

[Summary]

What Can We Learn from the Research on “Pockets of Effectiveness”: Exceptionally Well-Functioning Public Institutions in Poor Governance - A Case of the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority, Cambodia

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ABSTRACTS

While a huge amount of research tends to focus on distilling cross-country lessons from failures in macro-level strategies for improving public services performance, the research on "pockets of effectiveness" sheds unique light on exceptionally well-functioning public institutions in countries that have otherwise poor governance and weak public sectors. With the analytical lenses of “pockets of effectiveness” this article intends to study the case of Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (PPWSA), which had transformed into a world-known well-performing water utility in the difficult environments, to investigate factors leading to its success. The foregoing research and the case analysis suggest unorthodox successful factors that are different from those stressed in standardized reform menus such as methodologies of “new public management.” The author argues that not only posing “effective reform menus” or formal institutional arrangements, development donors should make better use of technical cooperation and infrastructure development for supporting local leadership so that leaders can cultivate informal “organizational culture” based on rule-based and result-oriented management. In conclusion, catalytic roles of international aid would be worth further exploring so that it can help local leaders to protect their organizations flexibly in order to cope with difficult situations.