

دور المجتمع المدني في صنع القرار والرقابة المجتمعية

The Role of Civil Society in Policymaking and in Social Accountability

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19/12/2022

Outline

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- Policy Making in the Arab Region.
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Background: *Regime Change or Reforms?*

- This paper's overarching objective is to provide possible answers to a much broader research question: How can any country overcome the persistent governance deficit, the lack of accountability, the lack of political will, inefficient service delivery, and in some cases, the culture of impunity?
- Today, corruption is a group activity. It is not the result of behavior from a few individuals. Corruption has created vast networks, its own rules, and reward or punishment systems. How can these networks be dismantled?
- Can the political systems be reformed?

Theoretical Foundations: How Does Policymaking Happen?

- This paper argues that the public policy framework posits three streams of policy activity. These three streams can sometimes operate independently.
- The three streams are **problems, policies, and politics**.
- *The problem stream* relies on an issue, event, or crisis. This crisis captures the focus of the public.
- *The policy stream* is simply the set of proposals, ideas, and suggestions floated by experts (academics, technical experts from the private sector, researchers, or bureaucrats).
- *The political stream* includes different factors such as public opinion, elections, pressure, or interest groups.
- ***Policy Window: Policy change can happen when the three streams are joined or aligned.***

Policymaking in the Arab Region

- High level of competence and skills yet a low quality of policymaking.
- Lebanon is an extreme case: It is the policy of no policy!
- This paper will delve into the impact of the existence of systematic corruption on the three streams of policy activity.
- Can we expect policy windows in the presence of systematic corruption?
- This paper will rely on examples or case studies provided by ACINET non-governmental group, on how corruption distorts policymaking.

Change through Social Accountability

- According to the UNDP social accountability in changing regime actors and mechanisms report, social accountability refers to a form of accountability that emerges through actions by citizens and CSOs aimed at holding the State to account, as well as efforts by government and other actors (media, private sector, donors) to support and respond to these actions.
- Examples of social accountability approaches are citizen monitoring and oversight of the public sector, analysis of budgets, participatory budgeting, monitoring of service delivery, etc.
- The goal of social accountability is not to replace but to reinforce and complement existing accountability mechanisms. (Elections, parliament, oversight institutions, etc.)
- Social accountability can be applied at central and local levels.
- Social accountability plays an essential role in facilitating policy windows mentioned before.
- Three key actors have a role to play in strengthening social accountability: the State, civil society, and media.

Change through Social Accountability

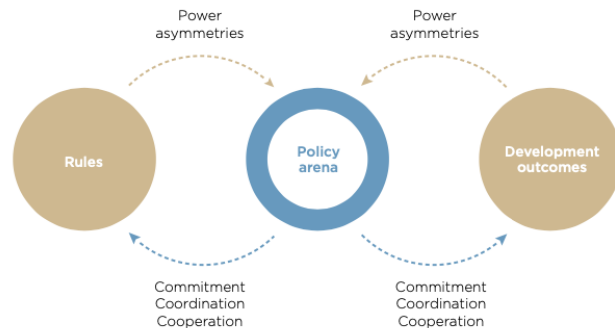


The Shortcomings of Social accountability in the Arab Region

- Despite the diversified political, cultural, social, and legislative environment, political regimes in the Arab region are still resisting the creation of an enabling environment for social accountability, guaranteeing the freedom of association and the right to access information, ensuring citizens' rights to public information, and increasing transparency in fiscal budgets.
- Can social accountability be effective, given the lack of political will and the persistent legal, political, and institutional obstacles for CSOs and media in the Arab Region?
- This paper will rely on examples or case studies provided by ACINET non-governmental group that can show successful social accountability initiatives.

The Drivers of Change

Figure O.7 WDR 2017 framework: Governance, law, and development



- According to the World Development Report 2017, *Governance and the Law*, there are three drivers for bringing significant changes: elite bargains (negotiations between members of the political elite), citizen engagement (which tries to change the distribution of power in the policy arena); and international influence (which indirectly affect the distribution of power in the policy arena and play an important role in influencing the domestic bargain dynamics by strengthening or weakening local coalitions for reform).
- Change occurs over time as coalitions are formed among different actors, but this is often a long process.
- This paper will rely on examples provided by the non-governmental group to show whether forming such coalitions is feasible in the Arab region (an example: Lebanon's Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework).