



**Africa  
power and  
politics**



**Governance for  
development in Africa:**

building on what works

**David Booth and Richard Crook**

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## What doesn't work and what might

- Governance is making development in Africa slower and more inequitable than it needs to be
- Part of the problem is 'good governance', which isn't evidence-based and doesn't work
- There is a relevant evidence base and APPP is contributing to this with new data and ideas with particular reference to Africa
- It is time to make this count, even though it means challenging cherished ideologies in North and South alike

## Four topics

- From 'best practice' to 'best fit'
- A realistic take on elections, citizen empowerment and public goods
- The leadership factor and the politics of it
- Implications for aid effectiveness

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... the ‘universal best  
practice’ approach to  
governance for  
development is  
bankrupt

Brian Levy

## From 'best practice' to 'best fit'

- Build constructively on existing institutional arrangements – 'work with the grain'
- Good institutions solve the collective action problems actually posed in particular contexts – so generic formulas are unlikely to work
- What work are 'practical hybrids' – marrying modern professional standards with elements that borrow from the host society
- Aid should enable, not block, local problem-solving
- Direct funding is not good from that point of view, and can do real harm
- So do less of that, and pay more attention to the enabling environment for initiatives that are technically sensible and locally anchored

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... rely less on the  
congenial assumption  
that all good things go  
together  
ODI voice evaluation

# Elections, citizen empowerment and public goods

- A widespread assumption that development problems need more democracy, citizen empowerment and governments 'held to account'
- Attractive idea, but ideological, not evidence-based
- Democracy a desirable goal, but has different effects in different settings (North et al) and is not a reliable route to better provision of public goods in the medium term
- Better elections get you more efficient clientelism, not better public goods

# Elections, citizen empowerment and public goods

- Citizen pressure is at best a weak factor and at worst a distraction
- The policy messages in WDR 2004 have been over-sold, evidence has been misreported, and evaluation findings (ODI, IDS) neglected
- The real evidence says that combined top-down + bottom up approaches are what work
- APPP findings are adding, in this respect, to 10+ years of IDS research (Future State ++)



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... what African  
countries need are  
leaders who are able  
to show that they can  
get things done

Blair AGI

## The leadership factor and the politics of it

- The overwhelming emphasis on bottom-up pressure and accountability provides an alibi to all those who prefer not to think about the biggest problem – lack of developmental leadership
- But where is it going to come from, politically?
- ‘Neopatrimonial’ political regimes are not all the same
- But appreciating the differences means stopping judging regimes by the standards applicable under advanced capitalism
- Instead, consider more carefully what a country’s citizens find acceptable
- And pay attention to Mustaq Khan on anti-developmental and pro-developmental uses of economic rents
- Côte d’Ivoire ...

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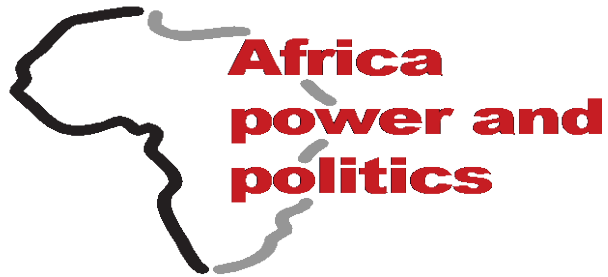
... the aid business  
must change to meet  
the needs of  
development, not the  
other way round

## Implications for aid effectiveness

- Ahead of Busan, we must tie ‘ownership’ more firmly to leadership – not to whether parliaments and CSOs have had a say
- Alignment needs to be about helping that kind of leadership to emerge, not about technicalities – it is time to abandon the polite fiction that current leaders are committed to development
- In these and other respects, working in a politically realistic, ‘best fit’ way is challenging for donor organisations
- Boldly articulated research and evaluation findings can help a bit ...

## Implications for aid effectiveness

- But there is no avoiding the basic challenge of re-educating politicians and publics in the North:
  - that getting the right skills to the right places to help institutions to change is a sound use of development budgets
  - that chasing ‘results’ with more cash in the context of unresolved institutional problems is not
- Thank you!



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