC, 2019.

This report uses cross-country datasets compiled by the World Bank on public employment and wages across 114 countries and surveys of over 20,000 civil servants to document the main features of the public sector labor market, bureaucrats' attitudes toward their jobs and their behaviors toward each other, how well they are managed, their use of digital technologies, and measures of their productivity.

### ✓ [Political Selection and Bureaucratic Productivity](#)

James Habyarimana, [Stuti Khemani](#), and Thiago Scot, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8673, December 2018 | [Blog](#).

The impact of anti-poverty and pro-growth policies in Africa depends upon how well they are implemented by locally elected politicians and nationally appointed bureaucrats who share responsibilities. Gathering original data on the quality (integrity, altruism, and competence) of 1,357 bureaucrats and 770 politicians across 75 districts in Uganda, this research discovered that higher integrity among local politicians is the most robust predictor of better implementation of public health programs.

### ✓ [Management and Bureaucratic Effectiveness: Evidence from the Ghanaian Civil Service](#)

Imran Rasul, [Daniel Rogger](#), Martin J. Williams, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8595, September 2018 | [Blog](#).

This study correlates the management practices of civil service bureaucrats with the delivery of public projects. Autonomy is good in almost all situations. Performance incentives are distortionary in many.

### ✓ [The Consequences of Political Interference in Bureaucratic Decision Making: Evidence from Nigeria](#)

[Daniel Rogger](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8554, August 2018.

This study investigates the consequences of granting politicians power over bureaucrats in the implementation of small-scale public infrastructure projects. The analysis finds a trade-off between political oversight and bureaucratic autonomy and a fundamental tension between bureaucratic inaction and political corruption.

### ✓ [Motivating Bureaucrats through Social Recognition: Evidence from Simultaneous Field Experiments](#)

Varun Gauri, Julian C. Jamison, Nina Mazar, [Owen Ozier](#), Shomikho Raha, and Karima Saleh, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8473, June 2018 | Accepted for publication at *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*.

This field trial tests a social recognition intervention meant to improve record keeping in Nigerian clinics. The study is replicated for bureaucrats performing identical tasks in two Nigerian states. Social recognition improved performance in one state but had no effect in the other, highlighting both the potential and the limitations of behavioral interventions.

### ✓ [Management of Bureaucrats and Public Service Delivery: Evidence from the Nigerian Civil Service](#)

Imran Rasul and [Daniel Rogger](#), *Economic Journal* 128 (608): 413-446, February 2018 | [Working Paper](#).

This study compares the management practices of bureaucrats using completion rates for 4,700 public service projects. Increasing bureaucrats' autonomy is associated with higher completion rates. Incentives for and monitoring of bureaucrats is

associated with lower completion rates.

## ✓ [If Politics Is the Problem, How Can External Actors Be Part of the Solution?](#)

Shantayanan Devarajan and [Stuti Khemani](#), *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7761*, July 2016.

Most development assistance is still delivered to governments in the form of finance and knowledge bundled together as a "project." This paper draws on recent research on the politics of government failure to explore how traditional development assistance can contribute to the persistence of government failures and how a new model of development assistance can help societies transition to better institutions.

To access the latest Policy Research Working Papers, please click [here](#).

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## RELATED DATASETS

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### [Worldwide Governance Indicators](#)

The annual Worldwide Governance Indicators report on six broad dimensions of governance for over 200 countries and territories since 1996: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.

### [Bureaucracy Lab](#)

The Bureaucracy Lab recently launched the [Worldwide Bureaucracy Indicators \(WWBI\)](#), a dataset on public sector employment and wages. This dataset is designed to help researchers and development practitioners gain a better understanding of the personnel dimensions of state capability, the footprint of the public sector on the overall labor market, and the fiscal implications of the government wage bill. The WWBI aim is to fill the gap in information on the personnel of the state by providing more objective measures drawing on administrative data and household surveys, thereby complementing existing, expert perception-based approaches.

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## RELATED BLOGS

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### **What's the latest systems research on the quality of governance?**

[Daniel Rogger](#) | *Governance for Development*, April 20, 2018.

Last week I attended Stanford University's Quality of Governance [conference](#), expertly organized by a rising star of the field, Saad Gulzar. I thought I'd follow in the footsteps of [Dave Evans](#) and others and summarize the findings of the papers presented. They provide a sketch of the frontier of research on state capacity.

In his plenary, Francis Fukuyama (presenting a paper co-authored with the Bank's Francesca Recanatini) highlighted how corruption initiatives implemented by the World Bank since Wolfensohn's 'Cancer of Corruption' speech—mainly focused on measurement—have basically failed. That much of corruption is essentially political is consistent with the findings of the [World Development Report 2017](#) and Stuti Khemani's [Policy Research Report](#). Many of the papers presented below highlight the underlying politics of state capacity.

