

World Bank Assessment

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The projects I have been assigned cover three distinct areas. To some extent my reaction to these three areas is quite different and thus it is instructive to cover them separately.

The first area involves developing an understanding of inequality across states with particular focus on issues of integration and transition. For the most part aggregate data are used, although some component of the analysis involves micro survey work. This work seems to be at its best in terms of providing basic descriptions of patterns in the data. Some theoretical work is provided in this body of studies but for the most part the value added of the theory is limited. In this area there seems to be room for careful linking of descriptive data with qualitative assessment of conditions in different countries.

The second set of projects focuses on village governance. This work involves detailed analysis of micro-level survey data. The work seems to be driven by important theoretical and policy questions and gives appropriate attention where possible to high standards of inference. The best of the work may be appropriate for first quality academic journals. It also shows a potential comparative advantage of the Bank in terms of implementing large-scale and timely surveys on important policy related issues.

The third set of projects focuses on environmental issues. This work is carried out at the regional and micro levels. The standards of inference in this work seem low and the extent of theoretical insight provided quite limited. This may in part reflect the special challenges of work on environmental issues as well as the relative scarcity of work outside the Bank by economists in this area. Nonetheless, many of the issues being addressed are of first-order importance in terms of individual and social well being. Moreover, these issues also seem to be of high salience in terms of public policy, given the importance of external effects in this arena that are difficult to internalize through market mechanisms.

Combining my views on the three subjects, I would say that there is an overall sense that Bank research is targeting important subjects in terms of developing and transitional economies. The work is however of uneven quality. Variation in the quality of work is at some level inevitable, but a comparison of the different projects in my portfolio suggests that there is a high potential return to strong links between Bank economists and top academic researchers. This complementarity seems particularly high in terms of the collection of topical surveys. The Bank clearly has the influence and resources to undertake specialized surveys on important topics in a timely matter that might not otherwise be collected. However, when such surveys are collected without careful consideration of how inference will be carried out and in terms of what key conceptual issues might be addressed, an important opportunity is lost. Arguably, these latter issues are ones that could be addressed through closer interaction between Bank staff with top-flight academic economists who face a different set of incentives and interests.

Detailed assessments of the individual projects follow. A title of the paper is followed in each case by a verbal assessment and then the corresponding quality indicator form.

Political selection and the quality of government: Evidence from Rural India

This is a well carried out study by a highly qualified team of investigators involving a useful theoretical framework, collection of appropriate data, and careful and at times creative analysis. The objective of the study was to determine the factors affecting politician selection, opportunism, and the allocation of village resources. This is an important topic given increased interest in political and fiscal decentralization as a mechanism to ensure efficient use and allocation of development resources. The design of the survey was appropriate given the timing of the project. The survey is cross-sectional and cannot therefore take advantage of within-village changes in the nature of institutions. As such it does not say much about the efficacy of village elections relative to some other alternative, which may be argued to be the most central policy issue. The random allocation of set-asides does provide a reasonable basis for inference on the effects of that policy (although this design is not new). The measured effects of village and politician characteristics are plausible, but of course not iron-clad from a causal perspective. It is always possible that village and politician levels of education are markers for some other characteristic. Nonetheless, even if these effects were “just” markers, there would be some value added in terms of one’s ability to identify particular villages that are at risk, for example, of opportunism. The collection of this unusual and carefully constructed data in a timely manner is laudable and likely an area of comparative advantage for the Bank. The use of the allocation of ration cards to measure opportunism is particularly innovative. It seems plausible that, conditional on observables, the differential presence of a ration card in a politician’s house is an indicator of a politician’s success in advancing his own private interests at the expense of broader public interest. The fact that predictions about opportunism are integrated using an appropriate theoretical framework adds to the credibility of ration cards as a sensible measure. The only place one might take issue with the model is whether restricting the voting set improves politician quality—one suspects that a more general model would yield a different result and the empirical evidence on this point is not convincing. This issue of rationing out potentially high-quality politicians is an important issue in terms of policy in that there is concern that set-asides, even if they redirect resources on average to a particular population, might reduce politician efficacy in other dimensions (which are not built into the model). The paper is clearly written and presented. It is probably targeted more for an academic than policy audience but this seems appropriate given the complexity of the issues raised. Nonetheless, the key insights of the paper, the importance of education at both the politician and village level in terms of reducing political opportunism and the fact that set-aside elections do seem to result in more targeting of resources to the corresponding population, are clearly important from a perspective of policy making.

