

*The Department of Agricultural & Resource Economics
Welcomes*

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11:15 am – 12:30 pm
WB Young 327**

Bureaucrats vs. Politicians: Evidence from a Field Experiment on Political Oversight in Uganda

Can local politicians constrain rent-seeking behavior by bureaucrats? Political oversight is a critical tenet of arguments in favor of decentralization. Yet, the effects of political oversight over bureaucrats on the quality of service delivery are ambiguous. Especially in settings where clientelism is rife, increased oversight and hence potential interference by politicians may have adverse effects on the quality of public goods and services provided. To assess the impact of political oversight on the quality of service delivery I conduct a field experiment in collaboration with the Ugandan Ministry of Finance in 260 local governments, serving about 5 million citizens. Taking advantage of a recent budget reporting reform, I directly manipulate (a) the de facto oversight local politicians have over their bureaucratic counterparts, and (b) their electoral incentives to use it to improve service delivery. Analyzing data from a panel survey with 2,800 local government officials, I find that increased access to oversight mechanisms does result in increased information and accountability-seeking behavior among politicians, with important heterogeneities. This study presents the first experimental assessment of the effect of political oversight on dynamics within local governments and the quality of service delivery.

For questions or concerns, contact Tatiana Andreyeva (tatiana.andreyeva@uconn.edu)