

Advancing Good Governance Seminar

June 12, 2014 – 4:00-5:30pm

A Voice for All – Ensuring Inclusive Participation in Governance and the Empowerment of Citizens Within the Global South

The world is facing a paradox; we are living during one of the most progressive times in history while facing some of the greatest threats. Our capacity to manage these global threats is dwarfed by their complexity and challenge. To address them, we must enhance global governance, relying on the newly expanded power of individuals and civil society to initiate and propel positive change. This panel explored the foregoing in the context of the global South, where South-South cooperation has continued to thrive. The panelists concluded that sustaining the momentum of a rising South and directing South-South cooperation to tackling poverty requires more institutionalized multilateral support aimed at enhancing the capacity of least developed countries as well as increased government will and private sector involvement. To the panelists, responsibility for this “revolution” rests with representatives of the global South and their stakeholders.

Key Points from the Session

- 1 Fault lines in understanding the role of civil society in South-South cooperation.** There is a tension in the types of engagement that civil society undertakes, from substantive participation to a more peripheral presence. This relates not only to how the state engages with civil society, but also with society generally. Is the role of the state increasing or decreasing? These fault lines also are related to an existential definition of democracy. Can we see civil society as descriptive or normative? All of these questions point to a real challenge in terms of not only understanding civil society (“How civil do we expect it to be?”), but also to understanding relationships with governments.
- 2 Regional interactions.** Regional networks such as the BRICs and the Commonwealth provide opportunities for engagement, but also an “imagined” community status for the governments. This leads to questions about how civil society engages regionally in practice.
- 3 Addressing democracy and governance challenges.** In discussing South-South cooperation, it is vital to know that elections are not enough to guarantee good governance and democracy. Many of the countries where governance challenges exist lack constructive engagement with civil society but also hold workable elections. Therefore, elections may constitute a blunt instrument of representation. Governance through the engagement with civil society remains another option for representation.
- 4 The case of India.** With the election of a new government in India, there is renewed optimism about its future. Analysis of the election concluded that the electorate transcended the boundaries of caste, creed, region and religion to come together and vote decisively in favor of development through good governance. The new government has made it clear that it will look toward the South and work on strengthening regional structures which have weakened over the years. For serious development to proceed, all countries must work together to take the region forward.
- 5 Problems for India.** One of the biggest problems India faces today is that development is not inclusive. There are parallel societies within the country, all on different social trajectories. To

address the socio-economic, racial and caste inequality, India must enact: (1) state-sponsored development programs which aim specifically at poverty reduction and improvement in productivity levels of workers; (2) periodic public expenditure reviews at village, sub-district and district levels to ensure proper utilization of funds and ownership of development programs by the people; (3) civil services' increased responsibility and accountability for delivery of services in respect of approved schemes; and (4) increased involvement by civil society in the development process, including through the dissemination of information and implementation of development efforts.

6 The role of the private sector. It is important to engage with the private sector on their strengths. A panelist cited the example of Mercy Malaysia (“**MM**”) and Pricewaterhouse Coopers (“**pwc**”), where pwc provided MM with financial systems as part of pwc’s corporate social responsibility program. This led to a greater interest in and contribution towards the work of MM.

7 Partnership. Partnerships are needed between the private sector and civil society.

8 Lessons learnt. Learning from actions and mistakes is vital.

Emerging Questions

- 1** What are the implications of the increase in South-South official development assistance?
- 2** Is South-South assistance – whether aid, foreign direct investment or otherwise – more effective as a result of regional know how, cultural familiarity, greater risk tolerance, appropriate technologies, etc.?
- 3** Are South-South aid and South-South trade more likely to lead to greater empowerment among the communities and individuals served than North-South aid and trade?
- 4** Can South-South cooperation avoid mistakes that have been made by conventional aid and humanitarian interventions?
- 5** Are there countries that “deserve” aid?
- 6** Can we talk about unique models of development assistance for southern countries?
- 7** How can regions help each other without seeking external support?
- 8** What is the role of diaspora and expat countries in the development of the global South?
- 9** How do we build trust between the state and the private sector?