CLOSED e-Discussion – Phase 2: How can ICA and similar tools be used in political transitions in the Arab States and elsewhere?

[*Facilitator's Note: The Regional center in Cairo and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery are pleased to launch the second phase of the e-discussion on Using Institutional and Context Analysis in Development Programming. This phase is co-moderated by Geoff Prewitt. RC Cairo and Kristoffer Tangri, BCPR. For more information, see the* [*Democratic Governance Practice Director* **Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi's** *Launch Message*](#) *on the discussion as well as the* [*Concept Note*](#)*. Here you can view* [*Phase I of the e-Discussion*](#) *which focused on the ICA approach and what how it can impact UNDP programming. Kindly click "*[**Post Comment**](#)*" below to submit your response to this discussion, or send your contribution by email to* [*dgp-net@groups.undp.org*](#)*.]*

Phase 2 (5-12 June 2013): ICA and Political Transitions

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the second phase of the e-Discussion on Institutional and Context Analysis (ICA). Thank you for your contributions so far. We have seen that the ICA can indeed be useful when informing development planning, either as an internal UN exercise or when it seems appropriate to also share openly with Government and other national stakeholders. In phase I, reflections have focused on how the ICA or similar tools can be used to generate better results, the support needed for such interventions and the role of Headquarters and Regional Service Centres and Offices in supporting country level ICAs.

During this phase we will focus on political transitions in the Arab region and seeing how the ICA can be of use in contexts of transition. The global development context – driven by the rise of the South, advances in technology, demographic changes, climate change, political uncertainties, and related processes – has transformed dramatically in the past five years. Nowhere has the development framework changed more than in the Arab region. The events that resulted in a change of leadership were indisputably prodigious, both in relation to the tremendous courage illustrated by those that demanded dignity but also for the rapidity of change. This poses ample challenges for UNDP's country offices and UN Country Teams, coupled with opportunity. New skill sets such as engaging with an independent civil society, supporting parliamentarian reform, facilitating constitutional dialogue, preparing for new electoral cycles, etc., are required for effective programme delivery.

In the Arab Region, what was thought highly implausible a few years ago is now the norm. Dissident voices once based in European capitals have been replaced by street protests; previously banned (or regulated) religious movements are gaining political authority; state controlled media no longer monopolizes the flow of news; new forms of expressing political views have emerged, though of course not with the same vigor in every country of the region. Media access and use is growing rapidly, particularly for youth. Arabic is the fastest growing language on Twitter. It will take time before the consequences of these phenomena can be fully understood. How can the ICA be deployed in a period of volatility?

Against this background,

1. **How can UNDP country offices or UN country teams use ICA or similar tools to reflect on their need to change to rapidly evolving situations that were once relatively constant?**

2. **Can ICA or similar tools be applied to a fluid situation - a country in transition? If so, how?**

3. **How can the ICA contribute to improved UNCT programming implementation in transitions?**

We look forward to your participation.

Geoff Prewitt, Moderator
Regional Center Deputy Head and Practice Coordinator
Regional Center in Cairo, Regional Bureau for Arab States

Kristoffer Tangri, Moderator
Programme Analyst, Crisis Governance
Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery

Comments

[Democratic Governance Content Manager](#)
Thu, March 20,2014

This query is now closed. A consolidated Reply is available [here](#).

[Geoffrey PREWITT](#)
Sat, June 15,2013

Dear Colleagues,

Phase II of the e-Discussion on Institutional and Context Analysis (ICA) is now complete, but you can still post reflections and we welcome a continued dialogue. We would like to take this opportunity to thank those that contributed insightful points on deploying the ICA in a transitional and/or unstable context. A consolidated summary of all phases of the e-Discussion will be provided at the end of Phase IV.

Phase III, on the use of the ICA and other similar tools in governance and energy and the environment, has now been launched. To participate, please go to https://undp.unteamworks.org/node/355423. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Geoff Prewitt and Kristoffer Tangri, Moderators

[Taimur Khilji](#)
Mon, June 17,2013

I did sit in on a workshop on ICA and recall the 'mapping of actors' as a useful exercise. While approaching our work from a political and somewhat more nuanced lens is useful, we may need to do more..for example, it would be good to try and learn the language and delve into the history of the country one is in to get a better sense of context, culture and social milieu. We tend to limit our interaction with locals usually...and maintain a safe distance...leading to a somewhat distorted sense of reality. At the same time, in our work place we tend to approach development through standardized approaches, templates and frameworks and this further limits our vision.

