

# Digital Development Dialogue (3D) Seminar Summary

## Improving Public Service Delivery by Giving Civil Society a Stake

Even small failures on government performance can have deep consequences for citizens' lives. How to improve public service delivery is not a simple question and, depending on the context, different incentives can be more or less effective. On this seminar, [Ousmane Kolie](#), Senior Governance Specialist for the Sahel countries at the World Bank, and [Malte Lierl](#), Research Fellow at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), presented the design, challenges, and results from a nationwide randomized controlled trial (RCT) in Burkina Faso that tests a novel incentive scheme called the Third-Party Performance Pay program (3PPP). The session was held on the June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, and was moderated by [Sarah Langlotz](#), Assistant Professor at the Chair of Development Economics, at Göttingen University. The session had simultaneous translation to French, which was provided by the World Bank team.

**In the first presentation**, Malte Lierl explained the design of the program, their initial hypotheses and the main results. The 3PPP was based on partnerships with community based organizations (CBOs), which were offered a variable grant based on changes in their municipal government's performance over a two-year period. The purpose was to incentivize regional grassroots organizations to improve public service delivery, taking advantage of their strong local knowledge, social influence, and mobilization capacity.

The organizations were selected to participate in the program based on their potential impact and on their structural development. They were all local-based and represented different ethnicities and sectors of Burkina Faso's economy, including education, agriculture, health, and environment. A relevant feature of the program was that the grant received by the CBOs depended solely on their local government performance, but not on the organization's performance in their main activities.

After some attrition along the selection and implementation phases of the program, 299 municipalities complied with the participation in the experiment, of which 149 were assigned as treatment and 150 as control. In the treatment municipalities, the two highest-ranked CBOs were randomly assigned, one as treatment and the other one as internal control group. In control municipalities, the two highest-scoring CBOs were selected into the external control group.

Malte explained that the experiment tested three main impacts of the 3PPP program: i) whether it motivated CBOs to actively lobby for better municipal performance, ii) if it was able to increase the accountability and problem-awareness of municipal decision makers, and iii) whether it led to improvements in municipal government performance. Additionally, based on concerns that the program could distract organizations from their main activities, the experiment tested whether the incentive scheme had any unintended consequences for the treated CBOs.

The results are very positive. The scope of the CBOs participation in local governments increased significantly, including more frequent meetings with authorities, collection of data, presentations at village meetings, and organization of local meetings and campaigns, for example. Municipal decision makers reported to have increased their interaction with treated CBOs, compared to control ones. No adverse effects were found on the organizations' functioning. Specifically, the program did not weaken CBO's collective action, organizational capacities, and no organizational capture was perceived by them. Additionally, there were unexpected positive impacts on Covid-19 adaptation, once the treatment CBOs were better able to cope with the challenges of the pandemic and to create innovative solutions in face of it. However, on the municipal's decision maker's perception, there was no increase in accountability pressures. Considering all these, the results suggest that the 3PPP program led to constructive forms of

Organized by Sarah Langlotz, Heiner Janus & Lennart Kaplan in Cooperation with:



# Digital Development Dialogue (3D) Seminar Summary

## Improving Public Service Delivery by Giving Civil Society a Stake

civil society engagement with local governments, showing a promising scenario on the program's expansion.

The successful design of the experiment led the researchers to be very confident with the results found. First, Malte highlighted the fact that the program was developed in a small scale, but tested in a large scale and under real-world conditions. Second, the RCT was very successful, with highly comparable treatment and control groups and with a high compliance. At last, the study was conducted as a blind analysis, with both the research hypotheses and analytical methods being selected without prior knowledge of the results.

**On the second presentation,** Ousmane Kolie gave us an overview of the innovative approaches that the World Bank has been operationalizing in Burkina Faso's local governance agenda. He also talked about the lessons learned and about the potential improvements for project design and operation. The new approaches he presented were implemented and evaluated in collaboration between the World Bank, the local governments and other external organizations. They included the Municipal performance survey (SUPERMUN), the Citizen Observer, and the Partnership with CBOs, which was the main focus of the seminar.

From the experience with these programs, Ousmane reported as one of the main lessons learned the importance of the synergy between the key players. In his point of view, the collaboration between the World Bank team, the research team from GIGA and the local government was essential for the success of the program.

Regarding the results, although the impact of the SUPERMUN on the municipal government performance was limited, the program led to the creation of a robust and reliable data collection system. The CBOs partnership approach, as presented by Malte, led to significant positive results on local government performance, including a better provision of public goods and an increase on the civil society participation. This was achieved in spite of a problematic security context faced by the country and the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As potential improvements, Ousmane mentioned: i) the combination of local governance interventions and the timely evaluation of the results of those, ii) the change on the impact measurement design, aiming to be more aligned to local governance models, and iii) the promotion of a more active involvement of mayor's associations, for example, when implementing these approaches.

Concluding his presentation, Ousmane highlighted the importance of the early inclusion of a research team and the constant interaction between researchers and practitioners for the success of a project. Generating just-in-time data and knowledge of what works and what doesn't, is crucial to allow adaptation on project's design and to solve its bottlenecks promptly. Ousmane believes that these advices apply not only to the project's organizations, but to all organizations in the development field.

In the Q&A session, one of the questions brought by the audience was on the challenges of evaluating impact during the project, for which the speakers stressed out the importance of determining objective indicators and with that done, they were able to monitor performance of organizations from different sectors. When asked about the possibility of expanding this project to other contexts, Ousmane stressed out the importance of being close to the local organizations and listening to their needs and perspectives as a main success factor for implementing a project in any setting. The audience also asked

Organized by Sarah Langlotz, Heiner Janus & Lennart Kaplan in Cooperation with:



# Digital Development Dialogue (3D) Seminar Summary

## Improving Public Service Delivery by Giving Civil Society a Stake

whether organizations from any specific sector performed better in the intervention, but the speakers reported no significant differences in that matter. In the concluding remarks, both speakers highlighted the importance of development organizations to interact with academia and to produce timely data in order to inform projects and to achieve better results.

**Author: Julia Hoechner Silveira Martins**

Research Assistant at the Chair of Development Economics (Prof. Fuchs) and Master Student in Development Economics at the University of Göttingen ([julia.hoechnersilveiramartins@uni-goettingen.de](mailto:julia.hoechnersilveiramartins@uni-goettingen.de))

Organized by Sarah Langlotz, Heiner Janus & Lennart Kaplan in Cooperation with:

