

**MAKING THE STATE  
RESPONSIVE:  
EXPERIENCE WITH DEMOCRATIC  
GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS**

Edited by  
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## **Making The State Responsive: Experience With Democratic Governance Assessments**

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## FOREWORD

The current global crisis may point to more than a meltdown of financial markets. It also marks the failure of a doctrine and ideology that swept across the world and was dominant for close to 30 years. Briefly stated, in the words of Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, that doctrine held that government was “the problem”, and “that every problem can be solved if only government would step out of the way; that if government were ... dismantled ... that would benefit us all” (Obama, 2009:2). An old term was re-coined: ‘good governance’. With 18th century roots, the term served to give the impression that democracy was assured and prosperity would come if government would simply “step out of the way” (ibid.), giving free rein to governance by markets, all the way. We are currently reaping the fruits of this view, as governments in Europe and the United States are struggling to bail out ailing banks and enterprises. Not surprisingly, the countries that have so far escaped the worst of this calamity – China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, India, and Indonesia – are those where governments played a truly preponderant role, impervious to the maxims of neo-liberal thinking or donors’ conditionalities. Such countries are well represented in this UNDP publication, because they offer a contrast to the once dominant pattern and have a point to make and key messages to impart.

These newly emerging economies are trailblazers. The OECD predicts that, by 2015, the GDP of non-OECD economies will exceed that of the OECD countries. Thanks to these countries’ rising influence, they may over time reduce the relative weight of the traditional sources of development assistance, changing its configuration substantially. The emergence of the G-20 and the slowly changing profile of the global architecture are portents of new trends. But they also signal challenges. For those that are still known as ‘developing countries’ or the ‘third world’, the trends might signal a transition both from recipient to donor, and from passive onlookers to active and vocal participants in global deliberations and in the tasks of global governance. Not only is it important that all countries concerned rise to this major challenge, but UNDP must also take stock of this transition and adjust its long-term strategies accordingly.

It is no exaggeration that, on all levels of governance, the world may well be poised for major transformations, for a true shift in paradigm. We need to understand and learn from the lessons that experience of dealing with crises by both international agencies and governments across the globe may yield. Auspicious departures by some and repeated failures in others tell an important story that we should all heed. That is one critical message that this publication would like to impart. The pundits who

believed that we had seen the worst of the deepest global downturn in more than 80 years have yet to assess the damage for which simplistic models and doctrinaire prescriptions were partially responsible. We count the hurt in economic terms. However, on the social and ecological fronts, the downsides have been just as bad, if not worse. They have been documented in United Nations reports (UNDP, 2008) among others, and all too often swept under the carpet or simply explained away as the collateral damage of an otherwise sound system.

Therefore, it is not too early to explore the serious harm that disdain for government has inflicted on democracy and public institutions. For example, the term 'administration' was expunged from our vocabulary in an attempt to imply that only management mattered, i.e., applied economics and virtually the same across the board ('one size fits all', we were told). In the same vein, the new public management approaches sought to convert all government and public administration to private sector ways. They further called into question the nature and identity of the public sphere itself and undermined the idea of 'common good', which is basic to democracy. The quest for the 3Es (economy, efficiency and effectiveness) rose in the scale of values. In contrast, social equity, the rule of law, and due process suffered deep decline. Notwithstanding the well-known fact that firm commitment and professionalism are the products of slow growth over lengthy periods of service, 'at-will employment practices' replaced traditional patterns in public organizations, national and international, with very mixed results. In government and academia, a climate of orthodoxy prevailed, which discouraged dissenting opinions to the so-called Washington Consensus, which saw attempts by the World Bank and other agencies to popularize 'good governance' as *the* new model, calling for a much "smaller state ... (one) that can provide an 'enabling environment' for private sector-led growth ..." (World Bank 1994: xvi).

Although it would be perilous to generalize, reduction of government spending was all too often sought through cuts in social services. Health, education, and welfare have borne the brunt of cuts. Downsizing public services has altered the profile and, in some ways, the relevance of government, as it comes through to people. To many a demonstrator across the world, it looks as though, in crises, the old 'night watchman state' is making a comeback. To make matters worse, outsourcing and privatization have opened wide the windows of opportunity for massive cost overruns, corruption, and embezzlement of public funds. Pronounced in certain cases, these trends have brought governments into disrepute, and are causing the rapid decline of public services and public trust, putting democracy in peril.

It must be borne in mind that what we have described are hardly isolated phenomena. From Europe, through North Africa and to Latin America, the ubiquity of these disturbing trends and resultant hardship should prompt us to address the issues with the urgency and consistency that their scale and gravity demand. We need a paradigm change, with a recognition of the need for government leadership and an effective state, cognizant of the fact that governance without effective government becomes an empty formality. For UNDP, this brings a twofold challenge. We must support the development of government leadership and effective states through capacity development. But arguably more important, we need to show ways to help

re-build communities, respecting diversity and supporting them to engage with their governments, thus investing new meaning in democratic governance and expanding the concept of citizenship.

In all too many countries, a democratic deficit has come to light through elections that are systematically rigged. In others, good intentions produce a flurry of promising legal enactments. But these remain dead in the water for lack of competent services – judicial and administrative – to put them into effect and, just as critical, to evaluate their outputs, their outcomes, and their impacts. Despite rapid advances in recent years, a wide gap remains between our knowledge of new management techniques, especially in measuring the performance of organizations, and consistent application of those techniques within the government context. This book looks at attempts to address this issue.

The UNDP approach to governance assessments uses the analytical framework of political economy, and the strategic principles of national ownership, capacity development, and alignment to national processes. Through assessments, stakeholders are enabled to monitor governance performance, especially in terms of its impact on vulnerable groups, within countries over time. UNDP Country Offices play a pivotal role in supporting national partners to develop an inclusive, consultative framework for the systematic assessment and monitoring of democratic governance goals, according to the targets expressed in national development plans. This approach results in contextualized governance assessments that conform to global standards, but are grounded in local ownership. Through the Global Programme on Capacity Development for Democratic Governance Assessments and Measurements, coordinated by the Oslo Governance Centre, the programme supports governments, national statistical offices, and civil society in the collection, maintenance, and analysis of governance-related data.

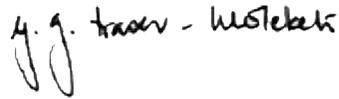
This volume is intended as stock-taking. It engages experts, academics, and practitioners to critically analyse and constructively develop this approach. It brings fresh perspectives, experiences, and insights from across several sectors and civil society actors, particularly those working to strengthen social accountability through monitoring and assessing the institutions and sectors of governments.

As such, the book represents an effort to consolidate knowledge by learning from governance assessment experiences on the ground in very diverse contexts. It endeavours to locate governance assessments in the larger context of the discourse on democratic governance. And it links theory and practice. On the one hand, it offers theoretical perspectives on governance and a historical account of how governance assessment has evolved both in UNDP and globally. But it also features nine practical case-studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These demonstrate the validity and viability of governance assessment as an important way of both democratizing governance and strengthening human development.

As the book appears in print, and as I noted above, the world is in deep crisis. We have a responsibility to make sense of the crisis and move to address some of the major challenges which face governments and international agencies. We

need to internalize that democratic governance and a competent, trustworthy, and accountable government grow and flourish together. What lies in the public domain must be accessible, transparent, and accountable to all. The sense by citizens of having a stake, of sharing vital interests in the conduct of public affairs, may well be what was lost as a result of the dominance of the market model of governance, the outsourcing of government business, and the hollowing out of the state.

To reverse the damage and make it out of the woods, we need effective states and public organizations infused with democratic governance. Democratic governance is integral to our approach to human development. For close to three decades, we may have overlooked the damage to democracy, to liberty and human development that stems from the almost total exclusion or marginalization of vulnerable groups, combined with escalation of inequality in wealth, income and opportunities. Development and freedom are clearly indivisible (Sen, 1999). Both, however, are predicated on building and sustaining strong communities of citizens. This is the primary goal of democratic governance. It begins by restoring the citizen to the centre-stage of government; not as a ward of the state, however beneficent, neither as a client or customer of a government-trader of services, however well-intentioned, efficient, and effective, but as a stakeholder and concerned participant in the conduct of public affairs.



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**Editors**

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CBGA	Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability
CECODES	Centre for Community Support Development Studies
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	Department for International Development, United Kingdom
DGI	Democratic Governance Indicators
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ICNRD-5	The Fifth International Conference for New or Restored Democracies
IDI	Indonesia Democracy Index
International IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
JGA	Joint Governance Assessments
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MKSS	Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan
NEPAD	The New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PAPI	Public Administration Performance Index
PGI	Partnership Governance Index
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SCAGA	Strategic Corruption and Governance Assessment
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlement Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# INTRODUCTION

**Göran Hydén and John Samuel**

The purpose of this book is to take stock of what has happened to governance and governance assessments over the past two decades. There have been significant changes in both theory and practice. At the theoretical level, the most notable shift has been toward treating governance as regime management. This has meant a greater emphasis on the 'rules of the game' and on the political dynamics surrounding their implementation. At the level of practice, there has been a growing recognition of the role that citizens play in formulating policy and holding officials accountable for a fair and just execution of these policies. These changes that have occurred gradually since the early 1990s, when governance became part of the international political discourse amount to a renewed look at the state and its role in development.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the state was viewed as the self-evident engine of development. The market was ignored and citizens rarely challenged the state on the way it implemented policies. The state tended to be autocratic in nature and the international development community never really raised any critique of its way of doing things. The result was a top-down approach to development that lacked grounding in people, and was often pursued against their interests. Not surprisingly, therefore, after two decades of dominance, the statist approach ran into a blind alley and met its demise in the early 1980s.