	S	AA	A	BA	U
<i>Please rate the following aspects of the project outcomes (or in the case of ongoing projects, design and intermediate outputs)</i>					
Topics					
Importance of the issues addressed		X			
Clarity of the project focus and stated objectives		X			
Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework		X			
Empirical application		X			
Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging		X			
Survey design and sampling	X				
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)	X				
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations	X				
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence		X			
Appropriateness of the recommendations		X			
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences		X			
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate			X		
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues	X				
Provides a sound basis for policy		X			
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy			X		
Future analysis	X				
The development community in general		X			
Overall Quality of Research	X				

Participatory democracy in action: survey evidence from Rural India

This paper is a short study examining the relationship between village meetings and the allocation of village resources. This subject is a potentially important policy issue given that in principle such meetings can and are mandated in rural India. The paper does not go very far in terms of nailing down policy effects given that there does not seem to be a compelling underlying source of variation in the holding of these meetings. As the authors clearly articulate, it is possible that more meetings are held precisely in those villages in which other mechanisms are in place that lead to more allocation of resources to the poor. Nonetheless, given the absence of work in this area, the analysis was worth doing given that the data were being collected for other papers and the results are intriguing: there is evidence that these meetings differentially attract low-status households and that more effective targeting is carried out. It is reasonable to hope that this work will spur more decisive work on this subject.

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Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework				X	
Empirical application			X		
Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging		X			
Survey design and sampling		X			
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)		X			
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations			X		
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Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy				X	
Future analysis		X			
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research			X		

Nations, conglomerates and empires: tradeoff between income and sovereignty

The objective of this paper is to present and test a simple model of state agglomeration. The basic idea underlying the model is that there is a tradeoff between income, which is enhanced through greater openness, and sovereignty, which is reduced through increased contact with the outside world. This simple model then generates some predictions about the effects of domestic market size, political repression, and wealth on the willingness to link with international organizations. The point is that an expansion in the domestic market weakens the need to trade internationally, that greater political repression tends to make leaders more concerned about the loss of sovereignty from joining internationally, and that the effects of wealth may depend on the source of that wealth. For example, a greater endowment of a tradable good increases the returns to integration with the outside world. Results are broadly supportive. Of course, from the perspective of a micro-economist, the regressions are fraught with problems—to what extent, for example, should repression be taken as given with respect to a propensity for integration? Still the theory does provide a useful framework for considering and integrating these results and thus there seems to be some value to the exercise. A weakness of this work is that it fails to deal explicitly with the issue of within-country heterogeneity. There is too much informal reliance on the notion of a median voter. In fact there may be multiple groups in society (other than politicians) that are differentially affected by the prospects of greater integration. It is also a little unclear how one ought to think about the returns to sovereignty. Presumably sovereignty matters most when there are important differences between the objectives of different parties and a purist might argue that all that really matters is what is decided, not who decides. Perhaps this is an improper view of nations, but more careful analysis of this perspective would have been useful.

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Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources		X			
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging		X			
Survey design and sampling		X			
Output Quality					
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Overall Quality of Research			X		

Half a world: regional inequality in five great federations

This paper is a brief analysis of the degree of inequality in five federations. It focuses on two concepts of income inequality—inequality across states and inequality across states weighted by population. This work has some importance given that these federations are very prominent on the world stage and arguably their success (or failure) relates importantly to questions about the returns to economic and political integration, trade blocks and the like. It is argued that the latter is a better measure of inequality as perceived by citizens, but of course this leaves out inequality within states. The omission of the latter is recognized by the author but its importance is downplayed. This omission seems particularly important for discussions of such issues as the effects of openness on inequality. Nonetheless the descriptive analysis seems plausible and of some conceptual interest. One sees, for example, that in India and China the growth effects on population-weighted inequality were positive in the 1990s—periods of substantial economic reform in which evidently rich areas got richer. In the 1980s, by contrast, the effect for India was smaller and for China it was strongly negative. By contrast in Brazil, growth in the 1990s created greater regional inequality. Obviously these striking differences call out for interpretation, but in this regard the analysis is weaker. One is provided a series of regressions of inequality on macroeconomic variables but there is little sense of what theoretical structures are being elucidated. Moreover, there are just too few degrees of freedom to make this a credible exercise.