No one really predicted the arab spring, or for that matter the recent protests in Turkey. The case of Turkey is particularly interesting, especially as the country is being cited as the model for other Arab countries to emulate, and not to mention that the current government was elected with a sweeping majority. Therefore, it seems that there is a degree of complexity that is not being picked up by analysts/media in the emergence of such uprisings...and a better grasp of festering issues and the way democracy is practiced and/or conducted can shed a lot of light on how people may react or behave in response to government actions.

It may also be useful to see what other UN agencies (and units within them) are doing. For example, it might be worthwhile to explore how we can work with OCHA as well as DPA to bridge politics and development in a manner that allows us to work and function more effectively. I think we can collectively contribute to shaping a coordinated approach toward navigating the political landscape of particular country for greater development impact.

   [Kristoffer TANGRI](#)
        Tue, June 11,2013

Posted on behalf of:

Harald Thørud, Crisis Governance Unit, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR)

Dear Colleagues,

This is a great discussion, and also very relevant to BCPR and BDP's work on Inclusive Political Processes in the Arab Region. For the discussion- I wanted to share with you some of our experiences with using ICA as a planning and implementation tool.

In early 2012, the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) developed a Regional Initiative known as the "Inclusive and Participative Political Institutions in the Arab States Region project.

The project came to light as as a response to the Arab Spring, and the expressed needs by CO in the region to strengthen the capacities of political institutions, help prevent and manage conflict and address political fragility. Parliaments had played only a very limited role in national governance and accountability systems prior to the Arab Spring, and the majority of legislatures in the region had limited capacity to promote transparent and inclusive law-making and oversight, with Secretariat support weak in most countries.

As the starting point for the project, BDP and BCPR conducted Country Missions to 6 agreed upon countries (Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, The Occupied Palestinian Territories and Somalia. Egypt was not possible due to the political deadlock in the country). The mission teams, consisting of parliamentary development specialist, a crisis governance representative and national experts used the ICA methodology to analyze the national context, and a specific tool was also developed and adapted to focus the Projects' scoping missions on political institutions. Time and resources did not allow for a complete ICA for any of the countries, but a 'light' version of a context analysis was conducted. Based on the analyses, the project team then decided if and how support would be provided to the institutions in the country to best support the democratic transition.

A common denominator identified through all the missions, was the importance of developing programmatic linkages with regards to timely support to political institutions in the context of the electoral cycle. Particularly, in post-conflict settings, the missions validated that it is critical to support newly established political institutions as they will play a key role in a process of national dialogue, legitimizing the political settlements and spearheading the implementation of legislative processes. Following the ICA process, Result Resource Frameworks (RRF's) were then finalized for all 6 UNDP Country Offices and funds were allocated to implement the identified activities.

 We also recognized at the outset that the Project was particularly vulnerable to risks associated with the sensitive political context prevailing in the region, and the possibility of a return to violent conflict in some of the target countries. The initial decision to undertake political economy analyses ICA's for each country was a response to the need to understand

more comprehensively the opportunities, but also the risks, involved in supporting inclusive political processes in each country. These PEAs helped UNDP identify the most targeted interventions likely to produce outcomes within the political constraints facing each country

This approach in setting realistic target outcomes for UNDP has proven to be very useful as it has allowed UNDP to give countries the space to progress reforms at their own pace, rather than pressuring them for results because of unrealistic project reporting pressures.

One of the limitations to the ICA framework that we discovered is that project interventions are always at the mercy of national political changes (which cannot always be predicted). In some of the project countries, a highly fluid political environment meant that progress was slow and at times stalled altogether, while we/ UNDP waited for political elites to work through their conflicts and disagreements. One of the biggest lessons is hence that the context analysis must be refreshed on an ongoing basis, particularly given the rapid changes occurring in the region. Unfortunately UNDP CO do not necessarily have the capacity to regularly re-assess the political context in which they work and adapt their outputs and activities accordingly. What we did note was that where staff in the CO does have such skills the Project has had a greater impact.

Additional reflections and comments welcome. Looking forward to continuing the discussion

Best,

Harald

[Abdo SEIF](#)
Tue, June 11,2013

Dear Colleagues,

1. How can UNDP country offices or UN country teams use ICA or similar tools to reflect on their need to change to rapidly evolving situations that were once relatively constant?

Yemen is the only LDC country in Arabian Peninsula with potential resources is managed well the country could transform into a middle income country within 20-25 years. However this is not a case in Yemen as complexities are far more beyond for ICA as a tool to be of greater beneficial for programming purposes. Since both parties of Yemen were found during the modern history of this region (i.e. after the revolutions of 1962 in the north and 1963 in the south), followed by the reunification of both two Yemenis, the country has not been in any single moment stability and without international or/and regional interference, without mentioning other undermining factors. For last 50 years, Yemeni leadership decision making has been influenced by super power states during the cold war and powerful region states in this region. Therefore, at upstream, especially with the above complexities, ICA alone will not be enough and sufficient to understand and to propose for a counter solution.

1. Can ICA or similar tools be applied to a fluid situation - a country in transition? If so, how?

If we have to undertake serious business that will lead to the transformation and changes to the level of people satisfaction, we should not undertake such an in-depth analysis in a fluidity situation as the final output will mainly be of a high level of distortion.

1. How can the ICA contribute to improved UNCT programming implementation in transitions?

ICA alone will not be sufficient; there is a need to combine with other methodologies to help UNCT to capture the key development bottlenecks and on how to address them appropriately.

[Kishan Khoday](#)
Tue, June 11,2013

Dear Geoff and Colleagues,

Great set of discussions and thought of adding a few thoughts. In a recent IMF roundtable on the Political Economy of the Arab Transition last April, Deputy IMF Managing Director Nemat Shafik analogized the situation in the region with a passage in Alice in Wonderland in which the Cheshire Cat asks Alice 'where do you want to go to' to which she replies 'I don't know'. The Cheshire Cat turned slowly with a grin and said 'well then, any road will take you there'. http://www.imf.org/external/mmedia/view.aspx?vid=2311534087001. A key added value of ICA application in a context of fluidity and transition can be to help create **future scenarios for the region** based on analysis of political-economic drivers of change, elaborate various potential pathways the region has before it, and highlight various policy responses that in coming years can help bend the curve towards inclusive and sustainable development results.

Another important focus for ICA application in the region would be to **analyze changing center-periphery dynamics**. In many ways the geopolitical balances that were shaped by the Sykes-Picot accords a century ago are unraveling before us; with a new constellation of centers of power and core-periphery dynamics emerging within nations, and between nations. Through such a focus, the application of ICA to transition contexts can bring attention to evolving geographies of power and inequality including along formal and tribal lines, re-distribution of growth centers, and realignment of socio-political hierarchies within nations.

Another key contextual factor shaping the nature of transitions in the region and a potentially useful and strategic focus for ICA application would be to better gauge the **role of the Gulf in the transitional process**. At the core of the Arab regions political economy has been, and continues to be, its world leading oil reserves. With record levels of oil export revenues in recent years, reaching $1 trillion/year in the Gulf by some estimates, a central dynamic in the region has been the growing role of the Gulf as a force in the region's political-economic transformation. While there has been much attention to emerging IMF packages for transition countries, there has been less analysis on the economic weight and political influence of Gulf financing, and other forms of interventions, often playing an even greater role as a driver of change in the regional transition.

Apart from these more internal dynamics within the region itself, a contextual factor of importance for a future economic re-emergence of the region would also be the **role of emerging Asia** as a new source of future growth, investment, and partnerships for innovation in the region. ICA application could help understand the potentialities for positioning a future Arab economic recovery within a broader shift of global growth poles eastward. While much analysis has been done for example on the emerging role of China in Sub-Saharan Africa, little attention has been placed on what an expanding role for Asia in the Arab region entails for the future context of development.

