

Advancing Good Governance Seminar

7 June 2013 – 1:30 – 2:45 PM

Public Value Innovators: Making Governments Accountable

Private companies are increasingly finding ways to advance social change through their mainline businesses. Against this backdrop, the discussion focused on the key question of how much influence should non-state actors have in driving social change? The panelists shared concerns of working with, and through, governments which are slow to react to social change, do not value innovation and are not learning institutions but, nonetheless, cannot be ignored as they provide crucial coverage for the provision of goods and services to the poor and marginalized.

Key Points from the Session

1. **Governments must be learning institutions.** Governments lose their knowledge and face the challenge of maintaining quality when subject to the fluctuations of political cycles. Governments need to be learning organizations that value innovation, quality and sustainability.
2. **Speaking the same language.** The private and public sectors must speak the same language. The private sector needs to understand the role and value of government in providing services and goods to the poor and marginalized. The public sector needs to understand profitable business models and engagement. Only by speaking the same language and understanding one another can private and public sectors work effectively together.
3. **Revisit the regulatory framework to allow the private sector to contribute.** It is necessary to enable a regulator to understand the value of taking risks in order to allow the private sector to find ways to advance social objectives. This requires an increased awareness that financial inclusion *is* an a issue and to demystify the innovation of new business models which can advance public good. The way to foster innovation with regulators and policy-makers is to increase the voice of civil society and encourage the regulator to be forward-thinking and drive change by taking risks, for example, by operating pilot schemes.
4. **Mechanism for coordination.** It is critical that governments have a coherent national policy for working with non-state actors and standards are set, monitored and evaluated in each sector. The role of evaluation is particularly critical for decision-makers.

Emerging Questions

1. The panelists noted that there is an absence of government support for the scale up of social enterprise. Why is government absent, and what can be done to engage decision makers?
2. Increasingly, the best talent is attracted away from public service. How do we get people motivated and recapture the joy in public service to reinvigorate the role of government?