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Geological Surveys in developing countries - Analysis of strengths and weaknesses for different types of business models (public institutions vs state departments)

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Geological Survey Organizations set up by Governments in Developing Countries are based on two major different business models. In Africa and Asia, most of Geological Surveys are integrated into Ministries. But the trend goes towards more modern concepts separating the technical activities from the policy functions of Ministries in charge of Geology, Mines and Hydrocarbons.

SWOT analysis for Geological Surveys organized as technical departments within ministries

Strength

- Online Policy with the Ministry's strategy; at the heart of the core functions;
- Respect of the state interests and of ethical codes (equality for the access to data, expertise and independent advices).

Weaknesses

- Institutional Heaviness, inadequate governance regarding reactivity and efficiency needs;
- Inadequate resources allocated by the state to carry out its missions;
- Gap between objective of excellence and resources available;
- Disintegration of skills without strong support from the industry sector;
- Low or very low pay level.

SWOT analysis for Geological Surveys organized as autonomous public institutions:

Strength

- Flexible and responsive governance, under supervision of the ministries in a Board of Directors, independent management and activity based on project management;
- Clear accounting rules, sale prices negotiated with the State and a commercial approach with industry;
- Ability to develop its own programs of R&D (earnings reinvestment);
- More attractive salaries.

Weaknesses

- Inadequate resources allocated by the state for national programs;
- Risk of drift: profitability as a sole policy driver; ethics (monopolistic position i.e. refusal to guaranty a free access to public information);
- Position of "party and judge".

Conclusion

The Geological Surveys, worldwide, all show a common purpose. They are all dedicated to the building of a high level scientific knowledge of the underground and of the resources it contains for their rational exploitation. Most of the Geological surveys remain integrated into ministries in developing countries.

This situation handicaps them most commonly due to the low attractiveness of salaries reserved to the staff and the investments that are rarely in adequacy with their ambitions.

The trend toward the outsourcing of technical services from the Ministries (autonomous public institutions), appears inescapable. This trend seems to be the best way to answer to the needs of the Societies in Developing Countries

References:

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