



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**  
**Robert Kutter**

Will defend his prospectus

**Demystifying Community Participation and Determining whether It  
Helps Sustain Sanitation Project Benefits in India**

Beneficiary participation has been cast as the remedy to “top-down” approaches to international development, and it has become virtually mandatory in development programs. Intuitively, participation seems beneficial, and researchers make diverse claims about its benefits. But their conclusions about the outcomes of participatory projects are contradictory. Because a significant amount of money and other resources is invested in providing for beneficiary participation in development projects, determining whether it actually produces better outcomes is important.

My research will assess whether the effects attributed to participation by its proponents are supported by: (1) the body of evidence documented in international development literature, and (2) empirical evidence from recently completed sanitation projects in India. To evaluate claims about participation, I will survey international development literature to clarify the meaning of the term, claims about its benefits, and justifications for those claims. I will then conduct a meta-analysis to assess whether documented cases, taken as a whole, support claims about participation. Finally, I will conduct a comparative case study of sanitation projects in India to empirically test a popular claim about participation—that it helps sustain project benefits longer. My research findings will enhance our understanding of the role that beneficiary participation plays in the outcomes of international development projects, and therefore may contribute to the design and implementation of beneficial projects.

Monday, September 24, 2012  
9:00 a.m.

Wrigley Hall, Room 481

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:  
Rimjhim Aggarwal  
Arnim Wiek  
Aaron Golub