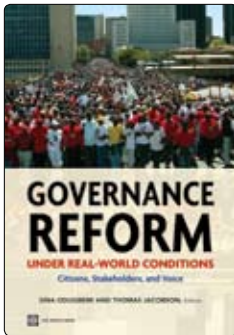# Reforming Governance Systems under Real-World Conditions

Although necessary and often first rate, technocratic solutions alone have been ineffective in delivering real change or lasting results in governance reforms. This is primarily because reform programs are delivered not in controlled environments, but under complex, diverse, sociopolitical, and economic conditions. Real-world conditions.

In political societies ownership of reform programs by the entire country cannot be assumed, public opinion will not necessarily be benign, and coalitions of support may be scarce or nonexistent, even when intended reforms really will benefit those who need them most.

While the development community has the technical tools to address governance challenges, experience shows that technical solutions alone are often insufficient. Difficulties arise when attempts are made to apply what are often excellent technical solutions. Human beings — either acting alone or in groups small and large — are not as amenable as are pure numbers, and they cannot be ignored. In the real world, reforms will not succeed, and they will certainly not be sustained, without the correct alignment of citizens, stakeholders, and voice.

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Six Key Challenges for Governance Reformers

- Uncovering the challenges inherent in building support for governance reform through political analysis;

- Securing political will and the best methods for reaching out to political leaders, policy makers and legislators;

- Gaining support of public sector middle managers, often the strongest opponents of change;

- Building broad coalitions of pro-change influentials and dealing with powerful vested interests;

- Transforming indifferent or hostile public opinion into support for reform objectives;

- Encouraging citizen demand for accountability to sustain governance reform.

Governance Reform under Real-World Conditions: Citizens, Stakeholders, and Voice (World Bank, 2008) is a contribution to efforts to improve governance systems around the world, particularly in developing countries. It offers a range of innovative approaches and techniques for dealing with the most important nontechnical or adaptive challenges that impede the success and sustainability of reform efforts.

Key Challenges for Governance Reformers

The book sets out to address the key challenges that frustrate governance reformers and reform efforts (see box, Page 1). Identification of these key challenges began by asking reform managers in development agencies and in developing countries directly, delving into the characteristics of these challenges, and distilling knowledge and lessons learned from practitioners, researchers and academicians, and from the theories and practices of the disciplines of communication and the allied social sciences for approaches and techniques that have proven useful. These key challenges were raised again and again, no matter the country or the sector in which the reform was being implemented.

Communication Counts in Governance Reform

Communication has something unique to offer governance reform by facilitating the development of democratic practices that are not limited to the ballot box. These are practices that comprise the public surveillance of government activities, public debates within civil society regarding interlocking and often contesting interests, and publicizing social services.

Communication approaches and techniques can be used to successfully deal with and mitigate the above-mentioned challenges. Communication links the constitutive elements of the public sphere – engaged citizenries, vibrant civil societies, plural and

independent media systems, and open government institutions – and thus forms the framework for national dialogue through which informed public opinion is shaped about key issues of public concern and public policy.

Communication approaches and techniques have been employed in the service of development goals for over 50 years. These include audience segmentation analysis, public opinion research, public will campaigns, public interest lobbying, civic education campaigns, social marketing efforts, communication audits, and media development projects. Each of these communication techniques has a vital role to play in contributing to general democratic capacity, yet a more political treatment of communication holds promise that has not yet been fully explored.

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What's Inside the Book?

This edited volume addresses each of the six key challenges noted above and presents lessons and experience from around the world in how to best tackle them. Chapters cover a wide variety of subjects and have been contributed by development practitioners, academics, and technical experts.

Part One examines the importance of public opinion for the quality of governance, and the critical role of a democratic public sphere in the architecture of good governance. It goes on to explore the relevance of Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere to governance reform. The next chapter unpacks terminology around the concept of participation in the context of development. Finally, it looks at what the journalistic approach offers to the task of assessing political dynamics in development planning and implementation.

Part Two deals with securing political will and considers the best methods for reaching out to political leaders, policy makers, and legislators. It makes the case for using network analysis and presents a reform space model that focuses on the intersection among three key factors: acceptance, authority, and ability. The next chapter explores the distinction between public and political will and interaction between the two. The final chapter reviews the literature on deliberative processes used to reach out to stakeholders and engage them in change.

Part Three addresses the challenge of public sector middle managers by exploring the insights of organizational communication. The example of a multisector capacity-building program in Rwanda shows why it is important to gain the support of middle management for any reform, while the example of the "appreciative inquiry" approach demonstrates how to successfully cultivate and engage middle management in the reform process.

Part Four turns to the challenge of building broad coalitions of influentials in favor of change. It starts by analyzing differences among dialogue, debate, and negotiation, then considers the example from Kenya of a successful consensus-based and stakeholder-driven approach to building coalitions around water reform efforts. It concludes with

an approach to building pro-change multisectoral coalitions to overcome powerful vested interests.

Part Five addresses the challenge of transforming indifferent or hostile public opinion into support for reform. It presents the fundamental concept of framing in communication. The next chapter presents lessons from a reform project in the Philippines, using the mnemonic device 6R = 1R, meaning that a combination of Research, Reason, Reach, Resources, Record and Review will produce Results. Finally, the last chapter looks at the democratizing potential of the Internet and new communications technologies and their role in shaping public opinion.

Finally, Part Six considers how to effectively promote citizen demand for good governance and accountability to sustain governance reform. The first chapter introduces the technique of deliberative opinion polling. The second chapter outlines policies critical to fostering an engaged citizenry, while the third chapter details techniques to facilitate effective citizen discussions. Part Six concludes with reflections on what political science brings to our understanding of reform processes.

The book also features nine case studies, providing practical lessons learned from large-scale governance reform projects in eight countries: a national-level public sector reform effort in Nicaragua; public enterprise reform efforts in West Bengal and Orissa, India; reform of the tax collection system in Bulgaria; economic reform efforts in Slovakia; judicial reform in Georgia; water sector reform in Delhi, India; procurement reform efforts in the Philippines; *Sanglap*, a radio and television program that gives citizens the opportunity to interact with their politicians and hold them to account, in Bangladesh; and the first-ever deliberative opinion poll in the People's Republic of China.

The book also includes a pull-out summative graphic, The Grounding Path of Governance Reforms, which lays out the social and political processes relevant to each of the key governance reform challenges, along with approaches and techniques that policy makers and reform managers may find useful in addressing them.

Across these academic, professional, and practitioner contributions, including the case studies, a number of recurrent themes emerge as having key importance. There is much talk of consensus seeking, the dangers of fake consultations, and the importance of leadership even in consensus-building efforts. The importance of networks is repeatedly raised, sometimes in the sense that professional networks among individuals are key to getting things done in a pragmatic sense, and sometimes as a tool of analysis. The concepts of dialogue, deliberation, decision making, and negotiation appear often, mostly in attempts to clarify differences among them while emphasizing the importance of not mistaking them for being one and the same.

The book does not offer an exhaustive treatment of these ideas, but their inclusion in a collection of studies that address the subject of governance reform is unique. The editors' intention is to bring together theory and practice to provide systematic evidence for best practices in the field. The fieldwork and case studies flesh out the meaning of the theory, and they go further, to test it. The outcome is a volume making a compelling case that communication has something unique to offer governance reform work.

Policy and Practice Recommendations

The implication is clear: a sensible innovator in governance needs to worry about public attitudes, public opinion, self-interested forces and inertia, and must seek to shape those forces in ways that support reform efforts. Reform managers must grapple with each of these adaptive challenges when seeking to implement governance reform under real-world conditions. Following is a set of policy and practice recommendations to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of governance reform efforts:

- Use the public sphere framework as part of governance diagnostic. There is insufficient appreciation of the public sphere as an essential part of how to secure good governance and accountability. While some of the constitutive elements of the democratic public sphere are now part of the governance agenda, a framework that ties everything together and also explores and takes advantage of the mutually reinforcing nature of the different elements of a democratic public sphere is entirely missing.

- Have a strategy for dealing with these adaptive challenges as part of every governance reform effort and ensure that sufficient financial and human resources are allocated to implement it.

- Train reform managers and build government capacity to handle the adaptive challenges that impede successful governance reform.

- Support efforts to systematize and disseminate knowledge regarding how to tackle these challenges.

- Recognize that governance reform is a multidisciplinary effort requiring the insights and skills of numerous disciplines including Anthropology, Communication Studies, Economics, Organizational Behavior, Political Science, Political Psychology, Social Psychology, and Urban Planning. No single discipline has all the answers.

CommGAP

The **Communication for Governance and Accountability Program (CommGAP)**, a global program at the World Bank, seeks to confront the challenges inherent in the political economy of development. By applying innovative communication approaches that improve the quality of the public sphere – by amplifying citizen voice; promoting free, independent, and plural media systems; and helping government institutions communicate better with their citizens – the program aims to demonstrate the power of communication principles, processes and structures in promoting good and accountable governance, and hence better development results.

CommGAP is funded through a multi-donor trust fund. The founding donor of this trust fund is the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

CommGAP has launched a blog entitled *People, Spaces, Deliberation* to share ideas about the role of the democratic public sphere in governance among a growing global community of practice with members who are united in their commitment to improve governance and accountability in developing countries. The blog is addressing issues such as accountability, governance, media development, anti-corruption, post conflict environments, and public opinion.

Join the conversation at http://publicsphere.worldbank.org.

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