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Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources		x			
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging		X			
Survey design and sampling			X		
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)			X		
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations		X			
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence			X		
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Government policy			X		
Future analysis		X			
The development community in general		X			
Overall Quality of Research		X			

Responding to globalization: social policy in emerging market economies

This is a big think piece combining some literature review and some analysis exploring the relationship between globalization on the one hand and the development of an efficient and effective social welfare state on the other. The article notes the increasing trend toward increased means-testing, privatization, and decentralization of social welfare programs, and seems generally supportive of these transitions. At the heart of the issue seems to be whether these results are natural and inevitable consequences of the process of opening an economy to the outside world, or whether they reflect particular processes inclusive of the perspective of international institutions and domestic political institutions. The paper does not seem particularly analytical in its perspective and its conclusions are correspondingly weak. One is struck by the relatively limited discussion of trends in political processes in developing countries. Arguably, democratization and increasing literacy, which may have changed the dynamics of participation among the poor, have become powerful forces promoting social welfare programs that target large groups of the poor. Another important feature may well be the effects of globalization on returns to human capital and thus the interests of industry in a better educated/healthier workforce.

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Theoretical/conceptual framework				X	
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Statistical and econometric methods				X	
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Awareness of other data sources				X	
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging				X	
Survey design and sampling				X	
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)				X	
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations				X	
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Government policy					
Future analysis					
The development community in general					
Overall Quality of Research					

Dividing the spoils: pensions, privatization, and reform in Russia's transition

The objective of this paper is to examine relative benefits to different types of individuals and how this was related to voting behavior in the context of Russia. It seems of some importance to understand what particular features of Russia explain how transition proceeded in that country relative to other countries such as Poland. With that said, the article seems to have three disconnected parts and as a consequence it is difficult to assess what has been learned. First, there is a simple and fairly transparent model that maps policy variation into electoral support. Second, there is empirical analysis examining changes in income and in voting for Yeltsin. The latter concludes that individual characteristics, not socio-economic group, explain voting but this, in turn seems at odds with the model. Third, there is discussion about Russia's failure to create pluralistic policies and how that as a result there is no counterbalance to managerial rent seeking. But there doesn't seem to be anything in the empirical evidence that represents managerial rent seeking, nor any evidence that this group was particularly able to differentially implement policies that they favored. In short, while one cannot disagree with the conclusion that political economy affects policy making, it is difficult to see how this paper contributes to the debate. At a minimum what would have been helpful would be to see comparisons on voting behavior in Poland and Russia. I would hazard a guess that voting behavior in Poland would not have seemed that different in terms of the variables explaining who voted for whom. Partly the difficulty here is that one is only looking at the election of Yeltsin, thus making it difficult to disentangle the personal effect from that of policies—one doesn't even know if people didn't vote for Yeltsin because his policies were too "liberal" or too "conservative" with regard to protecting pensions and/or managerial rents. Perhaps an analysis of regional elections in which one could look at pairs of candidates would have been useful.

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Empirical application				X	
Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources		X			
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling			X		
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)				X	
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations				x	
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence					X
Appropriateness of the recommendations			X		
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences			X		
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate			X		
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues				X	
Provides a sound basis for policy				X	
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy				X	
Future analysis				X	
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Inequality during the transition: why did it increase?

This paper assesses the relative contributions of different components to inequality in transition economies during the transition period. The results indicate that increased wage inequality was the dominant source of growth in inequality and that this effects was particularly dramatic in Russia, where it increased the Gini coefficient by 24 points. The method used, decomposing the Gini coefficient into an additive sum of income levels and concentration coefficients by source of income, is sensible. As the author recognizes, the normative interpretation of this change depends very much on what the source of this inequality might have been, as well as how it has affected incentives for investment.

