Short Session Report

Session Title: The Proxy Challenge Competition
Date & Time: 02.12.16, 9am-11am
Report prepared by: David Jackson, Advisor, U4

Experts:

Paul Heywood, Nottingham University
Matthew Stephenson, Harvard Law School
Liz Hart, Independent Consultant
Caryn Peiffer, Research Fellow Birmingham University

Moderated by: Fredrik Eriksson
Session coordinated by: U4/ DFID

Main issues raised in kick off remarks. What’s the focus of the session?

This session presented the two finalists of the U4/ DFID proxy challenge competition as well as providing general assessments of efforts to measure corruption. It was noted from the beginning that it is very important to measure on-going efforts in anticorruption. Assessing effectiveness will help improve interventions; finding reliable ways to measure the effects of AC reforms can also motivate more action against it. The conundrum facing anticorruption is how to measure something that is not readily observable.

U4, supported by DFID, developed the competition to inspire the development of new indications: reliable, intuitive, accessible and cost-effective assessment methods that are useful across country-contexts. There were twenty-four submissions in total – the two entries of highest quality presented at the event.
What initiatives have been showcased? Briefly describe the Game Changing strategies/ ideas (if applicable)

Two new proxy indicators:
The first, presented by John Cipperly and Ehrik Aldana from the National Center for State Courts, aims to measure changes in corruption in the judicial sector. The proxy proposed is % of traffic court cases resolved within expected time standards as an indicator of anticorruption reform results in the justice sector. It was noted that this proxy could be helpful for policy evaluation; in particular, tracking trends in judicial reform; identifying and focal points for resource allocation, and tracking the impact of corruption reform.

The second, presented by Mihály Fazekas and Bence Tóth from the Government Transparency Institute, aims to measure corruption in public procurement. The proxy proposed is the age of a company at the time of exchanging with the state. The main strength of the indicator is that is based on objective administrative data and is highly sensitive to change.

The judges praised both indicators, but awarded first prize to Mihály Fazekas and Bence Tóth.

Briefly describe the highlights including the thematically interesting questions and ideas that were generated from the discussion or from the floor, and session quotes.

• ‘Not that everything that matters can be measured, not everything that can be measured matters’
• We need more imaginative ways of addressing corruption.
There is strong interest among international development agencies to develop such indicators – U4 proxy challenge will hopefully serve as an inspiration.

What are the key recommendations, follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)

Anticorruption community has not done a good job of what specifying what corruption is. Too often we have fallen back on generic indicators that underspecify corruption, indicators that have not been a good guide for anticorruption efforts. We need more imaginative ways of addressing corruption. There is strong interest among international development agencies to develop such indicators – the U4 proxy challenge will hopefully serve as an inspiration.

It is very important to generate indicators that can be used by development agencies. Indicators should be aimed at showing results over time: do interventions have their desired effect? Key criteria for the development of strong indicators are: validity (i.e. does it represent the type of corruption being measured); discerning (i.e. it captures changes in corruption from ‘other stuff’); it is comparable over time; it is sufficiently sensitive to detect short term changes; and can be scaled up at reasonable cost.

Follow up actions include the publication of the winning proxy indicator by U4 and the possible deployment of the indicator by DFID in the field.
Key Insights that could be included in the IACC Declaration

Anticorruption is in an interesting moment. On the one hand, the desire to fight corruption is very strong as evidenced by the inclusion of corruption-free institutions in the UN development goals.
On the other, anticorruption policy could be considered to be the greatest policy failure of last 25 years. It is hard to argue that there has been many successes: we know what doesn’t work rather than what does and evidence papers point to a dismal record, especially with regards to international donors. New thinking is required.

Rapporteur’s name and date submitted David Jackson,
02.12.16

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