UNDP Regional Event: Public Sector Innovation

Venue: Jordan, Amman, Wild Jordan
Date: 25 October 2015

Context

UNDP is hosting a **Regional Conference on Public Administration** from 26 to 28 October 2015 in Jordan. The conference will address the question of how to achieve effective and accountable public administration in the Arab region. (Please see the attached concept note for further detail on the conference.) In conjunction with the conference, UNDP is also holding a one-day **Public Sector Innovation event** on 25 October in Jordan for about 25 partners across sectors and countries in the region.

Governments around the world are grappling with societal challenges that are acting as a brake on sustainable economic growth, leading to inequality and instability in society, and impinging upon the general well-being of their populations. Social innovation is a response to these challenges that offers considerable promise for public managers. Social innovation refers to new ideas that work in meeting social goals. It offers new conceptual frameworks, new methodologies and most important, new solutions. A feature of social innovation is that it combines multiple disciplines, types of actors and sectors. Social innovation is more than just invention; it describes a process from initial prompt through to systemic change. Increasingly rapid technological advances act as a vehicle for bringing this collective process of creation, and its outcomes, to scale. While it remains an emergent field, still building a robust theoretical underpinning and establishing an evidence base, the promise of social innovation is compelling.

During this one-day event, UNDP looks to bring together a diverse set of people, from across the region and around the world, with diverse perspectives, experiences and ideas for effective and accountable public institutions.

Objectives

The **objective** of the pre-event is to explore the challenges, opportunities and implications of innovation for public administration and generate ideas in the context of "strengthening the institutional capacity of governments across the Arab States to improve state-society relations and perform the core functions needed to sustainably deliver services in a more inclusive and accountable manner." We will look at innovation through the lens of institutions, focusing the discussion on (a) improving the capacity of public institutions to identify, facilitate, absorb and scale up the innovations taking place in society and/or (b) promoting the role of public institutions as potential incubators for social innovation and 'intrapreneurship'. We will look at technology as an enabler of such change. By the end of the day, we will aim to have ideas and recommendations viz. policies, processes, structure, incentives, that can be taken into the three-day conference that follows.

Participants

In terms of **participants**, we will have representatives from across the region (from 5-10 countries) and across sectors. Level/seniority and sector will differ but all participants should be (i) willing to engage in

interactive work during the pre-event; (ii) engaged in solving problems linked to public sector/public life (broadly defined); and (iii) interested in engaging in discussions on how to improve the interface (barriers/possibilities) between innovators and institutions. We will invite people representing various sectors: civil society, private sector, foundations, and universities; it is intended that only a small percentage of participants will be government representatives. We will invite people who have demonstrated some impact in the area social innovation. And finally, we will look to have various demographics represented: youth, women, residents of cities outside the capital, etc.

Agenda

The **agenda** of the day-long event will be along the following lines:

- *Inspiration Session, part 1:* What does public sector innovation look like? Dedicated session to showcase innovative approaches being used by the public sector, or in collaboration with them, from the region as well as globally (pechakucha style/5 min presentations). Innovation approaches to be covered include design thinking, social innovation labs, ICT4development, games, big data, and foresighting.

- *Interaction… part 1:* Participants will be taken through a facilitated process of using design thinking to address the following questions. In part 1, they will explore the problem to develop an understanding of the issue and defining the problem.
    - How can public administration institutions identify, promote and support social innovation taking place in society? (i.e., create an enabling environment for social innovation, social innovators)
    - How can public administration institutions drive innovation within their organizations? (i.e., change their policies, process, partnerships, personnel profile to encourage and reward innovation)
    - How can public administration institutions play a catalytic role in scaling out and scaling up innovative practices (both internally and externally)?

-

- *Inspiration Session, part 2:* What do public sector innovation labs look like, how do they operate to promote innovation?

- *Interaction, part 2.* In part 2, participants will brainstorm potential solutions to the problems as defined during part 1. Considerations of how to use the regional scope and cooperate across borders will be included.

- *Prep for Conference:* consolidate specific recommendations to take into the conference and make commitments regarding participation in the conference with social innovators and government officials agreeing on joint messages and specifically on presentations for Day 1 of the conference.

Logistics

Participants are expected to attend the pre-event (25 October) and the first day of the conference (26 October), during which there is a session on public sector innovation. The pre-event will be conducted in English, and the conference in Arabic, English, and French. Please see the logistics note for further details.

Innovation Resources

For UNDP, innovation means reframing the issues we work on through uncovering user-focused insights, continually scanning the horizon for fresh thinking and new ideas, and often in parallel prototyping those in an effort to quickly and inexpensively figure out what works and what does not. UNDP supports national partners in exploring new approaches to development such as design thinking, foresighting, and games for social change. Together, we are creating the next generation of public services and finding better ways to create impact for people and the planet, to strengthen resilience, and to build more inclusive societies.

www.undp.org/Innovation
twitter.com/UNDP_Innovation
Innovator.Support@UNDP.org