Advancing Good Governance Seminar

6 June 2013 – 2:45 – 4:00 PM

Technology and Governance: A Feedback Network for Clients?

This session explored the concept of client feedback in the development sector, including a definition of feedback, the reasons for and methods used to seek feedback, as well as sources of funding and other implications. The development community aims to capture feedback in order to: (a) feed beneficiary/citizen perspective and preferences into the design/implementation of programs, thereby hopefully improving effectiveness and outcomes; (b) allow for corrections and improvements of a program while in process; and (c) help in program assessment, both as a measurement tool and as part of the intervention itself.

Key Points from the Session

1. **Feedback as a loop.** In order for information to be "feedback," the information must be put into action. The idea of a "loop" illustrates this; information is acquired about a certain project and that information is then used by the project manager to re-tool or re-shape the project. If the information is simply collected, but not put into action, it just remains information.

2. **This sector is not exempt from the concept of "customer service."** Programs and projects administered by organizations must take into account the satisfaction of the clients they exist to serve. The purpose of receiving feedback on programs and projects, and adjusting those accordingly, is not to collect data or improve relationships, but to create a culture of demanding citizens.

3. **Designing a feedback mechanism that takes into account marginalized voices.** Any feedback system must be designed to take voice into account. Many communities have marginalized minorities who, even in the context of providing feedback on projects, will be silenced by the majority (by numbers or otherwise).

4. **Feedback for course correction.** During the course of a project or program, the best means of improving the likelihood of success of the project or program is to seek feedback and adjust the project or program accordingly. Often, programs are not designed to be adjusted while ongoing because of agreements with donors or governments. This means a program which could otherwise be more effective will not be due to external constraints.

Emerging Questions

1. The sector measures feedback and voice of clients, but does it measure how much the sector is listening to those clients?

2. What if what clients want is not what they need? E.g., what if clients would prefer to spend money for infrastructure on a football stadium instead of schools? Does an organization from the sector ever know better than the clients it seeks to help?

3. How do we encourage more independent feedback mechanisms, rather than feedback mechanisms designed and administered by the providers of the services for which feedback is sought?