[Shaima HUSSEIN](#)
Mon, June 10,2013

Dear Geoff and Kristoffer,

Thanks for initiating the second phase of the e-discussion on using ICA for development programming. The questions are really provocative, especially when it comes to apply such tool in fluid situations. Applying this tool in the Arab context requires defining the exact country that we are addressing as the political developments during the transitions vary between what happened in Tunisia and Egypt (where the military had a say and were in support of the revolution), to Libya and Yemen (where the military was turned to be a family business of the ex-presidents) to Syria (which poses a very different perspective). The other issue is what do we mean by the question on 'fluid situations'. The areas of arguments and debate, or even sometimes chaos in streets not necessarily to be all over the country. What happens in Cairo (which is very serious), not necessarily to be the same situation in the Southern Governorates or the Western ones. In addition that, we need to look at the exact angle of programming; the challenges of applying ICA depends on the exact area that requires programming, is it on engaging on a highly political matter (constitution, elections, rule of law), or less political (livelihood etc…).

I would like to highlight some of our work here in BDP on taking this tool forward with a specific application on the area of Rule of Law. We recently completed the development of the 'Note on Assessing the Rule of Law Using Institutional and Context Analysis', which applies the generic ICA tool to the specific area of the rule of law. We've found that because the rule of law, including access to justice, security and justice reforms, legal empowerment and citizen security, is such a broad and politicized area it is beneficial to conduct a specialized ICA in order to appreciate the complex interplay of stakeholders, incentives and vested interests that may impact on development interventions in this area. Below is a brief summary of what the Note can provide:

(i)   ICA can **provide a thorough understanding of the rule of law, including both the formal and informal justice** aspects in the specific context, so that the strategic support provided is relevant and realistic and opportunities for positive change are identified.

(ii)   It can help **unpack the "political will"** question and frame UNDP's political engagement on rule of law issues, maximising its impact by ensuring that it is strategic and realistic, and as much as possible, builds on an understanding of the interests, incentives and limitations of national counterparts.

(iii)   It can **identify opportunities for leveraging policy change** and supporting reform within rule of law. By helping to understand how incentives, institutions and ideas shape political action and development outcomes, ICA is extremely useful when thinking about the feasibility of policy reform and institutional change.

(iv)   It can **help foster enhanced national ownership** and contribute to the improved prioritisation and sequencing of reform efforts. For example, it can identify areas for **creating dialogue between stakeholders** in rule of law and development practitioners in understanding the underlying causes of rule of law weaknesses, or it can **identify ways of forging alliances for change** between national stakeholders such as through bringing civil society groups together to discuss rule of law from this perspective.

(v)   It can **contribute to a much deeper and broader identification, understanding and mitigation of risks** than undertaken in a project level risk log. Frequently, risk analysis is poorly done and only based at the project level, with risk mitigation actions frequently not taken. ICA can be used to anticipate risk in the rule of law area, even before the design of a given programme intervention. Once risks are identified through the ICA, mitigation strategies can be developed and implemented.

(vi)   It can **assist in the formulation of public policies** and strengthening of institutions related to rule of law, creating competencies and capacities and conveying to the citizens the impact of rule of law and how it directly affects their lives. moving **towards a more strategic approach** to strengthening RoL for development. The RoL ICA can be used to develop an integrated programme approach rather than institution specific programmes.

(vii) ICA **can assist UNDP in developing holistic programmes and projects** that are not focused only on the provision of technical assistance but support to the development of national capacities that contribute to sustainable and long-term development results.

(viii) It **can generate insight into what and where capacities exist and what and where they need to be strengthened**, as well as areas, which can be explored in more depth through subsequent capacity assessment(s) and capacity development support

The RoL/A2J team in BDP and Oslo Governance Team worked together to develop a Note on ICA for RoL. The draft is not published yet as it has to be tested first in a couple of contexts.

