



AFKAR 2: 2nd GCC Think Tank Dialogue  
"The Impact of Think Tanks in Societal Development"  
July 7, 2012, Salalah

[PARTNERS]



الرؤية



## [WELCOME NOTE]

“WELCOME TO AFKAR 2; 2nd GCC Think Tanks and Development Dialogue, in Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. Our desired end results is that through sharing ideas; progress will be made in two relevant areas upon the conclusion of the discussions of this workshop. First; strengthening networking and stakeholder engagement potential of Think Tanks in GCC. Second, offering constructive and sustainable impact assessment solutions. You are here because you are viewed by the Steering Committee as a valuable stakeholder with practical background relevant to moving societies in GCC forward. Therefore, we are truly honored to be your hosts, and hope that these modest efforts in facilitating brainstorming and networking between thinkers and stakeholders will positively exceed your expectations.”

Nasra Abdulrahman Al Adawi  
On behalf of AFKAR 2 Steering Committee



## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Tawasul, driven by its mission to empower Civil Society through training and knowledge is pleased to present its 2nd GCC Think Tanks dialogue on “The impact of Think Tanks in Societal Development”

Tawasul is the first independent private Think Tank in the Sultanate of Oman and has been actively participating in enhancing future leaders with capacity building and training, providing high quality policy research papers, enhancing shared and social engagement, and last but not least providing platforms to engage public opinion.

### Objectives

- 1- Strengthening the networking, effectiveness and impact of Think Tanks in the GCC region and extending the existing framework of action to synergize their sustainable development.
- 2- Identifying stakeholders and elaborating measures to engage them into projects relevant to Society within a changing environment.
- 3- Offering constructive and sustainable patterns on how Think Tanks can contribute to empower the public, private and “third” sector to jointly capitalize on opportunities in youth participation.

## [SUMMARY OF 1ST DIALOGUE ON THINK TANKS IN THE GULF]

THE 1ST DIALOGUE ON THINK TANKS IN THE GULF WAS HELD ON JULY 7TH, 2011 IN SALALAH WITH THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:

- Determining the status quo of Think Tanks in the GCC region and identifying their strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats.
- Deducing a framework of action to synergize sustainable development of TTs in the region.
- Developing support and guidance schemes by Think Tanks to CSOs in the region.

The Dialogue drew a lot of attention from the media and a great diversity of participants. The Dialogue assumed the form of a one day seminar comprised of three sessions as follows:

### **First Session: Setting the Context**

Brief presentation on the paper: From Research to Policy: a trajectory to development in the GCC.

- Critique and synthesis of sub themes for the working groups.
- Q and A session.

**Second Session:** develop a framework for action with some indicators and timeline based on the results of the working groups.

Break out session to three work groups:

1. Strategic Framework, Tasks and Missions: such as engaging Public Opinion.
2. Infancy of the market of ideas and Resource Development.
3. Government relations and Synergy.

### **Third Session: Concluding session**

- Presentation of rapporteurs brief.
- Identifying the next steps.
- Evaluation

The Dialogue confirmed the following:

- The diversity of Think Tank models in the Gulf is in line with others in the world. Similarly, the challenges met are the same;
- it is better to keep this diversity for at least 5 years to allow for new models to emerge, as Think Tanks are still in their infancy in the region;
- more concerted effort is needed in terms of joint action plans and advocacy, which is needed more in the case of home grown Think Tanks as opposed to international ones operating in the region; and
- consistent rapprochement efforts are required with government authorities focusing at the beginning on loosening the tight regulatory framework and creating complementarily and confidence among decision makers, public and Think Tanks.

## [PROGRAM]

Fri, July 6

Arrival & Welcome networking dinner at Al Fanal Restaurant at Juweira Boutique Hotel.

### [MORNING SESSION]

Sat, July 7

8.30 Bus transfer from Juweira Boutique Hotel to Hilton Hotel

8.45-9.00 Registration.

9.00-9.30 Greetings and introduction to closed-door meeting  
Nasra Al Adawi, CEO Tawasul

Key-note speech: "The Impact of Think Tanks in Societal Development" by Dr. Mohammed Al Fili.

9.30-10.30 Panel 1: "How to identify and engage stakeholders",  
Presentation by Dr. Obaid Al Younossi, Director of  
RAND-Qatar.

10.30-11.30 Panel 2: "Mechanisms of Impact Measurement -  
Setting Standards", Presentation of paper by Hania  
Beckdash, Independent Researcher, Global Connections  
Center (Tawasul).

### [COFFEE BREAK]



## [PROGRAM]

12.00-13.30 | Focus Group discussions

Group 1: Mechanisms for improving quality of indigenous research and accessibility to information.

Group 2: The quest for sustainability: Synergizing outputs.

Group 3: Optimizing outreach in continuously evolving environments.

13.30-14.00 | Conclusions and outcomes. Presentation of workgroup discussions and recommendations.

### [LUNCH]

15:00-17:00 | Optional Tour to Mughsail Beach and Job's Tomb- Ittin.

### [EVENING SESSION]

18:45 | Bus Transfer from Juweira Boutique Hotel to Hilton Hotel.

19.00-21.00 | Public dialogue on: "Youth, Participation and the Future"

Chaired by Dr. Saad Bin Taafra and Sheikh Sultan Al Qasbi.

Moderated by Fatma Al Araimi, Asst. Editor - Alam Al Iktisaad Wal A'mal (AIWA)

Sun, July 8 | Networking activity & Departure

## [POLICY PAPER ABSTRACT]

### [ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THINK TANKS IN THE GCC: MECHANISMS OF IMPACT MEASUREMENT SETTING STANDARDS]

THE overall aim of this paper is to provoke and add to a discussion on setting regional standards for policy impact assessment by think tanks in the GCC region. It argues that policy impact assessment is a necessary component for the strategic planning and effective policy impact of think tanks. The paper draws on original data gathered to reflect the current state of policy impact assessment by GCC think tanks which reflects that for the most part, think tanks in the GCC are not systematically measuring or considering their impact. Without dedicating time and resources to policy impact assessment, GCC think tanks are potentially missing opportunities to increase communication and access to constituencies, improve efficiency of their work, and develop better relationships with stakeholders.

The paper also draws from the current literature, including existing international handbooks, guides, and some regional think tanks initiatives, on policy impact assessment and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It synthesizes the information to highlight the most salient mechanisms that can be used to measure the impact of think tanks on decision-makers and society in the GCC region. It addresses the main issues and challenges of assessing think tank policy impact, especially in societies where more transparency, accountability, and civic participation is needed. Further, it proposes an overarching mechanism, in the form of a matrix of measurements, indicators, and evaluation methods, to assess the policy impact of GCC based think tanks intended to be subject to debate by experts in the field. The matrix is also meant to serve as the first attempt in a practical solution to identify and improve a think tank's policy impact. It may also be used for other types of civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations that would like to impact society and policymaking, such as advocacy groups and various associations.

BY HANIA BECKDASH