For a considerable time thereafter, the market reigned unchallenged as the inevitable alternative to the state. The Structural Adjustment policies of the 1980s swung the pendulum towards a state whose role and legitimacy has been reduced, in the eyes of many citizens. Gradually, however, the pendulum has begun to swing back. This began in the late 1990s with a recognition that the heavy emphasis on the market as the prime mechanism of allocating resources led to increased poverty. Added to that was a growth in environmental awareness; an unregulated market tended to have deleterious consequences for the environment in which people live and work. Finally, in

2008, the market was hit by one of its worst crises. The little that remained of its legitimacy was called into question, and people demanded action to regulate its behaviour. It is in this context that the call for a more responsive state has arisen. This time, the return of the state takes place in a context where the question is not only its effectiveness in implementing policy, but also its legitimacy as an organ of the people. In other words, the state is being claimed by citizens who, this time around, wish to have a say over what it does as well as how it does it. The lesson that was learned both when the state was hegemonic and subsequently when its role was diminished is that it needs to be constantly checked.

Checks and balances has been an integral part of the global governance discourse in the past two decades, but its emphasis has shifted from being merely a matter of 'fixing' institutions in a technical and managerial manner towards treating it as a political issue at the core of state-society or government-citizen relations. Similarly, there has been a shift from approaching it and related governance issues as a supply-side problem, i.e., providing support for reforms regardless of demand, towards treating it as a demand challenge, i.e., creating social and political space for citizen voices and activism.

The time has come, therefore, to demonstrate what has been done to move the understanding of governance to a focus on citizen power. This volume provides a selection of initiatives from countries in the global South to promote measures aimed at claiming the state for policies that are fair and just, not just efficient. This approach to the state is based on an understanding that to involve people and serve the interests of citizens, the state must be inclusive, responsive, and capable of carrying out its intentions.

This places the state at the centre of democratic governance discourse. Here, the role of the power and 'agency' of people in terms of analysing and addressing development issues is fully recognized. It points to the importance of understanding the multi-dimensional aspects of power operating at the national and international levels, and how they affect policy outcome. Creating spaces for poor and marginalized groups in society, including women, is central to this emerging agenda of democratic governance.

Many factors have contributed to the rise of this new agenda, not least initiatives taken by the people themselves. The 'Arab Spring' is just the more dramatic manifestation of that. UNDP takes pride in its own contribution, which has been inspired by its human development work over the last two decades. The latter has facilitated the evolution of a rights-based approach to development that is central to the new democratic governance agenda, and forms an important part of the global ambition to realize the MDGs by 2015.

The volume discusses and analyses a cross-section of democratic governance initiatives that UNDP has supported, but it also includes other activities in this field that come under the same label of democratic governance. It gives a comparative perspective to the UNDP experience, which allows for a broader theoretical and practical reflection on the evolution of the governance discourse and practice in the last couple of decades. In this respect, the volume takes stock of governance and governance assessment. This will be of considerable interest to researchers and practitioners in the governance field, regardless of home base.

Apart from a first chapter that focuses on the evolution of the governance concept, and three background chapters dealing with governance assessments both generally and with specific reference to UNDP, nine case studies provide more detailed information on various approaches to democratic governance and the lessons learned from them. Each case study chapter provides an account of the objectives of the approach, its scope and methodology, and the lessons learned. The final chapter brings together the lessons from these cases for UNDP and other actors in the field, and includes suggestions on what needs to be considered in future work.



**MAKING THE STATE RESPONSIVE:  
RETHINKING GOVERNANCE  
THEORY AND PRACTICE**

**Göran Hydén**

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the 2011 upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, and other Arab countries is the spontaneity of the calls for governance reform. These events were not driven by a small group of intellectuals, nor were they funded by donors. Instead, they reflect sincere expressions of ordinary people for a state that is more responsive, more inclusive, and capable of conducting policies based on principles of human development. Rising food prices and high unemployment may have been the factors that unleashed popular anger, but at the crux of it all is a widespread feeling of betrayal by those in power. The call is for a state that respects human dignity and social justice, while serving its citizens more effectively. The events in the Arab world, therefore, are a warning to leaders who take their power for granted. They are also a reason for rethinking governance theory and practice.

The concept of governance has now been part of mainstream international development discourse for two decades, but its versatility means that it continues to mean different things to different actors. In an attempt to mainstream the concept, it covers a wide range of political, administrative, and economic concerns. In one instance, it is being presented as a set of objective tools that can be applied to improve public finance management, while in another it is applied to promoting political reforms involving stakeholders with often conflicting political objectives. Despite its multiple and varying use, there is a degree of consistency in the application of the concept along two principal lines. One is managerial and addresses issues of public management, in particular finance management. The other is political, and invokes issues such as building democratic institutions, promoting social justice, and strengthening human rights.

Defining governance has preoccupied three different constituencies over the years. One is the academic community, which adopted the concept from various perspectives in the 1970s and 1980s. Another is the international donor community, which began applying the concept to its programmes in the early 1990s. A third is civil society activists, who have been at the forefront of shaping the governance discourse in recent years. This does not mean that individual governments have merely been passive onlookers, but the state-sponsored local participation initiatives of, for example, the governments of China, South Korea, and Viet Nam have not made the same mark on the global agenda as the three constituencies identified above. If there is a storyline here, it may read something like this: the academics helped set the stage for what governance would eventually become in policy practice; the donors developed the concept into prescriptive devices; and activists today are challenging the governance mainstream, because it focuses too much on transferring institutions from the North at the expense of identifying endogenous social forces that can help build sustainable governance structures.

This chapter begins by tracing the origin of governance in academic circles before identifying how it has evolved into ‘best practices’ in the donor community, and how it has further developed independently in social activist circles around the world. Drawing on that narrative, this chapter revisits the concept in the light of changes that have taken place and challenges that call for a new way of looking at governance as a mechanism for making the state more responsive, inclusive, and capable of pursuing sustainable human development.

### **Its theoretical origins**

Governance may have existed as a concept for a long time, but it was effectively dormant until the 1970s when it began to be used in the public administration literature and subsequently in the works of students of international relations and comparative politics. That sudden rise did not come from nowhere. A convergence of factors helps explain why scholars in these various fields adopted governance as a term to analyze their respective subjects. The growth of inter-jurisdictional policy issues encouraged public administration theorists to look for a concept that allowed them to think beyond conventional terms in their field. International relations scholars adopted the term as a way of analyzing the emergence of global issues and challenges after the Cold War, and the emergence of a global economy. And students of comparative politics began to use governance in the context of the wave of democratization after the fall of communism. Kjaer (2004) and Bevir (2010) have provided a thorough overview of the concept’s history, but

more elaboration may still be justified here, particularly as it also covers the experience outside academe.

Beginning with public administration, the first use of the term 'governance' is attributed to Harlan Cleveland in the early 1970s (Frederickson, 2005). Writing a guide for future managers Cleveland (1972) questioned the vertical arrangements of conventional public administration and argued for more attention to horizontal relations between organizations. Organizations must be capable of better using their in-house expertise and become more collegial and consultative. His assumption was that people wanted less of government and more of governance. The concept, therefore, came to be associated with two simultaneous trends in public administration: the blurring of the relationship between what is public and private and a similar tendency to dim the relationship between policy and politics, on the one hand, and implementation and administration, on the other. Governance became gradually associated with the New Public Management School and its prescriptions for reforming public administration by contracting out responsibilities to non-state actors. A review of the uses of governance in public administration includes some advocates who hold a radical belief that it is possible to have governance without government (Pierre and Peters, 2000). Many scholars, especially in Europe, however, have approached the subject of governance in less prescriptive terms and merely acknowledged and described a new decision-making reality characterized by inter-organizational dependencies and thus the need for multi-level and multi-organizational responses to societal problems (Kooiman, 1993). Much of that perspective has made its way into the thinking and use of governance at different operational levels. Yet another influence that has been particularly important in the international development community is the legacy of the development administration movement (Hope, 1984). It was influential in the 1960s and 1970s in its call for a more flexible type of public administration for development purposes, then gradually faded only to reappear at least in part in the form of governance in the 1990s.

As Frederickson (2005:293) notes, the problem with governance in public administration is that it lacks a theory and he suggests that scholars should look to international relations where regime theory is the basis for understanding governance. Regimes are deliberately constructed orders at regional or global level that aim to reduce the risk of unilateral action by powerful nations. They establish shared expectations about desired behaviour. Governance, then, is the exercise of establishing and sustaining such regimes. Much of the literature and practice of global governance incorporates these insights. Rosenau (1995:13) makes the point that global governance applies to any system of rules that has transnational implications. An example would be the

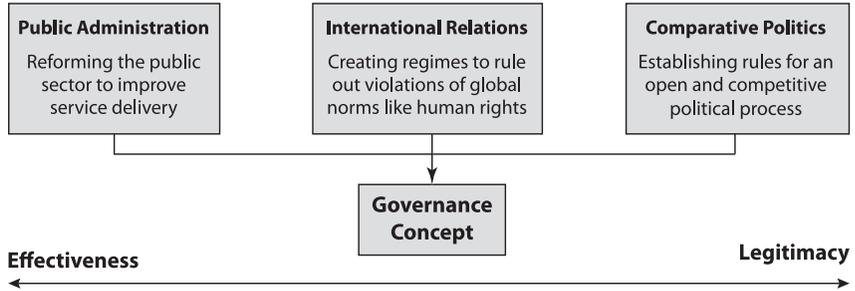
efforts in the 1990s to institutionalize an international human rights regime drawing on the work prepared for the 1993 International Human Rights Conference in Vienna. It has been instrumental in generating a human rights approach to development that has been influential in the United Nations system as well as among some donor agencies, notably those of the Nordic countries, and in civil society organizations. So, as some influential scholars in the international relations field have argued, governance involves nurturing and managing principles, norms, and decision-making procedures that facilitate the maintenance of an international order (Krasner, 1983; Keohane, 2002).

