

Center for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP)

Job Announcement

POSITION: Research Assistant

PROJECT: Rebuilding the Social Compact: Urban Service Delivery and Property Taxes in Pakistan

START DATE: As soon as possible

MINIMUM COMMITMENT: 12 months

LOCATION: 19-A FCC, Syed Maratib Ali Road, Gulberg IV, Lahore

I. Project Overview

The social compact between citizen and state – whereby a citizen pays taxes and receives (public) goods and services – is a critical link in the development process. This link is especially salient in the context of local governments and a significant metric on which they are judged. However, if citizens perceive little benefit from their tax payments, or local services are disconnected from local decision-making, this link can be broken. This can create a vicious cycle where citizens do not receive high quality services because resources are limited by low levels of local tax revenue, and the low quality of services leads to a low willingness to pay taxes, as well as a broader lack of trust in the state.

This study seeks to examine these issues by introducing a menu of reforms that strengthen the link between the provision of local urban services and local property tax collection in urban Pakistan. The three main interventions are:

1. ***Demand.*** In this intervention, tax collectors inform citizens of the link between taxes and services by showing a short video on how local taxes are used. Tax staff then solicit citizens' preferences on which type of local goods should be prioritized in their neighborhood. The results of this preference elicitation are then shared with the local government in an effort to improve the allocation of services.
2. ***Delivery.*** In the status quo, revenue is collected from administrative tax units and transferred to local governments that allocate these to city-level services. To strengthen the link between taxes paid and services provided, this intervention requires local governments to allocate a portion of property tax collected from a neighborhood (tentatively 35%) to that same neighborhood. As in the Demand intervention, tax staff inform citizens of the link between taxes and services and convey details about the intervention.
3. ***Demand and Delivery.*** This intervention combines the previous two. By both eliciting citizen preferences (#1) and requiring local governments to allocate funds to the neighborhood (#2) in accordance with preferences collected from citizens, it seeks to make the tax-services link even more salient and credible. As in the Demand intervention, tax staff solicit citizens' preferences on which type of local goods should be prioritized in their neighborhood. Citizens are then informed that 35% of their neighborhood's property tax revenue will be earmarked for their preferred service.

In addition to these main treatments, we will implement a variant of the Demand and Delivery intervention where local leaders will mobilize the community to help enhance the tax-service link.

Finally, we will randomize the content of the information and preference elicitation at the property level to help understand how to make the information credible and how to best get citizen voice. In particular, we will vary who will deliver the information in the video (a high ranking politician or bureaucrat), whether taxpayers rate the quality of existing services in addition to providing preferences on new services, and whether taxpayers are given the opportunity to provide unstructured feedback to the government.

The sample consists of approximately 500 neighborhoods in two of the largest cities of Punjab, Lahore and Faisalabad.

II. Current Status

In the last year, we introduced the interventions to all intervention neighborhoods in the sample. Tax staff have surveyed nearly all of approximately 60,000 total properties in the sample.

In *Demand* and *Demand and Delivery* neighborhoods, we surveyed taxpayers for their preferences over a variety of local services including sanitation, street repair, and street lighting. We have aggregated these preferences and transferred them to the relevant Local Government departments. We are now working with the Local Government to begin service implementation using earmarked property tax funds and preparing for the second year of the study.

III. Policy Relevance

Re-engaging with urban areas is a key priority for Pakistan in general, and the Punjab government in particular. The country is in the midst of revitalizing local governments, and enabling citizens' voice within this context could significantly impact the success of these local governments. The demand for this study came from a combination of the Punjab Local Government Department – which provides services – and the Punjab Excise and Taxation (E&T) Department – which collects the property taxes that fund these services. The project is strongly supported by both departments and backed by the Chief Minister and is anticipated to be a key pillar in the reform agenda of the government.

IV. Links

<http://southasiainstitute.harvard.edu/2016/06/faculty-voices-rebuilding-the-social-compact-in-pakistan/>

<http://harvardmagazine.com/2017/01/tax-collection-and-civil-society>

Position Description:

We hope that the successful candidate will start as soon as possible. This is a full-time position based in Lahore. CERP's project teams are small, and the amount of work we accomplish is significant. The

position is challenging but rewarding – only apply if you are the type of person who takes charge and responsibility, can do good work with little supervision, and are not afraid to learn new things in order to get the job done. The ability to take on challenges is essential.

The Principle Investigators of the project are Dr. Asim Ijaz Khwaja (Harvard Kennedy School), Dr. Adnan Khan (LSE, IGC), Professor Ben Olken (MIT/J-PAL), Mahvish Shaukat (MIT).

You will be working primarily on the following tasks:

1. Secondary data collection and management, and archival research
2. Coordinating between the research team and partners
3. Assisting in the design and development of interventions
4. Survey questionnaire design and implementation
5. Data cleaning, data management and quality assurance
6. Field visits as required

Job Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in Economics, Public Policy, Computer Sciences or a related discipline from an internationally recognized university.
- Preferably 1 years of relevant experience in research/program design and/or evaluation, including the design and execution of surveys, focus groups, and interviews
- Demonstrated knowledge of data management of large datasets as well as data collection, quality checks of data, and presentation of data
- Familiarity with STATA and willingness and ability to learn more at a fast pace. Knowledge of other statistical and programming software is appreciated but not required.
- Familiarity with ODK (optional)
- Familiarity with Python (optional)
- Familiarity with ArcGIS or any other GIS software (optional)
- Ability to manage of fieldwork related to the project in both urban and peri-urban areas, including field visits
- Fluent in English and Urdu

How to apply:

Interested candidates should fill this [online form](#) and send their cover letter, CV, and transcripts to careers@cerp.org.pk with the subject title **“Research Assistant- Social Compact”**.