

- EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SEMINAR: PROF. VIVIEN LOWNDES

**When:** 26 May 2012

**Where:** Razak School of Government

**Who:** Professor Vivien Lowndes

**Target Group:** Agencies, ministries, non-governmental organisations and private sector

#### **About the Seminar:**

Professor Vivien Lowndes briefly shared her previous session at RSOG, which focuses on the importance of social capital and how it may be leveraged upon. She related the role of social capital with meaningful citizen participation in democratic practice – the topic of seminar. The design and delivery of effective citizen engagement was explored, with Prof. Lowndes sharing real-life examples, lessons, and its prospects. Prof. Lowndes began by asking two crucial questions – why involve citizens in public service delivery? And how can this be done most effectively?

#### **About the Speaker:**

Professor Vivien Lowndes is Director of Research in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham, UK. Vivien has conducted major research projects on social capital, community cohesion, citizen participation, partnership governance, public service reform and leadership for UK and European public sector clients, and for the major social science funders. Vivien Lowndes acted as Specialist Advisor to the House of Commons Public Administration Committee for its inquiry into innovations in participation, and was an Advisor to the Lyons Inquiry on Local Government. She is Deputy Chair of the Politics Sub-Panel for the Research Excellence Framework, which will assess research quality across UK higher education in 2014. Before becoming an academic, Vivien held research and policy posts in local government and several NGOs. She was previously Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) at De Montfort University, Leicester, and has also worked at Universities of Birmingham and Essex.

#### **Objectives:**

It is hoped that vibrant discussion that takes place would encourage the audience in the proposal, application, discussion and dissemination of ideas brought by Professor Vivien Lowndes in public service and the broader public.

#### **Questions and Issues Raised:**

1. Engagement reduces friction and creates better relationship.
2. In the UK, there is a high level of individualism and materialism so it can pose difficulty when a more collective mentality is required in identifying crucial improvements for certain groups.
3. Stage of development does allow room for up scaling resources and relationships but both are not necessarily a prerequisite to initiate engagement.

4. Engagement must not only be taught through civic education in schools but also to provide an avenue where it is practiced at an early age.
5. There is a link between public engagement and public diplomacy as both entails negotiation and dialogue.

### **Programme Outcome:**

1. Civic engagement gives public control over public service priorities, therefore assist in better delivery.
2. Services designed with input from citizens would ensure better policy and service implementation.
3. The ladder of participation – information, consultation, participation, control – requires clarity on the level of engagement to manage expectations.
4. Effective citizen engagement involves training and development of citizens and community leaders. It also requires politicians, policymakers, and civil servants to work in new ways, with new skills and orientations.
  5. Research shows that citizens participate when they:
    - a. Can do – have the resources and knowledge to engage
    - b. Like to – have a sense of attachment to their community and services
    - c. Enabled to – are mobilised through groups and associations
    - d. Asked to – are directly approached by policymakers and civil servants
    - e. Responded to – are able to see the evidence that their views have been considered
  6. Sustaining engagement initiatives are crucial.
7. While bureaucracy is good as it provides standardisation and systematic approach, engagement is about power.

### **Contact:**

To get more information on this event, you can contact us via email at [programmes@rsog.com.my](mailto:programmes@rsog.com.my)

### **Photo Gallery:**

[\(link to the gallery\)](#)