Hope this helps,

Shaima

Policy Specialist,

Rule of Law, Access to Justice and Legal Empowerment

Democratic Governance Group

Bureau for Development Policy

UNDP

[Geoffrey PREWITT](#)
    Sun, June 09,2013

Allow me to thank Moraig and Bruno for their extensive and thoughtful comments. The latter articulating "why" the UN(DP) should engage in ICA methodology and the former illustrating "how" through practical findings in Iraq. A few brief comments in response:

1)   The phrase that most aptly sums the need for application of the ICA is "Politics is development – and development is politics". This will require direct interaction with decision makers on the development or reform of policies, strategies, plans, and programmes. This implies deeper engagement with political actors. As noted by Bruno, there are associated risks but potentially large dividends and will enhance the legitimacy of the UN(DP), particularly in the Arab Region. Following many years of autocratic rule, it will prove vital to balance and nurture the evolution of indigenous governance structures, including a re-emergent of religion in politics. UN(DP)'s litmus test – consistent with the signatories of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - is to uphold values and principles enshrined in our global covenants without being confrontational or challenging national sovereignty. In order to do so, we require a deeper understanding of the ICA principles embedded in power relations, interests, resources, and incentives. "Knowing your actors" proves vital.

2)   The Iraq case, as perhaps one of the more volatile in the region, reflects the significance of the above and deploying an ICA. In spite of the key characteristic of "unsettlement", the ICA clarified different actors – political militia, ruling elite, religious groups, women – whilst also identifying the hot-button topics – property rights, legal vs. social guarantees, mobility, inequality, corruption – and then focused on adjustments – entry points for the UN, improved collaboration, etc. Therefore, rather than adding an additional layer, the ICA - in Iraq – hopefully pointed out the "sweet spot" that Bruno references.

3)   I am of the opinion that the ICA can and should be applied in fluid situations. Detrimental results of (seemingly) short-term socio-political struggles can stretch into the future via the institutional structures they contribute to creating. We are witnessing – for

example – the passing of very significant legislation in a number of countries yet, simultaneously, with questionable oversight procedures.

Additional reflections welcomed.

> Moraig HENDERSON
> Thu, June 06,2013

I served in Iraq during 2004-06 and again 2008-10. While elections had been held during those periods and development aid poured into the country through the Iraq Trust Fund and other modalities the environment remained unstable in many areas and still does today. We did apply the ICA approach. One example was through a mission to one of the most fragile areas of the country (Kirkuk Governorate), and discovered that peace dividends or development gains are really only possible through a political negotiation process. We cannot pretend that our work in not political - it is. The following is a snapshot of that analysis and what emerged as important development issues, which answers aspects of all three questions posed by Geoff in this phase of the discussion.

Through an interview process with a range of stakeholders over a 3 week period we found that civil society broadly was concerned with how their Governorate was governed and how power was divided, but that the political turmoil they were experiencing was so pervasive that it affected all areas of their lives (social, economic and cultural). There were a number of classic 'red flags' (indicating instability) evident, namely, incarceration of political opponents (in defence of terrorism); lack of access to resources (e.g. land); decreased access to or standards in basic social services; police and government corruption and a weak system of law and order, which in many cases had manifested in increased violence, especially against women. Divorce rates had risen considerably, a key indicator of increased violence. One member of the Kirkuk council stated 'unsettlement is the key characteristic of the city.' This is still the case in pockets throughout Iraq and a similar situation could arise in other Arab states. What made development or recovery more difficult particularly in addressing inequality and promoting an ethos of inclusiveness was that governing bodies at all levels (sub-national, and national with regional fissures between different ethnic/religious groups) were not representative of the broad ethnic makeup of the country or of the region/governorate. This imbalance across the country only served to support the minorities' slid into corruption to win some trade-offs or worse into a cycle of deadly violence, of the like we see in Baghdad daily. The imbalance or lack of power sharing also exacerbates the ruling elite's institutionalised corruption. Corruption was and is endemic across the country and was openly discussed by all stakeholders as a key detriment to responsive governance that would foster development.

