



## GOVERNANCE FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

*“Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.”*

—Kofi Annan, Annual Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 1998.

Since the late 1990s, the concept of governance has taken center stage on the development agenda. Governance is the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels (UNDP). Elements of good governance include government effectiveness, voice and accountability, social inclusion, control of corruption, rule of law, and political stability.

Despite a wide range of research and development activities on governance worldwide, little attention has been paid to the role of governance in improving the livelihood of the rural poor and promoting agricultural and rural development. This is rather surprising, since most of the poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture. IFPRI's new Governance for Agricultural and Rural Development Program seeks to address this knowledge gap by examining the following questions:

- *How can the provision of local services—such as water, education, health, and agricultural extension—more effectively and accountably respond to the needs of rural populations, particularly the rural poor and women? To what extent does decentralization empower the rural poor to demand and control public goods and services that are important for pro-poor development?*
- *How are the interests of the rural poor, including small farmers, rural women, and disadvantaged groups, represented in the formulation of development strategies, agricultural policies, and governance? What are effective ways to increase their representation and participation? What role can parliaments play in representing the interests of the rural poor?*
- *How can research be used more effectively in support of transparent and evidence-based political decisionmaking? What strategies are effective in “bridging research and policy?”*



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### IFPRI'S GOVERNANCE FOR AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

#### Objectives

IFPRI's Governance for Agricultural and Rural Development Program aims to support countries in their efforts to improve governance by researching governance issues that are essential for achieving food security and promoting equitable and sustainable agricultural and rural development. Improving governance requires an in-depth knowledge of institutional designs and policy processes, and the capacity to identify areas where reform efforts and institutional change are most promising. To generate such policy-relevant information, the Program is closely working with partner organizations in conducting policy-relevant research, communicating the research results, and strengthening capacity.

#### Research Principles and Approaches

The Program's research is characterized by the following principles:

- *A focus on interdisciplinary research:* combining institutional and agricultural economics, organizational and rural sociology, and political and administrative sciences;

- *The use of quantitative and qualitative methods:* including cross-country regressions; statistical analyses based on surveys of communities, institutions, and households; as well as case studies based on focus-group interviews, narratives, social network analysis, and participatory research methods;
- *The linkage of research to governance reform efforts:* supporting ongoing governance reform efforts in the field; contributing to learning from innovative approaches and policy experiments; and developing analytical tools that help organizations involved in governance reforms identify reform options that “best fit” their priorities and needs;
- *The production of global knowledge based on international experiences:* using a comparative approach and conducting research in different countries—initial studies have begun in India and Ghana, with plans to expand to Ethiopia, Uganda, Nigeria, Pakistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Guatemala.

## PROGRAM AREAS

**Local governance and rural service delivery.** Research focuses on the role of local governments, civil society, and the private sector in the provision of infrastructure and public services in rural areas. Special emphasis is placed on agricultural services and their governance. Research examines strategies to improve the ability of the rural poor to demand services and hold service providers accountable and strategies to increase the capacity and effectiveness of local service providers in rural areas. Cross-cutting strategies to control corruption in rural infrastructure and service provision are also a priority.

**Political decisionmaking processes.** Research explores political processes with respect to the formulation of development strategies and agricultural policies as well as governance reform processes. Particular attention is paid to how politics influences agricultural policymaking, how research and knowledge influence policy, how the role of parliaments can be strengthened, and how the rural poor can be represented in participatory policy processes.

**Cross-cutting governance issues.** In collaboration with other programs at IFPRI, the Governance Program contributes to research on cross-cutting issues such as agricultural regulation (including biotechnology regulation) and the governance of natural resources, agricultural innovation systems, and markets.

### Collaboration

Collaborating with a wide range of organizations and stakeholders during the entire research process contributes to the Program's overall impact by linking research more closely to policymaking. Collaborators include:

- political decisionmakers, including parliamentary committees;
- public administration institutions, such as ministries of agriculture and rural development;
- universities and independent research institutes;
- civil-society organizations and interest groups, such as nongovernmental organizations, farmers' organizations, women's organizations, advocacy groups, and village-based organizations;
- regional and subregional organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, such as regional research and extension networks; and
- international organizations, including donor organizations and nongovernmental organizations working on governance issues.



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### Communication and Outreach

Program researchers work closely with social actors involved in promoting governance reforms in the agricultural and rural sectors, and strive to communicate their research results in ways that are useful and applicable in a policymaking context. To further bridge the gap between research and policy, the Governance Program will use a number of communication channels targeting different audiences, including:

- policy dialogues and consultations to reach policymakers involved in governance reforms, discuss knowledge gaps and research needs, and communicate results;
- research workshops to share information within the scientific community; and
- media contacts to present important results to a larger audience.

### Capacity Strengthening

To promote capacity building, the Governance Program collaborates with universities and other education and training institutions in developing countries. Special emphasis is placed on collaborating closely with institutions that are in charge of training administrative and elected members of local governments and the staff of rural service providers. The program also focuses on strengthening the capacity of partner research institutions that are engaged in governance research by offering specific training on interdisciplinary research and the use of innovative research approaches. Particular attention is paid to including female researchers and young researchers in joint projects.

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The Governance Program is managed by IFPRI's Development Strategy and Governance Division (DSGD). [www.ifpri.org/divs/dsgd.htm](http://www.ifpri.org/divs/dsgd.htm).

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