Influencing of Policy and Public Management Program

Reducing Poverty by Improving Public Policy and Public Administration in Bolivia

Impact Assessment - Executive Summary

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The “Influencing Policy and Public Management Program” is a program through which Bolivia’s Fundación Jubileo (FJ) seeks to address the country’s continuing high levels of extreme poverty through improved public policy and public administration outcomes. This connection between improved public policy and administration outcomes and reductions in poverty rates is the fundamental assumption of FJ’s theory of change. In addition to using its own relationships and access to information in order to influence key policy debates, the Foundation works to build the capacity of other civil society actors to successfully influence those debates. This study focuses on an assessment of the impact of Jubileo’s advocacy work during the period, 2008-2011. The Foundation emerged out of the international debate on how to address the stifling indebtedness of one the world’s most impoverished countries, but, over time, Jubileo broadened its interventions to cover a wide range of governance and political participation issues.

This assessment uses a methodology known as Process Tracing to determine the impact of Jubileo’s interventions over the period in question. Based on Jubileo’s own identification of the Most Significant Outcomes of its work, the analysis focuses on four major outcome areas:

1) Repositioning of the Central Bank of Bolivia on key issues related to Bolivia’s external debt;
2) The decision of Bolivia’s Catholic Church to create an integrated information system;
3) Civil society – municipal government dialogue in the municipality of El Alto; and
4) The approval of a draft law on Social Monitoring in the Municipality of La Paz.

In addition to the establishment of the context of the report, the data collection activities supporting this research focused on the analysis of these impact claims from the following five angles:

- Nature of available evidence;
- Validation of outcome claim;
- Relative significance of outcome;

1 That well-targeted and effective government policy in a variety of areas can reduce poverty is a well-established precept of the entire development enterprise. That said, debate continues concerning the extent to which government should involve itself in poverty reduction efforts. See, CIDA’s Poverty Reduction Strategy, http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/inet/images.nsf/vLUImages/Policy/Sfile/POVERTY%20.pdf for a discussion of the Canadian government’s exploration of the connection posed by Fundación Jubileo. In Bolivia, for the time being, this issue has been resolved and the government actively claims to be contributing to the reduction in poverty there through social policy.
• Causal explanation; and
• Nature of Fundación Jubileo’s contribution to the outcome.

While we find considerable variation among outcomes in terms of the apparent impact of the Fundación Jubileo intervention, we conclude that the Foundation occupies a unique and quite strategic space at the current moment in Bolivia. A variety of actors share the view of Jubileo as a credible source of information and analysis on critical social and economic issues at a moment when evidence-based analysis of this sort is in short supply. It holds a clear and consistent position in support of the rights of Bolivia’s poor majority, but is capable of open dialogue on delicate issues with nearly all sectors of a highly-polarized society. Not content to limit itself to a knowledge creation and information dissemination role, Jubileo uses its position to advance its own advocacy agenda and to support other civil society actors in building the capacity to advance their agendas. Limited by resource availability and a political context in which serious, evidence-based advocacy remains distinctly counter-cultural, Jubileo’s advocacy interventions are consistently directed toward policy positions and public management approaches that the Foundation believes will help diminish Bolivia’s persistently high rates of extreme poverty. As it approaches the tenth anniversary of its formal establishment, Fundación Jubileo faces a variety of important strategic and operational questions, especially in regard to the eternal challenges of sustainability and leadership development. Oxfam Great Britain is well positioned to accompany the Foundation in its effort to resolve these key questions and to support the continuation of its unique and important mission.