Many of whom we interviewed expressed distrust in the police force due either to a lack of integrity and / or capacity to do what was required of them to ensure community safety and security. Returnees, Governorate officials as well as NGO staff all recounted anecdotal evidence of police collusion or apathy in connection to investigating crimes related specifically to kidnapping or murder, that were ethnically motivated. Many accounts relayed focused specifically on the interference by political militia groups in maintaining law and order outside the purview of legitimate law and order structures. This extra judicial interference is perceived as being supported or at best ignored by the legitimate law and order organs, on the premise that detention of individuals by militia groups is related to addressing terrorism. Others claim that this is a guise for the incarceration of political opponents.

Christian groups reported being marginalised and vilified in the communities in which they resided. In their words they are perceived by other groups "as representing all that is wrong and unwanted from western culture and by inference - not considered Iraqi." The small numbers of Christians, still residing in the Kirkuk area, believe they were being pushed to leave. Despite earlier immigration programmes sponsored by a number of countries (US, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand etc.), many Iraqis returned due to the inability to find suitable work commensurate to their experience and qualifications and also because of cultural incompatibility in the country of emigration. Following their return, hostility towards them intensified. Consequently, many returning Christians disavowed their religious beliefs in order to 'be left to live in peace' – some converting to Islamism. Most important to their continuing habitation in Kirkuk is that of being accepted as Iraqis. So, social cohesion was more important than maintaining minority cultural practices – a clear problem for human

dignity and freedom. Arabs and Turkmen also spoke about human rights abuses across a range of issues. Property rights, was a hot issue of debate. Many recount loss of property through the Arabisation process and then through domination by the Kurds. It was a matter of take the money or not – the land was to be confiscated either way. Land ownership will be an important element related to development across all countries in the Middle East going through political transitions.

Problems associated with women's rights and access to land and resources was also important. Even where women knew their rights, (right of inheritance to land and other property) they were often pressured to abrogate that right in favour of brothers, husbands and other male family members. This situation was dire in light of the fact that women headed households made up a substantial proportion of the total population of Iraq due to the long conflict. One lawyer made the point that while legal guarantees exist for women, social guarantees often do not - again an issue that is applicable across all Arab states. Women do not challenge this for fear of being ostracised or of physical violence. A number of NGOs working in the area of Human Rights informed us that illiteracy among particularly older women is a key determining factor in the non-realisation of their legal rights. This underlines another key area for UNDP's work - building women's capacity (literacy programmes are particularly crucial) to help them engage in the workforce to enable some economic empowerment and being literate also helps their political empowerment. We found (during the electoral observation process) that where women were illiterate, they often let their male family members cast a vote on their behalf.

Women in the Arab areas in particular didn't trust the political process (democracy) didn't know or understand what it is and believed that it was something detrimental. One issue that may prevent large-scale participation by women from rural areas in the electoral process is mobility and access to polling stations – something we did not realise until doing this type ICA work. For example, if the polling station if beyond walking distance, many don't have the means of transport or feel unsafe to travel beyond their know territory (village boundaries).

Women generally lack opportunities for work and education, women activists advised that this is mainly due to the fact that women's issues are under-represented, misunderstood and misrepresented at worst. Women experience discrimination across all areas of life, particularly with the rise of tribal power.

On a more positive note, the five female members of the Provincial Council at the time were successful in advocating for the elimination of Polygamy especially in Kurdish areas north of Kirkuk. This emphasises the need to find 'champions' within the community to raise awareness and advocate for change. UNDP or others cannot do this important work, but we can support the 'champions for change' through providing the forum for their voice to be heard. It is important to note that women in the Kurdish north (while not enjoying equality to the extent desirable), do not have the same oppressive socio-cultural pressures put upon them as women in other parts of Iraq do. The Kurdish north incidentally is the most stable part of the country and developing well across a range of sectors. This would indicate that a focus on women's development through human rights norms awareness, promotes development more broadly. A number of officials (political representatives and technocrats) stated that there is generally little human rights awareness by the population at large. UNDP and the OHCHR made some human rights gains during a political mediation processes. The example highlights the 'honest broker' convening power of the UN to bring warring parties to the negotiation table, this could not be possible as each side would lose 'face' if they went to a place / location owned by the other. We for the first time used the premises of the UN buildings in Erbil to conduct a meeting between Kurds and Arabs from Ninewa. This was the first time each side had met to discuss differences for a number of years. In return we asked that prisoners' human rights were valued through giving prisoners access to family, basic hygienic living conditions and that those who had no charges brought against them to be released or the cases heard in a court of law. These conditions were met, with many prisoners on both sides being released.

A key governance challenge at the sub-national level was in instituting an effective planning model that links all sector development. A councillor maintained that while he was supported by the centre in terms of timely budget allocation delivery, there is little guidance and support given to facilitate overall planning. Adding that planning is a cross-sector necessity especially for efficient delivery of services and for capital investment led development, stating that "we need better collaboration across all sectors based on a common purpose, goals and approaches". He elaborated further, "planning is missing at every level - for example, universities are not looking at quotas for particular courses based on societal needs or even

the amount of teachers required for each subject area in schools in the governorate". Better planning capacity is a crucial requirement for transitional governments. The lack of planning capacity is often compounded by fluid demographic movement, which was the case in Iraq. Population movement and growth is still not settled and therefore growth patterns for different areas are not clear. This influences effective planning processes and budgetary allocation overall.

Ownership of planning processes was also important. Many suggested that civil society at the local level needed to strengthen their contribution to the process of deciding what is needed from Government and in deciding the allocation of their portion of the budget. Also correcting the imbalance of the supply and demand of responsive and responsible governance needed attention. However this was a longer term prospect that required a cultural shift in the way political elites understand leadership - as servants to the state and not the reverse. It is well documented that inter-state conflict is mainly attributed to weak supply or indeed, where weak or no demand systems/mechanisms of governance are in place through which citizens can have a voice e.g. elections, free media and an open policy on the creation and growth of civil society organisations.

However a related challenge is that many national NGOs are politicised (a common dynamic across the region) and only 'pay lip service' to the correct political line vis a vis the key tenants of the programmes we aim to promote, while in actuality they are more loyal to specific party politicking. NGOs operate in this way as it is difficult to register as an independent NGO and easier to attract work from national as well as international organisations if affiliated with specific political entities.

Strategic approaches that support integrated and rights-based programming across a number of key sectors simultaneously should be the prime underlying principle for UNDP and the rest of the UN system. This does not mean working separately in a number of sectors at the same time – but rather seeking to work on a number of significant issues that directly link or impact one sector's work with another. During the transition phase programmes need to be flexible to accommodate the vagaries of a fluid and unstable environment and UNDP CO's need the space and control to apply this adaptability which current operational frameworks make difficult.

Summing up at that time, one Kirkuk council member eloquently captured the collective mood thus: Everyone hoped that 2003 was a turning point, but the same situation evolved under new leaders who use the same style of authoritative leadership. We don't know or are familiar with any other. It is difficult to change. Our ethnicity and differences however are more accentuated now. Not all people are seen as Iraqis as before – there is a lack of cohesion in the community, with most people finding safety and solace in their own communities. We need to reach out to other parts of Iraq to maintain our Iraq-ness. We need to reach outwards in order to free ourselves of this claustrophobic negative internal politics. It overshadows all that we do. This is our hope for the next generation.

   Gert CEVILLE-DANIELSEN
        Wed, June 05,2013

*Posted on behalf of **Bruno Pouezat**, UNDP Resident Representative and United Nations Resident Coordinator, Morocco*

Time and time again, development outcomes fail to meet our carefully considered expectations. Time has now come to address the nagging doubt that maybe, just maybe, we've been blind to a whole dimension of transformative change: development never starts from a blank slate. However dismal their present situation, groups and individuals have stakes in it; our well-intentioned meddling may threaten these interests. After all, our own experience with organisational change has taught us not to assume that everyone is in favour of change...

Yet, we can change. Over the years, development assessment tools have evolved from pure income per capita rankings to the Human Development Index, incorporating development outcomes in health and education, and to the multi-dimensional poverty index. Project analysis has moved from a financial cost-benefit analysis to an economic one (incorporating non monetary costs and benefits) to a social one (looking at how costs and benefits are distributed across groups). The strict division between the political part of the UN, chatting in

headquarters, and its development limbs, active in the field has broken down, witness the multiplication of "integrated" missions combining peace-keeping, political affairs, humanitarian, post-crisis and development dimensions.