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Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
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Awareness of other data sources				X	
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling			X		
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)			X		
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations			X		
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Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy				X	
Future analysis		x			
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Explaining the increase in inequality during the Transition

This paper has substantial overlap with “inequality during the transition.” In particular it presents a decomposition of changes in income inequality in transition economies over the transition period. Like the other paper, it concludes that increases in wage inequality are the primary source of increasing inequality. One difference is the presentation of a simple one-sector model. A key feature of the model is that it predicts a movement from state workers into two sectors—a higher paid wage sector and unemployment. As the author notes, it is hard to test this feature without access to longitudinal data. The model itself does not speak to the issue of increased variance in wage inequality itself, which is obviously what is of greatest empirical relevance.

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Statistical and econometric methods				X	
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
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Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling			X		
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)			X		
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations				X	
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence				X	
Appropriateness of the recommendations				X	
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Availability of translated outputs where appropriate				X	
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues			x		
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Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy				X	
Future analysis			X		
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Cash transfers, direct taxes, and income distribution in late Socialism

This paper examines the redistributive impact of transfers and direct taxes in late socialist economies. This was, for its time, an important contribution in that it helped to provide a baseline for understanding the possible costs and welfare consequences of the extant system in the face of the transition to market economies. Most significantly the paper succeeds because the results taken together provide a theoretical perspective on how transfer systems in those economies differed from those in contemporary market economies. Simply put the results show little evidence that transfer programs and taxes had an important redistributive effect. On the transfer side, it is evident that the programs tended not to be need-based and instead targeted specific groups. In some cases, such as family transfers, these were redistributive but overall they were not. The contrast with market economies in this regard was marked. In addition the use of wage taxes and the relative equality of wage inequality across households implied that taxation was not especially redistributive. One can of course critique the paper in terms of its overall focus on income inequality rather than some other measure of well-being. For example, the comparisons with the United Kingdom might be much less striking if they were done by level of income rather than income percentiles—presumably many of the differences would disappear. Nonetheless it is fair to point out that the fact that there was not a strong need for redistributive policies in pre-transition socialist economies importantly conditioned the types of transfer policies that were in place at the time of the transition, and thus led to an important weakness in post-transition transfer policies.

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Theoretical/conceptual framework		X			
Empirical application		x			
Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources		X			
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging		X			
Survey design and sampling			x		
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)		X			
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations		X			
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence		X			
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Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues		X			
Provides a sound basis for policy		X			
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy		X			
Future analysis		X			
The development community in general			X		
Overall Quality of Research		X			

Poverty and economic transition: how do changes in economics of scale affect poverty rates for different households

This paper examines the potential effects of economies of scale in terms of evaluating poverty rates in different types of households. It includes some simple economic theory that highlights some of the key issues, including the importance of the expenditure share and relative price of particular types of public goods such as housing, which may distinguish transitional economies. It then examines the extent to which interpretation about the relative poverty rates among different types of households is affected by the extent of scale economies that are assumed. The two parts of the paper seem disconnected in the sense that the former does not provide much guidance in terms of how to judge the latter. In terms of the impact of the paper, the most useful insights are in trying to come to terms with how the particular conditions of the transitional economies likely affect scale economies. In particular, the extent of scale economies arising from children will be greater to the extent that basic health and educational expenditures are subsidized. To the extent that housing is a relatively public good, a substantial increase in housing prices and limited flexibility of the housing market can substantially increase scale economies. The latter section, which compares poverty rates of different groups, seems less useful. Comparing poverty rates between elderly households and high child ratio households seems a rather delicate exercise in the best of times. Does one account for example for the fact that children may in part be a choice? On the other hand, how does one consider the possible social returns to greater investment in child-centered households? In the end, these questions can only be addressed with more detailed analyses of individual well being and how it is impacted by household residence patterns.

