

Strengthening Research on The Civil Service

A Joint Initiative of the Governance Global Practice and the Development Research Group

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The World Bank has initiated a project to strengthen the global knowledge base on civil servants and the organizations in which they work. The project aims to develop the evidence base for public sector reform by understanding the characteristics of public officials and the systems and organizations in which they work. The project will develop improved methods of data collection and analysis on the civil service, based on a complementary set of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Developing the Evidence Base for Public Sector Reform

A nation's bureaucracy is fundamental to the state's capacity to design and implement policy, regulate, and deliver public goods and services.

Civil servants play a key role in designing and implementing economic and social policy and regulation, as well as in providing key public goods. Civil servants are the main interface between government and citizens.

In spite of their importance, existing data on the characteristics of civil servants and the organizations in which they work is extremely limited both within and across countries.

Improved information, on as basic a fact as how a service's wage bill compares with other countries, will provide evidence on which policy makers can improve the efficacy and efficiency of their services.

The Project

The 'Strengthening Research on the Civil Service' project aims to develop the groundwork for a systematic effort to build a comprehensive foundation of data and analysis on bureaucrats and bureaucratic systems across countries.

Nigerian civil servants discuss policy



The 3 Pillars of Strengthening Research in the Civil Service

1. Improving administrative data on bureaucracies

Aim	Key deliverable
Build a network of civil service authorities to gather existing or accessible administrative data	Creation of international database of statistics on public sector officials and organizations

Activities

- Review of existing administrative data
- Survey potential users of administrative data
- Design processes and templates to collect internationally comparable data

2. Building a global survey of civil servants

Aim	Key deliverable
Design, pilot and experiment with surveys of civil servants to provide globally comparable micro-level data	Creation of new flagship survey on civil service staff and organizations

Activities

- Collect and compare major existing surveys of civil servants
- Survey potential users of survey data
- Experiment with questionnaire design and implementation of civil servants surveys
- Undertake civil servants surveys in collaboration with policy and research counterparts

3. Developing a detailed qualitative approach to understanding bureaucracies

Aim	Key deliverable
Investigate how to use the Bank as a platform for more detailed qualitative investigations into bureaucracies	Embedding of detailed qualitative methods in to civil service operations

Activities

- Review of existing anthropological research work on civil services
- Integrate anthropological and sociological methods into the Bank's program design and evaluation approaches

This initiative will:

- Determine how to build stronger data collection tools for civil service settings
- Allow for piloting and experimenting with novel mechanisms for interfacing with and surveying public officials

- Provide World Bank staff and external researchers with improved information on the public organizations with which they work and similar organizations in comparative countries
- Provide internationally comparable datasets for use by academics and policy-makers
- Provide a foundation for researchers and civil service executives to collaborate on frontier research focused on bureaucratic systems
- Inform priority areas of public sector reform

Examples of Current Work

The World Bank's existing portfolio of projects provide a range of opportunities for the collection of administrative data on the service, civil servant surveys and detailed qualitative research. Work is already underway in a range of countries.

Pillar 1: Improving administrative data on bureaucracies

The project has analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of current definitions and models used to conceptualize the size of the civil service. We have reviewed the existing *"administrative data"* on civil servants and the management practices that govern them, a key step in identifying indicators on human resource management that can be collected through administrative data.

Pillar 2: Building a global survey of civil servants

The project has already developed a number of civil servants surveys across sub-Saharan Africa to assist governments in diagnosing key reform issues. To inform these efforts, we have reviewed the existing set of surveys of public officials and are developing a database of questions and methodologies. We are producing white papers on key related issues such as measuring public service motivation.

Pillar 3: Developing a detailed qualitative approach to understanding bureaucracies

The project has convened a committee of leading academics and Bank researchers to identify means by which sociological and anthropological methods can be embedded in civil service operations. In one project in Tanzania, an anthropologist is studying the nature of bargaining amongst local bureaucrats. The committee is writing a review of the literature on these topics, and assisting researchers interested in studying the Bank and its own bureaucracy.

Opportunities for Collaboration

We have established a Steering Committee comprised of academics, policy-makers and World Bank experts to help us formulate and implement the project. However, we are looking to make this a fully collaborative effort with interested members in the Bank, academia and policy becoming involved at all stages of the project. There are several paths to collaboration:

- **CIVIL SERVICE EXECUTIVES** We are looking to engage with civil service executives who would like support in better measuring and diagnosing critical issues in their services. We aim to establish partnerships which will ensure policy relevance.

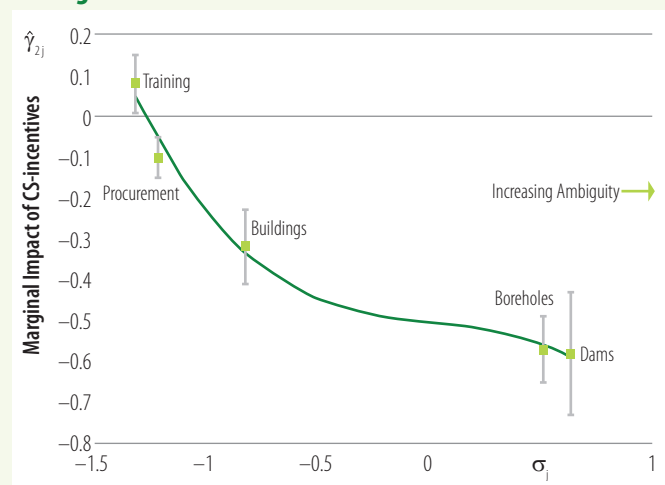


An enumerator discusses a survey of civil servants with local government officials

- **ACADEMICS** We would like to collaborate with academics who are doing similar work in order to design a broadly applicable instrument which can be used to collect data on civil servants in a comparable way across organisations and countries. Similarly, the World Bank's engagement provides excellent entry points for country-specific studies.
- **WORLD BANK STAFF** We are keen to hear from Bank staff who would like to become involved in aspects of the design and/ or implementation stages of the project, who would like to use the data, or who would simply like to share ideas.

While we will hold workshops and set up meetings to continue assessing the success of our activities and to incorporate feedback into the running of the project, we welcome all expressions of interest and look forward to setting up conversations on wider collaborations.

Project Ambiguity and the Response to CS-Incentive Management Practices



Analysis of government management practices on productivity