

***Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs***

***Research, Advocacy and Public Policy-making Program***

***Open Call for Research Papers***

***Policy Research Institutes: The State of Emergent Stakeholders  
in Public Policy-making in the Arab World***

The Research, Advocacy and Public Policy Program (RAPP) at the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs is issuing a call for proposals for papers to be presented during a meeting entitled “Policy Research Institutes (PRIs): The State of Emergent Stakeholders in Public Policy-making in the Arab World”. The meeting will offer an opportunity for researchers to present their work in the area of research and policy-making with a focus on Policy Research Institutes (PRIs), think tanks, civil society organizations and other similar organizations in the MENA region. The meeting will provide an opportunity for sharing knowledge from real world case studies that show a clear intersection between the work of PRIs and policy making processes in each of the countries of the Arab world. Papers deemed of high quality may be considered for documentation in a book that will be developed and published later at IFI.

The general theme of the call for papers looks at the different aspects and issues that relate to PRIs in the Arab world. The Call invites researchers to use a critical lens to provide a better understanding of these institutions that have emerged as significant players in a number of cases across the countries of the region. Researchers are invited to submit proposals that may address one or more of the following sub-themes:

- Defining PRIs: How can we describe *think tanks* in the Arab world?
- The relationship of PRIs and the state and / or non-state actors
- The evolution of PRIs and their influence on policy-making: before and after the Arab uprisings
- Funding of Arab PRIs or think tanks: challenges and opportunities
- Strategic communications and knowledge translation: how do PRIs communicate with target audience
- Role of PRIs or civil society organizations in setting the agenda including the use of evidence in informing policy-deliberations
- Role of PRIs or civil society organizations in advocacy: how do PRIs, think tanks and civil society organizations interact with policymakers when advocating for an issue? What is the role of media in this dynamic?
- Monitoring and evaluation frameworks: measuring outcome and impact of PRIs in policy-making processes

- Networking among PRIs in the Arab region and beyond
- Comparative analysis of think tanks: a comparative look at the Arab region and the West

Researchers are welcome to submit papers on these topics using a range of scholarly approaches including theoretical and empirical papers employing qualitative, quantitative and critical methods. Case studies are also welcomed.

### **Call for Papers | Deadline of proposal submission: August 15, 2014**

Please note that IFI will commission full research papers by September 15, 2014. Full research papers are due **6 months** after signature of the contract.

Research papers can be structured according to (but not exclusively):

1. Sector (e.g comparative analysis of PRIs working in a specific sector within one country or across the Arab world)
2. Country (e.g PRIs in Lebanon)

### **Background**

In the past few years, the Arab world witnessed a growth in the number of policy research institutes established in countries across the Arab world. However, these institutes have yet to become prevalent in the region. Some argue that the think tanks in the MENA region are still developing, which may be quite a controversial indicator as the world of think tanks in the Arab world is a very complex one where numbers of think tanks in other regions may be argued to be quite inflated.

Studying policy research institutes (PRIs) in the Arab world is essential to provide a better understanding of the policy-making contexts of the countries across the region. Over the last two years, IFI's RAPP program has focused some of its activities towards engaging with policy research institutes, think tanks, and research centers across the Arab World, to explore their collective activities, aims, outputs, outcomes 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. The RAPP program has initially organized this effort under a project entitled the Consortium of Arab Policy Research Institutes (CAPRI). Many activities and research efforts conducted under the banner of the project on PRIs in the Arab world, previously known as CAPRI, allows for a better understanding of the complexities, constraints and opportunities that define the work of PRIs in the Arab World today, both before and after the uprisings and revolutions.<sup>1</sup> While the environment in which PRIs operate may be rapidly changing, their primary goals and impacts remain relatively constant.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on the RAPP Program and the CAPRI project is available here:

[http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public\\_policy/rapp/rapp\\_research/Pages/ifi\\_rapp\\_capri\\_project.aspx](http://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/rapp/rapp_research/Pages/ifi_rapp_capri_project.aspx)

For a compilation of outcomes from the series of workshops held by the RAPP program, check the monograph report:

A number of issues have emerged as significant in the world of PRIs in the Arab world, among which several were highlighted in our project on PRIs, such as: 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 user friendly and easily available to policy-makers, media and others; and potential cooperation among PRIs in the Arab World. Arab PRIs continue to struggle with and work diligently on overcoming a number of common constraints to achieve their full potential of key stakeholders in the public world of policy-making. These include choosing the issues on which to focus when 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 state of PRIs and policy-making in the Arab region is characterized by a lack of regular interaction among decision makers and civil society. Arab PRIs seem to have low visibility which has so far resulted in their limited impact on policy-making. Furthermore, Arab officials do not regularly call on PRIs expertise for a number of reasons, particularly the absence of accountable governance systems. Another distinctive feature of the Arab region is the lack of stability in the region and the dynamic landscape of PRIs with 45 new institutes starting up and 16 others closing down since 2009.<sup>2</sup> 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. 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.

### **Submission Guidelines**

We invite interested participants to submit proposals (1000 words) for research papers by August 15, 2014. High quality papers can contribute to developing a policy brief on the topic of interest and to inform dialogue among stakeholders. Proposals should be sent to Dr. Hana A. El-Ghali, Senior Program Coordinator of the Research, Advocacy, and Public Policy-making program at IFI: [ha58@aub.edu.lb](mailto:ha58@aub.edu.lb)

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[https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public\\_policy/rapp/Documents/20140331ifi\\_RAPP\\_monograph.pdf](https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/public_policy/rapp/Documents/20140331ifi_RAPP_monograph.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> CAPRI, “A Preliminary Overview of Policy Research Institutes in the Arab World: A Compilation and Synthesis Report”, (2014), p. 18.

Proposals should include:

- 1) Title
- 2) Scope of work
- 3) Research questions
- 4) Methodology
- 5) Research timeline
- 6) Budget
- 7) CV of applicant (Including a list of published articles)

A research award ranging from \$7000- \$15000 will be granted to the commissioned researchers to facilitate their research and field work. The amount given will depend on the nature and scope of the submitted research proposal. Please note that the grant will cover additionally travel expenses to participate in the conference. In addition, please note that AUB requires that all studies granted honorariums obtain IRB approval<sup>3</sup>.

### **Audience**

Researchers and scholars, as well as directors of policy research institutes, think tanks and interested civil society organizations with relevant work are invited to submit their proposals.

### **Decision Process/Timeline/Important Dates**

Each submission will be reviewed by an internal committee. IFI will commission full research papers on September 15, 2014. The date for the full research paper submission is 6 months after signature of contract. The presentation of research papers will occur at a conference to be held at AUB in May, 2015.

### **Contact Information**

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<sup>3</sup> For more information about seeking IRB approval at AUB, please visit the following link:  
<http://www.aub.edu.lb/irb/Pages/index.aspx>