

Advancing Good Governance Seminar

6 June 2013 – 1:00 – 2:30 PM

The Sharpest Challenges in the Governance of Development

The panel examined the role of government in development, and how governments, which the panelists argued are best placed and resourced to serve the public good, can fulfill their popular mandates. Development, the panelists concluded, is a consequence of good politics. By working with aid organizations and empowering affected constituencies, governments can strengthen the impact of aid organizations' and multilaterals' efforts.

Key Points from the Session

1. **Good government matters for development.** While much of the work carried out by social sector organizations in the “business of development” is apolitical, it is potential-limiting to forget the value of working together with governments. Government and politics are the way in which a society exercises its voice and chooses rules that will govern it (invariably reliant on a functioning democracy of sorts). Indeed, governments are better placed to implement and maintain simple public goods provision; and to enable more efficient infrastructure across regional boundaries that will support the movement of people and goods – challenges which social sector organizations can assist with, but they require the weight and legislative power of government to enforce. At the same time, aid is not intended to make government right, or be a substitute for government, because aid is not intended to produce a functioning society with a functioning economy. However, aid can focus on solving specific problems, including getting government to work better.
2. **Good governance is a consequence of good politics.** Within a community, around a school, amongst parent organizations and children, good politics – holding each actor to account, having checks and balances – enables good governance.
3. **The Millennium Development Goals are impenetrable end goals.** The Millennium Development Goals are frequently assessed with statistics only, rather than more qualitative measurement, including the perspectives of the people whose lives are meant to be rid of poverty. Some governments publish their expenditures monthly, and publicly, to enable their constituents to monitor progress, but much of the journey ahead. It is up to governments to demonstrate their capability, and one way to do that is by improving their transparency en route to the end goals.
4. **Development is not a money chain.** A key problem with bilateral and multilateral funding arrangements is that donor organizations are by default accountable to accountants and receipts, and less focused on improving outcomes or being driven by results to allocate their resources. Recipients of aid cannot tell donors about relevant accounting streams, but they can tell donors if they are still walking half a mile to obtain water, and they can be angry about this. If we empower people who receive services, and move towards a results-based system, everyone wins.

Emerging Questions

1. How can governments retain their best and brightest employees when they cannot match private and civil society sector salaries?

2. How best can citizens be taught to make demands of their governments, and hold them to account?
3. How can multilaterals appropriately outline incentives so that governments do not become reliant on them but rather seek independence from aid?
4. There is no monopoly on excellence. How do we pool the experience, knowledge and multiple intelligences of governments and aid agencies to build institutional capacity and strong partnerships to deliver aid well?