

A Governance Practitioner's Notebook: Alternative Ideas and Approaches

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“External actors who want to help countries move out of poverty, avoid large-scale conflict and increase state resilience have no choice but to address the issue of governance”

—Jörn Grävingholt in Governance Practitioner's Notebook

There is now a growing recognition that without more effective, accountable and inclusive institutions progress towards meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals will stall.

The Governance Practitioner's Notebook produced by the OECD-DAC Governance Network (GovNet) provides space for expert commentators to speak on the major governance issues facing today's practitioners: politics, public sector reform and stakeholder engagement.

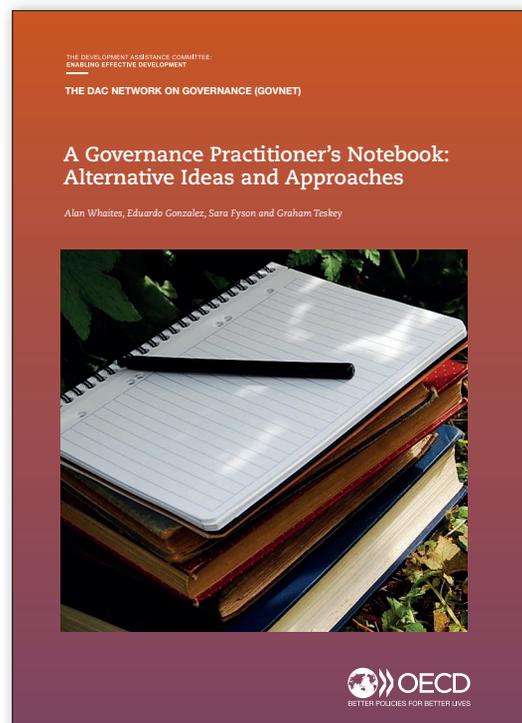
Intended to encourage debate rather than offer definitive answers, the Notebook charts the evolution of donor thinking and practice, highlighting current challenges and offering insights into new ways of working. Expert contributors include Tom Carothers, Lant Pritchett, Heather Marquette, David Booth, Sue Unsworth, Fletcher Tembo, Ousmane Sy, Jörn Grävingholt, Nick Manning, Frauke de Weijer and Matt Andrews.

Running through the Notebook is a critique of current practice in development support to governance reform. The book encourages practitioners to engage with debates and alternative ideas, and to look at new forms of partnership with stakeholders.

To access a full online copy of the Notebook go to

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/governance/governance-practitioners-notebook.htm>

The OECD-DAC Network on Governance (GovNet) is a forum for practitioners from the development co-operation agencies of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries. The members of GovNet work collaboratively, with each other and with other bodies and platforms, on issues of governance and institutional development. To find out more about the OECD-DAC Governance Network go to <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/governance/aboutgovnet.htm>



The Governance Practitioner's Notebook takes an unusual approach for the OECD-DAC Network on Governance (GovNet). It brings together a collection of specially written notes aimed at those who work as governance practitioners within development agencies. It does so, however, without attempting to offer definitive guidance – instead aiming to stimulate thinking and debate. To aid this process the book is centred on a fictional Governance Adviser.

THINKING AND WORKING POLITICALLY

Why does politics matter and how can governance practitioners shift their political economy analysis from an interesting read to a real tool for changing programming?

Sue Unsworth, David Hudson and Heather Marquette, amongst others explore why it is important to deliver politically smart development programming and how it can be achieved, calling on nothing less than a revolution in our approach and a fundamental change to donors' organisational practices.

“You may have already encountered people in development who get uncomfortable when you talk about politics... we are instinctively more comfortable believing there is a technical solution to the problems that we see around us – even when faced with growing evidence that there probably isn't”

– Richard Butterworth

TACKLING PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

If the evidence points to the fact that technical policy fixes based on best practice models don't lead to sustained and effective public sector reform then what does?

David Booth, Thomas Carothers and others argue that public sector reform is more about changing behaviour within institutions. They call for a more humble approach that puts locally identified problems at the centre of programming and adopts an iterative and adaptive method to reform.

“...we don't need more 'experts' selling “best practice” solutions in the name of efficiency... we need instead organisations that generate, test and refine context-specific solutions in response to locally nominated and prioritised problems”

– Matt Andrews, Lant Pritchett, Salimah Samji and Michael Woolcock

ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

What does country ownership really mean and how can development co-operation providers best support it? Tom Carothers, Jörn Grävingholt and others call on providers to support not just developing country governments, but developing country societies. To do this effectively, the authors suggest: opening up the design of governance programming to a wider set of local stakeholders to ensure relevance and avoid doing harm; looking for stakeholders that can act as change-agents; providing greater support for the media; protecting civil society space; and, tackling collective action problems to enable more effective public service delivery.

“I would advocate orientating any intervention strategy towards relevant change agents (development entrepreneurs, champions of change, call them what you like but people who want to make something happen).”

– Jörg-Werner Haas and Tim Auracher

