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Research, Advocacy & Public Policy-Making

April 2014

A Preliminary Overview of Policy Research Institutes in the Arab World

A Compilation and Synthesis Report
Consortium of Arab Policy Research
Institutes (CAPRI)

Hana A. El-Ghali & Farah Yehia

Monograph

Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and
International Affairs
American University of Beirut

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Research, Advocacy and Public Policy-making in the Arab World (RAPP) studies the effectiveness of think tanks and research policy institutes in influencing public policy in the region. It aims to establish a permanent network of self-financed think tanks and research centers across the Middle East that are better able to impact public policy in their respective countries.

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Preface by Rami G. Khouri

In late 2006, the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) began to grapple with the core issue that defines and animates all our activities: How does research interact with policy-making to generate effective and relevant policies? How can IFI, a research institute based in a research university like the American University of Beirut, play a useful role in promoting greater convergence among policy-makers, researchers and policy institutes? Furthermore, our work is groundbreaking in the Arab World since apparently such dynamics have rarely been systematically analyzed or researched. We identified these dynamics in relation to the following three areas: the production of research and other forms of knowledge, the making of public policies, and the connection between them which is the advocacy process. So we launched the Research, Advocacy and Public Policy-making Program (RAPP) at IFI in order to study these and many related issues, and this remains a core program of IFI that will continue to shape our work for years to come – especially now that the policy-making and governance systems in the Arab World are undergoing dramatic changes.

One aspect of this work has been to engage with policy research institutes (PRIs), think tanks, and research centers across the Arab World, to assess our collective activities, aims and impacts, and work together to try to identify how PRIs and research centers could increase their

engagements with, and inputs into, policy-making across the Arab World. We are pleased to publish this initial volume of findings from our work in this area, which we have administratively organized as a project entitled the Consortium of Arab Policy Research Institutes (CAPRI). Many activities and research efforts conducted under the CAPRI banner have allowed us to better appreciate the complexities, constraints and opportunities that define the work of PRIs in the Arab World today, both before and after the uprisings and revolutions. While the environment in which PRIs operate may be changing, their primary goals and impacts remain relatively constant.

The activities of the CAPRI project have included regular workshops, meetings, interviews, lectures, conferences and research papers, all of which explore the following issues that are central to the work of PRIs: relationships among PRIs, governments, donors, and civil society organizations; the self-defined aims and goals of PRIs; the sectors they choose to work in, and how they make those decisions; funding of PRIs and the influence of donors; strategic communications and dissemination to various target audiences; languages used in research, activities and dissemination; how PRIs interact with policy-makers and government institutions; how PRIs measure their influence or impact; why they feel their impact is significant or limited; how they set research agendas; how they have responded to the Arab uprisings and continued transformations; how PRIs “translate knowledge” to make technical research more easily available to policy-makers, media and others; and potential cooperation among PRIs in the Arab World.

Initial conclusions from this ongoing research include the following: a) PRIs and policy-makers rarely interact on a regular basis and know almost nothing about each other’s needs and capabilities; therefore, PRIs have very limited impact on policy-making to date; b) PRIs have limited credibility in the eyes of policy-makers because the PRIs tend to change

the focus of their activities regularly, and rarely develop deep expertise required for the credibility and visibility which, in return, would generate impact on policy-makers; c) PRIs generally do not maintain research areas for years at a time, partly due to funding constraints and the agendas of Arab and foreign donors, and partly due to political or other constraints within their own countries; d) the lack of accountability of Arab officials in policy-making limits their need to call on the expertise of indigenous research centers and PRIs.

This publication, which is the first in a series that will make available all our findings from the last five years of work, outlines many of those issues in more detail. We now have much more clarity on the issues and sectors where PRIs must work diligently to overcome identifiable constraints and achieve their full potential. These include choosing the issues on which to focus in generating new knowledge and research, promoting public debate, and influencing policy agendas by “translating” technical knowledge into materials that can reach the public, especially via the mass media. The media also interact directly with policy-makers, and act as repositories of knowledge for research, data and analysis that can be used in the future when policy-makers need it.

In high hopes that public policy and research communities in the Arab World deem this material useful, IFI looks forward to continued collaborations with our many colleagues and partners in this exciting arena.

Rami G. Khouri
Director

Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs

1. Overview

Introduction

Since the inception of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs (IFI) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in 2006, the Research, Advocacy and Public Policy-making (RAPP) Program has sought to study two parallel and related issues: how the Arab World formulates public policy, and how research, evidence and knowledge production affect the policy-making process. The Consortium of Arab Policy Research Institutes (CAPRI) project is part of the RAPP program research agenda aiming to fill the gap in understanding the specific link between Policy Research Institutes (PRIs) and policy-making, and to explore with colleagues how PRIs and even individual researchers throughout the region can enhance their contributions to effective policy-making.

The purpose of the CAPRI project, initiated in 2008 and formally launched in 2010, is to bring together Arab think tanks or PRIs to study the role of these institutes collectively and explore how to enhance their impact in Arab policy-making in the Middle East and North Africa. There has been scarcity of research on not only this policy-making process but also the activity of PRIs in the Arab World. Existing research on these topics in the region often applies Western assumptions regarding the role and influence of think tanks or focuses on advocating a development agenda, excluding the wider range of issues being addressed by many PRIs. Even though defining what constitutes an Arab PRI has been difficult and in spite of having done that through various workshops, discussions, and interviews, CAPRI has concluded that - at a minimum - a PRI must be policy-oriented, produce evidence-based research, and target and engage with policy-makers. Furthermore, Arab PRIs lack a formal network

or knowledge-sharing mechanism to fortify the link between research and policy-making in the region in order to increase its effectiveness.

Policy-making in the Arab World and other developing countries is characterized by a troubled political context, a limited research supply, external interference and recent civil society engagement (Young, 2005). Moreover, policy-making in developing countries is particularly less linear than in the West - being less based on public opinion and debate, and more on acting as a function of informal private bargaining (Yom, 2005). Most countries in the region are governed by non-democratic systems that lack accountability, so decision-makers are not always responsive to the concerns of their constituents. In these highly centralized systems, policy-makers do not often provide evidence in support of the policies they design, nor are there channels to disseminate relevant knowledge to these policy-makers. There are several civil society organizations in the Arab World that have attempted to participate in the policy-making process through several channels, one of which is the dissemination of knowledge. Although there is a fair amount of literature on civil society, more generally in the Arab World the role and impact of think tanks or policy research institutes, in particular, remains under-studied.

The uprisings that began in late 2010 in Tunisia have had a profound effect on the Arab World and have also presented a unique opportunity for PRIs in the region. Significantly, the CAPRI project began in the months before the uprisings and continues through the present day, providing a helpful bridge between the status of PRIs in a previously static regional order and today's ever-changing environment.

CAPRI has gleaned and compiled a significant amount of data regarding the state of PRIs in the Arab World over the past three years through conducting a variety of activities, together with establishing a regional PRI database, convening regional strategic and technical workshops and seminars, and developing working papers. This report reviews findings

from the information collected covering organizational issues, obstacles to PRI-led reform, and common themes under which these subjects can be grouped. Before going in-depth into the findings, we will begin by offering an overview of the current situation of PRIs in the Arab World and examining how they can be strengthened.

CAPRI started with research on policy-making and knowledge production in the Arab World, then moved into a series of workshops and seminars in Beirut, Cairo, Amman and Doha in which over 42 PRI colleagues from 17 different countries from the region examined their collective and individual experiences and explored how they could expand their impact in society. This includes ongoing research on policy-making in the Arab World and the role of PRIs, including projects to explore the role of parliaments, PRI activities and impact in single communities, and advocacy mechanisms and outcomes vis-à-vis the media and civil society organizations.

A. Current Situation: Opportunities and Constraints

In an attempt to better understand the current situation of PRIs in the Arab World, an in depth consideration of the internal strengths and weaknesses of PRIs as well as the opportunities and challenges posed by the external environment (SWOT Analysis¹) in which PRIs operate have been mapped.. Figure 1 shows the SWOT analysis carried out for PRIs in the Arab World:

1 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SWOT Analysis)

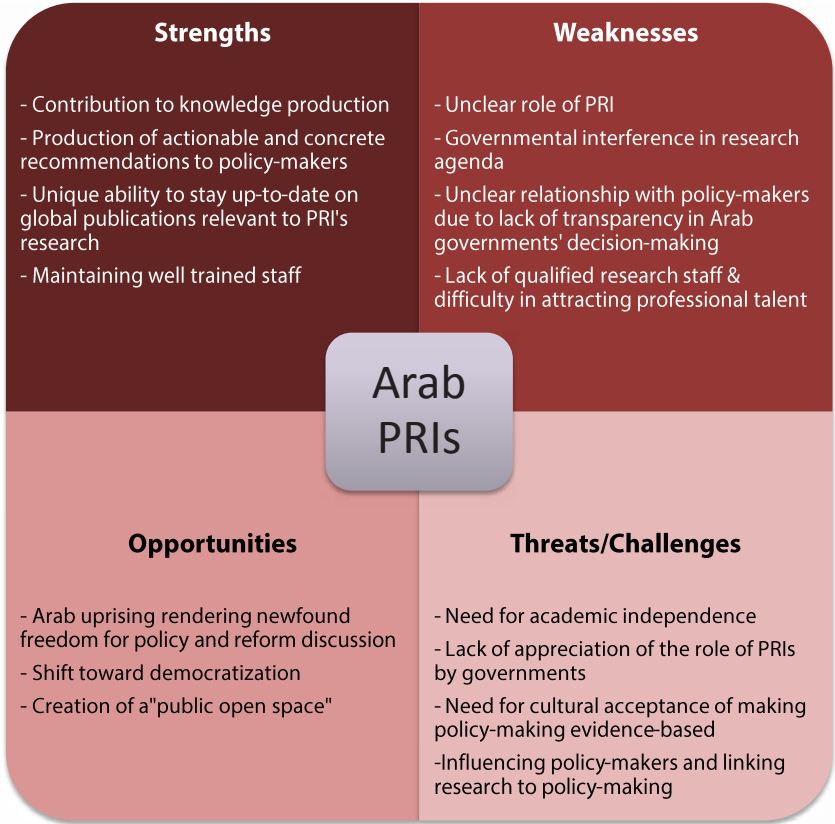


Figure 1. SWOT Analysis for PRIs in the Arab Region

Strengths

Strengths shared by PRIs include contributions to knowledge production. Some of these contributions include publishing a series of educational books for university students on many subjects, providing Arab states with advice and consultations, offering unique training courses for high level decision-makers in different Arab states, maintaining good relationships with commercial publishers and good networks with academics, to use for teaching and sending decision-makers research and publications. Some institutes have a unique ability to follow substantial amount of publications in the world and all news reports on their research issue. Other areas of strengths within some institutes are relevant to the human capital within a PRI such as maintaining well-trained staff, and producing consistent academic publications, hence being an academic center as well as a policy research institute.

Other strengths of Arab PRIs include the ability to provide globally recognized services such as producing good diplomats (***at one particular center***) and offering good training facilitated through separate agreements signed with universities abroad. Producing reports, which include concrete recommendations that can be immediately implemented, is another criterion indicative of immediate impact on certain decisions. Some PRIs maintain a competitive advantage over others by identifying the government's seasonal agenda in advance. As a result, they are able to work on topics that are of interest to policy-makers. For example, one PRI influenced the private sector in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility by sharing findings on good governance, the environment, and corporate governance with the government officials and developing the strategy, attitude and structure of the department of corporate monitoring. This approach helped the government become more aware of good governance, transparency, and accountability mechanisms.

Weaknesses

Arab PRIs deal with a unique set of issues that hinder their role in the region. Among these issues is the absence of clarity in the role of the PRIs. Many PRIs, with which the CAPRI project interacted through its various workshops and activities, have stated that their role is unclear. A lack of historical precedence in the Arab World is one reason for this uncertainty, since there is no defined tradition of policy research and advocacy as exists in the West. This is complicated further through their relationship with Arab governments. A number of governments interfere heavily in policy research and dictate the terms by which PRIs can operate. Others label PRIs as foreign agents in order to subvert their goals of reform. These interferences make it difficult for PRIs to establish themselves, let alone lead many organizations to operate on the basis of survival by avoiding sensitive topics in the hopes of affecting policy at some point in the future. Standards of research also vary widely among PRIs, contributing to their undefined and weakened role in the region.

The relationship between PRIs and policy-makers is unclear since Arab governments operate in an opaque manner. The decision-making process is decidedly non-linear, rendering any attempt to influence it exceedingly difficult. At the same time, many governments show little concern in hearing policy reform proposals from outside parties. Regimes are interested in their own existence and often the policies proposed by reform groups conflict with the government's perceived survival.

Adequate funding is a standout issue for all PRIs. Most saliently, there is a lack of indigenous funding across the Arab World for policy research. At the same time, foreign funding, though more plentiful, comes with its own complications. In many Arab countries, a stigma is attached to foreign funding since it serves the foreign policy interests of other countries.

Furthermore, the lack of good research staff is hindering the ability of Arab PRIs to achieve their potential. The younger generation, in particular,

is cited as having inadequate experience and education to play a positive role in policy research, an issue rooted in both the quality of regional education and better opportunities offered outside of the Arab World.

PRIs in the Arab World have varying levels of effectiveness due to the complexity of their stated independence. It may be perceived that an “independent” institute may be one that enjoys freedom from financial, political, and governmental influence. However, few PRIs may be described as “independent” according to this perception. Instead, they exist in a continuum of heavy to mild interference (generally from Arab governments). Semi-independent PRIs may operate under the supervision of the government but without deeply restrictive interference, outside of a handful of sensitive issues. Government-organized NGOs, on the other hand, have legitimacy issues related to the influence of government interests, though they may also have privileged access to players in the policy-making process. Regardless of the quality of their work, local branches of foreign PRIs may not always reflect indigenous agendas and instead cater to expat populations or home-country audiences. In summary, the local environment is not supportive of PRIs’ efforts, and the resources needed for substantive research are deficient.

Opportunities

Since December 2010, the Arab uprisings have created a new operating environment for PRIs in the region. The ability of regional regimes to control public debate has weakened, presenting a window of opportunity that Arab PRIs have perhaps never before experienced. Regardless of the myriad political transitions that have taken place, most PRIs that have participated in the CAPRI project have expressed a newfound freedom for policy and reform discussion.

A shift towards democratization may open up new avenues for addressing policy issues and may have an effect on policy reform over the long term, but in this moment a public “open space” has opened up, to which PRIs can contribute. This new space is still young, so what remains to be seen is how PRIs will utilize it. There is optimism among PRIs that they can engage in a new arena for public dissemination and leverage for policy reform.

To that end, it is recognized that many structures of the previous order still exist as before and opacity remains a hallmark of policy-making in the Arab World. Any structural changes to parliaments or bureaucracy, though hopeful, are still incremental. If the open space for public discussion of policy is to be properly utilized or policy-making processes are to be clarified, PRIs must take advantage of this moment. Doing so will require self-improvement and proactive measures to ensure a role in future policy impact.

Threats/Challenges

There are a number of challenges facing PRIs in the Arab World that can restrain their role in the long run. Most commonly shared challenges include PRIs’ need for academic independence and more freedom of speech and thought. In addition, Arab PRIs face challenges such as the lack of appreciation of their role by the government itself and the need to change the existing culture to make policy-making based on scientific evidence. Finally, an ongoing challenge that PRIs struggle with, in the Arab World in particular, is figuring out how to influence policy-makers and manage to engage more university professors and academics doing policy relevant research in order to link research to policy-making.

B. Strengthening Policy Research Institutes in the Arab World

In order to establish an effective presence in this new regional environment, CAPRI's research has identified several recommended areas for improvement.

The role of PRIs in the region needs to be asserted with more definition. Several organizations lamented a delayed response to the uprisings of November 2010 onwards and now seek to play a more active role. The widening of a public forum for discussion allows for greater opportunities to be proactive but also greater complexity. As a result, the line between research and activism must be clearly delineated so that PRIs refrain from moving into activism to maintain their position as objective producers of knowledge and providers of policy options. An additional role for PRIs to play, especially in countries more directly affected by the Arab uprisings, is in training and informing new players in the policy-making process, such as parliamentary members and other newly-elected officials with limited experience. Furthermore, Arab PRIs in the past have undertaken this role but with greater effect in countries with established, if problematic, democratic processes. Widening its application across the region can lead to a more informed civil state as well as a closer interaction between policy-makers and PRIs, in general.

Difficulties such as shortage of data, non-conducive research environments, and resource limitations are cited as issues that can be addressed through effective networking and collaboration among PRIs in the region. This can be a strategic matter when dealing with sensitive (such as government-restricted) topics, as working across state borders would lift the issue in discussion beyond the scope of a specific country and give it greater strength and credibility. Standards of research and transparency can be communicated more readily, leading to a higher overall level of action and impact. The quality of research staff, as well, can

see improvement from cooperative sharing. This concept is not without reservations as some Arab PRIs cite a competitive mindset between organizations, previous negative experiences with collaboration, and the reality that stronger PRIs will carry an outsized burden when partnering with smaller or weaker institutions. However, there remains a willingness to move forward if serious collaborative proposals are put forward.

Currently, monitoring and evaluation among regional PRIs is inconsistent or non-existent and restricts their ability to play a role as independent organizations. Implementing efficient self-monitoring strategies will help organizations increase productivity by taking into account their operating environments, planning and follow-up for projects, and recognizing new opportunities. Transparency in funding and financial accountability will also be improved with greater self-monitoring, increasing organizational legitimacy. The issue of human capital is closely linked to management quality and will also see improvement from raising internal efficiencies.

Funding, a significant challenge for PRIs across the region, will also benefit from increased transparency. As organizations improve their own accountability, they will increase their legitimacy and spur subsequent funding opportunities. Additionally, the creation of a “waqf”² fund, either in specific countries or across the region, is cited by PRIs in the region as a possible indigenous solution to funding issues. The “waqf” fund, with a historical precedent in the region, is an institution that local donors are familiar with; and, therefore, increases the likelihood of improved funding for PRIs. Lastly, as Arab uprisings continue to engender greater political participation among all groups, generally speaking, greater funding opportunities for PRIs will arise since they are part of this political process.

2 A “waqf”, in the context of religious endowment in Islamic law, involves donating cash or property for religious or charitable purposes that serve the public, akin to trusts or foundations.

Many of these goals are better achieved through heightening awareness of PRIs in the region and their efforts to support policy reform. Part of the problem in lacking a historical role in the Arab World is that the visibility of PRIs is low, limiting their ability to influence policy. Moreover, increasing the awareness of these organizations can create an ongoing discourse between them and the public as well as policy-makers. When policy-makers reach out to PRIs for input, an effective level of dialogue is established and can engender further opportunities for outreach over time. The negative perception of PRIs, often under the suspicion of “foreign influence”, is also open for improvement if their positive role is better appreciated. In fact, many of the issues raised by Arab PRIs are of transnational importance and so are applicable to more than one country, regardless of geographic location. Fighting this negative perception and touting the global nature of many policies are important steps in gaining greater public acceptance and influence.

C. Conclusion and Looking Forward

The environment in which Arab PRIs work historically has not been conducive to policy reform. A difficult confluence of government interference, vague operating guidelines, and very limited resources has hampered the impact of PRIs on policy-making processes. Yet, PRIs have proliferated, especially in recent years, with 45 new PRIs coming into being since the early days of CAPRI in 2009, and over half of those (25 PRIs) having been established in the past 2 years only. On the other hand, 16 PRIs have shut down or are no longer active since the start of the project. Therefore, it is evident that there is enough interest and support to maintain a steady supply of well-informed research on policy reform.

The ongoing Arab uprisings present a new opportunity to harness the potential of these PRIs. A larger space for public dialogue allows for wider discussions on policy issues. This situation allows PRIs to provide valuable input, shape policy discussions during a critical time for many countries, and set a precedent for larger interaction between PRIs and the policy-making process.

In order to achieve this scenario, PRIs must use the new public environment to their advantage. Asserting a positive, research-based role in informing the policy debate is a critical factor. Collaboration among PRIs can also lessen the effect of common difficulties while monitoring and evaluation studies could allow PRIs to maximize their efficiency and transparency. Funding remains a challenging issue, but attempts can be made to support regional financing efforts, such as a waqf fund, or encourage greater private sector support for indigenous policy research. All of these topics enhance the legitimacy of PRIs and increase the likelihood of policy research forming an effective part of future political processes.

It may not be clear yet what part PRIs will play in the Arab World, even with the opportunities presented by the recent uprisings. However, it is certain that they are more likely to influence the policy-making process now than at any other time in recent history. The CAPRI project has identified the need to clarify the intent of PRIs to serve the public good through the use of independent and quality research.

After serving as organizations that were critical of government policy for so long, many PRIs now find themselves as part of the dominant narrative of reform. Making this adjustment requires internal and intra-PRi change to help write the new chapter in policy-making and policy reform in the Arab World.

II. Public Policy & Research in the Arab World: Pre & Post Uprising

First CAPRI Seminar, May 7-8, 2011, Beirut, Lebanon

Overview

The first CAPRI seminar was held on May 7 and 8, 2011, with a diverse group of Arab stakeholders consisting of approximately thirty individuals including academics, opinion-makers, directors of PRIs, and other policy-makers. Strategic collaboration interests were addressed by first determining the role and impact of Arab PRIs. Technical collaboration issues were also raised regarding a potential first step in creating successful PRI collaboration models that would benefit all PRIs and enhance efficiency and policy influence. Other technical issues were discussed such as communication strategies, mailing list management, peer-review and validation processes, languages, and databases.

A number of pioneering discussions on PRIs in the Arab World took place during the seminar. It was divided into six panels addressing the following issues: the landscape of PRIs in the Arab World, the impact of funding on PRIs, the politics of policy research, collaboration and networking, current changes in the region, and a look forward. Discussions brought forth the following themes:

- It was found that much greater nuance is needed in defining and understanding the role of PRIs within the varied contexts of the Arab World.
- IFI is attempting to understand the intersection between knowledge, advocacy and policy worlds.

- The context of each Arab country is unique and cannot be broadly addressed.
- Funding and political constraints seem to be the primary barriers to creating effective policy research.

Most of the issues discussed during the seminar were recurring and closely interrelated. For example, politics influence funding dynamics, which influence the agenda of the PRI, the quality of research, and the resulting policy advice. These aspects, in turn, are linked to the goals of the work of the PRI, and the impact on policy-making. Given the complex interconnectivity of these issues, each theme addressed at the seminar is presented separately for the purpose of this overview.

PRIs in the Arab World: Mapping the Landscape

The Problem of Defining Arab PRIs

The question of defining PRIs was repeatedly raised throughout the seminar. The PRI definition initially presented by IFI was “a non-profit, research-producing, institute based in the Arab World.” This preliminary definition was challenged on many fronts. First, the criteria of “non-profit” raised legal concerns about the need for some PRIs to register as NGOs or for-profit associations due to the nebulous, and sometimes inadequate, Laws of Associations under which many Arab PRIs must operate. In many cases, the non-profit prerequisite would then produce a flawed measure of who was actually a PRI and who was not.

Next, the criterion of “research-producing” institute was deemed too broad as many different kinds of organizations were already engaged in such a production: universities, international organizations such as the United Nations, NGOs, government agencies, private sector consultants, etc. Some participants requested to narrow this distinction by normatively assessing the role of the PRI within the Arab state by starting a debate around citizen-state relations. Some argued that policy research institutes

have to maintain a certain level of engagement, which is why it was suggested that the term “Policy Research Institute” be amended to “Public Policy Research Institute” necessarily implying a relationship between research and a responsibility to the public.

It became useful to consider the PRIs as defined along a continuum between the type of work they perform and the purpose for which they perform it. In order to identify PRIs, it is first necessary to define which policies Arab PRIs want to influence: strategies, budgetary, normative, etc. As they do so, PRIs need to rethink their role within the policy advice world: how, who and what sort of power balance do and can they have? It was also recommended that PRIs rethink how they actually influence governance and whether policy-makers are key players to affect change. The continuum in figure 1 was suggested for discussion as a way to define PRIs’ diverse work, though it was not deemed exhaustive or final at the time.

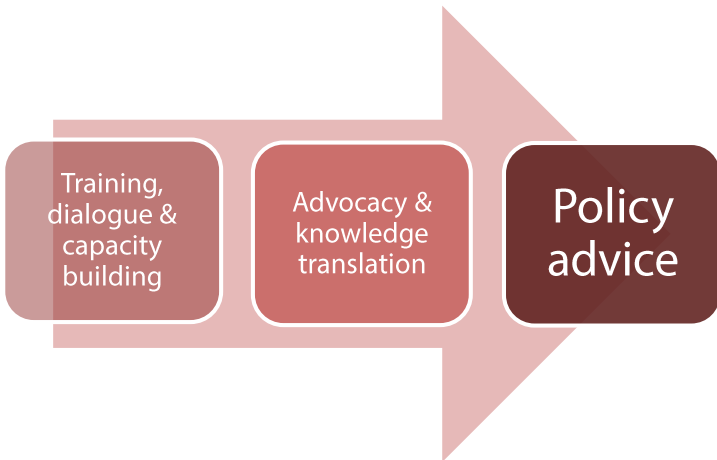


Figure 2. Continuum of PRI Role

These areas, defined in the continuum above, were contestable suggestions because for some participating PRIs a clear distinction between research and advocacy is constitutional while, for others, such a distinction is only imaginary.

Studying the landscape of PRIs in the Arab World in a comparison with PRIs in other regions, it is important to note that a number of participants agreed that “independent” research centers are absent in the Arab World³. This aspect is in contrast to the largely homogeneous “independent” nature of PRIs in the U.S., for example. It was suggested that PRIs should not try to invent a non-existent “independent” description to fit the Arab context as an imported Western ideal for PRIs. Alternatively, PRIs could work towards addressing objectivity in research based on scientific evidence.

Other participants highlighted the need to clearly and constructively address the concept of what a PRI is in order to avoid it being transformed into a “Christmas-tree model” which can assume the identity and function of almost anything. PRIs take part in a number of knowledge brokering tasks like enriching the public debate, acting as repositories of knowledge, providing policy advice directly to governments, indirectly providing policy advice to governments through advocacy, mobilization, disseminating knowledge, or merely enriching the available information on certain subjects through scientific research. Furthermore, the scope of some PRI’s foci can vary from national, to regional, to global or a combination of the three. Therefore, it was acknowledged that the CAPRI project would benefit from trying to better understand the differences between research and advocacy to better define the environment in which PRIs operate.

3 This statement reflects the time during which this report was written. It is critical to note that the landscape of PRIs in the Arab World may have changed by the time this report is published.

It was also argued that there seems to be a need to describe the policy-making process and policy-makers in the Arab World prior to describing PRIs and their functions. In this regard, there seemed to be a need to understand the supply side of policy research, as well as to explore the demand side– the policy-makers and others who attempt to shape public policy in the Arab World. Therefore, other relevant aspects of this issue were discussed such as whether or not policy-makers seek research and policy advice and from whom. In case they do not seek policy research, it is essential to find out why not. Other aspects of this debate that were raised included whether or not policy-makers used evidence to inform their policy decisions; and furthermore, who was accountable for these decisions.

The Role of PRIs in the Arab World

Identifying and understanding the role of PRIs was yet another issue that was identified similar to that of defining PRIs in the Arab World. The majority of PRI directors or representatives present at the seminar agreed that they did not have a clear understanding of Arab PRIs' collective role in the policy-making processes in the region, nor did policy-makers have a clear understanding or appreciation of PRIs' work. Rather it was seen as a very ad-hoc process dealt with differently on a case-by-case basis.

In light of the recent uprisings, the role of PRIs seemed to be centered on the distinction between PRIs' role as either policy-advisers for reforms within the existing policy and governmental frameworks, or advocates for systemic change. It became increasingly clear that in autocratic environments, these roles tend to be mutually exclusive; and a single PRI could not effectively fulfill both. The role of PRIs is dependent on its relationship with policy-makers and others who influence policy both directly and indirectly. Some believe that those PRIs who perceive their roles as government advisors will need to retreat and be overturned by advocates for change during the Arab uprisings. However, the public

usually influences policy in most democratic regimes through voting. Therefore, it becomes debatable whether or not the PRIs ought to become more responsive to the public given the democratization process slowly underway in some of the countries of the region.

This called into question the idea of PRI responsibility and accountability in assessing to whom a PRI is responsible given the multiple different actors with whom it usually interacts including the public, the donors, the media, the government, NGOs, policy-makers and opinion-makers. One PRI director suggested a triangle of accountability where PRIs fit between the government, donors, and society.

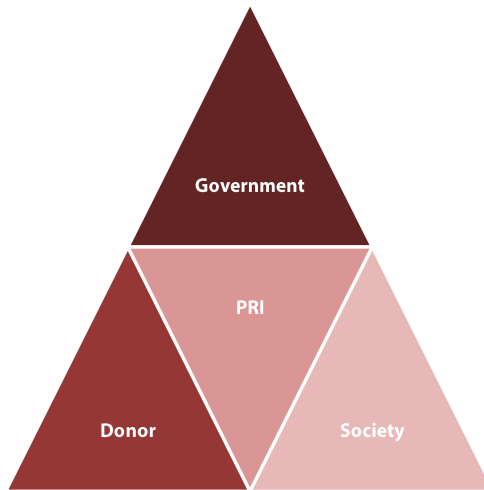


Figure 3. Triangle of PRI Accountability

Funding Influences

A major consensus of the two-day seminar was the political nature of funding as well as the numerous constraints it creates, even if not explicitly or ideologically motivated. Constraints include agenda-setting, the availability and selectivity of funding, as well as bureaucratic requirements (researchers taking time from doing research to prepare routine reports for donors) and time constraints as most donors are interested in funding short-term projects rather than contributing to the long-term capacity development of institutions. Many participants argued that these are mainly attributes of western funding, which in a large part results from the lack of indigenous funding for research.

Funding also raises the issue of PRI accountability and its link to the political economy of aid as it raises the distinction between local and foreign knowledge. Most participants agree that it is necessary to rethink the funding architecture in ways that localize funding. Funding can be employed as an optional means to raise responsibility while informing the funder of all the gains he/she will receive for being a donor. Foreign donors usually come with predetermined agendas which are considered inadequate when compared to indigenous donors and the agendas they usually bring forth. In this regard, it is assumed that local and regional donors take the Arab social and political environment into account.

Quality of Research and Policy Advice: Linking Researchers and Policy-makers

The relationship between the role, definition, and funding of PRIs directly affects the quality of their work. Participants raised the need to distinguish between short-term and long-term research. Some participants argued that short-term research was often based on rushed analyses, whereas a PRI builds its reputation and legitimacy from the quality of well-designed, methodologically sound and evidence-based research. However, others argued that it was necessary for PRIs to respond quickly to current events,

such as the ongoing uprisings. For this reason, it was suggested that PRIs work on two tracks, one long-term research for analysis, and one shorter-term research for the purpose of responding to urgent and current events.

Other concerns related to the quality of research also arises, the first being a lack of indigenous data and research. As a result, research is often synthesized with data facing the probability of being recycled, or the same source citing a previous report with only itself as a reference. Self-assessment, standardized institutional research in Arab World, and investment in research on better monitoring and evaluating practices to measure PRI impact were some of the suggestions in response to the concerns of the quality of research produced by Arab PRIs.

Another concern related to the quality of research produced by Arab PRIs is the increasingly privatized nature of research and the expanding marketplace of ideas which includes the profit-seeking private sector. Private consultants are increasingly creating competition in offering policy analysis and advice, even though they may not have experience in conducting or publishing research. This affects the integrity and quality of non-profit-seeking research institutes, who may or may not strive to compete with profit-seekers.

The audience targeted by the research produced by Arab PRIs was also discussed as some research was being geared toward international audiences, especially with English being the main language. It was argued that this created a crucial gap between young researchers and senior scholars, and perhaps most importantly, a division between English speakers and those who speak only Arabic or French. Research topics are often limited by language, especially if research efforts are collaborative. This is not because topics cannot be discussed in certain languages, but due to the fact that research partners will be chosen accordingly.

The role of universities in policy-making and policy research was highlighted and critically examined throughout the seminar. Some participants claimed that some universities lay more value on the Western standards of publications and promotional systems, which undermine indigenous Arab human development. Instead of publishing in the region for Arab audiences, such as academics, policy-makers, and the public, it seems that the information is being exported abroad and catering to a Western audience. Furthermore, the idea that Arab people are unwilling to read indigenous research, as well as the lack of sufficient outlets for it in Arab societies, were both met with much frustration. It was agreed that if policy research is not conducted in the Arabic language, it may not as easily find its way to local audiences and the public.

Collaboration: Prospects and Feasibility

The question of whether or not PRI collaboration is an effective tool in influencing policy-making in the Arab World was a highly contested topic. Given that indigenous Arab PRIs often face difficulty in research capacity, funding, and influence, combining efforts and resources may be a viable way to impact policy. At the same time, collaboration may create more work for PRIs in the effort to coordinate, establish, and maintain an efficient network. There is no evidence on the impact of collaboration on policy-making or PRIs, mainly because there are few examples of networks in the region and around the world. This may be due to the desire of PRIs to maintain individual and independent agendas and resources.

The definition of a certain PRI network is entirely relative to the agenda and goals of its member institutes. A PRI network is generally defined as a group of research institutes working towards a common goal. Participants emphasized, however, that the research community must understand what the main goal of collaboration is to establish a network. Of course, this varies according to the differing agendas of the PRIs, but the goal of collaboration can be vary between enhancing impact to capacity-building. Questions surrounding the collaboration level

(individual, national, regional, governmental, and international) and the organizational structure are yet another aspect of the networking that requires careful attention. It is crucial that PRIs define themselves and clearly state their goals before embarking on any research projects, so that they may understand themselves and their position in relation to other PRIs and PRI networks.

Seminar participants listed advantages of establishing a PRI network. For one, it greatly reduced redundancy in research. Many PRIs in the Arab World focus on similar topics, such as democracy or economics; and their different types of research often overlap. Working together on a single project eliminates redundant efforts, thus saving time, effort, and resources. Second, a PRI network has a greater propensity to produce credible, accurate research because it combines the skills of some leading researchers from a variety of institutes. Therefore, this collaboration creates a team of “the best of the best” in certain specialized fields and encourages deeper learning about a topic. In this regard, collaborative efforts raise the standard for research and are, therefore, more attractive for funding and prospective donations.

Collaboration has its difficulties and setbacks. In a PRI network, there are bound to be older and larger institutions working with smaller, younger ones. This provides the younger PRIs with new experiences because they can learn from the older counterparts. Older and better-funded PRIs, however, may have to resort to “handholding” and bear most of the responsibilities due to disparities in capacities and resources (human capital, technical, funding, etc.). Furthermore, collaboration tends to be uneven because of issues not just in individual institutional capacity, but also in the political circumstances and environments that vary by country and society. Therefore, the quality of research and the availability of researchers in the Arab World are inconsistent at best, and unless tasks can be equitably distributed, older PRIs will be discouraged from joining such networks.

Agenda-setting is another potential obstacle for collaborative initiatives among PRIs. Although member institutes of a particular network would most likely share similar research goals and interests, determining how, when, and by whom the agenda is set requires time and planning on behalf of all members. Some PRI networks, like the Euro-Mediterranean Study Commission (EuroMeSCo), use meetings as a measure for seeking consensus on the overall research agenda and as a way to “ensure the fullest possible participation of member institutes.” Other networks rely on calls for papers to bring associate institutions together under a common research goal. For example, one of the participating associations hold internal research competitions, perhaps as a way to encourage wider participation and to ensure quality production of research within a specified time frame.

Many participants agreed that PRI networks can easily overcome issues hindering collaboration, provided that they have a clear goal. Given the advantages of this partnership, it is worth mentioning that there are no PRI networks in the West, and particularly in the United States. This does not reflect well when advocating for collaboration in the Arab region, as well as other parts of the world. Given the apparent lack of cooperation in the West, it was questioned why it is recommended for PRIs in the Arab World to work together. Some argue that collaboration is highly desired because of the internal weaknesses of individual PRIs specific to the Arab World, such as the shortage of qualified staff and limited funding, which could be remedied through collaborative efforts. Others discouraged these combined attempts because it requires competent staff and proper funding.

Assessing the Present

The Arab uprisings have led many of the PRIs in the Arab World to reconsider fundamental elements of their identity, operation, and research agenda. Today, the role of PRIs as knowledge producers has expanded to include preparing quality researchers through offering training programs by the institutes or through partnering with graduate programs at universities, while also meeting the rising demands for policy advice. PRI directors at the seminar agreed that capacity building of researchers is particularly needed during the time of the Arab uprisings because the region suffers from a lack of good human capital for policy research.

The political transformations have created pressures and presented opportunities for Arab PRIs and raised their awareness of the important role they must play in collaboration with the civil society, the media, the policy-makers, the donors, and other similar institutes as well. Further study and analysis is needed in the region on the political and economic level and their respective regional policy implications, especially because they have had a domino effect on other regimes. This calls for an accurate identification of the opportunities and mechanisms to support/establish advocacy and lobbying measures, as too little is known about social and political forces/agents of change, and how the PRIs can increase their influence and utility amid the changes. Seminar participants agreed that this was the time for setting new agendas for PRI interactions with all factors in the policy-making process: governments, media, donors, and the public. Many participants acknowledged the need to study the manner in which revolutions have evolved and impacted individual Arab states differently, as well as the different reactions to the uprisings of elite formations.

A Look Forward

A fundamental research issue identified at the seminar was the need for deeper exploration of the public/civic society which was the leading force in the Arab transitions, and specifically the youth who constitute the greater bulk of the movement. It was noted that this youth had the drive to change the current situation, but insufficient education on how to become more civically engaged in the community they are attempting to change. Thus, inculcating a sense of civic responsibility within the youth was highlighted as integral in response to such uprisings.

In order to capture a clearer image on the current situation and its future implications, comparative analyses with other regions, which have experienced transition, was seen as a primary necessity at this stage. It was further recommended that such comparative analyses focus on how PRIs can seize the opportunity to enter the public domain through new innovative ideas and set debates and agendas for policy-makers about main issues and concerns. Furthermore, comparative studies on the crises and areas of research would also create supply and demand for research as social movement constituents would attract a wide array of donors and funding. This can be enhanced through collaborative research among different PRIs.

In further response to the uprisings, it was argued that PRIs assume an important role in managing the transition in collaboration with the different entities within the society: government, youth, media, and other research institutes. They put different issues on the table for discussion in this transition to democracy, brainstorming responses in and out of the box as they acknowledge that this is a process and is only beginning to emerge. In Egypt, for example, national university centers are still struggling with the internal governance matters. Directors of semi-governmental centers have become ministers. However, the American University of Cairo-based centers have responded more rapidly. Roundtables on corruption have

been planned; new relations between civil society and government have been recognized as primary; furthermore, a lot of opinion pieces, information sharing and research briefs have been published.

It remains unclear as to the extent to which PRIs are effectively participating in the Arab transitional process, although their willingness to respond and capitalize on the occasion is visible. Some seminar participants insisted that PRIs put too much focus on analyzing the current changes rather than spending time to understand the underlying transformations and power dynamics that will define how decisions will be made in the future.

Presenting themselves as an essential part of the new world by media exposure, PRIs are increasingly seeking funds from western donors who have shown interest in researching the foundations and peculiarities underlying these uprisings. Democracy and youth have moved to the forefront of research. PRIs are trying to reposition themselves to respond to emerging needs and exchange points of view on a regional level in order to set priorities, though it seems that in the short-run PRIs must put more effort in advocacy and training.

Concluding Remarks

Given the fact that the mere definition of a PRI in the Arab World is a highly-debated topic among experts, it is clear that there is much research to be done in the policy-making realm as a whole. How to define a PRI, as well as agenda-setting protocols, funding methods, and capacity-building were a few of the issues that have been identified to be further addressed before determining how best – or if it is best – for PRIs to collaborate. The key change that has gripped the Arab World has forced a paradigm shift whereby the research community must rethink even the most basic building blocks of policy, such as the political environment in which policy is produced. The outcome of the Arab uprisings is far from certain, but in the meantime, academics and experts should focus on the basics: namely, definitions, functions, and purpose of PRIs.

The themes discussed at the seminar and in this paper, which are organized thematically, are in no way isolated from each other; they are part of a complex web of interconnecting issues and ideas with the ultimate goal of linking policy and research. Just as funding affects the quality of research, so too does the quality of research affect funding. Likewise, all of the issues discussed in the seminar are crucial to the policy research process and must be examined deeply and thoroughly if the research community is to better grasp how to improve the policy-making process, and how best to influence policy-makers and impact the public as a result.

III Strategic Workshops

The following chapter presents the findings of two strategic workshops conducted by IFI as part of the CAPRI project. Strategic workshops grouped high-level managers or directors to deliberate on long-term issues facing the organization. They are important vehicles for strategy development and play a significant role in strategic planning processes (Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson & Schwarz, 2006). As such, IFI employed strategic workshops as a first step to discuss strategic issues regarding the general state of PRIs in the Arab World and to identify the overarching themes, after which it would be possible to start focusing on specific issues through the use of technical workshops.

A. Policy Research Institutes and the Arab Uprisings: Agenda Setting and Beyond

Part 1, January 15-16, 2012, Beirut, Lebanon

Overview

The first CAPRI strategic workshop took place on January 15-16, 2012 at AUB, gathering a group of 10 PRI directors and policy advisors from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The gathering was conducive to opening up discussions related to PRIs in the Arab World in the current state of uprisings. The aim was to define the role Arab PRIs in policy-making, discover common opportunities and challenges during the transitional period, and discuss strategies for moving forward.

The main themes that emerged centered on the relationship between the state and PRIs, as well as their accountability. It was generally accepted that since the uprisings began in the Arab World in 2012, a new kind of space for policy-making and citizen/state power relationships started to form. It is yet to be defined as to who will be the main actors shaping this relationship and *how* it will be shaped.

PRI's Relationships with States and the Issue of Accountability

At the beginning of the first strategic workshop, each country representative described the respective country's unique setting during the current transformations and the distinctive relationship between the state and citizen. It was highlighted that each country still suffers from the same issue of governmental repression and control over civil society. It was also reported that policy-makers remain not fully accountable to the public. Some of the participants explained the emergence of "safe spaces" within which they concentrate their work on topics deemed permissible and non-threatening to the regime. Other participants reported that working on "unsafe" topics was halted once the uprisings began in their country.

The first day of the workshop was specifically devoted to focusing on strategic questions related to PRIs during this historic period, including:

- How have Arab PRIs responded to the uprisings?
- What are some emerging concerns during this time?
- What does it mean to have policy impact during a time of structural change?
- What is the relationship between the state, private sector, civil society, and other PRIs during the uprisings?

PRI's Role and Response

Many PRI directors regretfully stated that at the start of the uprisings in their respective countries, their initial reaction was a "no-response." In some cases, this was because they were hopeful that the government would handle the situation appropriately before it became destructive. In other cases, PRIs did not respond because of fear of repression. A PRI's role within the existing state and societal structure remains an unanswered

question. Should a PRI have then become an advocacy organization and “taken to the streets” to demand the reforms and policies it is trying to advance through research? Or should a PRI be viewing the situation as an “objective” outsider critically analyzing the changes as they occur? More so, how can the PRI be an “objective” outsider when presumably it already has a role in the policy-making process and calls for change?

Funding and Setting the Research Agenda

Day two of the workshop was designed to tackle the practical issue of funding. Among the pressing issues of financing that were discussed was the question of “who sets the research agenda?” Most participants agreed that setting the research agenda is still largely internal and autonomous, despite varying degrees of governmental control, oversight and accessibility to funding. It was reported that both political and financial factors are taken into consideration when adding a new project to the agenda. Participants perceive their institutes as accountable to both the government as well as the civil society, because their work is relevant to policy-makers and is also responsive to the needs of the people. This is a difficult balance with the limitations set by funding institutions that also try to push their own agendas. Moreover, participants discussed common challenges they face related to reporting to donors and seeking funding that would not severely alter their own agendas.

It was agreed that stigma is associated with foreign funding and relations with some foreign institutions or governments. This is mainly a problem with regards to accountability and credibility towards the public because the consensus was that there is no “foreign” topic. The topics are universal, humanistic, globalized, and more importantly, indigenous. The “westernized” topics may have been repressed by Arab dictators for many years, and thus IFI was conditioned not to attribute it to local practices. The dilemma remains how to accept certain funds without losing one’s local reputation or legitimacy.

Another concern about funding was related to the bureaucratic administrative tasks that donors required in reporting. In many cases, this dissuades some PRI directors from applying for smaller grants. Instead, they may undertake a more time-consuming inquiry for larger grants, which may also impact the research agenda.

Recommendations & Suggestions

The following is a brief summary of the suggestions and ideas that were concluded from the two-day workshop:

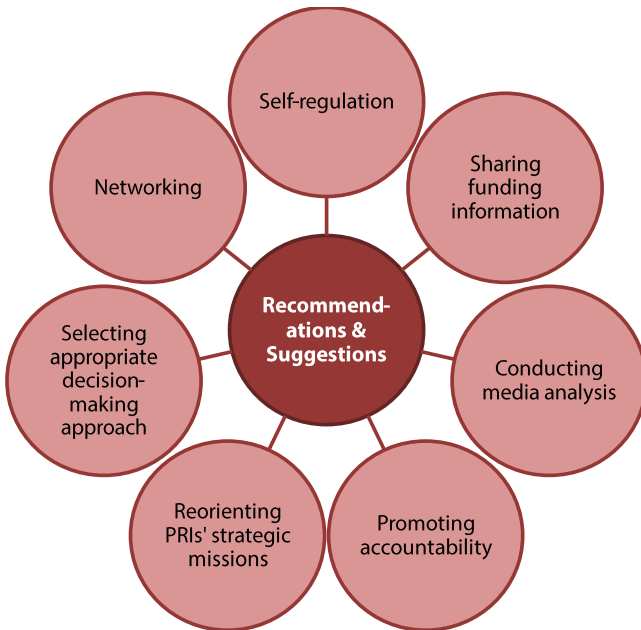


Figure 4. Recommendations & suggestions generated in 1st strategic workshop

Networking

Networking was one strategic suggestion in response to the regional situation. An important result of networking would be generating regional studies and reports. Networking and sharing resources also provide credibility and legitimacy for the PRI in the region. This strategy is particularly essential when PRIs work on sensitive issues as it pushes for certain “regional” policies rather than trying to push a sensitive policy locally, which helps relieve individual institutions of the burden of being perceived as a threat by the state.

Self-regulation

It was also suggested that it would be helpful for PRIs to decide collectively on regional standards and self-regulation mechanisms as a form of accountability independent from the government. These collective efforts would also serve to raise the credibility and legitimacy of Arab PRIs. Many PRI directors explained that the problem does not only reside in their “unclear” role due to “unclear” policy-making processes in regional countries, but also in their hazy role towards policy-makers and the public.

Sharing Funding Information

It was suggested that funding information be shared among PRIs. This information becomes critical, especially with respect to funders that are negatively perceived within society.

Media Analysis

Further, it was also recommended carrying out a media analysis of how the local, regional, and international media portrayed the uprisings in various countries. This suggestion comes as a means to better engage PRIs within the society in order to serve the needs of the public through utilizing a major medium of communication.

Reorienting PRIs' Strategic Missions

Participants suggested that the strategic missions of PRIs be geared towards opening a space for dialogue rather than being restricted to changing laws. It was emphasized that once the idea is discussed openly, changing the laws will eventually follow.

Decision-making Process

Finally, it was commonly perceived that clarity as to where/how the decision-making process affects change in Arab states is still lacking. Some participants agreed that, in certain situations, such as the current uprisings, the answer is to work on both bottom-up and top-down approaches.

Accountability

As previously mentioned, accountability emerged as one of the dominant themes of discussion in the meeting. If the government is not held accountable to the people, it was questioned whether or not the people shall then be accountable to the government. Civil society was encouraged to take the lead in searching for alternatives and solutions to societal concerns, where research would play a crucial part in formulating and informing civil society to advocate for sound suggestions. Participants also stressed the imperative of involving the private sector.

Concluding Remarks

The workshop concluded with stressing the need for more clarity in addressing the state of PRIs in the Arab World, and their accountability, in times of the uprisings. A more detailed report will follow this overview, and regional workshops are forthcoming to include participants from more countries in the Arab World. A collective summary and analysis of these workshops will form the basis for an in-depth research study and collaboration on PRIs in the MENA.

B. Policy Research Institutes and the Arab Uprisings: Agenda Setting and Beyond

Part 2, April 18-19, 2012, Cairo, Egypt

Overview

The second strategic workshop was held on April 18-19, 2012 in Cairo as part of the CAPRI workshop series based on the findings of the regional CAPRI seminar held in May 2011. The purpose of the workshop was to review and find ways to enhance the role of PRIs in light of the Arab uprisings. The workshop also aimed at uncovering potential for collaboration and common interests in prioritizing research agendas. One senior representative from a PRI attended the workshop from each country in Arab North Africa, including Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Sudan as well as several Egyptian PRI representatives and researchers.

Defining Arab PRIs

Although defining Arab PRIs proved to provoke debate and reveal differences of opinions, there were a few points which seemed to hold a general consensus, as apparent in Figure 5.

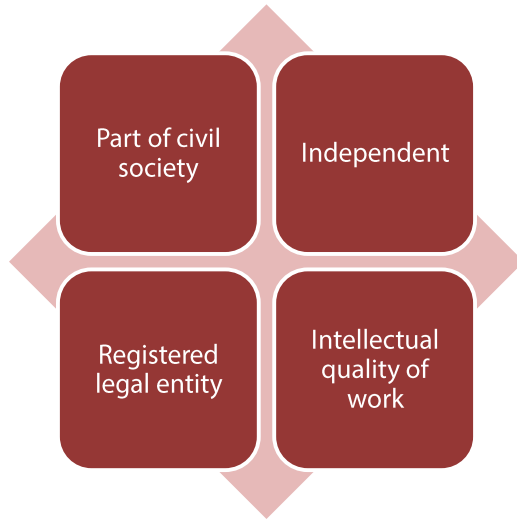


Figure 5. Components of Arab PRI's definition

First, to be considered an Arab PRI, the research institute must be a part of civil society, offering its services to the public. The purpose of a PRI is to ensure that decisions which affect the general public are not taken without research. Therefore, the research agenda should not reflect solely the agenda of policy-makers, but also the needs of the general public. Such a definition would rule out research centers which are foreign-created and do not reflect needs and agendas of local populations.

Closely tied to the definition of a PRI as a civic organization, is the notion that a PRI must also be independent. This means that a PRI should be free from undue influence in the following three categories: financial, political and governmental. It should not be structurally or administratively linked to any other entity. The critical need to differentiate between “real” and “infiltrated” PRIs was often brought up, and suggestions were given for

regulation and categorization of these factors. The question of funding and influence is addressed in a following section.

The next agreed-upon criterion for defining Arab PRIs was that of registration status. These PRI representatives, like those in previous workshops, agreed that an organization's registration status was not a reliable factor upon which to define PRIs. Too many types of registration statuses exist, and many PRIs came into existence under different circumstances. Furthermore, various reasons could be identified regarding whether to register as a for-profit or a non-profit institution. Until the laws of association are changed, a PRI's registration status should not be considered adequate to define it. However, a PRI should be a registered legal entity in some form and not be expressly profit-seeking, which would bias the research and marketplace for ideas to serve the needs of policy-makers, conflicting with the first premise of PRIs, as stated above.

Finally, the quality of the work conducted by PRIs was also considered an important defining factor by the Arab North African PRI group. It seems difficult in some cases to draw the line between intellectualism and activism, but this group believed that the line should be drawn before activism in order to preserve the intellectual nature of PRIs as primarily knowledge producers. It was proposed that the PRI should have a scientific board of directors to avoid an overlap between action NGOs and PRIs. It was argued that the latter should publish more papers and research than holding seminars and meetings. They expressed concern for the regional research standards and called for greater evaluation measures for research and PRIs. In addition, it was specifically stated that university research centers, which conduct research relevant to policy-making, should not be overlooked even if they are not policy research centers.

Changing PRI Environments: The Arab PRI Paradigm Shift

Beyond agreeing on a unified definition of PRIs and their role, the group also deemed it necessary to define the terms “democracy” and “civil society” in the transition period in which both are either nascent or radically changing concepts. Further, some of the revolutions are only being called “movements”, like the “movements” in Morocco which came to a halt due to the lack of the escalation of demands.

Before the uprisings, participants described civil society as relatively closed and operating on the basis of survival, usually avoiding red lines. Some participants described their role as a balancing act of coexistence with and opposition to the government. Decades of oppression followed by a sudden leap forward in the past two years has made it especially hard to discern the changes so far.

In addition, it was agreed that the changes occurring in each North African country were very different, and that there could be no standard model. However, in all cases, there have been radical changes in civil society, which is opening up to new types of organizations including a “flurry” of new PRIs. Moreover, each country should study the role of PRIs within its individual policy-making context.

Nevertheless, participants admitted that they do not believe there has yet been a proper fundamental change in the power structure, and that is why new actors and civil society groups are important in restructuring this environment. Incremental changes taking place within parliaments and the shaping of opposition components are hopeful, even if no radical changes are yet to take place.

To respond to the changing environment during transition, participants agreed that policy research centers must play a different role, varying their activities and their purpose from what it was before the uprisings.

Despite their agreement that PRIs should do more research than action, during this period PRIs may need to engage more in actions they have not engaged in during normal times. Participants identified great lack of understanding of the decision-making process, which is why trainings and outreach to decision-makers should be part of the transition priorities.

In terms of agendas, it was noted that PRIs cannot reach a common plan because agendas are sectorial; however, they can agree on common values in agenda-setting stemming from the transition period (Figure 6). These values include instilling a culture of accountability, transparency and knowledge sharing. They should also include a concrete attempt to dismantle the despotic and corrupt political and cultural systems and promote proper management of the transition period through transitional justice mechanisms tailored to local needs. PRI agendas during the transition period should also strive to collaborate with other research institutes, especially new ones.

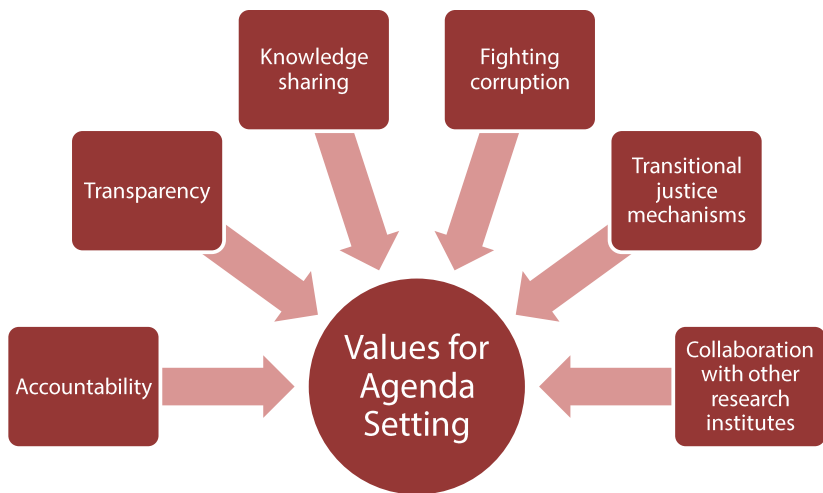


Figure 6. Common values for PRIs agenda-setting during transitional periods

The Question of Funding & Influence

PRIs clearly explained that they do not want to be considered as being subjugated to any influence, which is why the question of independent funding was so central to this discussion. However, it was argued that the question of funding and influence is not only related to foreign financing but also to the reason why no local funding for research is available. According to the Arab North African PRI group, two sources of local funding should exist: the private sector, including individual businessmen, and the public sector.

Pros and cons of both types of local funding were discussed. The public sector is bureaucratic, politicized, and exclusive, which brings out the need to focus on finding funding that is not just project-based (core funding). The private sector, in some cases, is still quite linked to the former regimes and embodies their power structures; thus making foreign funding more legitimate.

The general consensus settled on the fact that a strong and independent PRI in possession of both qualified researchers and research on the one hand, and integrity, transparency and independent budget, on the other, would be able to attract more funding without influence. In relation to agenda-setting, it was noted that the agenda should be tied to local values and principles. It was also noted that some local values may also reflect “foreign” agendas, such as democratization and development, although they are not necessarily imposed upon them. They may be topics that attract foreign funding but they are in line with indigenous interests.

There yet undoubtedly remains stigma towards foreign funding. Several PRI directors admitted that they were offered several donations since the Arab uprisings. However, they had to refuse them because the donors had asked to know too much. Until more public funding is made available, the group agreed that they must rely more heavily on foreign funding

because a PRI cannot wait for policies to change before it can operate; they must work on changing these policies. Furthermore, some argued that there is too strict a division of “local” and “foreign” notions of funding and agendas.

Collaboration

The North African PRI group, like the group before it, was skeptical about starting a formal consortium or PRI network at this time. Participants pointed out that networking in the Arab World is a problem because the more developed institutions would shoulder greater responsibility. Furthermore, they often do not have the incentive to collaborate. This is also related to the competition for funding and the necessary shift toward a more collaborative spirit.

Given the common challenges and concerns facing PRIs in the transition period, the North African PRI group identified common areas in which collaboration would be most useful.

First, sharing information would be a beneficial step on two fronts: to counter the shortage of and access to data, and to contribute to a culture of transparency. A useful way to facilitate this exchange of information is the PRI database of the CAPRI project.

Another suggestion was for a permanent exchange program of researchers among Arab PRIs to increase knowledge production and training— a form of collaboration/partnership and capacity building.

The Arab North African PRI group also identified the need for training in communication because researchers are not communication experts, and training is the key to collaboration and the successful dissemination of their work.

Concluding Remarks: Recommendations & Suggestions

The role of a PRI during the transition period is not the same as the regular role of a PRI. Several exceptional suggestions and recommendations were made to support North Africa during its transition period. The following were suggestions of practical steps and strategies that Arab PRIs may find beneficial.

1. With the help of the media, PRIs should raise awareness concerning the role and importance of PRIs to the public, to civil society and to decision-makers. Though this would not normally fall under a PRI's mandate or agenda in the transition phase, participants thought it would be an important aspect in "capacity building" of policy-makers.
2. PRIs should lead in bridging the gap between different sectors of society. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), as spokespersons to the public, should hold dialogues between all sectors. They should also focus on making these dialogues independent and show the public that they are not a shadow of the government or a puppet of soft power by foreign entities.
3. PRIs should lobby to change laws governing NGOs, CSOs, and PRIs to increase potential impact for the long run.
4. The establishment of a "Waqf" financial endowment system was repeatedly suggested, specifically a North African endowment for democracy.
5. Other forms of collaboration that were suggested include coming up with local Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) criteria for the assessment of research and work of Arab PRIs.
6. PRIs should strive for transparency to avoid corruption in funding.
7. Examining a "successful model", an Arab PRI that is independent and has an endowment was suggested in order to learn from its prior experience.

IV. Technical Workshops

Several topics calling for more focused attention emanated from the strategic workshops conducted by IFI: Strategic Communications, Funding Strategies and Knowledge Translation. A suitable approach to deepen the understanding of these issues and to provide PRIs with tools to tackle them is through the use of technical workshops. Technical workshops allow experts to participate in in-depth discussions on specific technical topics. They also share their expertise. The following chapter presents findings from three technical workshops conducted by IFI as part of the CAPRI project.

A. Strategic Communications for Arab Policy Research Institutes

July 16-17, 2012, Beirut

Overview

The first technical workshop of the CAPRI project, entitled Strategic Communications for Policy Research Institutes in the Arab World, took place on July 16 and 17, 2012 at AUB. The workshop grouped around 15 participants from Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon. Each participant was the selected communications representative of a PRI.

The aim of the workshop was to combine both training and discussion to result in practical solutions for issues and recommendations related to strategic communication for PRIs in the region. Based on requests and suggestions of peers in five gatherings to date, IFI had identified a common interest in strengthening communications and outreach strategies. IFI believed this would enhance its collaborations for shared

policy impact by PRIs in the Arab World. It would also allow interested Arab PRIs to share knowledge, develop skills and capabilities, and explore collaborative activities.

PRIs Vision and Role for Communication

The first part of the workshop addressed the need to define who PRIs are, their vision, and what they stand for in the Arab region in order to acquire a better understanding of their role and function, and consequently communicate it in an efficient manner. The participants found that these questions are still debated and under discussion internally within most Arab PRI circles. Reaching a consensus seemed impossible and relied heavily on understanding the policy-making context within each country.

In an attempt to articulate their vision, participants highlighted the necessity of clarifying a PRI's place within the society between government, media, and the public. One participant noted that it was still unclear what the goals of Arab PRIs should be, for many people in the Arab region are not familiar with the concept of policy-oriented research and think tanks. Another participant mentioned that the goal should be present to connect policy-makers to research; while a third explained that his/her PRI's goal is to be the main source of policy-relevant research for policy-makers. Others said they only aim to "inform and be a reference" for the debate on policy issues.

The next step was to clarify planning priorities of internal communications. This led to a discussion about the links between strategic thinking and strategic planning. It was a necessary conceptual exercise to first make the link between connecting the PRI to society and policy-makers. PRIs were perceived as entities leading to planning and setting goals as well as having good management which, in turn, would formulate the big picture for PRI communications. Participants questioned how to translate messages from PRIs to society and policy-makers. They also stressed the importance of having a plan to disseminate information, with the

most important part of the plan being to know the target audience. Many participants agreed that there can be multiple target audiences depending on the issue, campaign, and strategy.

As such, it was agreed that three main questions need to be answered in identifying a PRI's role for organizational and strategic planning necessary for communications:

1. Who are we (as an institute within the state and within society)?
2. What capacity do we have (financial, human, technical resources)?
3. What problems are we addressing (what are the critical issues we need to respond to?)

Credibility and Target Audience

Establishing itself as a credible PRI was another main theme of discussion among the workshop participants. Once a PRI has internally identified itself within society and developed a strategy based on the above questions, the PRI struggles to be recognized externally and encounters the problem of credibility. Participants shared their frustrations. Governments and the public largely discounted their role within society even if their recommendations were adopted. In response, it was suggested by one participant that PRIs should limit their research and topics to specific thematic issues in which they could establish themselves as experts. Other respondents questioned the importance of recognition when impact is occurring nonetheless.

Still, recognition of impact and impact assessment became meaningful in the discussion on how to select target audiences. Given the policy-making context, many of the PRI communication representatives said they were not sure who to target and often felt like they were targeting too many diverse groups without being certain of impact effectiveness.

It also aimed at knowing how to define this influence. In addition, this was tied to the discussion of “social marketing” and ways to “position the product” of policy-relevant research to specific foci within the society in different ways most accessible to policy-makers, media, civil society and other policy actors. In some cases, participants agreed this would require “awareness” campaigns, but were careful not to conflate “awareness” with “advocacy”, especially since most participants concurred that PRIs should not be engaged in “advocacy.”

Framing Communications for Arab PRIs

It was debated whether framing communication for Arab PRIs is a strategic advantage, core competence, or distinctive capability. Participants argued for each of these points. One argument for strategic advantage is that designing the right communication strategy and tools gives one organization a strategic advantage over others. However, other participants were quick to rebut this point on the grounds that PRIs should not be competing with each other and such a framework for analysis of PRIs and their communication strategies is thus flawed. An argument for strategic communications as a core competency suggested that without communication, the research and work of a PRI would have no impact and thus is essential to the success of a PRI. The respondent arguing for strategic communications as a distinctive capability explained that successful and effective communications is the goal of many PRIs. However, there is a considerable possibility that PRIs may not be good at communications but still be doing quality relevant work.

Once a conceptual framing of the PRI and a framing of strategic communications for PRIs were both established, the moderator shifted to a more specific contextualization of communication strategies for PRIs in the Arab region. Participants questioned whether these strategies should rely heavily on the level of democracy, transparency, and political freedoms in the specific country which led to a larger discussion on whether the concept of think tanks altogether could exist without democracy. There

was no consensus on a specific top-down or bottom-up formula because that required an analysis of stakeholders, a mapping of the policy-making processes and context as well as the existence of a relationship with other policy actors on an issue-specific basis.

It was agreed that policy research should nevertheless, despite the level of democracy, be disseminated to a larger and more public audience than only policy-makers – bridging the gap between research, policy-making, and the public. However, it was pointed out that this becomes seemingly impossible when the nature of one PRI's work was only to produce evidence-based research as objectively as possible and share the results with governments that are commissioning and largely funding their work. Such PRIs are known as quasi-governmental (QUANGOS) or government-organized (GONGOS) PRIs.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

At the end of the strategic workshop, working groups came together to discuss a case study example of a communication strategy and develop recommendations and lessons learned. The results of these discussions are divided into the following three sections:

I. Arab PRIs Regional Communications:

1. Increase collaboration among PRIs on technical and strategic issues – for example, create a virtual forum for discussion, questions-answers, and practical information-sharing.
2. Organize web conferences for smaller, more localized issues.
3. Collaborate and exchange ideas on effective strategies for editing, design, printing, etc.
4. Focus on social networking among PRIs in order to easily exchange, share and disseminate information related to their research.

5. Build on the CAPRI database of PRIs for networking purposes.
6. Design a central mechanism to channel thinking from outside the Arab region to within, and vice versa.
7. Establish a “code of conduct” for PRI communications in the Arab World – work out values specific to communications and media relations in the region.
8. Collectively discuss and try to agree on PRI “positioning” within Arab societies (relationship to state and public).

II. PRI Strategic Communications – “Do’s” and “Don’ts”:

Do's	Don'ts
Know your audience – and know what they need to know	Don't just engage international audiences, communicate with local as well
Know how to interact with local media	Don't limit yourselves to focusing on technical issues
Use Social Media – to extract as well as disseminate information	Don't compete with other PRIs
Publish in local language	Don't use negative slogans/ images in communications
Measure the impact of communications on different audiences since certain mediums work better with some more than with others – one easy way is through impact logs, Google analytics and website statistics	Don't engage only with like-minded groups and individuals
Internally clarify PRI role and mandate before designing communications strategy	Don't try to “specialize” in too many fields and topics - focus on a few
Ensure the involvement of PRI communications manager in the early formulation of PRI research projects	Don't expect social media to provide a good indicator of impact/influence, especially in reaching decision-makers

Dos	Don'ts
Maintain a degree of neutrality and objectivity	
Build personal relationships as much as possible	

III. Other Lessons Learned

1. Communications is a two-way process - a dialogue not a monologue.
2. Involve stakeholders in designing the communication strategies.
3. Define opponents and beneficiaries to help select target audience.
4. Make your institute part of the policy-making community – requires understanding the policy-making process and actors first.
5. Speak with an understandable language - “translation” of scholarly/academic language for policy-makers and the public.

Concluding Remarks

Communications for PRIs in the Arab World, as with PRIs in general, relies heavily on an understanding of the PRI's role and targets within the policy-making process. PRIs should involve strategic communications planning in the early stages of program and project development. This ensures that the desired outcomes and impact of policy research are achieved. The various types of PRIs that exist throughout the Arab World are operating at a range of communications capacities. These PRIs also lack clarity about the impact of their work. They believe that working together and helping each other at least to examine shared issues relevant to communications would be a great asset, and the CAPRI project could be a pioneer facilitator for this type of collaboration in the future.

B. Funding Strategies within Arab Policy Research Institutes

September 5, 2012, Beirut

Overview

The second technical workshop of the CAPRI project took place September 3rd, 2012 focusing on analyzing funding strategies of PRIs in the Arab World. Participants joined the workshop from Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon. The participants were the representatives of PRIs involved in managing the finances of the corresponding institutes.

The workshop aimed at sharing experiences and knowledge on funding strategies and issues facing PRIs in the Arab World. Based on the previous discussions and gatherings, strengthening funding strategies and capabilities was identified as a common interest for Arab PRIs. The workshop also aims at consolidating the capabilities of PRIs in fundraising and the management of resources.

Funding Strategy Challenges Faced by PRIs

The first session of the workshop addressed the funding strategies and issues of PRIs in the Arab World. The following issues were presented as challenges faced in raising funds:

- 1. Gaining credibility and trust:** Participants highlighted the importance of gaining credibility and trust, as well as the importance of being transparent in their relationship with donors. This facilitates receiving further funds from donor agencies.
- 2. Writing proposals:** Numerous participants mentioned that the proposals they had submitted to donor agencies were refused because of technical and structural issues in writing. As a result, several PRIs started recruiting researchers to write proposals on their

behalf, which burdened the institutes with additional expenses.

- 3. Receiving feedback:** The participating PRIs complained of the lack of feedback from donor agencies after a proposal is rejected. They also highlighted the need to obtain such feedback in preparation for applying to new grants.
- 4. Conducting pilot studies:** Another challenge reported by participants was the cost of conducting pilot studies, which is a prerequisite that some donors often demand from the institutes when applying for a grant.
- 5. Covering administrative costs:** Participants pointed out the issue of covering the cost of permanent administrative employees (as an indirect cost). Administrative cost can become a burden on some institutes since it is not usually included in the budgets of funded projects.
- 6. Political issues:** Participants mentioned that political issues sometimes influence government funding. The relationship between the government and the PRIs is politicized. Policy-makers will not often accept to fund a project unless it serves their political and sectarian interests.

Donor's Perspective

This session aimed at presenting the donor agencies' perspective on funding issues and to familiarize the participants with donors' funding requirements and procedures. The session was moderated by a representative of the delegation of the European Union, an active donor in the region. The presenter highlighted the gap that still exists between research and policy-making in the region. One reason for this gap is that research is not policy-relevant, thus, it was recommended that PRIs produce research relevant to the interests and priorities of donors and governments – while taking into consideration that donors need *tangible*

outputs. A list of criteria important for donor agencies was devised and presented during the workshop as follows:

1. PRIs should respect the administrative criteria and abide by donor agencies' timelines (which are often underestimated).
2. The project should match the strategic plans and priorities of the donor agency.
3. PRIs should focus on a specific sector and field of study to gain credibility.
4. Partnerships are highly valued by donors.
5. Proposals should be well-written, and the financial section should be very clear and transparent.
6. Activities of the project should be in line with the objectives of the project and the organization.

The donor agency representative also noted that the competition for funds is high; therefore, it is essential for a proposal to address all the listed criteria in for better chances at being funded.

Case Study on Funding Strategies within PRIs

This session presented the findings of a case study conducted by the IFI team on the funding strategies of PRIs in Lebanon. The case study⁴ mapped the different aspects of funding of PRIs, looking closely at the following: sources of funding, biggest expenditures, auditing procedures, procedures followed to obtain funds, and factors influencing funding. Participants then discussed the case study as it relates to their individual institutes, highlighting the following aspects which concur with the findings of the case study conducted in Lebanon:

4 See "The Funding of Policy Research Institutes in Lebanon" available at http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/rapp/rapp_research/Documents/capri_report/20120905_CAPRI_2nd_Technical_workshop.pdf

- 1. Sources of funding:** It was reported that the main sources of funding for Arab PRIs are international donor agencies, such as International Development Research Center (IDRC), European embassies, and United Nations agencies. Participants indicated that government funding is lacking in general, and regional funding is minimal or it is usually directed towards cultural studies rather than research.
- 2. Biggest expenditures:** PRIs' biggest expenditures as reported by participants and the findings of the case study are: human resource expenditures (such as recruiting researchers and administrative staff) and costs incurred from organizing events.
- 3. Auditing procedures:** It was reported that two kinds of auditing procedures are followed: internal and external. The participants pointed out that it is critical to maintain financial auditing procedures to guarantee transparency and accountability, which helps the institute in gaining and maintaining the needed credibility for receiving further funding. The participants within the study and at the workshop both agreed that writing proposals is the main procedure followed to obtain funds for institutes. Furthermore, personal communication with donors facilitates the process.
- 4. Factors influencing funding:** The discussion showed that funding fluctuates over time and is affected by different factors. For example, as participants mentioned, funding from European governments has decreased in recent years because of the European financial crisis. Moreover, funding shifts from one country to another according to interests of donors. In addition, fundraising for certain topics has been observed to be easier than others, according to the donor's priorities and current "hot" issues. For example, funding has been given more abundantly to countries of the "Arab Spring" that are currently considered of high priority to donors. In addition, several participants have mentioned that some

Western governments employ political interests in the region by funding projects which serve their welfares. The participants also complained of the “conditioned funding” where PRIs are forced to change their agendas if they were to receive financial support.

Resource Mobilization Strategies

Dr. Fadia Homeidan, the Director of the Office of Grants and Contracts at AUB, shared her long experience in funding strategies and resource mobilization with the participants. The session focused on the techniques and strategies of resource mobilization, which include aspects of fundraising and grants management. Issues on the relationship between donor agencies and PRIs, successful fundraising and management as well as technical issues in proposal writing were discussed. Dr. Homeidan presented the main constituents an organization must have to raise funds:

1. Mission/vision
2. Good reputation
3. Credibility and transparency
4. Programs and activities with clear positive effects on society
5. Policies and procedures (on partnerships/ financial and grant management)
6. Strong monitoring and evaluation system
7. Strong financial system
8. Ability to communicate, negotiate and attract resources

The presentation also included the Dos and Don'ts in a proposal:

Dos	Don'ts
Set realistic timeframes	Be vague
Allocate sufficient time for planning, feedback and revision of the proposal	Be over-ambitious
Be clear and concise	Lose your ideas in poor style
Be specific and show details	Talk in jargon
Use arguments to substantiate statements	
Show that your mission fits the mission and objectives of the donor	

Furthermore, Dr. Homeidan pointed out the importance of highlighting in the proposals a comprehensive case statement presenting the organization and revealing the reason why funding the project is important. Dr. Homeidan stressed the importance of writing good proposals and presenting clear budget details and correct financial reports. She also spoke of the importance of partnerships in supporting proposals and provided the participants with a list of databases (e.g. Grantsnet) where they can find a number of funding opportunities with the priorities of donors listed as well.

Concluding Remarks

PRIs in the Arab World are facing difficulties and challenges in funding. International funding fluctuates and depends strongly on the priorities of donor agencies, the interests of foreign governments and “hot” issues. PRIs are also facing difficulties in writing proposals and preparing financial

reports, which constitute a problem with their relationship with donors. The workshop identified the need for PRIs to pursue training on proposal-writing, proposals, financial management and financial report preparation. Such training is important in raising and managing funds efficiently within Arab PRIs as well as in building PRIs' capacities, enhancing their roles in advocacy, and impacting public policy-making.

