CONTRACTING OUT CORE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS
AND SERVICES IN POST-CONFLICT AND FRAGILE SITUATIONS

WHY A CONFERENCE?

There are increasing questions emerging from developing countries’ governments and the aid community regarding the most effective ways to support state building and capacity development, especially in more sensitive environments such as post-conflict and fragile situations. In those contexts, partner countries and donors are faced with the pressure to deliver quickly and, in particular, to have one or two ‘functional’ key sectors and/or services to kick start state consolidation and development.

For this reason, where governments are assessed to be incapable of delivering services directly, bilateral and multilateral donors have often favoured the contracting out of core government functions and services, understood as the transfer of competencies and/or authority from the government to a third party for a specific period of time.

Hence, notwithstanding the internationally agreed priority objective of long-term capacity development, contracting out arrangements have been used repeatedly in fragile situations. However, there is still insufficient international evidence and little empirical work conducted on such experiences. This conference seeks to address this gap and to provide a better understanding of when and under which conditions contracting out services and core policy functions can be conducive to capacity development and state building.

KEY QUESTIONS

► What have we learned from past experiences of contracting out in fragile situations?
► How to assess the desirability of contracting out in a given country or sector?
► How to balance the achievement of results with long-term capacity development and sustainable knowledge transfer?
► How to ensure that contracting out arrangements do not undermine government-led efforts and are integrated into national strategies?
► How to select the most appropriate modalities and sources of assistance?

TUNIS, TUNISIA — 8-9 JUNE 2009
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CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

Through a combination of plenary and break-out sessions, the conference will discuss and assess contracting out experiences in fragile and post-conflict situations and propose a series of policy recommendations for developing countries’ governments and the international community to help decision makers and stakeholders strike a balance between the need for urgent service delivery and longer-term concerns about ownership, state building and sovereignty.

Break-out sessions will specifically discuss lessons from a selection of case studies highlighting contracting-out practices across core sectors and services such as Public Finance Management, procurement, customs, taxation, security, audit, water, health and education.

The final plenary will propose policy recommendations for governments, civil society, contractors from the private and non-profit sectors and the donor community regarding the contracting-out of core government functions and services in fragile and post-conflict settings.

PARTICIPATION

This conference will bring together a wide range of technical experts, policy and decision-makers from donor and partner countries, multilateral organisations, as well as leading enterprises, businesses associations and civil society organisations with experience in the delivery of key public services in countries in fragile situations, and multilateral and donor organisations. Participation is by invitation only; individuals interested in attending the conference may request an invitation from the PDG Advisory Unit.

“Despite their significance in the implementation process, there has been little empirical work to date examining the relationship between for-profit consultants, development agencies providing funding and developing countries in the area of public sector reform.

This is surprising given that private sector consultants have played an increasingly visible role in defining the boundaries of the debate and the validity of specific mechanisms introduced to strengthen public sector governance systems.”

— SARA FYSON

IN “SENDING IN THE CONSULTANTS: DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE REFORM OF PUBLIC FINANCE IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES”