**Feb 4 Launch Event Remarks – R. Struyk**

On behalf of NORC, especially the international program, and all of the trainers I want to say how pleased we are to be working with EPF and the Consortiums on this project. Let me start by quickly introducing NORC and the trainers leading the workshops.

NORC at the University of Chicago is an 80-year-old think tank with about 800 staff. It has roots as an elite survey organization. Its data-based heritage has shaped its analytical work. In the past 20 years it has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration. It has a large policy research program in transition and developing countries.

**Staff**

Let me now briefly introduce the program’s four highly-qualified trainers. (More complete statements are on the project web page.)

Armen Varosyan brings over 15 years of especially relevant experience in local democracy and local economic development; in particular, his expertise arises from supporting local governments in improvement of municipal services, promoting community development and public participation, and empowering young local leaders. He directs the Urban Foundation for Sustainable Development.

Penny Paturyan holds a PhD in political science from Jacobs University in Bremen Germany and is now on the faculty at AUA, after a stint at EPF. She teaches the university’s course on public policy analysis among others and has frequently published research in refereed journals.

Harutyun Vermishyan leads the SOCIES Expert Center. Most relevant for us is that he developed the training module “Research Methods for Social Scientists” and has delivered related certificate courses for CSO representatives and young scientists. He also teaches the course, “Research Design and Methods.” Mr. Vermishyan has authored over 30 publications.

[Raymond Struyk] I am the team leader for the workshops. I hold a PhD in economics. Before turning to international work in the 1980s I worked at the Urban Institute in Washington and was the Assistance Minister for Research and Evaluation at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development during the Jimmy Carter Presidency.

I have been active in working with think tanks, and advocacy CSOs to a lesser extent, since helping colleagues in Hungary and Russia found think tanks in the early 1990s.

My experience in Armenia consists of advising on the USAID-funded Earth Quake Zone Recovery Program for four years and in 2006 and 7 advising on the development of Armenia’s mortgage market, with support from KfW and the IFC.

**Training Program**

The backbone of the program is seven workshops, each ranging between a half-day and multiple full-day equivalent meetings. In-class problem sets and homework assignment are common. The program aims to strengthen the ability of CSOs to develop evidence-based policy recommendations and communicate them effectively in the policy arena. The program follows what is sometimes called the “value chain policy process” for evidence-based policy advocacy.

As you might expect the cycle begins with issue definition and concludes with a communications program that marshals data and analysis to advocate for policy change.

Instead of going through every step of the process, I want to touch on the first two which experience suggests are particularly critical.

**1. Defining the policy issue comprehensively and accurately**

Achieving this goal requires that analysts look at the issue or question under consideration from the differing perspectives of various stakeholders, define its magnitude or prevalence and whether the problem is stable or increasing, common across the country and population groups or concentrated in certain regions and sub-populations, and possibly other characteristics.

This is also the stage where possible interventions are initially considered and a sense of whether in broad terms the problem can be addressed with the tools and resources at hand.

**2. Development of the analysis plan**

This is the stage at which a step-by-step process for analyzing an issue, defining hypotheses for its causes and possible responses that may lead to improvement.

Take the example of a social assistance program, one that is an entitlement program, but which has lower participation rates than would be expected based on population profile data. The long-term goal or outcome for addressing the issue is now defined.

At this stage testable hypotheses are also developed for why participation is low and concrete plans made for testing them. One hypothesis is that the local government offices that handle the intake of households into the program may be inefficient and some staff even rude to applicants thus discouraging participation as word of negative experiences spreads though the community.

Then plans are made to test the various hypotheses. What indicators are sought to do so? What will be the data sources? How will the data be analyzed, that is, what sort of statistical analysis is appropriate?

Lastly, the team then asks what is the outcome from analysis likely to be. Is it consistent with the long-term outcome goal? Are the benefits likely to be sufficiently great to justify program expenditures.

This is also a good time for the CSO to bring in potential partners it will need in the advocacy stage. You need their advice now to enrich the research and to induce them to help advocate later.

Evidently the analysis plan step is critical in the overall cycle.

In sum, my experience is that focusing on the full “value chain policy process” is an appropriate and effective approach for assisting CSOs make their arguments for change more credible and compelling. Thank you.