

AIDE MEMOIRE
WORKSHOP ON PROMOTING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT
THROUGH INNOVATIONS IN GOVERNANCE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
East-West Center, Honolulu
28 – 30 January 2008

Sponsorship and Purpose

The workshop on Promoting Trust in Government Through Innovations in Governance in Asia and the Pacific, to be held from 28-30 January 2008 in Honolulu, will be organized jointly by the United Nations Governance Centre in Seoul and the East-West Center (EWC) in partnership with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). As one of the follow-up activities of the 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, the workshop will discuss findings of the sub-regional reviews of building trust in government in Asia and the Pacific, as well as selected country cases.

Context

Asia and the Pacific is the fastest growing region in the world. Despite its high rates of growth, however, many developing countries within the region are not making significant progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In fact, none are currently on track to meet all of the goals by 2015. While some progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty and hunger and improving universal primary education, these advances need to be continued. Moreover, sufficient advancement is not being made toward achieving targets set in the areas of child mortality, maternal health, gender equality, the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Advancement in the achievement of development objectives within Asia and the Pacific Region has been constrained by many factors: an inability to sustain government initiatives due to a limited relationship between larger governance processes and programme level intervention; weaknesses in basic transaction cost infrastructure including the judiciary, police, and revenue and land administration; high levels of corruption which impedes government reinvention; and the lack of a rigorous analysis of historical and legal context and socio-economic factors before initiating new government reinvention interventions. Other challenges are environmental degradation, inter and intra-state conflicts, inadequate access to basic social services, and low levels of women's participation and civil society engagement in economic and political activities.

The 2005 United Nations World Summit Outcome Document emphasized the centrality of governance capacity development in multiple contexts, including the eradication of extreme poverty, the promotion of economic growth and economic development. Good governance and effective public administration are necessary conditions to achieve MDGs in the region. With this in view, countries in the region are emphasizing the need to improve governance systems and processes to promote sustainable development. The multi-lateral agencies and bilateral development partners have been supporting the efforts of the countries in the region.

Problematique

Trust in government is declining throughout the world. Although the countries in Northeast Asia have made tremendous progress in economic and social development, trust in government continues to be a serious concern of policymakers and development practitioners. There are many determinants of trust in a society. Two of the most important determinants are participatory and accountable governance and security, including human security. Innovations in governance play a central role in promoting trust in government. With this in view, all countries in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Pacific Islands have initiated programmes of innovations in governance. The workshop will review the impact of these innovations and governance reforms to enhance trust in government.

Objectives

The workshop on Building Trust in Government Through Innovations in Governance in Asia and the Pacific will examine critical issues in promoting trust in government. Specifically, the workshop will:

- discuss four regional reviews (in Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Pacific Island) already undertaken through the United Nations Project Office on Governance and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs;
- examine the country papers on China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia;
- identify critical dimensions of governance that affect trust in government;
- identify factors that promote or impede trust in government; and
- prepare the design of the second phase of the Programme, focused on case studies of specific innovations in governance.

Collaborating Institutions

The collaborating institutions are the United Nations Governance Centre, the East-West Center, the Presidential Committee on Innovation and Decentralization of the Republic of Korea, and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The audience of the project is policymakers, development practitioners, scholars and others interested in promoting trust in government and creating a harmonious and just society.

Modalities and Outcomes

During the first phase, a workshop will be organized by the East-West Center and the United Nations Governance Centre in Honolulu from 28-30 January 2008. Research directors who undertook sub-regional reviews in East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Pacific Island will present their findings. In addition, research directors from the Republic of Korea, China, Japan, and Indonesia will also participate and present respective country papers, based on a common format to be prepared by East-West Center. Follow up activities for the second phase will be identified during the workshop.

The project will contribute to our understanding of the role of governance innovations in improving trust in government and factors that contribute to success of the governance innovations. It will also promote the capacity development of training and research institutions and support the network of institutions in the region being established by the United Nations Governance Centre to share experiences, lessons learned and regional cooperation. Edited versions of the papers will be posted on the United Nations Governance Centre website and the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN). A book that includes shorter versions of papers will be published for wider dissemination within the region.

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