Public Policy Evaluation –
Is the glass half empty or half full?

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Stakeholder engagement

- Why engage stakeholders
- Alternative paths to engage stakeholders
- Examples from Egypt
  - Polling Center
  - Poverty Baseline
- Limitations in the current system and ways to overcome them
Egyptian Polling Center – IDSC

- Innovative initiative to improve dialogue with citizens
- Affiliated with Information Decision Support Center – office of the prime minister
- First specialized government polling center in region
- Has conducted more than 300 polls since established in 2003
- Emphasis on high scientific standards, wide availability of results
Polling Volume

Increase in annual outputs
2003-2009

Surveys

Note: These numbers do not include monthly polls on consumer trust

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة
Polling Center

- Rely on phone survey (landlines only) – why?
  - Rebalance sample to reflect differential ownership of phones
  - Ask hard questions
  - Still more descriptive
  - Beginning to tackle views on policy

www.pollcenter.idsc.gov.eg
Polling Center – Examples

• Preferences between two ways of delivering government subsidy: in-kind transfer system or cash transfer system.
  – Government favored cash transfer system
  – Public favored in-kind transfer system
  – Stimulated major discussions in the media.
More examples…

- E-government awareness poll
  - revealed people unaware of e-services introduced despite efforts to publicize major initiatives
  - sent to all concerned policymakers even though embarrassing
- Corruption, reinstituting sixth grade in primary schools, agency performance, private tutoring problem, problem of unemployment, internet use by youth, traffic…
- Repeated some polls for better tracking – e.g., confidence in govt, internet use
Polling Center: Results

• Government health insurance system was modified after indicated public complaints
• More basic goods made available in the market after poll results on the availability of basic goods showed shortages
• Some public TV channels canceled after poll showed low viewership.
• Set rates for new fuel-efficient cab system
• Changed law to permit part-time work for men in government
Polling Center – Strengths

- Commitment to methodological excellence
- Commitment to fully reporting results
- Commitment to linking internationally – Think Tanks Network, new consortium of polling agencies
- Commitment to openness
Staff capacity-building

Increase in the number of staff (Part time and full time) between 2003-2008

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Polling Center – Challenges

• Low level of trust in government
• Lack of statistical literacy in press and NGOs
• Lack of strategic plan – staff-driven(?), but creating board
• General avoidance of evaluation in favor of descriptive studies (changing)
Poverty Baseline Analysis

- Innovative effort by GoE and AUC’s Social Research Center
- Integrated GIS data with existing and new survey data
- Aim to prioritize specific regions within Greater Cairo, understand poverty on multi-dimensional basis as basis for intervention
Found More Poverty...

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy
Challenge of Assessing Multi-Agency Policy Outcomes
Key Issue: Where to Put Capacity to Ensure Stakeholder Responsiveness?

- Where to put capacity?
  - Independent agency
    - Under prime minister
    - Cours des comptes model
  - Legislative agency
    - The ultimate stakeholder representative
    - Incorporate with audit function or not
    - Must have ministry-level capacity
    - Reliance on academy/consultants or in-house
      - Need both
Issue: Changing the Culture of Secrecy

• Right to know – information flow to the public
• Overcoming the culture of secrecy in the government
  – Follow the money…
• Overcoming the culture of secrecy in the private sector
  – Facilitate formalization, further reduce burdens
• Growing recognition that lack of hard data is harming development
• Value of international rankings
Revolt of the Researchers!

- Headline from a report on an IDSC conference on polling:
Revolt of the Researchers!

- Headline from a report on an IDSC conference on polling:

Arab researchers threaten to conduct unauthorized researches (!)

10/11/2009—Al Youm Al Sabe'e
• “If governments persist to hide information and make it difficult to issue research permits, we will have to work without them”…. [A senior Jordanian researcher] assures that we are suffering a lot of restrictions in attaining information, and there is great shortage in monitoring information which represents a great challenge for scientific efforts that aim to monitor public opinion indicators.
Independence and Transparency Challenges

- 3-6 months to get permission to conduct surveys, even for government units
- Permission may be denied
- Government authority has been known to demand to censor results
- Surveyors without police stamps may be arrested
Issue: Overcoming Limitations to Stakeholder Engagement and Public Policy Evaluation in MENA

- Hesitance to ask the hard questions
- Unwillingness to accept bad news – although fundamental to progress
- Lack of reliable data
- Lack of “data literacy”
- Limitations on field research
- Lack of countervailing forces to call for evaluation
- Over-reliance on donors
Issue: How to Build Capacity in Policy Reform in MENA

- “Reform” as primary, evaluation a key support to it
- Need for continuous improvement – policy cycle
- Need to move from design to implementation to assessment
- Difficulty of bridging technical analysis and policy/political level
- “Missing chapter – missing section”
- Unidisciplinary models of education
- Communication and advocacy
A New Profession: the Public Policy Analyst

- Have existed on an ad hoc basis – technical offices, advisors from academia, etc.
- No recognized profession, however
- Formal graduate programs established in the U.S. to train policy analysts in late 1960s
- Interdisciplinary master’s programs (MPP) at Harvard, Princeton, Berkeley, Texas/ now perhaps 100 graduate programs
What Is the Public Policy Discipline?

Combines:
- Economics, Political analysis,
- Statistics, Operations research and management
- French model adds legal studies

• AUC’s planned master’s in public policy
  - to be launched in Fall
  - First MPP in region
  - Must be supplemented with ST training to build demand for analysis
  - Hope others will develop their own models to establish policy analysis in MENA