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**Understanding the local public sector:  
looking beyond elected sub-national governments**

par/by

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A series of international conflicts and crises have been dominating the news over the past year, ranging from the war in Afghanistan, to the Arab Spring and the European debt crisis. A common denominator in each of these news stories is that the public sector has failed to deliver basic public services in a responsive, effective, accountable and sustainable manner. In this regard, one aspect of the public sector that is often overlooked and under-analyzed -by the news media, policy makers, and development specialists alike- is the role of the local public public sector - that part of the public sector that interacts directly with residents and provides public services in a localized manner.

Intergovernmental (fiscal) relations are a topic of intense policy scrutiny and discussion in countries like Canada, the United States and other countries that rely on elected state and local governments ("devolved countries"). However, the different structures of governance and state administration in developing and transition countries do not always lend themselves readily to the same analytical approaches or policy responses that are common in more developed economies. In response, the Urban Institute's Local Public Sector Initiative has developed a methodology to quantify the size of the local public sector that can be applied regardless of the political structure of

a country. The initial application of the methodology to a few countries -including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Mozambique, Nepal and Tanzania- is uncovering that -although the specific obstacles are diverse- the disempowerment of the local public sector is often a key factor in the ineffectiveness of the public sector.

**About the author:**

Dr. Jamie Boex is a Senior Associate with the Urban Institute Center on International Development and Governance in Washington, D.C. He is a senior public finance expert with extensive experience in fiscal decentralization reforms and fiscal policy reforms in developing and transition countries around the world. Working with organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, USAID, and numerous other bilateral development agencies, Dr. Boex has contributed to policy reforms in close to twenty developing and transition countries around the world, including Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Egypt, Republic of Georgia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Russia, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Timor-Leste and Uganda.

Dr. Boex has authored and contributed to numerous books, book chapters, articles, and reports on local governance and local government finance, intergovernmental fiscal relations and fiscal decentralization, public expenditure management, and poverty reduction. As a scholar-practitioner, Dr. Boex continually seeks to place public finance and intergovernmental fiscal relations within the context of each country's institutional (administrative) and political (governance) traditions.

Dr. Boex has a PhD in economics from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies (AYSPS) at Georgia State University (1999). He is a member of the American Economic Association (AEA), the National Tax Association (NTA), the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), and the Association for Budgeting and Financial Management (ABFM).