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# Legal reforms and development

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This paper canvasses the theoretical and empirical literature concerning the role that legal institutions play in development. The first part outlines six influential theoretical perspectives on development and their implications for the relationship between law and development. The second part surveys the relevant empirical literature. There is surprisingly little conclusive evidence that reforms in particular substantive areas of law such as property law, contract law and human rights law have been effective in furthering development, however conceived. There is, however, evidence that enhancing the quality of institutions that enact, administer and enforce laws can have positive and significant effects. This suggests that the current wave of legal reforms must be situated in a broader agenda of public sector reform if they are to avoid the problems that led to the demise of the 'law and development' movement of the 1960s.



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