C. Knowledge Translation: Bridging the Gap between Research and Policy

February 28, 2013, Beirut

Overview

The third technical workshop of the CAPRI project was held at AUB on February 28th 2013, under the title "Knowledge Translation: Bridging the Gap between Research and Policy". Participants joined the workshop from Iraq, Egypt, Qatar and Lebanon.

The workshop aimed at providing a platform for sharing successful experiences on knowledge translation as part of the policy-making process. Previous workshops had addressed technical issues of communication and funding among PRIs. This workshop was timely as it highlighted the existing gap between research and public policies and the critical need to make research more relevant to policy-making.

In the knowledge translation process, facilitators presented both the perspective of the researcher as well as that of the civil society organizations and PRIs. Case studies were presented to illustrate how research produced in academic settings is transformed into knowledge, which informs policy decisions and is relevant to policy-makers and other key actors in civil society.

Case Study: The Tobacco Law Case in Lebanon

Mrs. Rania Baroud, Board Member of the Tobacco Free Initiative, described the development of events which culminated in the establishment of successful legislation to ban smoking in public places in Lebanon. The series of advocacy events began with a petition against indoor smoking while she was working at a local television channel. This petition received support from a number of stakeholders and ended up in legislation that became effective in September 2011.

The Role of Scientific Evidence

Baroud highlighted the role of scientific evidence essential in forging public support around the cause as well as the role AUB has played in providing the needed supporting scientific evidence and thus giving more credibility to the campaign. For example, information on the dangers of smoking on an individual's health was available in Lebanon before the advocacy campaign began. However, this information was never communicated to the public until a partnership was established between civil society organizations and AUB's Faculty of Health Sciences. The evidence-informed research complemented the collective advocacy efforts. The scientific evidence provided by researchers at AUB was used to target the different stakeholder groups in society, using information which appealed to each group. For example, information about the poisonous chemical elements in cigarettes were presented in the study in a simplified language by comparing them to chemical elements found in everyday cleaning products. Therefore, the *"know-how"* of communicating with stakeholders was essential and proved very effective.

In addition, collaboration with scientific researchers has provided the campaign with specific scientific evidence in a timely manner. For example, the advocacy campaign was ready to respond to the hard data provided by restaurant owners who protested against the law claiming that it would have a negative impact on their businesses. They supported

their claims with scientific data from a study conducted by one of the leading international consulting firms. In response, faculty members at AUB developed a study to further support the proposed law and refute the claims of restaurant owners.

Therefore, the advocacy campaign would not have been successful without the availability of relevant and timely scientific evidence provided by researchers at AUB, nor would it have succeeded without the efforts of the PRIs in making the evidence accessible to policy-makers.

Knowledge Translation Tools

Dr. Fadi El-Jardali, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Health Sciences, presented an overview of knowledge translation tools and strategies that can be used in policy-making.

Key Challenges to the Link between Research and Policy

Three key challenges have been found to present the link between research and policy:

- Irrelevant research
- Devaluation of research in the policy-making process
- Difficulty to use research “as-is”

Although data and scientific evidence may sometimes be available, there exists a number of problems with the dissemination and effective utilization of this data. A recent study surveyed 238 researchers from 12 countries in the Arab Region. The study looked at the use of health systems and policy research evidence in the health policy-making in Eastern Mediterranean countries (El-Jardali, Lavis, Ataya & Jamal, 2012). Findings showed that only 16 percent of the participants interacted with policy-makers and stakeholders in priority settings, and 19.8 percent involved policy-makers in the process of developing their research.

As for research dissemination, it was found that researchers are more likely to transfer their research findings to other researchers (67.2 percent) rather than to policy-makers (40.5 percent).

The timing of the release of any research is also significant, as illustrated by Dr. El-Jardali. According to the study, a substantial 40.1 percent of the research was reported not to have been delivered at the right time.

A number of strategies were identified as tools to overcome these challenges and bridge the gap between research and policy:

- **Policy briefs:** The policy brief includes the characterization of the problem, description of three viable policy options, benefits and harms in adopting any of the listed policy options, and description of barriers to implementation. Policy briefs can be used to inform, consult, and involve stakeholders at different stages of the policy-making process.
- **Policy dialogues:** Policy dialogues include grouping together different stakeholders in order to discuss policy briefs. Conducting such dialogues can help clarify the problems and solutions. It can also contribute to effective implementation of public policies.

Capacity building of PRIs and civil society organizations was also strongly recommended in order to facilitate their capability to influence policy-making. Moreover, enhancing human and financial resources of parliamentary committees may enable the policy-makers' access to evidence.

Current Views on and Practices of Knowledge Translation in the Arab World

A number of participants shared their experiences on knowledge translation, and particularly highlighted how research contributed to public policy-making. Among the issues presented were:

- **Timing of the research:** The timing when the research was released to the public was very critical as it coincided with a national event that was expected to have a significant political impact. The research provided a national and international debate which would potentially influence the national event.
- **Key informants:** In the process of developing research, researchers interviewed key stakeholders such as ministers, policy-makers, civil society actors, and tribal leaders (where applicable). Engaging the different stakeholders eventually increased the credibility and accuracy of the research.
- **PRI's credibility:** One of the participating institutes gained credibility and recognition for it had established a history in conducting policy-relevant research in the country in which it operates. As a result, the local government began to consult this PRI as an expert on providing relevant evidence for decision-making on a number of pressing local issues, such as electoral reforms and natural gas policies.

Concluding Remarks

The workshop addressed the utilization of scientific evidence in public policy-making and highlighted the gap between research and policy formulation. It was agreed that communicating research findings is as important as its content, given the availability of various institutions and/or channels for such research to pave its way to the public. Traditional outreach methods include mass media and civil society groups. More sophisticated methods, which are usually designed to influence public policies, include policy briefs and policy dialogues. In this context, PRIs need to address policy-makers in a targeted approach. The right approach along with timing, efficiency, accuracy and credibility of research contribute to better formulation of public policies.

V. Conclusion

The CAPRI project has been pioneering in exploring policy research institutes in the Arab World, which is an area that has been understudied. It particularly focuses on studying the role of PRIs in the policy-making process in the Arab World, which is a rather complicated and non-linear process. Its various activities, among which were the workshops presented throughout this report, have enabled a deeper understanding of the state of PRIs in the Arab World today. The project addressed a number of issues throughout its activities, such as relationships among PRIs, governments, donors, and civil society organizations; defining the strategic role of PRIs in the region, funding opportunities, creating strategic communications, interacting with policy-makers and many more. There is an obvious need for more clarity regarding the definition of a PRI, agenda-setting protocols, funding schemes and capacity-building. These pressing issues, among others, have been echoed as priorities of PRIs that have participated in the workshops conducted in the past three years at IFI. The dynamic changes that have gripped the Arab World have forced a paradigm shift whereby it is necessary for the research community to rethink even the most basic aspects of policy-making, particularly the local and regional political environment in which policy is produced in the region.

The role of PRIs has evolved into a more influential one during the transition period in the Arab World, including instances of exceptional suggestions and recommendations in support of the emerging Arab states. The media plays a significant role in helping PRIs in raising awareness about their role among the general public, civil society and decision-makers. Therefore, it is critical for PRIs to work towards bridging the gap between the different actors in society through public policy dialogues. Lobbying for change and striving for transparency increase PRIs' potential impact on policy-making. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems for the assessment of research and work of Arab PRIs and the establishment of a waqf financial

endowment are among the strategies suggested for improving PRIs' impact on the policy-making process.

A number of topics pertaining to Arab PRIs are highlighted in this report, including strategic communications, funding strategies and knowledge translation tools. Strategic communications for PRIs in the Arab World relies heavily on an understanding of the PRI's role and target audience within the policy-making process. Strategic planning is critical for the success of a PRI, particularly in the early stages of program or project development, to ensure that the desired outcomes and impact of policy research are achieved. As for the persistent challenge of funding, PRIs in the Arab World are heavily dependent on international funding that fluctuates and relies strongly on the priorities of donor agencies, the interests of foreign governments and "hot" topics. This calls for more local and regional funding to support the work of indigenous PRIs. Among the funding constraints faced by PRIs are also difficulties in writing proposals and preparing financial reports. There is a need to help local PRIs become self-reliant in raising and managing funds efficiently. The CAPRI workshops also addressed issues pertaining to knowledge translation (KT) tools and strategies. The utilization of scientific evidence in public policy-making and the need to bridge the gap between research and policy-making are critical in KT efforts put forth by PRIs. It is essential to communicate research findings in an appropriate manner in order to reach different stakeholders. Aside from the mass media, methods exist that are specifically tailored to policy-makers as a target audience, including policy briefs and policy dialogues. There are also methods designed to influence public policies. In this context, PRIs need to address policy-makers in a targeted approach. The right approach along with timing, efficiency, accuracy and credibility of research contribute to a better formulation of public policies.

Over the past three years, the CAPRI project has explored the general state of PRIs in the Arab World today, and when necessary, delved into more specific issues facing PRIs. The latter was achieved through the technical workshops on strategic communications, funding challenges

and opportunities, and knowledge translation presented throughout this report. After having gained a substantial amount of knowledge and identified key issues that need to be addressed, CAPRI will be taking a more focused approach in studying PRIs in the Arab World. Three forthcoming workshops will be held by IFI as part of the CAPRI project. In order to leverage efforts and benefit from collaboration and coordination among leading institutes, a stocktaking meeting will gather these institutes that are currently exploring PRIs in the Arab region with the purpose of identifying common areas of interest and policy priorities. IFI will also meet with PRIs and individual researchers in order to harness local and regional knowledge, offer researchers an opportunity to present their work in the area of research on PRIs and policy-making with a focus on the MENA region, and identify priority topics that need further investigation. IFI will then organize a meeting with policy-makers in order to gain a deeper understanding of their needs and priorities, and to create an awareness of the existing efforts of regional and local PRIs within the policy-making arena. Finally, IFI will carry out in-depth national case studies of policy research institutes in four Arab countries with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding of this recent phenomenon of think tanks in the Arab World. In addition, IFI will forge links between PRIs and policymakers through joint meetings and workshops. This approach will help provide a holistic view of the research-policy-making link and will systematically enable the identification of policy priorities from the perspectives of the different stakeholders, and hence being able to take action accordingly. The pioneering and extensive research IFI is undertaking on the role of think tanks and research in devising evidence-based policy brings forth a comprehensive understanding of PRIs in the Arab world. This understanding of the role, impact, opportunities and challenges of PRIs in the Arab world is essential and timely as regimes shift and governance structures change in the region. It entails a deeper understanding of the complex policy-making contexts of the region. Bridging the gap between research and policy-making will be one of the innovative approaches to building a democratic country where decisions are made by the informed people, for the people.

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