Governance as related to systems of rule is found also in the comparative politics literature, but here it is typically confined to individual countries and is associated with regime transition issues spurred by democratization since the early 1990s (Hydén and Bratton, 1992). A significant and influential contribution to the thinking on governance has come from neo-institutionalists, notably Douglass North (1990), drawing theoretical inspiration from the rational choice tradition in the social sciences. By highlighting the human mind behind the design of institutions, the assumption has been that they can be reformed more or less at will. Public sector reform, including the task of reducing transaction costs, has been largely driven by this approach. Rules can be rewritten as if the slate is clean. This has been applied also to political games, e.g., over electoral laws or the accountability and transparency of public officials. The principles of 'good' governance have been based on a single 'formal' model built around the twin concepts of participation and freedom of choice (Dahl, 1971) that, when applied, has all the features of the liberal (Western) version of democracy. Good governance in the international development discourse has been so closely tied to forms of liberal democracy that a belief in good governance as a cause of economic development has emerged. The research community, however, is less convinced and continues to ask whether good governance really is a cause or effect of development (e.g., Lewis-Beck and Burkhart, 1994; Przeworski et al., 2000; Bueno de Mesquita and Downs, 2005).

This overview, albeit compressed, shows that the intellectual heritage on which governance discourse rests is varied and complex. It is possible, however, to confine it to two main parameters: effectiveness and legitimacy. Influences from public administration in particular come closest to the effectiveness dimension, while those from international relations and comparative politics are closer to that emphasizing legitimacy. The former tend to encourage a managerial and technocratic approach to governance, while the latter give rise to a focus on the political aspects of governance. The former treat governance as an instrument to get things done with

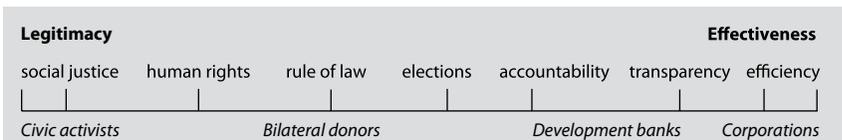
better results and is manifest in the donor interest to make aid delivery more effective. The latter encourage thinking on how things are done and lead to concerns about respect for the rule of law and how the state interacts with citizens. It is the difference between a results-based and a rights-based approach to development.

**Figure 1.1 The theoretical origins of the governance concept**



The continuum between effectiveness and legitimacy defines much of the space within which governance has been put into practice. It covers administrative and economic, as well as political, aspects of the concept. The various organizations that work in governance have anchored their programmes somewhere along this line. Corporations, the World Bank, and other development banks have typically built programmes around concerns such as reducing transaction costs, fighting corruption, and enhancing transparency and public accountability in government agencies (Figure 1.2). At the other end of the spectrum are faith-based and secular organizations whose objective is to promote social justice. Bilateral and multilateral agencies have their governance programmes at various points between those poles.

**Figure 1.2 Map of anchoring-points for select key actors in the governance field**



It should be added that many agencies have governance programmes that are broader and more diverse than Figure 1.2 suggests. What it illustrates is the anchoring point, i.e., the key aspect that defines the programme.

Over the years, UNDP has taken a holistic approach to governance. It has defined it in administrative and economic, as well as political, terms. The balance has tilted increasingly in favour of the political approach. This has particularly been the case since the establishment of UNDP's

Oslo Governance Office, which has become a catalyst for the democratic governance emphasis that Nahem and Wilde outline further in Chapter 3. It is also this democratic governance programme that is the main focus of this volume. For analytical purposes, we distinguish between governance and democracy as follows: governance is a process of managing public affairs, democracy is a set of universally recognized values, and democratic governance, therefore, is the process that incorporates such values.

Although the academic community was instrumental in launching the governance concept, it never fully embraced it for its own research purposes. Its members preferred to confine their work to specific issues related to democratization. Rarely, if ever, in this context did they refer to ‘governance’. Nonetheless, as Wilde discusses in Chapter 2, the focus on democratization in the 1990s may, for the purpose of understanding governance assessments, be labelled the ‘first wave’. It eventually faltered, however, because much of the work was oriented to producing data sets on democracy, which were not easily translated into programme action by donors and governments.

### **Putting governance into practice**

In developing a more applied approach to governance, the international development community has borrowed insights from this mixed intellectual heritage. Although the emphasis has been on creating specific programme interventions and assessing progress towards what is being defined as ‘good governance’, practice has not been completely unhinged from theory. The two interact even if that is not always evident.

All these definitions are striking for their macro-orientation. Governance is being applied to the way whole systems, political, administrative, or economic, are being managed. Another common feature of these definitions is their implicit or explicit reference to the primary role of government or the state. They imply a managerial, or top-down, approach to governance that has continued to dominate donor thinking. Although governance is meant to be more than government, in practice government’s role in governance has been given priority, not least because donors have applied good governance criteria as conditions for their aid and the OECD system of official development assistance confines main aid flows to government-to-government transfers. The formal institutions of rule have been prioritized over the more latent forces that often determine implementation and outcome.

By the end of the 1990s, the donor community had become the most influential stakeholder in the governance field. Agencies had had enough time to fine-tune their instruments and they were by no means hesitant in using their prescriptive devices as conditions for further aid. As Wilde suggests in Chapter 2, this donor appropriation of the concept and its use

### **Definitions of governance by a select number of international agencies**

"the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development"

*The World Bank 1992*

"the manner in which public officials and institutions acquire and exercise the authority to shape public policy and provide public goods and services"

*The World Bank 2007*

"the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised"

*The World Bank Institute 2006*

"the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels"

*United Nations Development Programme 1997*

"the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)"

*United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*

"the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority necessary to manage a nation's affairs"

*Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*

"the process or method by which society is governed"

*International Institute for Environment and Development*

"the way countries/societies/organizations organize to protect human rights; to elect governments, appoint office bearers and promote accountability; to provide conflict resolution and social and other services to the people through a public sector"

*Danish International Development Agency 2004*

constitutes the second wave, one driven by optimism and an emphasis on quick fixes and results. Not surprisingly, given its high expectations, the second wave was eventually subject to criticism in the early 2000s for a variety of reasons associated with the way the governance concept was being applied and assessed.

One influential tenet that was being called into question was an underlying assumption that things in the global South are broken and need fixing. There is an underestimation of the capacity of existing institutions that donors target through wholesale reforms of specific sectors. Good governance has been used to justify broad reforms of the civil service, the legal sector, and local government. This tendency to try to fix whole sectors is reminiscent of the 'development administration movement' that was supported by the donor community in the 1960s (Schaffer, 1969). Then, like now, the assumption was that change is more desirable than order. Existing institutions, whether governmental or non-governmental, were turned into experimental stations for donor-funded projects aimed at improving governance.

A second issue has been the extent to which governance is believed to serve as a precondition for development. Members of the international donor

community have invested heavily in improving governance in the belief that without such reforms development will not occur. This has often led to the imposition of institutional models that are out of touch with the social and economic realities of recipient countries and at the expense of tapping the potential of political institutions already on the ground in these countries. There has been a tendency to overemphasize the supply side of governance rather than its demand side. What citizens think and how they can improve governance have often been ignored.

### **Governance by citizens – the overlooked contribution**

The discourse on governance has largely been dominated by academics and donors, but it is important to acknowledge the constructive contributions that have come from civil society. For too long, these contributions have lived in the shadow of what the dominant governmental and inter-governmental organizations have said and done despite the fact that much assessment work began even before these mainstream actors recognized governance as a lead concept. A case in point is *The First Citizens' Report – State of India's Environment*, published in India by the Centre for Science and Environment in 1982. This was not just another project evaluation, but an exercise aimed at assessing institutions, policies, and processes based on verifiable indicators. Another example from India is found in the country-wide assessment of local government institutions – the *Panchayati Raj* – that looked into their performance over a thirty-year period (1957-1986). These examples are part of what may be described as a 'pre-governance' period that helped to lay the ground for bolder civil society initiatives that developed in the 1990s.

A special discourse on governance has emerged, centred on human rights and social development issues. This discourse tends to be driven by social movements and activist groups around the world. It has been especially significant in countries like India, Brazil, and Mexico. Many of these initiatives are gathered under the 'social watch' rubric, some of which (like the participatory budget initiative in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the Social Audit in India, and the Citizen Tribunal in Kenya), have attracted world-wide attention. A common platform for these various governance initiatives is the World Social Watch and the website, [www.socialwatch.org](http://www.socialwatch.org). The discourse on this site and in the twenty or more participating countries constitutes a bottom-up alternative to the mainstream donor dialogue on governance. It has broad legitimacy in many of these countries and is conducted through organizations that are grounded in local civil society circles. Examples of influential organizations include CIVICUS in South Africa, the Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement, the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability in India, the Centre for Governance at BRAC University in Bangladesh, and the Brazilian Institute of Social Analysis. Although this

bottom-up discourse is driven by organizations in the global South, many leading international development NGOs in the West, such as Oxfam, and human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, also participate and help influence this discourse.

The practitioners and activists in this discourse are no longer just on the sideline. Their opinions have become increasingly influential and, thanks to their actions, citizen initiatives have received greater recognition as an integral part of what governance is all about. They have helped move the mainstream discourse beyond a concern mainly with the representative aspects of democratic governance to include its monitoring aspects. UNDP, as a global catalyst in governance, has tried to build its own programme around not just what mainstream donors call governance, but also those ideas that emerged from this activist discourse. In its emphasis on country-led governance assessments, as Chapter 3 demonstrates, the citizen component has become increasingly significant.

The rest of this chapter will build on the historical narratives above to show how the concept has evolved in the past twenty years, how programmatic concerns have been established, and the implications for future work on democratic governance.

### **Main features of the conceptual evolution**

Although governance assessment is a technical and practical exercise involving specific methods, it is also driven by theory and ideas associated with how the governance concept itself is understood. For anyone wishing to understand where the field of governance assessments has come from and where it may be heading, it is necessary to discuss further the main features of the concept's evolution. It has already been suggested that the governance field has been occupied by three different constituencies – academics, donors, and activists. Each has had an opportunity to occupy centre stage and has been particularly influential at one time, but its ability to hold the stage has been challenged by the others and their interest in furthering a different agenda. This process or trend is summarized in the following table.

**Table 1.1 Shifts in the use of the governance concept**

	<b>1990s</b>	<b>2000s</b>	<b>2010s</b>
<b>Agenda setters</b>	Academics	Donors	Citizen Activists
<b>Main approach</b>	Analytical	Programmatic	Empowering
<b>Position adopted</b>	Detached	Managerial	Engaged
<b>Principal aim</b>	Generating knowledge	Reforming institutions	Checking power use

This trajectory is also reflected in the way that governance assessments were conducted and used in the past twenty years. As Wilde shows in Chapter 2, the 1990s were characterized largely by the creation of data sets aimed at a comparative analysis of various aspects of governance. The most important indices of governance, such as the Worldwide Governance Indicators produced by the World Bank Institute, and Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, are products of the 1990s. These were mapping exercises with normative implications for how to act on systematic information about governance qualities in countries around the world. This information, however, was not immediately actionable and individual donor agencies felt the need to develop their own assessments that were more specifically geared toward their own programme objectives and priorities. The early 2000s, particularly, saw a proliferation of governance assessments.

Following the 2005 Paris Declaration and the decision to give more emphasis to policy priorities in recipient countries, donor agencies have tried to step back from their status as primary agenda setters. The expectation more recently has been that recipient countries should own and take responsibility for improving their own governance. The example of the African Peer Review Mechanism, despite initial implementation problems, has been heralded as a step in the right direction. In other regions, civil society activism has increasingly pushed governments to respond to a broader set of stakeholders than previously. The most dramatic such event occurred in India in mid-2011 when activists rallied around Anna Hazare, an elderly Gandhian-style leader, to force the Government of India to adopt a tougher than originally planned anti-corruption law. Thus, although the extent to which citizen activism has been allowed to flourish differs from country to country, there is evidence from various regions of the South that governance issues are increasingly treated as the concern of each sovereign country. This does not mean that donor influence over governance is disappearing altogether, but it is diminishing. Instead, the local conditions in each country, notably the relations between citizens and officialdom, have moved to centre stage. That has sometimes led, as the events in the Middle East in 2011 testified, to strong and sometimes violent demands for governance reform, in other cases to more repression and a more phlegmatic view of governance within the political elite.

The current situation in the governance field may be characterized as one of tension between a rights-based and a results-based approach. Donors lean toward the latter even though some, like the Nordics, also have their governance programmes anchored in human rights. Because institutionalizing universal human rights and building democracy takes time in societies where they are weak, the expectation of results within set timelines can easily lead

to disappointment. Donors have no real control over the political process that enhances human rights. At the same time, they can take comfort in the rise of civic activism, since much of that is aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, not only civil and political rights but also those that are usually referred to as social and economic rights. Even in African countries, where civil society is generally weak, there has been maturation toward greater strategic intervention on key issues, such as land tenure, gender, and issues relating to constitutional reform. Much of this activism has been – and continues to be – financially supported by donors, but some of the strongest citizen organizations are enhancing their independence by diversifying their support base.

### **Governance revisited**

The governance field is crowded and characterized by actors with different interests and ambitions. Donors want to harmonize, standardize, and mainstream ideas of governance (OECD, 2009). Activists strive in the opposite direction. They would like fresh ideas to flourish, and to broaden and diversify the discourse. Though bilateral donors acknowledge the political nature of governance and have pushed for reforms that allow for wider citizen participation, more often than not donors tend to approach governance in a managerial manner whereas activists approach it as a tool of social and political mobilization. Donors treat it as science, activists as engagement. These contrasting ambitions, however, do not lead to stalemates or deadlocks. Individual ideas and practices emerge from both quarters and enter into what is increasingly a global discourse. Perhaps no other organization has played a more important role than UNDP in catalysing these various ideas and practices into a particular brand of democratic governance. Operating one step beyond the national arenas where political pressures limit what can be done, UNDP has managed to remain open to a wide range of ideas and thus incorporate influences from several sources, both governmental and non-governmental. It has also been able to take advantage of first-rate academics that have advised and helped develop its agenda. Although several other inter-governmental organizations, notably the World Bank and OECD, have participated and shaped the governance discourse, they have typically had a more narrow and prescriptive agenda, which has appealed less to other stakeholders than to governments. In comparison, UNDP has been able to serve as a truly global platform and follow a more open-ended agenda. Even though the organization has not always been able to successfully implement its own ideas, it has become the best global source of information on governance, its Governance Assessment Portal (<http://gaportal.org>) offering the clearest evidence of that.

Analysing the rich information available through this portal and examining trends among donors as well as activists, it is possible to discern significant changes in the global discourse on governance. These shifts can be identified as being from: (i) technical/managerial to political aspects, (ii) global to country level, (iii) numerical indicators to narrative trajectories, (iv) quantitative to qualitative methods, (v) top-down to bottom-up approaches, and (vi) representative to monitory aspects of democracy.

Many interventions in the name of governance have been made on the assumption that it is possible to ‘fix’ problems at the institutional level. The rational choice legacy was dominant for a long time in the global discourse on governance and it justified institutional reform measures on the assumption of a universally present rational behaviour. As Bevir (2010) notes, some of this positivist social science thinking may still remain, particularly among economists, but it has gradually given way to a broader recognition that governance (after all) is primarily political; that governance measures touch a sensitive nerve wherever they are being introduced. The development banks are obliged for statutory reasons to abstain from using political criteria, but continue to find ways of indirectly addressing them. A recent example is the World Bank’s practice paper on its ‘problem-driven governance and political economy’ approach (Fritz, Kaiser and Levy, 2009). The new African Governance Outlook project of the African Development Bank is another.

The second shift is from global to national level. The problem-driven governance and political economy is interesting, because unlike previous attempts by the World Bank that have started with a global strategy and thus a “blueprint” as proposed solution, this approach begins at the country level. It recognizes that each country’s governance challenges are different and are determined as much by history as contemporary initiatives. It encourages a form of problem analysis that has so far been largely absent in the World Bank papers and reports. It also acknowledges that these problems do not lend themselves to simple institutional solutions, but require an understanding of underlying causes; hence the political economy part of the analysis. Some bilateral agencies have been moving in this direction for a longer time. DFID pioneered its ‘drivers of change’ approach in the early 2000s, Sida followed with its own forms of power analysis soon afterwards. To this list should also be added the political economy-inspired approach, SCAGA,<sup>1</sup> which was adopted by the Netherlands Government in 2007. This shift implies what is known in current donor parlance as ‘drilling down’ into causal factors

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1. Strategic Corruption and Governance Assessment. Incidentally, the word SCAGA in Dutch means something like grove.

that were largely ignored in previous years, when solutions were engineered in donor offices.

The next change concerns the shift from numerical indicators to narrative trajectories. It began with ambitious general assessments of individual countries using sets of indicators that helped produce global indices. The most commonly used has been the Worldwide Governance Indicators. However, that seems now to have outlived its utility for policy. Academic researchers in comparative politics rather than governance analysts and practitioners continue to use it – despite the fact that the methodology has been the subject of much critique – because it is an easily accessible data set that covers many countries. Policy analysts have preferred a narrower set of indicators that focuses on specific policy issues. Diagnostic tools have been developed for this purpose, the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability being one example, and tools to specifically get a handle on corruption being another. In fact, in some donor circles work on governance has been reduced to anti-corruption strategies. This ‘war on corruption’, however, has run into its own difficulties and there is, if not an acceptance, then an understanding that rent-seeking is an inevitable part of governance in many countries (Khan, 2007). There has, then, been a tendency to rely less on numbers and more on the narrative in which they are embedded. It has become necessary to accept that countries cannot be approached as clean slates, but as coming from somewhere. Country-specific history and culture cannot be completely ignored. ‘Good enough’ governance drawing on local practices is often not only the most practical, but also the more preferred approach (Grindle, 2004, 2007).

This shift in thinking has also led to a less exclusive reliance on quantitative data and a greater readiness to adopt and use qualitative methods of analysis. The Worldwide Governance Indicators set the stage for the use of numerical data to analyse governance. It is truly worldwide covering over 200 economies. It aggregates data from some 40 sources produced by 30 organizations. The indicators capture six dimensions of governance that have arbitrarily been packaged as (i) voice and accountability, (ii) political stability and lack of violence, (iii) government effectiveness, (iv) regulatory quality, (v) rule of law, and (vi) control of corruption. Its emphasis is on providing numerical measures for everything that may count as governance. It is a number-crunchers’ idyll. A number of other instruments, based on subjective perceptions among key stakeholders, offer similar global indices for the ‘state of governance’ in different countries. Subjective perception indices may be informative at a first glance, but they have their own methodological shortcomings that limit their value for policy analysis. Because they may still be considered as the best that analysts have access to,

they are still being used, albeit less exclusively than before. The introduction of political economy studies has shifted the methodology toward greater reliance on qualitative data often produced with the help of country-based experts. Snapshots of country governance have given way to more complex ways of trying to understand the subject matter on the ground. Triangulation has become the new motto.

The fifth component of the trend in governance analysis is the shift from top-down to bottom-up approaches. There is more explicit interest than in the past in capturing the views of a broader segment of local actors. A range of tools have been developed and are currently in use. These include opinion polls, such as the Afro- or Latino-barometers, which include a broad range of issues, some more specific to governance than others. Other instruments are the country-led assessments that have been spearheaded by UNDP. The list would be incomplete without also mentioning self-assessments, for example the African Peer Review Mechanism, which is discussed further in Chapter 6. These are all indicative that the opinion of those for whom governance matters most should be included. Social movements and citizen activism inspired by concerns about human rights and social justice have been instrumental in bringing about this change in outlook. By including the voices of those outside government, the analysis is more evidence-based. Even if each participatory approach has its own methodological challenges, they constitute a valuable complement to those top-down approaches that used to be singularly dominant. And although cross-country comparisons may have their role in certain analytical contexts, the policy world, as suggested above, has increasingly moved away from such an approach.

The sixth change that has occurred in the governance discourse is the growing interest in strengthening the monitory aspects of democracy. This does not mean that the representative aspects are being ignored, but with demands for more direct citizen participation in the policy process, monitoring government policy implementation has become increasingly significant. Keane calls 'monitory democracy' a post-Westminster form in which power-monitoring and power-controlling devices have begun to extend sideways and downwards through the whole political order (Keane, 2009:xxvii). It goes beyond the standard accountability mechanisms that are part of the original model of representative democracy. Wikileaks may be the most well-known example of this new trend, but monitory governance initiatives are very much part of the political scene in many countries in the South. Examples of these extra-parliamentary power-monitoring institutions include public integrity commissions, judicial activism, local courts, workplace tribunals, consensus conferences, parliaments for minorities, public interest litigation, citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies, independent public inquiries, think-tanks,

expert reports, participatory budgeting, vigils, blogging, and other novel forms of media scrutiny. Many of these are new governance institutions that did not exist – or certainly did not have such a prominent role – in earlier times when representative democracy was the prevalent model.

So what does this trend analysis of the governance field amount to? There are two interrelated answers. The first is that the certainty that used to characterize the governance discourse is gone. Today it relies less on normative blueprints and more on practical experimentation. The second is that governance today relies less on teaching than on learning new norms. This has implications for how governance is best assessed.

### **Democratic governance**

To many in the global South, governance to date has been an artificial add-on. That is why the events in the Arab world in early 2011, and the legacy of civic activism in many parts of the South, are so significant. They demonstrate that political reforms can succeed if effectively and sincerely pursued by citizens. The challenge for the international community, therefore, is how to proceed from here to make governance more relevant, transparent and in the longer run to become superfluous as an instrument of aid.

With a growing recognition that governance is political and most effectively pursued if driven by local stakeholders, the assessment methodology shifts from relying on the outsider's detached and 'objective' view to depending on the insider's ability to be inspired and called to action. Democratic governance is what citizens and their governments do to make the rules of the political game acceptable and legitimate in the eyes of as many stakeholders as possible. It is a question of redefining the relations between state and society, government and citizens, in order to make the authorities more responsive, inclusive, and capable in their pursuit of development. It is about changing the nature of the public realm and its rules.

That is not just a technical or managerial task. It is highly political. In ancient Greece, the essence of politics was the care of the public realm, precisely what we call 'governance' here. Rules are never dead paragraphs. Political actors do not face rules, but live them. Institutions are composed of rules that are not enacted schemas, but lived skills, as Berk and Galvan (2009) argue. Institutions are not constraints on action, they are made through action. Order is not a prior or necessary condition of institutions, but a possible result of particular forms of experiencing rules in action. Governance is not an abstraction, but a continuous real-life challenge.

The approach to governance here is the opposite of what Peter Evans (2004) calls "institutional mono-cropping", the replacement of local rules and

practices with those derived from more advanced societies (e.g., constitutions, mass parties, private property, legal orders, and human rights regimes). Social change in this view depends on borrowing or transferring effective institutions from places where they already work. Demonstration effects are meant to convince people to adhere to new rules and practices, giving up old ways as necessary. In the colonial period, this was done through assimilation, conversion, or education. For generations, however, transfer and tutelage have run aground on the persistence of local cultures and rules. There is reason to take to heart from the argument, for example by Douglass North (1981, 1990), that developmentally useful institutions only emerge when informal rules, norms, and values support and help engender new formal institutions. This occurred very slowly in the West, to eventually make possible market exchange and constitutional governance. As Helmke and Levitsky (2006) show with reference to Latin America, democratization rests on a mixture of both formal and informal rules. Sometimes they reinforce each other, at other times they contradict each other. The system works best when the rules are not 'foreign', but reflective of the cultural norms prevailing in those countries; when cultural and legal codes, even if they do not converge in all respects, are sufficiently close to yield functioning democracies.

Defining governance in a way that is acceptable to everyone is difficult, but a working definition that reflects where the international discourse is today might be "the formation and nurture of the regime that constitutes the public realm within which state and non-state actors interact to decide on issues affecting the welfare and security of citizens". So defined, governance is the politics over rules: the constitutional, legal, or procedural context in which policies are made and implemented. It points to the importance of citizens as the true constituency of the state, and away from previous approaches to governance that have stressed the accountability of governments to the international donor community.

Governance has both a representative and a monitory dimension. To make government possible, citizens choose their own representatives. To make governance real, the same citizens need to be alert, demanding the right to know what their representatives and government-appointed officials are doing. Democratic governance, therefore, is not about the implementation of specific policies but about the normative framework – the regime – within which policies are formed and executed. It is about the means and methods by which it is designed and sustained through watchful eyes. In developmental terms, it is about citizens claiming the state in order to make it more responsive, inclusive, and able to serve their welfare and security.

Promoting forms of democratic governance today calls for active participation by citizens and government alike. This does not always translate into immediate and positive action but even if the country may have taken two steps forward and then another one backward, there is an accumulation of experience that fosters the institutionalization of democratic governance norms. Country-led assessments, especially when allowing citizens to play a leading role, provide valuable opportunities for inductively building locally acceptable structures of governance.

This approach to governance calls for a more diverse methodology when assessing what is happening in different countries. The urge to measure levels of governance for score-carding and creating scales indicating where, on a global governance ladder, each country is located is no longer useful. It has more academic than practical interest. Identifying trajectories based on local perceptions is more meaningful. Such an approach implies recognition that governance is contingent on history and context. What governance assessments increasingly need to address is how beliefs evolve over time and impact political practices in a democratic direction. Triangulating various ways of acquiring knowledge about governance is likely to yield more than a single positivist methodology.

Promoting good governance has for long been approached as teaching new norms. This tutelary exercise has had its successes, but in many contexts it has run into difficulties, because it has been based on transferring institutional practices into foreign settings. With a view of governance that incorporates the importance of state-society or government-citizen interaction, teaching new norms becomes less important than learning new norms together. In the Arab world in early 2011, this has happened explosively, with citizens forcing such interaction and learning on government. These ‘critical junctures’ are often the best occasions for joint learning (Olsen and Peters, 1996) although they are often controversial and painful. Jha and Samuel, in Chapter 11, and Roque and Ciconello in Chapter 12, also show that citizen-led initiatives to empower the poor and disadvantaged groups in society can result in new government legislation as a result of official learning of the costs and benefits of accepting reform in the light of citizen pressure.

Learning in political life, however, is an exercise that is difficult to measure in precise terms. There are no objective indicators and how one goes about getting a sense of progress may at times be hard to determine. Conditions for learning may differ, and the capacity for doing so may vary. Difficulties in assessing progress towards democratic governance in learning rather than teaching contexts, however, should not be an excuse for not trying. Building democratic governance through citizen-led initiatives, as UNDP tries to

encourage, is not easy and not always successful, but such ventures are right at a time when the doors for citizen activism and monitoring of government are being increasingly opened.

### **Towards a more responsive state – the rest of the volume**

This chapter has attempted to put governance in a historical and comparative perspective indicating how the ground for assessing and practicing governance has changed over the past twenty years. This is no doubt a never-ending story, because governance is an eternal and universal human practice. But this volume highlights some of the more important practices and experiences that have made their mark nationally as well as internationally as steps toward a more responsive state.

The next twelve chapters are grouped into **four categories of three chapters** each. The *first* of these categories, in Chapters 2 to 4, are descriptive or definitional background contributions to identifying the various types of governance assessments that have emerged over the years and are relevant to this volume on democratic governance. These chapters confirm the evolution of the governance concept in a direction that has led to country and citizen-led assessments, concerns about social accountability, and more participatory methodologies. The *second* category – Chapters 5 to 7 – analyses exercises in which government has played a key role as initiator and/or lead partner in the assessment process. They demonstrate that governments can play an important role in reforming governance even though the analysis also points to shortcomings, such as diminishing the contributions of other stakeholders and difficulty in sustaining the commitment to reform. The *third* category – Chapters 8 to 10 – discusses and analyses assessments aimed at improving conditions at the sub-national level. Many countries have adopted specific assessment instruments with which to understand citizen satisfaction with various aspects of managing development. These are not only efforts to mainstream governance assessments in government, but are also important tools for improving interaction and understanding between officialdom and citizens. The *fourth* category, spanning Chapters 11 to 13, focuses on activist contributions to improving governance. It draws on country experiences in the global South. Specific attention is given to analysing the social accountability initiatives that have been taken place in India and Brazil as well as the lessons learned from the Metagora project that continued for ten years under OECD auspices in several countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Chapter 14, the conclusion, is meant to summarize the lessons learned as well as arriving at indications of where the move to democratic governance and making the state more responsive is likely to head in the years to come.

Beginning with the background contributions, Chapter 2, by Alexandra Wilde, traces the story of how governance assessment has moved in a democratizing direction, reflecting the shifts that have taken place in the definition and use of the governance concept as discussed in this chapter. The third chapter, co-authored by Wilde and Joachim Nahem, offers a deeper introduction to the UNDP mode of operation with its focus on country-led and people-centred approaches to assessing governance. It makes clear that its objective is not to invent new tools, but to respond to initiatives and practices at the country level. Since the establishment of the Oslo Governance Centre as a focal point for its work in the governance field, UNDP has supported democratic governance programmes in some twenty countries. Ingvild Oia devotes Chapter 4 to an account of the relationship between governance assessment and social accountability. It sets the stage for a better understanding of how the latter concept has become an increasingly important part of making governance assessment more people-oriented.

The second set of chapters begins with a case study of Mongolia by Hashbat Hulan. In Chapter 5, she analyses the experience of government-led governance assessments involving multiple stakeholders with a view to strengthening and stabilizing democratic governance in the country. The space given to professional inputs into the exercise meant that it enjoyed widespread credibility within the network of participating national stakeholders. In Chapter 6, Stephen Gruzd focuses on the role that the African Peer Review Mechanism has played in paving the way for country-led assessments in Africa. As with the Mongolian assessment venture, the African Peer Review Mechanism has been government-led and involved multiple stakeholders. He describes the main features of this approach, its varying impacts and the lessons learned, as well as challenges that need to be met for the exercise to be sustained in the future. In Chapter 7, Gareth Williams and his four colleagues examine a joint governance assessment carried out in Rwanda in 2008. It was the first of its kind and brought together the Government of Rwanda and its development partners in a joint review of governance in that country. The authors draw a balance sheet indicating its value as well as its problems as the host government and foreign donors stake out different positions on a series of sensitive governance issues.

The third group of chapters offers a cross-section of cases in which governance assessment has been used to measure policy impact at the sub-national level, whether province or district. In Chapter 8, Abdul Malik Gismar presents and analyses a Partnership Governance Index introduced in Indonesia after the fall of President Suharto to assess the quality of governance performance at provincial level. The instrument developed for the project examines performance in six governance arenas. The author shows its main features, how it was carried out, and some of the more interesting and controversial findings of the exercise.

Paul van Hoof describes the practical experience, in Chapter 9, of a Local Governance Barometer that was developed in South Africa with a view to measuring the policy impact at district level. It discusses the political dynamics associated with its establishment as a basis for policy dialogue between local government authorities and citizens. One positive outcome of this initiative has been to translate complex governance issues into relevant contextualized and local issues that citizens can relate to in a constructive manner. In Chapter 10, Jairo Acuna analyses a governance and public administration index that was set up in Viet Nam with a view to assessing and strengthening demand among citizens for better government performance. The assessment has been carried out at a provincial level, and the index shows varying performance with some outlying provinces faring quite poorly compared to those closer to main cities. An interesting aspect of this project is that it is being carried out in a socialist one-party state with an ambition, like China, to improve performance at the local levels in order to enhance government effectiveness – and legitimacy.

The last set of chapters deal with citizen activist approaches. Praveen Jha and John Samuel devote Chapter 11 to an analysis of how citizen initiatives in India have produced a greater sense of public accountability. India has a wealth of such initiatives and Jha and Samuel discuss the experience and impact of a cross-section ranging from social audit measures introduced by civic movements to policy score-cards and budget monitoring at local level. Atila Roque and Alexandre Ciconello take up similar examples from Brazil in Chapter 12. They discuss how efforts have been made to open up the state to citizen influences through councils and conferences in which government officials meet with civil society representatives on a regular basis, as well as through more radical measures by civic activists to enhance monitoring of government performance. In Chapter 13, Mark Orkin and three colleagues analyse the Metagora project that was carried out with support from OECD over a ten-year period. One of the unique features of this project was that it strived to bring statistics into the field of human rights in order to show that it would make a contribution to enhancing a rights-based approach to development. This link between official statistics agencies and citizen activism produced interesting results in several parts of the global South – The Philippines, South Africa, Francophone West Africa, and the Andean Region of South America.

## **Conclusions**

The various case study chapters reveal many things about the process of moving toward a more responsive state. One is that there is no single way to progress. Success comes from varying practices and experiments. Initiatives often come from below and are citizen-led, but governments can be just as ready to lead the process.

A second point that this volume highlights is the tension between local and universal methods of how to approach governance issues. For instance, as the case of Rwanda shows, tension arose between government and donor representatives over how to deal with human rights violations. The Rwandese wanted to rely on their own adapted customary institutions, while the development partners insisted on an approach that reflects their commitment to a notion of justice as impartiality.

A third point that emerges is that countries embarking on governance reforms do not start from the same position. Some countries are already more democratic than others. The task of making the state more responsive, inclusive and capable, therefore, varies in degree of difficulty. Furthermore, some challenges are more immediate than others. What some countries demonstrate is that readiness to act tends to be enhanced by shifts in the political opportunity structure. The decision to monitor governance progress in Indonesia, for example, was very much inspired by the uprising – and eventual downfall – of the autocratic regime of President Suharto.

While citizen activism may have been inspired by relatively recent shifts in the political opportunity structure, as in Indonesia and South Africa, and thus may be at an incipient stage, such activism has reached a more advanced level in countries that already have a democratic tradition and where civil society has therefore played a part in politics and development for some time. The examples of India and Brazil are particularly enlightening, because they show how popular awareness can be raised and lead to changes in government policy. Such initiatives require both patience and courage, and they demonstrate that tenacity pays off when it comes to monitoring officials and their acts.

This volume is unable to include references to all those important initiatives to enhance democratic governance that have been taken around the world. It does, however, include a cross-section of what has been done in recent years to make the state more responsive, inclusive, and capable. These projects and programmes cover efforts to strengthen the voice of citizens on public policy issues as well as measures taken to ensure that officials execute policies in a fair and just manner. The monitoring aspects of democracy are as important as those that focus on representation. Together they constitute an approach to democratic governance that transcends the more ‘formal’ democratic institutions, and demonstrate the importance of institutional innovation in dealing with an increasingly complex set of issues that arise as countries in the South become increasingly integrated into the global economy. The lessons learned from these efforts are discussed in Chapter 14.

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## Chapter 2

# THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS

Alexandra Wilde

Governance assessments, and democratic governance assessments in particular, have not been around for long. It is only since the late 1990s that comprehensive democratic governance assessment frameworks have been developed and implemented systematically. This chapter examines the principal influences on assessment approaches' tools and methods. The most dynamic period in their development has been since the early 2000's, which have witnessed a simultaneous surge in the production of donor-driven, government-driven, and citizen-driven assessments. There are shared and divergent reasons for the propagation of assessments among these actors, but for many, assessments represent an important instrument for enhancing accountability and transparency, maximizing the effectiveness of development programmes, and providing an empirical basis for policy reform.

A key challenge in developing countries is to understand how a democratic governance assessment can strengthen democratic development. There are two camps of thought on this issue. The first sees democratic governance assessments as an exogenous aid-conditionality instrument, in which the assessment provides an incentive to reform. For example, democracy promoters argue that the Millennium Challenge Account, which is based on countries passing a governance and democracy test, has been highly effective in bolstering democratization in recipient countries. The second sees democratic governance assessments as an endogenous transformative process that should be guided by the same democracy and good governance principles it seeks to assess (e.g., participatory, transparent, representative). This latter view is said to provide more potential for local capacity development and local ownership.

This chapter charts the contributions to the thinking and practice on the *content* of governance assessments (what to measure, and which tools to use)

to the more recent concern with the *process* of assessment, which has been influenced by social accountability thinking, the rights based approach, and international commitments to national ownership of development. Evolving normative and operational imperatives, as well as innovations in methods and tools since the mid 1990s, have had a considerable impact on how governance assessments are designed and implemented to the extent that there have been three distinct waves of assessment.

The *first* wave of governance assessment was heavily influenced by the work of academics fixated on producing instruments that seek to evaluate the progress of democratization in regions such as Latin America and Eastern Europe, and the democracy support that was given by the donor community. In the democracy promotion field, first wave indicators are rather crude measures that are oriented towards academic research. Furthermore, most of these indicators are based on an institution-centred concept of democratic governance as opposed to a people-centred concept of governance. Much activity in producing these measures was not particularly suitable for use by development practitioners, the chief criticism being an overuse of quantitative measures and the over-simplification of the governance or democracy concept by insisting on minimalist definitions. At the same time, the theoretical insights that donors took away toward the end of the first wave were two approaches that have continued to be influential in subsequent years. One is the Results-Based Management approach, the other the Logical Framework Analysis. Both contributed to keeping donor agencies focused on assessing results.

The *second wave* of governance assessment built on the first, but was particularly influenced by an increasing demand from donors for instruments that can be used to determine development assistance decisions. This has resulted in the production of a number of global indices that are used to rank countries' performance, including instruments produced by the World Bank, and Transparency International, among others. New aid conditionality programmes designed by organizations such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Ibrahim Foundation, the World Bank, the European Commission, and other bilateral donors, are using these tools. Many are 'naming and shaming' indices and have been criticized for lacking transparency in the way they are compiled and for being used to make decisions for which they are ill-suited. The second wave also includes assessments that combine and integrate democracy, governance, and poverty reduction dimensions. Carothers (2009) writes extensively on the divide that has existed between democracy and development specialists and how these fields are often treated as entirely distinct disciplines. This can also be seen in the body of work in which separate stand-alone assessments have developed

over time for governance, democracy, and human rights, but where the divisions between the three gradually dissipate.

The *third wave* builds on the innovations from previous generations in terms of the content of governance assessments, but turns its focus to the process of assessment. It does this through its emphasis on principles and actions that fortify local ownership, strengthen domestic accountability relationships, and develop local capacities. The Africa Peer Review Mechanism, which is based on regionally chosen indicators and an implementation process that emphasizes domestic ownership, is an important example of this most recent generation. The third wave of assessments is also heavily influenced by the aid effectiveness agenda (the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* and the *Accra Agenda for Action*) and the rights-based approach. The latter is process-oriented and underlines domestic accountability relationships and capacity development. Finally, the third wave is marked by the prominence of social accountability instruments, such as citizen-led assessments, surveys of the public (i.e., of ordinary citizens), and using measurement tools that empower citizens in the process of measurement. John Keane describes this as “monitory democracy”, an approach marked by public scrutiny and public control of decision makers through surveys, focus groups, deliberative polling, online petitions, and audience and customer voting. All these are citizen-driven accountability mechanisms that in many ways can be more powerful checks than traditional accountability institutions, such as parliament, the judiciary, or the media (Keane, 2009).

### **First wave: democracy programming indicators and academic datasets**

The first wave began in the 1970s with the democratic transitions in southern Europe – Greece, Spain, and Portugal – and continued in the 1980s in Latin America. By 1990, the democracy bug had infected more than 60 countries throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, all of which underwent some form of democratic transition (Huntington, 1991). The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the spread of democracy in the former Soviet Union and Latin America were significant landmarks towards the end of this wave. At this time, capitalism and liberal democracy were increasingly espoused as ideal systems. In the context of US foreign policy, democracy promotion was not an explicit area until 1994, but various activities that existed before then could be thought of as democracy-related assistance, such as the post-World War II Marshall Plan and human rights programmes in Latin America in the 1980s.

The “democracy promotion industry”, as Carothers (1999) describes it, came into being in the 1980s. Along with the US, European democracy

aid also expanded with programmes in Latin America and later in Africa and Eastern Europe. There was also a huge increase in the number of international democracy organizations starting in earnest in the early 1980s. Freedom House, which was founded in 1941 but did not begin producing its annual assessments on the *State of Freedom in the World* until 1978 (the same year, incidentally, that Human Rights Watch was founded), Amnesty International which was established in 1961, and the German government-funded party foundations, Friedrich Ebert, Friedrich Neumann, and Konrad Adenauer foundations in the 1960s, are the early exceptions. The real mushrooming began in the 1980s and included the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy in 1983, which provides funding for the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in the United Kingdom in 1992, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in 1994 (which has since been replaced by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (also EIDHR) in 2007, the founding of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in 1995, and the development of its State of Democracy project in 2002, and then more recently the Netherlands Institute of Multiparty Democracy in 2000, among others.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that the first wave of assessments was dominated by academics who were employed by stakeholders, such as the international democracy organizations, rather than the official donor agencies. It was the academic community that was responsible for building large multi-country, time series democracy and politics datasets. Landman (2009) outlines the various strategies that scholars have used to measure democracy since the 1960s, including categorical measures (democracy versus non-democracy), scale measures (e.g., a rating on a 1 to 10 scale), objective measures (e.g., voter turnout and party share of the vote), hybrid measures of democratic practices, and perceptions of democracy based on mass public opinion surveys. Cheibub et al. (2009) also note variation in how democracy is measured based on different notions of democracy, i.e., continuous or categorical? And if categorical, dichotomous or polychotomous?

Although political data (and statistics, in particular) are far behind social and economic comparative data, Munck (2009) notes that the current period is unprecedented in terms of the production of data on politics. A sampling of some of this production includes the Polity data series which

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1. The EIDHR is a European Union programme that aims to promote and support human rights and democracy worldwide. Since its inception in 1994, the EIDHR has been the principal vehicle for extending support to civil society activities in the promotion of human rights and democracy

began in 1978 and is still widely used; the six-fold classification of regimes by Cheibub which was first published in 1996 and then revised in 2009 and renamed the *Democracy and Dictatorship Data* (Cheibub et al., 2009); the *Vanhanen Polyarchy Dataset*; Przeworski's *Democracy and Development Extended Dataset* (data from 1946-2002), and Freedom House's State of Freedom (previously known as the Gastil Index) with data from 1972 to the present, among others. However, despite this impressive collection of data, there is a significant challenge to be overcome in making it *relevant* and *usable* beyond academia.

Yet another influence on the first wave of indicators is the contribution of surveying to democracy and governance data. The last two decades have seen a significant growth in the range and scope of public opinion surveys that are based on adult population samples. They measure the public's views of the quality of democracy in their own country, and assess the performance of their government leaders, institutions, policies, confidence and trust in government institutions, and satisfaction with democracy, patterns of political behaviour and civic engagement, and social and political values. Norris (2008) maps the major cross-national and time-series surveys of public opinion, which include the Global Barometers (Europe, Latin America, Africa and, more recently, the Asia and Arab barometers), the World Values Survey, the Pew Global Attitudes, and the Gallup World Poll. The surveys are an important addition to the data sources for democracy and governance assessments, because they capture the differences that exist between *de jure* rules and *de facto* outcomes on the ground. While subjective data has often been thought considered inferior in the measurement of other variables and phenomena, in the democracy and governance field subjective indicators can often be superior precisely because of this property.

With the increase in democracy-building support in the second half of the 1990s, demand grew for evaluation instruments and assessment tools that would not only show whether the assistance was having an impact on democratization, but would also explain the distinctive features of democratic development, the role of political institutions and actors in that development, and shed light on such issues as the sequencing of democracy support interventions. Results-based management emerged as the predominant mode for managing donor resources in the late 1990s and it is within this framework that work to develop democracy and governance indicators that could be used in donor programming began. At the heart of results-based management is a focus on a time-bound project or programme and the application of logical framework thinking, which is essentially a results chain that links inputs to outcomes and impacts. It was quite a significant leap at

that time to think about development in terms of outcomes and impacts, rather than inputs, activities, and outputs.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) introduced suggested performance indicators for the democracy assistance ‘sector’ in the late 1990s. The 1996 CIDA guide, *Indicators for Programming in Human Rights and Democratic Development: A Preliminary Study*, and the USAID *Handbook of Democracy and Governance Program Indicators* (1998) remain, more than a decade later, important reference documents on democratic governance indicator development. This is because they provide a considerable number of illustrative or example indicators based on an extremely inclusive conceptualization of democracy and governance that had not previously existed.

That being said, there are useful things to be borrowed from the general evaluation field, particularly in its knowledge of, and experience with, participatory methods. Cracknell (2000) stated that, “the trend towards the use of participatory methods in monitoring and evaluation is undoubtedly the most significant change currently taking place in the field of evaluation”. The evaluation discipline has experimented with participatory techniques since the late 1980s. UNDP (1997) provides a useful summary of participatory evaluation. It “involves the stakeholders and beneficiaries of a programme or project in the collective examination and assessment of that programme or project. It is people-centred: project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation”. Its key characteristics include:

- Drawing on local resources and capacities.
- Recognizing the innate wisdom and knowledge of end-users.
- Demonstrating that end-users are creative and knowledgeable about their environment.
- Ensuring that stakeholders are part of the decision-making process.
- Using facilitators who act as catalysts and who assist stakeholders in asking key questions.

Crawford and Kearton (2002) note that even though participatory evaluations have been widely practiced in various development fields, this is not the case in the democracy and governance sector, which has obvious complexities and sensitivities for engaging stakeholders such as the government, donors, and non-government actors together. Consequently, the notion of multi-stakeholder participation in governance assessments

only occurs later in the evolution of governance assessments, and is a third wave attribute that is examined later in this chapter.

### **Second wave: aid conditionality and naming and shaming indices**

Second wave assessments are characterized by quantitative, multi-country, ranking, and aggregated/composite measures. The *UNDP Governance Indicators: A Users' Guide* (2nd edition, 2006a), presents a flourishing quantity of global indices that are used to 'name and shame' countries for their performance against a range of democracy and governance measures. Beyond naming and shaming, many of these indices are used as a basis for decisions on official development assistance and for access to other financial resources. Each year the US Millennium Challenge Corporation and the World Bank allocate billions of dollars of assistance using governance indicators. Bilateral donors are increasingly doing the same as well as new entrants, such as the Ibrahim Foundation, who give grants based on performance against predefined governance indicators. Some international organizations, such as the World Bank, play a leading role both in the supply and use of cross-country governance ratings. The European Commission is also a relatively new user of governance ratings with the introduction of its Governance Incentive Tranche for African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries, which supplements ratings with qualitative assessments. Arndt and Oman (2008) note that the last 15 years have seen a veritable explosion of interest in the quality of governance in the developing world and an equally significant increase in the use of quantitative governance indicators (Arndt and Oman, 2008).

Unlike the first wave of assessments (the datasets produced largely by academia), these indices are increasingly being built with the development community (mostly donors) in mind so that they can pluck out one or two indicators that will give them the information they need to quickly make decisions. They are also more usable than the first generation insofar as they integrate democracy, governance, and human rights concepts – all of which together, rather than individually, have become increasingly relevant to development practitioners. This group is not interested in democracy datasets based on procedural or minimalist definitions of democracy, but wants measures that are able to include all the economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions of governance, democracy, and human rights together. This has focused attention on the concept of governance and to questions of definition – how broad or narrow should the concept be defined? What attributes are most important? What are the critical dimensions or components of the attribute, etc.? Democracy and human rights, while still tricky concepts, can be anchored in theoretical frameworks, whereas

governance is entirely ‘under-theorized’ and is often overloaded “where governance is all good things” (Grindle, 2004). This makes it even more of a challenge to develop an assessment around it. For example, the Worldwide Governance Indicators measure the perceived quality of six dimensions of governance for 213 economies, but are not based on a theoretical construct of what constitutes good or bad governance. Governance is, in a way, a catch all for everything good and it suffers greatly from concept validity. The normative aspect is important, as the *Governance Indicators: A Users’ Guide* highlights: all assessments have a normative bias otherwise it is not possible to judge what is good or bad or if something is improving or deteriorating.

Many actors on the development stage began to broaden human rights, democracy, and governance concepts so that they merge into one people-centred meta-concept. For example, UNDP began to incorporate a political dimension in its public management work in the late 1990s and renamed the area Democratic Governance. This area includes human rights, governance (in all spheres), and promotion of democratization. Donors also began to develop instruments that focus on cross-cutting concepts, such as power to understand reform dynamics in which formal and informal sources of power are mapped and stakeholder interests and incentives are analyzed (World Bank, 2009).

*Why did quantitative cross-country comparative indices become so popular?* With the last decade’s international consensus that governance matters for development and economic growth, the development community and donors in particular need broad brush instruments that will say something about what is happening on the ground on these subjects. It also became widely recognized that corruption in particular (a key governance concern), is a considerable obstacle to the delivery of effective development assistance. Furthermore, donors and, importantly, pro-reform citizen groups and non-governmental actors in developing countries demand tools that can be used as an incentive to improve the situation by naming and shaming and horse races (countries want to out-perform each other). Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index is an excellent example of this.

