An Approach to Assessing Governance

How can we effectively assess and analyse governance issues? Most commentators highlight the challenges and that current approaches provide poor ways of assessing key governance processes. Without advances on how to assess governance, our understanding will remain unnecessarily limited regarding how governance varies across the world, what role governance really plays in development, and what aspects of it may be particularly critical.

Based on extensive testing, we believe we have developed a reliable approach to generating valid data on governance issues. We developed an approach using a balanced group of well-informed persons (WIPs) - respondents who have a high degree of experience and expertise regarding governance at the national level. The WIP approach was shown to be feasible, relatively low cost and generated meaningful results.

Step-by-step Overview:

Country Coordinators: The first task is to identify a country coordinator/institution in each country. The country coordinator then prepares a short background governance report on the country. The country coordinator, with the assistance of the WGA staff, also develops the sampling frame.

Sampling: The coordinator then develops a list of all relevant persons in 10 WIP groups which include parliamentarians, civil servants, government officials, business persons, academics and NGOs. These persons should have extensive experience of the governance realm. The coordinator, with help from the WGA team will select the final sample of WIPs within these 10 different groups. It is desirable to include at least 100 respondents per country in the assessment - i.e. 10 from each key stakeholder group.

Data Collection: The governance assessment exercise (background work, survey preparation, data collection and reporting) at the country level is the most cost-intensive component of the approach. Our belief is that the key to feasibility, as well as cost control, for the WGA lies in exploiting the use of the Internet. As well as our paper survey, we have developed an online version of the WGA survey. This survey instrument utilizes custom programming and a robust database format. The online survey tool has many valuable features, such as confidentiality, a simple fast-loading format and the ability for respondents to stop at any point in the survey and return later to finish, picking up where they left off. Country coordinators can use this same online survey instrument to enter data from respondents who choose to complete the survey using the paper version.

The WGA Governance Index: The governance index used in the pilot phase demonstrated very high levels of inter-item reliability and good correlation with existing credible indicators where relevant. In addition to ranking each answer, respondents are invited to provide comments; thus the approach also generates very rich qualitative data.

Study Management: Back-up support from a survey specialist is important for ensuring reliable data. To save time, lower costs and provide support, country coordinators in our work use the project's web site and project management module to manage their samples and data collection. We monitor the progress in each country in real time and assist country coordinators as needed.

Source:
Making Sense of Governance: The Need for Involving Local Stakeholders Goran Hyden, Julius Court and Kenneth Mease (2003) Development Dialog.
Conclusions in 16 Developing Countries Goran Hyden, Julius Court and Kenneth Mease (2003) World Governance Survey Discussion Paper 10.