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Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling			X		
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)			X		
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations			X		
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence		X			
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Government policy				X	
Future analysis				X	
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Determinants of land use in Amazonia: a fine-scale spatial analysis

The objective of this paper is to use relatively small-scale variation in land cover to study the determinants of “conversion” of agricultural land, with particular focus on the roles of rainfall and proximity to roads and urban centers. Two key dependent variables are used, the proportion of land cleared for agriculture and the number of cattle per unit of herded land. The data are essentially cross-sectional, although the land cleared equation includes on the right hand side proximity to earlier cleared land. The primary conclusions of the paper are that higher levels of rainfall decrease agricultural cover and that proximity to small cities and roads increases agricultural cover given other factors. Stocking ratios are also decreasing in rainfall. While the paper has clearly amassed a great deal of data and tried to address various econometric problems, it is very difficult to know what to conclude from this analysis. Much of the discussion is in terms of “deforestation” but the dependent variables are in terms of levels, not changes. Conditioning on the lagged disturbance can be interpreted as picking up a change effect but then the interpretation of the level variables must be carried out with caution. For example, if areas with more rainfall were more likely to have experienced pre-1976 disturbances, then it might appear that areas with more rainfall were less likely to be agricultural at a later date even when in reduced form (e.g., unconditional on 1976) agriculture is positively related to rainfall. This is not to say this is necessarily the case but it underscores how challenging it can be to interpret results of this kind, a point that is not appreciated or at least not discussed by the authors. There are also issues of whether rainfall is proxying for other important variables, such as slope, that might importantly affect the value of land for agricultural purposes. The use of the stocking variable as a proxy for value of land seems odd as well and certainly raises other questions. It is not clear how these problems might be repaired. At the very least it seems there is a need to integrate direct analyses of agricultural profitability at the farm level with larger-scale studies such as this.

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Use of existing knowledge and resources				X	
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Survey design and sampling			X		
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Overall Quality of Research				X	

Transferable development rights and forest protection: An exploratory analysis

The objective of this paper is to examine an important policy issue—To what extent can a market for protected forest help reduce the cost of maintaining a given level of forest cover? This is a very topical point and not one that has been carefully considered elsewhere and thus the paper is a nice contribution. With that said, providing a definitive answer to this question presents important challenges in terms of inference, and as such the paper is more of an exercise than a definitive study of the issue. Specifically, there are a number of reasons to be concerned about the measure of the returns to land conversion that are backed out using the data. In particular, agricultural net revenues per acre of non-forested land in the cross-section are regressed on agroclimatic and market proxies and a vector of shares of land of different types. Marginal revenue per hectare is then computed as the predicted average revenue for the type of land that has the lowest marginal revenue. Unfortunately, we are not given a clear sense of what must be true for this model to appropriately approximate the marginal value of additional land, particularly given the possibility that land shares at the household level may be endogenous with respect to land quality. It does seem that application of the generated data to policy issues – such as the consequences of restricting TDRs to large holdings and the merits of expanding the areas over which TDRs may be traded – provides significant insights in terms of the direction if not the magnitude of the differential effects. A useful extension of this work might have been to consider the merits of TDRs versus a scheme to differentially tax land held under forests. One might imagine that the latter would provide some of the same advantages as a TDR and might be easier to monitor and implement, particularly in view of changing policy objectives over time.

	S	AA	A	BA	U
<i>Please rate the following aspects of the project outcomes (or in the case of ongoing projects, design and intermediate outputs)</i>					
Topics					
Importance of the issues addressed		X			
Clarity of the project focus and stated objectives	X				
Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework			X		
Empirical application		X			
Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources					
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling			X		
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)		X			
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations		X			
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence		X			
Appropriateness of the recommendations		X			
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences		X			
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate			X		
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues		X			
Provides a sound basis for policy		X			
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy		X			
Future analysis		X			
The development community in general		X			
Overall Quality of Research		X			

***State - Community Comanagement of Urban Environmental Services:
Water, Sanitation, Solid Waste Management***

This document appears to be a proposal characterizing a body of work studying effective strategies for solid waste management, water supply and sanitation, and sewage in urban areas of developing countries. This seems to be a policy issue of first-order importance given the implications of these problems for the urban poor, anticipated rapid rates of growth in urban areas, environmental conditions in coastal areas, and the potential for such areas to serve as an incubator for disease that may have substantial global impact. With that said, the document itself is very disappointing. It is comprehensive in the sense that it seems to touch on almost all of the issues that might arise in the context of exploring possible strategies for addressing these problems. But it is also generic and bureaucratic in tone, with little attempt to sort out and identify the particular sets of intellectual and practical issues on which the ultimate payoff of work of this type is likely to turn. One gets the sense that one could plug almost any study of a community policy issue into the framework provided by this proposal with little alteration. It is possible that these problems will be addressed as the study focuses on the selected candidate case. One suspects, however, that there would be real returns to the early involvement in the project of one or more first-rate academic economists. For example, issues such as the identification of program effects are particularly complicated in the context of environmental issues given the tendency of benefits (and possibly costs) to accrue in different ways to a variety of different actors. A single program in a single region, for example, would not be a proper basis for inference about the effects of a program given the importance of correlated shocks to health in particular regions. Unless these issues are considered up front, it is likely that the inferences will be of little long-term value to policy makers and in pushing forward these issues as important subjects for scholarly research.

	S	AA	A	BA	U
<i>Please rate the following aspects of the project outcomes (or in the case of ongoing projects, design and intermediate outputs)</i>					
Topics					
Importance of the issues addressed	X				
Clarity of the project focus and stated objectives				X	
Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework				X	
Empirical application				X	
Statistical and econometric methods				X	
Use of existing knowledge and resources				X	
Data					
Awareness of other data sources				X	
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging				X	
Survey design and sampling				X	
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)				X	
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations					X
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence				X	
Appropriateness of the recommendations				X	
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences				X	
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate				X	
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues			X		
Provides a sound basis for policy			X		
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy			X		
Future analysis			X		
The development community in general			X		
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Pesticide poisoning of farm workers: Implications of Blood Test Results from Vietnam

The objectives of this study are to relate subjective and objective measures of pesticide poisoning and to relate the latter to measures of farmer behaviors, such as avoidance of the most toxic of pesticides and use of protective items. The first part of the paper, which looks at the use of subjective reports, is quite striking and somewhat worrisome from the perspective of other papers in this body of work that focus on subjective measures of adverse health. In particular, there would appear to be a very low correlation between subjective and objective measures. But this point is important enough to deserve much more careful scrutiny than is provided in this paper. For example, it is possible that although the correlation is very low, that with a sufficiently large sample, subjective and objective data might yield similar inferences about the effects of various practices on poisoning. The results also point to the presence of external effects but it was unfortunate that consideration was not given to this potential issue at the outset. In terms of the effects of behaviors, there are obvious concerns with the extent to which the behaviors may be taken as exogenous with respect to the outcomes of interest. In the end from a policy perspective one is interested in knowing whether providing various types of information or mandates in terms of pesticide management impact health, and this more or less requires finding exogenous variations in these policies that may be exploited empirically.

	S	AA	A	BA	U
<i>Please rate the following aspects of the project outcomes (or in the case of ongoing projects, design and intermediate outputs)</i>					
Topics					
Importance of the issues addressed		X			
Clarity of the project focus and stated objectives		X			
Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework				X	
Empirical application			X		
Statistical and econometric methods				X	
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling				X	
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)			X		
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations			X		
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence			X		
Appropriateness of the recommendations			X		
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences			X		
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate			X		
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues				X	
Provides a sound basis for policy				X	
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy				X	
Future analysis			X		
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Is environmentally-friendly agriculture less profitable for farmers? Evidence on integrated pest management in Bangladesh

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the costs and profitability of integrated pest management as an alternative to pesticides for the management of pests. The authors conclude that integrated pest management lowers pesticide costs without lowering profitability and thus conclude that IPM is a cost-effective, environmentally friendly alternative to traditional pesticides. The use of multiple different estimation techniques that assume different things about the production function is laudable. However, it seems likely that none of these techniques deals with the fundamental identification problem. In particular, little attention is given to the source of variation in IPM. It may be, for example, that educated farmers or those with better quality land (or fewer problems with pests) are more likely to adopt IPM. If this is the case, then the finding that IPM does not lower productivity might be spurious as IPM farmers might be otherwise more productive. The paper also draws some conclusions about externalities but these seem rather speculative as they were not built into the survey design. In particular, it is argued that collective action is needed to ensure that farmers collectively adopt these practices. While clearly there may be important collective benefits for adoption by an individual farmer, there may be collective costs as well. For example, if a single farmer is protected by the pesticide use of other nearby farmers, the measured effects of IPM for the individual would exceed those that would be realized with collective adoption. In terms of specific comments, the inference that farmers are operating under “surplus labor” conditions is problematic. This seems out of step with other studies of rural agriculture in the region. Moreover, given the assumed production function, the finding of zero marginal product of labor implies a zero average product of labor as well.

