



STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

As home to half the world's poor people and 90 million malnourished preschool children, South Asia still faces major development challenges in terms of reducing poverty and achieving food security. The vast majority of the region's poor people rely on agriculture, but the sector has returned lackluster performance since the gains of the Green Revolution of the late 1960s and the 1970s. Agricultural growth is crucial to much-needed development, but it must occur faster, be inclusive, and be environmentally sustainable. Past efforts to promote agricultural development and food security in the region have been hindered by lack of appropriate governance. South Asian countries have engaged in a range of promising governance interventions—including decentralization and devolution, women's empowerment self-help groups, participatory planning, improved rights to information, and public-sector management reform; but results have been mixed. Policy reform has often been stalled by vested interests, and rural services, infrastructure, and poverty reduction projects have suffered due to resource mismanagement, elite capture, and corruption. What efforts to overcome these challenges work where, and why? Addressing these questions in the region is the major goal of the research program, *Governance for Agricultural and Rural Development*, conducted by the Development Strategy and Governance Division (DSGD) of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).



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OBJECTIVES AND PROJECT AREAS

The program seeks to provide research-based knowledge and analytical tools, to engage in policy dialogue, and to strengthen capacity in the following areas:

1. **Reforming agricultural policies.** How can countries overcome political obstacles to policy reform in support of pro-poor and environmentally sustainable agricultural development? Which types of policy processes are most likely to overcome obstacles to reform? How can countries increase the participation of the rural poor and of rural women in political decisionmaking? How can research-based evidence be used more effectively to promote reform of agricultural policies and institutions?
2. **Strengthening governance for rural service provision and program implementation.** What is the appropriate role for the public, private, and civil-society sector in promoting agricultural and rural development? What types of governance reforms are most effective in improving the provision of rural services and infrastructure, and the implementation of poverty alleviation programs? How can governance reforms empower poor rural men and women to demand better services and infrastructure, and to hold government agencies and other service providers accountable?

3. **Addressing cross-cutting governance issues in agriculture:** The program's research team collaborates with researchers throughout IFPRI to address cross-cutting governance issues, such as biotechnology regulation, natural resource management, and agricultural innovation systems.

RESEARCH APPROACH

IFPRI's *Governance for Agricultural and Rural Development* program combines quantitative research, such as household, local government, and service provider surveys, with qualitative research, including participatory methods. The program emphasizes interdisciplinary research, drawing from economics, sociology, political science, and public administration. It links research with governance reform efforts, and identifies reform options that best fit the priorities and needs of the implementing organizations involved. The program also benefits from a global comparative approach due to complementary governance research undertaken by IFPRI in Africa and Latin America. Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders is strongly emphasized, as is close collaboration with in-country research partners. Results are communicated through workshops, conferences, discussion papers, journal articles, policy briefs, web resources, and training materials.

PROJECTS

Program Area 1: Reforming Agricultural Policy

- **The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy Reform in India: The Case of Fertilizer Supply and Electricity Supply for Groundwater Irrigation**

Based on extensive stakeholder interviews and reviews of policy documents, this study analyzes the political economy of India's fertilizer, electricity, and groundwater irrigation policies, and assesses different options to increase the efficiency, poverty-orientation, and environmental sustainability of these policies.

- **The Political Economy of Agricultural Spending in India**

This study, conducted jointly with the Indian Institute for Dalit Studies, aims to identify the political and economic factors that influence agricultural spending at the state level in India.

Program Area 2: Strengthening Governance for Rural Service Provision and Program Implementation

- **Making Decentralization and Local Governance Work for the Rural Poor**

In India, this project seeks to identify how decentralization and other governance reforms affect the ability of rural people to demand better rural services, and hold service providers accountable. A survey of more than 800 households and 200 village leaders has been conducted in Karnataka, and research on decentralization is also underway in Tamil Nadu and Bihar. The project pays special attention to the gender dimension of rural service provision. This research is being jointly conducted with the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) in Bangalore, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, and the Agricultural University of Tamil Nadu.

A research project on decentralization and rural service provision is also being conducted in Kyrgyzstan in collaboration with the Center of the Social Research at the National Academy of Science. This project combines the analysis of secondary data with in-depth case studies and a survey of local governments.

- **The Role of the Public Administration in Providing Rural Services and Implementing Rural Development Programs in India**

To assess the role of the public administration in rural service provision, researchers are interviewing more than 500 members of the public administration and representatives of community-based organizations in Karnataka regarding rural water supply, agricultural extension and livestock services, child care facilities, and the public distribution system. The project also includes case studies in two states on the role of the public administration in implementing development programs. The project, implemented jointly with the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies and ISEC, uses innovative research methods such as process influence mapping to better understand how administrative processes can be reformed to improve program implementation.

- **Analyzing the Performance of Agricultural Advisory Services in Pakistan**

This project, currently in the planning phase, will evaluate the performance of public, private, and nongovernmental organization providers of agricultural advisory services. It is being conducted in collaboration with the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) and Innovative Development Solutions (IDS).

- **Votes and Voice: An Analysis of the 2005 Local Government Elections in Pakistan**

Under this project, data from a comprehensive local-government election survey conducted by the Pattan Development Foundation were analyzed to determine to what extent people use their vote to exercise their voice for better rural service provision.

Program Area 3: Addressing Cross-Cutting Governance Issues in Agriculture

- **Caste-Based Discrimination in Indian Agriculture and Its Impact on Growth and Poverty Reduction**

With a view to promoting inclusive governance, this research project analyzes the prevalence and the patterns of caste-based discrimination in Indian agriculture. The research assesses the impact of both market- and non-market forms of discrimination, on agricultural growth and poverty reduction, in order to identify policy options to address this problem. The project is conducted in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies.

- **Improving the Governance of Agricultural Technologies: A Case Study of Agricultural Biotechnology in India**

Based on a review of published information and expert interviews, this project reviews controversial governance issues related to the Bt cotton technology, including biosafety and food safety regulation, seed quality and certification, and anti-trust regulations of input industries. The project is being conducted in collaboration with Rutgers University.

- **Addressing the Governance Challenges of Nutrition Interventions**

Conducted in collaboration with IFPRI's Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND), this area of research analyzes the governance problems that affect the implementation of large-scale nutrition interventions in India.

Working in partnership with organizations in the region, IFPRI's *Governance for Agricultural and Rural Development* program strives to provide cutting-edge knowledge on strategies to meet the governance challenges affecting agricultural and rural development in South Asia. We welcome your feedback on the program and on future issues that need to be addressed.

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