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Local Service Delivery

Theorists argue that decentralisation can bring benefits for service delivery via improved decision making and allocative efficiency (as local government are more sensitive to local priorities), increased revenue collection (as local government will be able to collect new local taxes and improve the collection of user charges) and generally improved administrative efficiency. However, recent studies show that these expected benefits have not always been realised and that elite capture, weak administrative capacity, poor participation, inadequate accountability mechanisms and low levels of revenue collection, coupled with under-financing from central government, have all meant that significant gains in service provision have not yet been seen. Given that service delivery is a primary vehicle for local development, the importance of improvements in developing countries cannot be underestimated.

Impact of decentralisation on service delivery

These resources demonstrate the mixed impact that decentralisation has had on local service delivery.

Ahmad, J. and Devarajan. S, 2005, 'Decentralization and Service Delivery', Policy Research Working Paper no. 3603, World Bank, Washington D.C.

Dissatisfied with the systematic failure of centralised approaches to delivering local public services, a large number of countries are decentralising responsibility for these services to lower-level, locally elected governments. What problems have been encountered with decentralising service delivery and how can these challenges be overcome? This paper provides a framework that explains both why decentralisation can generate substantial improvements in service delivery and why it often falls short of this promise.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1428>

Fjeldstad, O-H., et al., 2006, 'Local Government Reform in Tanzania 2002–2005: Summary of Research Findings on Governance, Finance and Service Delivery', Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) Brief 6, October, REPOA

What impact has Tanzania's Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) had on governance, finance and service delivery? Have public services been improved? This briefing by Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) summarises research on the

programmes' progress in six local councils. Despite developments in decision-making processes, accounting and service delivery, it is clear that devolution takes a long time to achieve and that sustainable change will require continued effort, commitment and leadership.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2612>

Conyers, D., 2007, 'Decentralisation and Service Delivery: Lessons from Sub-Saharan Africa', IDS Bulletin vol. 38, no. 1, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK

To what extent does decentralisation improve the quality of public service delivery? This article published by the Institute of Development Studies explores the evidence on the impact of decentralisation on service delivery in sub-Saharan Africa and offers some general lessons. It finds that decentralisation has not yet had a significant positive impact on the quality of public services in the region. However, this is due primarily to the wider policy environment rather than to the ineffectiveness of decentralisation per se.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2731>

Robinson, M., 2007, 'Does Decentralisation Improve Equity and Efficiency in Public Service Delivery Provision?', IDS Bulletin vol. 38, no. 1, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, UK

To what extent does decentralisation produce improvements in service delivery for the poor? This paper from the Institute of Development Studies argues that political and institutional decentralisation do not currently contribute to increases in either equity or efficiency. However, a poor record on service delivery so far does not rule out scope for improvement. The challenge for proponents of democratic decentralisation is to specify methods by which equity and efficiency can be achieved under decentralised forms of service delivery.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2782>

Decentralisation and education

The following resources are sectoral studies, which give operational guidance on designing, implementing and evaluating education reform.

UNESCO, 2007, 'Educational Governance at Local Levels', Policy Paper, Division for the Promotion of Basic Education, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Paris, pp. 7–37

Can decentralisation improve education and its governance? This United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) booklet provides a

Policy Paper on implementing educational decentralisation, followed by Evaluation Guidelines to evaluate progress at country level. It finds that if decentralisation is to succeed, then it must be planned and funded at all levels and its stakeholders trained at all levels. Equally it must adhere to the fundamental principles of human rights: participation, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2948>

Gershberg, A. and Winkler, D., 2004, 'Education Decentralization in Africa: A Review of Recent Policy and Practice' in Levy, B. and Kpundeh, S. eds. *Building State Capacity in Africa: New Approaches, Emerging Lessons*, World Bank Institute, Washington DC

What has been the African experience of education decentralisation? What lessons can be learned from the African experience in the wider context of international experience? This research, by the World Bank Institute, looks at that devolution of educational finance to subnational governments. It examines the vitally important role of the community school. Finally, based on lessons learned in the international arena it gives recommendations on how best to make the transition from the centralised to the decentralised delivery of education.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1503>

McCarten, W. and Vyasulu, V., 2004, 'Democratic Decentralisation and Poverty Reduction in Madhya Pradesh: Searching for an Institutional Equilibrium', *Development in Practice*, vol. 14, issue 6, pp. 733–740

Can successful decentralisation outcomes occur in an environment characterised by highly unequal wealth distribution, semi-feudal social structures and low literacy? This article from *Development in Practice* reviews decentralisation in Madhya Pradesh (MP), an Indian state that emerged as an institutional design leader in the 1990s. While the first phase of MP decentralisation led to new institutions, changed political structures and improved governance, initial successes are no guarantee that future institutional adaptation will be successful.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3352>

Decentralisation and health

The resources below specifically focus on decentralisation of health services. Particular challenges in this sector include ensuring integration of health referral systems, managing 'moonlighting' (where health service staff undertake lucrative private work at the expense of their availability for public sector work), the need for strong regulation and supervisory systems to build public trust in health provision and creating participatory health programmes.