	S	AA	A	BA	U
<i>Please rate the following aspects of the project outcomes (or in the case of ongoing projects, design and intermediate outputs)</i>					
Topics					
Importance of the issues addressed		X			
Clarity of the project focus and stated objectives		X			
Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework				X	
Empirical application				X	
Statistical and econometric methods				X	
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources			X		
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling				X	
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)			X		
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations			X		
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence				X	
Appropriateness of the recommendations				X	
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences				X	
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate			X		
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues				X	
Provides a sound basis for policy				X	
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy			X		
Future analysis			X		
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Health effects and pesticide perception as determinants of pesticide use: Evidence from Bangladesh

The objective of this paper is to better understand patterns of pesticide use in rural Bangladesh. This is clearly an important policy issue given that there is ample evidence that recommended procedures are not being followed. This is perhaps not a surprising explanation given the many risks that Bangladeshi farmers take on that would be considered unacceptable in better-off societies. The analysis consists of a trivariate probit framework focusing on health effects, misperception of pesticide use, and health impairment. It is in practice rather difficult to interpret the results. It is not clear what theoretical framework drives the exclusion restrictions embodied in the analysis. Nor is it clear why so much of the data have been discretized. Arguably a preferable procedure would be to use the full range of variation in the data and then let the data itself indicate whether there are important break points that deserve separate analysis.

	S	AA	A	BA	U
<i>Please rate the following aspects of the project outcomes (or in the case of ongoing projects, design and intermediate outputs)</i>					
Topics					
Importance of the issues addressed		X			
Clarity of the project focus and stated objectives			X		
Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework				X	
Empirical application					X
Statistical and econometric methods				X	
Use of existing knowledge and resources				X	
Data					
Awareness of other data sources		X			
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging			X		
Survey design and sampling		X			
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)				X	
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations				X	
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence				X	
Appropriateness of the recommendations				X	
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences			X		
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate			X		
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues			X		
Provides a sound basis for policy				X	
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy				X	
Future analysis			X		
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research				X	

Pesticide traders' perceptions of health risks: Evidence from Bangladesh

The objective of this paper is to examine the determinants of pesticide traders' subjective health measures as well as their knowledge of the risks associated with pesticide use. This is important not just in terms of its implications for the health of the traders, but also because of the important potential role that traders play in terms of disseminating information to farmers. As with other papers in this group, there was a substantial amount of unnecessary data reduction and the estimation of a simultaneous equations model without appropriate theoretical justification. Nonetheless the paper is of some significance in that it studies an interesting population and documents clear weaknesses in terms of traders' knowledge or recommended procedures for handling their products.

	S	AA	A	BA	U
<i>Please rate the following aspects of the project outcomes (or in the case of ongoing projects, design and intermediate outputs)</i>					
Topics					
Importance of the issues addressed		X			
Clarity of the project focus and stated objectives		X			
Analysis					
Theoretical/conceptual framework				X	
Empirical application			X		
Statistical and econometric methods			X		
Use of existing knowledge and resources			X		
Data					
Awareness of other data sources		X			
Data compilation, cleaning and cataloging		X			
Survey design and sampling		X			
Output Quality					
Writing quality (clarity, organization, etc.)			X		
Clarity of conclusions and recommendations			X		
Extent to which conclusions are based on analytic evidence			X		
Appropriateness of the recommendations			X		
Appropriateness of output form (working paper, book, database, etc.) for intended audiences			X		
Availability of translated outputs where appropriate			X		
Extent to which research:					
Increases knowledge and understanding of the issues			X		
Provides a sound basis for policy				X	
Actual or likely impact of research on:					
Government policy			X		
Future analysis			X		
The development community in general				X	
Overall Quality of Research			X		