The time has come to take the next step, swallow our pride and admit it – politics is not a dirty word. Rather, politics drive development. Politics is about who exercises power within a society, and how – including power to assist and hinder development. Institutional and Context Analysis is a professional approach to folding politics into the design of development assistance.

ICA at the UNDAF stage? Not quite!

When formulating an UNDAF, the Common Country Analysis reflects on the country's development priorities and the gaps to achieving its goals, including the MDGs. Then, the UN Country Team reviews its comparative advantages – mandates, capacities, competition – to identify where we are likely to be able to make the most difference. Where needs overlap with our capacities, and where these needs are not adequately covered by other actors, there lies the "sweet spot" for UN interventions in the country.

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis is one tool that gives a useful picture of the capacities of UN Agencies in the country. In its simplest understanding, the ICA is a motivation/ capacity analysis of the national entities around us.

During UNDAF formulation, then, the ICA methodology helps put things in perspective: just as we review the UN's mandates and capacities against national development assistance needs, we should project our possible interventions against the background of the country's institutions, including social/informal institutions. Who are the most important actors? Where do they stand on issues important to us: as potential allies or obstacles? How much influence do they have to facilitate or hinder our work? How can we best work with them: as beneficiaries of our activities, as useful intermediaries/relays, as indispensable opinion-makers who will influence the attitudes of others towards our work?

The ICA mindset is useful at the time of UNDAF formulation, but adding a formal ICA stage might make the process even heavier, when we're being instructed to lighten it as much as possible. In all but exceptional cases, then, I suggest instead that UNDP inject the ICA methodology at every stage of the joint UN UNDAF process. The larger the scope of the analysis, the harder the task and the more superficial the results; at UNDAF level, a full-blown ICA would most likely only scratch the surface.

ICA at programme/project level – analysis for action

At programme/project level, on the other hand, ICA can inform important decisions: how to bring such and such a group on board? How to work around an institution that cannot be brought around? How to ensure that the programme will effectively benefit the intended target group?

ICA-type stakeholder analysis is not entirely new. UNDP has a long history of looking at one narrow but essential dimension of power dynamics: gender, as in the question "how will this project impact men and women?" Gender divides societies into two pretty clear groups. We have all grown aware of the differential costs and benefits that development can have on both these groups, and of the need to address these differences in order to ensure truly transformative change. ICA is a tool for us to look more systematically at all formal or informal groups in society.

Know thy stakeholders

No one can claim that, until the day ICA was handed down to us, we'd remained blissfully unaware of political issues. UNDP's comparative advantage on the ground includes the long institutional/ social knowledge and experience embodied by our national colleagues and, more generally, by our local networks of partners. ICA is a means to bring this knowledge from behind the curtain, pool it (at the UNDP or UN level), test it against rational argument – and then decide what to do about it.

While tip-toeing around the word "politics", we have unhelpfully confused self-inflicted blindness and impartiality. We do not have this luxury anymore – in middle-income countries particularly, the easy problems have already been solved. Those that remain require interventions of almost surgical precision. In advocacy, the first rule is "know your audience"

and the second "anticipate their arguments – and yours". ICA will help demine tricky ground, but we must be aware that engaging on sensitive issues raises our risk profile.

What support do we need?

In the short run, government counterparts may be surprised to see us formally address issues seen as political. They need to be reassured that doing so constitutes established institutional policy, not a flight of fancy by a mistaken ResRep. High-quality, experienced, culturally sensitive facilitation by BDP professionals coming from headquarters or the Regional Service Centres will be very helpful.

In the medium term, we need to accept the risk of eventually stepping on a landmine. At that point, Country Offices will need immediate, unreserved and (unequi)vocal support from their Regional Bureau Director, UNDP Senior Management and possibly UN Headquarters. At the New York workshop, the Associate Administrator vouched this support. This message may need to be repeated.

Politics is development – and development is politics. ICA is the tool to put political thinking into development planning.

Type	forum
Date Created	Wed, June 05,2013
Created By	[Geoffrey PREWITT](#)
Original Space	[Political Economy Analysis / Institutional and Context Analysis](#)
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