Lopez Levers, L., et al., 2007, 'A Literature Review of District Health Systems in East and Southern Africa: Facilitators and Barriers to Participation in Health', Duquesne University, Counselling for Health International (CHI) Trust and Pennsylvania State University for the Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET), EQUINET Discussion Paper no. 40, Harare

What are the facilitators and barriers to community participation in district health systems (DHSs) in sub-Saharan Africa? This literature review by the Regional Network for Equity in Health in East and Southern Africa (EQUINET) explores evidence on community voice, roles and participation at district level. The analysis is based on case studies in six countries: Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Rwanda, Swaziland and Tanzania.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2624>

Golooba-Mutebi, F., 2005, 'When Popular Participation Won't Improve Service Provision: Primary Health Care in Uganda', *Development Policy Review*, vol. 23, issue 2, pp. 165–184

Community participation in decision-making is seen as vital for promoting service delivery and ensuring accountability for social provision. Can devolution and participation succeed, however, where weak state structures are unable to provide an adequate regulatory capacity? This paper, compiled for *Development Policy Review*, examines Uganda's early experience of establishing new health care structures. It highlights various obstacles to sustainable reform and details the conditions required for improved service delivery through increased participation over the long term.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=1411>

Decentralisation, water and sanitation

Effective decentralisation of water and sanitation services involves addressing issues such as how to devolve greater powers to water users and their local representatives, how to increase greater participation in water management and how to build transparent and accountable mechanisms for resource allocations. Resources on this topic emphasise the importance of the local context, timing, sequencing, adequate financing and the devolution of responsibilities in reality, not just in rhetoric. An issue of concern is how to manage the competition for water resources between domestic users and businesses. In poor areas there is a particular need to protect against the dominance of large-scale commercial farmers who are better able to articulate their needs, due to greater technical knowledge and fewer resource constraints in attending meetings.

UN-HABITAT, 2003, 'Changing Perspectives and Roles in Urban Water and Sanitation Provision: Privatization and Beyond', in *Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities: Local Action for Global Goals*, UN-HABITAT, United Nations Human Settlement Programme, Nairobi, pp. 158–189

How can problems of water and sanitation provision best be resolved? Despite the localised and site-specific nature of many water and sanitation problems, the need for reform in the water and sanitation sector has fostered a search for generic prescriptions. This study from the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) concludes that increasing private sector participation, at least as it has been promoted in recent years, is not going to resolve the problems of inadequate water and sanitation provision found in most urban centres in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=915>

Galvin, M. and Habib, A., 2003, 'The Politics of Decentralisation and Donor Funding in South Africa's Rural Water Sector', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 4

How have donors affected the implementation of decentralisation policies in South Africa? What impact, if any, have they had on the form of decentralisation implemented? This article from the *Journal of Southern African Studies* examines how donors have supported decentralisation in the rural water sector in South Africa. Differentiating between community-oriented and state-centric forms of decentralisation, it finds that while donors claim to support community-oriented decentralisation, in practice they promote statecentric decentralisation.

Full summary available in alphabetical appendix or online at:

<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=3310>

Mtisi, S. and Nicol, A., 'Representation and Participation in Decentralised Water Management', 29th WEDC International Conference, Abuja, Nigeria

This short paper from the 29th WEDC conference in Abuja argues that the presence of decentralised water institutions does not necessarily mean greater representation and participation of all stakeholders in water management. Using evidence from Zimbabwe, they argue that participation is limited to those who are wealthy enough to travel to meetings, can communicate effectively and have the technical knowledge to articulate their views effectively. This leads to a bias towards large commercial farmers as opposed to small rural farmers and other domestic water users.

Full text available at:

<http://docs.google.com/gview?a=v&q=cache%3ADXbQXvjf9qUJ%3Awedc.lboro.ac.uk%2Fconferences%2Fpdfs%2F29%2FMtisi.pdf+%E2%80%A2+Mtisi%2C+S.+and+Nicol%2C+A.%2C+%E2%80%98Representation+and+Participation+in+Decentralised+Water+Management&hl=en&pli=1>

Case studies

- Khan Mohmand, S. and Cheema, A., 2007, 'Accountability Failures and the Decentralisation of Service Delivery in Pakistan', *IDS Bulletin* vol. 38, no. 1, Institute of Development:
<http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Document&id=2725&source=rss>
- Massoud, O., 2009, 'Urban Governance and Service Delivery in Nigeria', *Development in Practice*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 72-78.
<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/cdip/2009/00000019/00000001/art00008>