[Read the blog.\(Part 1\)](#) | [Read the blog.\(Part 2\)](#)

## E-bureaucracy: Can digital technologies spur public administration reform?

[Zahid Hasnain](#) | *Governance for Development*, February 16, 2017.

“By introducing an automated customer management system, we took a noose and put it around our own necks. We are now accountable!” This reflection from a manager in the Nairobi Public Water and Sewerage utility succinctly captures the impact of MajiVoice, a digital system that logs customer complaints, enables managers to assign the issue to a specific worker, track its resolution, and report back to the customer via an SMS. As a result, complaint resolution rates have doubled, and the time taken to resolve complaints has dropped by 90 percent.

*This blog is part of a series for the 'Bureaucracy Lab', a World Bank initiative to better understand the world's public officials.*

[Read the blog](#)

## Making politics work for development

[Stuti Khemani](#) | *Let's Talk Development*, July 25, 2016.

Fear of openly confronting politics can come in the way of achieving economic development goals. To help address this problem, the Development Research Group of the World Bank prepared a [report synthesizing the vanguard of economics research on the functioning of political markets](#) to understand the implications. It yields insights for strengthening existing transparency and citizen engagement policies with potentially powerful consequences for economic development everywhere, in poor and rich countries alike.

[Read the blog](#) | [Report](#)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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- **September 9, 2019:** [6th Urbanization and Poverty Reduction Research Conference: People, Markets, and Cities](#)
- **September 16, 2019:** [Policy Research Talk: A Global View of Inequality](#).

To see more events, please click [here](#).

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## NEW DATA FOR RESEARCH

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### [Terrestrial Biodiversity Indicators](#)

The new biodiversity indicator database provides counts of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles at 1-kilometer grid resolution based on more than 25,000 range maps of species identified by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Birdlife International. The database also includes counts of critically endangered and endangered species, extinction risks, and indices on the uniqueness of species and WWF ecoregions within a country.

[Access the data](#)

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

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## Some good news from Afghanistan

[Markus Goldstein](#) | *Development Impact*, June 12, 2019

A couple of years ago, I [blogged](#) about an ultra-poor program in Bangladesh that was having lasting positive impacts. This week we got some good news out of Afghanistan where Guadalupe Bedoya, Aidan Coville, Johannes Haushofer, Mohammad Isaqzadeh and Jeremy Shapiro have a new [paper](#) looking at a similar program. And as a neat bonus, it has the most interesting results so far on women's empowerment in the literature on these type of programs.

[Read the blog](#)

## Is inclusive growth an oxymoron?

[Pinelopi Goldberg](#) | *Let's Talk Development*, May 29, 2019

After participating in two events on inequality at the Spring Meetings — [Making Growth Work for the Poor](#) and [Income Inequality Matters: How to Ensure Economic Growth Benefits the Many and Not the Few](#), I received a surprising number of emails asking whether my remarks on the importance of addressing rising inequality meant I had abandoned growth as the main priority for developing countries. One thing I certainly took away from this correspondence: Inequality is too complex a phenomenon to address in a brief session at the Spring Meetings.

[Read the blog](#)

## The Pathbreaking Work of Steve Knack | May 16, 2019

[@Jimnosredna](#)

We are deeply saddened by the loss of our colleague and friend Steve Knack. He was such a careful empirical economist, always engaging on the many topics he studied. A thread can't convey his warmth but can hopefully give a sense of the breadth of his research. Steve made major contributions to the literatures on institutions, growth, social capital, aid, and more.

[Read the Twitter thread](#)

## Addressing challenges in public financial management and public sector reform in East Asia

[Jim Brumby](#), [Sokbunthoeun So](#), and [Michael Woolcock](#) | *Governance for Development*, February 6, 2019

. . . A question to pose is how can particular "binding constraints" to public sector reform be more readily identified and resolved in a way that transforms aspirations into real improvements? As development practitioners, it is useful to look at alternative approaches, which build on both international good practices and adaptation to local contexts, to maximize development impact to help the international community and developing countries address the toughest governance challenges that we face today. From our exploration of eight country cases in East Asia and the Pacific, we found a combination of three key factors to be especially important to the outcome of public sector reform.

[Read the blog](#) | [Report](#)

To read more of our blogs, see: [Let's Talk Development](#) | [Development Impact](#)

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This newsletter is produced by the Development Research Group, part of the Development Economics Vice Presidency of the World Bank Group. Please send your comments and feedback to: [research@worldbank.org](mailto:research@worldbank.org).

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