The Corruption Perceptions Index is an annual ranking of countries according to perceptions of corruption in the public sector. It is an aggregate index that combines different sources of information about corruption. It has played a huge role in raising awareness of the problem of corruption, of catalyzing dialogue with government, and of galvanizing support for measures to fight corruption. The index has great influence both in academic research and in anti-corruption efforts (Andersson and Heywood, 2009). It is a so called “index of indices”, similar to the World Bank’s *Worldwide Governance Indicators*. The Bank’s approach to corruption measurement

is similar to methodology applied by Transparency International, and the two indices correlate well (Søreide, 2006). These two instruments and the Freedom House Index enjoy huge popularity in their use and reference.

Criticisms of governance ranking/rating instruments both in academic and policy circles are widespread, and many users now have access to a growing information base that explains how these indicators should be used and what their limits are. Furthermore, these kinds of indices have been challenged for normative, legitimacy, and methodological reasons: some governments in developing countries regard the indicators as biased, as pro-liberalization, pro-market and not relevant to understanding the governance, democracy, or human rights reality in their countries.

Two examples of the use of second wave indicators, the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the Ibrahim Foundation, are detailed in the following paragraphs to illustrate the use of second wave governance assessments and their characteristics (i.e., aggregate/composite measures based on a multidimensional concept of governance). The Millennium Challenge Corporation is governed by a CEO and a board of directors comprising the Secretaries of State and Treasury, the Administrator of USAID, the US Trade Representative, the CEO of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, as well as four non-governmental representatives. It administers the Millennium Challenge Account, which is a bilateral US development assistance programme established by President Bush in 2002.

The Millennium Challenge Account is independent of all other agencies that administer US aid and is intended to be different from other US aid programmes in that it asks eligible countries to submit proposals based on national development priorities. When the proposals are approved, the grantee government enters into a 'compact' with the Corporation that includes benchmarks for success. One of the aims of the Corporation's selection processes is to draw attention to and reward countries for democratizing reforms in that eligibility for Millennium Challenge Account funds serve as an incentive. The criteria for country eligibility is based on a number of cross-country measures of the quality of governance, including several constructed by the World Bank in its Worldwide Governance Indicators, including especially measures for voice and accountability.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation has three 'democracy indicators' in its eligibility criteria:

1. Political Rights (as measured by Freedom House, Freedom in the World), covering a country's performance on the quality of the electoral processes, political pluralism and participation, government function

and accountability, transparency, and fair political treatment of ethnic minorities.

2. Civil Liberties (as measured by Freedom House, Freedom in the World), covering freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law, protection of human rights, personal autonomy, individual and economic rights, and the independence of the judiciary.
3. Voice and Accountability (as measured by the Worldwide Governance Indicators), covering the ability of domestic institutions to protect civil liberties, the extent to which citizens are able to participate in the selection of government, and the independence of the media.

Research undertaken by the Center for Global Development assert that there is a Millennium Challenge Corporation ‘effect’, in that the indicator-based country selection process has proven to be a powerful incentive for reform in candidate countries (Herrling et al., 2009). The brochures produced by the Corporation also speak of its impact. It states that Freedom House has begun reporting that “they have held discussions with a much wider range of countries since the Millennium Challenge Corporation began using their analysis as part of the selection process”, and that “governments who have previously dismissed ratings as irrelevant or illegitimate have now requested meetings to learn more about the methodology and the issues driving their scores” (Millennium Challenge Corporation, 2007).

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation was established by Dr. Mohamed (Mo) Ibrahim, founder of Celtel International, as an African initiative to recognize achievement in African leadership and to stimulate debate on good governance across sub-Saharan Africa and globally. The Foundation publishes the *Ibrahim Index of African Governance* and has an annual African Leadership Award, a monetary prize (\$5 million) awarded to an African leader based on the findings of the Index. Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, provides one of the testimonials on the Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s website and has this to say about the Foundation:

“Mo Ibrahim has a vision to promote and recognize good governance that will drive Africa’s political and economic renaissance. He has established the Mo Ibrahim Foundation to develop criteria for good governance, stimulate public debate and challenge the continent’s leaders to set the global benchmark on this issue. Most specifically, the Foundation will provide a unique prize to recognize good governance by African leaders who have left office after a successful period in power. It is appropriate that this will be the largest prize in the world. Nothing is more important”.

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance was first published in 2007 and calls itself “one of the most comprehensive assessments of governance in sub-Saharan Africa”. It assesses the provision of public goods and services delivered to citizens by government and non-state actors. It consists of 84 indicators grouped into four main categories:

1. Safety and rule of law, i.e., personal safety (crime), rule of law, accountability and corruption, national security.
2. Participation and Human Rights, i.e., political participation, political rights and civil liberties, gender equality and women’s rights.
3. Sustainable economic opportunity, i.e., public management, private sector, infrastructure, environment and the rural sector.
4. Human development, i.e., health and welfare and education.

The Ibrahim Index is a composite and, like the Corruption Perceptions Index, is an index of indices, utilizing data from 23 external institutions. It goes much further than the Worldwide Governance Indicators and certainly Freedom in the World in its inclusion of social and economic indicators in its conception of governance. The problem with the Ibrahim Index is that by including indicators of both outcome and process, there is no way of differentiating between the two, or between cause and effect.<sup>2</sup>

### **Third wave: a focus on process**

The third wave includes assessments that emphasize process. The focus on process is made on the basis that an inclusive, transparent (i.e., more democratic) process will have positive transformative effects for local stakeholders. It sees the assessment process itself as an entry point for empowering local stakeholders through access to information and by providing a mechanism for engagement and participation in dialogue on governance and democracy issues in their countries.

The first and second wave assessments had little concern for the points of intersection between an assessment and local actors. Assessments in these cases are based on data generated by external experts or qualitative studies undertaken by external researchers. There is limited interest in using or building on local capacities. Nor is assessment ownership a priority, especially in cases where those that are undertaking the assessment are using it for making their own decisions rather than viewing the assessment as a tool for local groups to use.

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2. See Art Kraay’s comments on the Ibrahim Index given at the Brookings Institution meeting “How to Rank Good Governance: The Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership” in Washington D.C on October 25th, 2007

So, in contrast to the two previous waves, the third wave of governance assessments is characterized by:

1. 'Bottom-up', citizen-initiated approaches that emphasize dialogue and social accountability.
2. The application of basic principles of the rights-based approach (especially strengthening accountability relationships).
3. The influence of the aid effectiveness agenda with its emphasis on national ownership of development and capacity development.

A useful example of a process-focused approach is the State of Democracy assessment initiated by the International IDEA to strengthen the demand for good governance. This tool is based on a carefully thought through framework of qualitative and quantitative democracy indicators that citizens can use to examine their own governance systems. Its main purpose is to contribute to the process of democratization by raising public awareness about what democracy involves, and public debate about what standards of performance people should expect from their government; providing systematic evidence to substantiate citizens' concerns about how they are governed; contributing to public debate about ongoing reform, and helping to identify priorities for a reform programme. The assessment process is locally led and owned, as local researchers undertake the assessment which is then disseminated widely and the results subjected to local multi-stakeholder dialogue. Since 2000, the State of Democracy assessment has been used in a broad range of developing and developed countries including Bangladesh, El Salvador, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand, Peru, South Korea, Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ireland, Latvia, Mexico, Chile, Mongolia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan.

Another example is the Urban Governance Index, supported by the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT). The index aims to catalyse local action to improve the quality of urban governance, and measures local governance across five dimensions: effectiveness, equity, participation, accountability, and security. Local indicators are adapted by cities and their partners to respond directly to their unique contexts and needs. The Urban Governance Index promotes stakeholder participation and local ownership of the process to help ensure the data collected are locally relevant and used in decision-making. The assessment process has seven main steps, beginning with sensitizing local leaders on the importance of measuring progress in improved urban governance, developing locally appropriate indicators (i.e., definition, selection criteria, linkages with other indicators), defining benchmarks and targets, assigning scoring and weighting to the indicators and sub-indices and the proposed formulae for

the local adaptation of the Urban Governance Index, field testing in cities, collecting data on a periodic basis (the data on the indicators is collected through stakeholder meetings where all key urban actors are present), and integrating findings in urban policy development.

Finally, two international programmes for supporting country-led assessments include the OECD supported Metagora programme and UNDP's Global Programme on Democratic Governance Assessments. Metagora was an international project focusing on bottom-up methods, tools, and frameworks for measuring human rights and democratic governance. It was launched in February 2004, under the auspices of the OECD/PARIS21, and concluded its operations in 2009. The programme made a significant contribution to local governance assessments through piloted innovative activities led by local institutions and invariably engaging national statistics offices. Activities included a statistics-based assessment of the rights of indigenous peoples in the Philippines, a survey in Mexico of all forms of ill-treatment of persons by police bodies, a pilot survey in South Africa focused on the realization of democracy and human rights in the land reform process, coding, matching, and analysis of NGOs' data on human rights violations in Sri Lanka, and a database on the realization of the right to education conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in collaboration with research institutions and NGOs (see also Chapter 13).

The UNDP Global Programme on Democratic Governance Assessments supports country-led, nationally-owned governance assessment initiatives in more than 30 countries, including Mongolia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Senegal, Malawi, Mexico, Indonesia, Egypt, and Chile. This programme is a significant catalyst of third wave assessments. It provides support to local entities for facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement on governance measurement, for capacity development initiatives related to governance measurement, and for initiatives that enhance the policy relevance of governance indicators (i.e., country contextualization).

### **Bottom-up approaches**

Third wave governance assessments stress a bottom-up approach. This is an alternative methodology that begins with the local population's most pressing governance and democracy needs and concerns. Then local citizens assess how well those needs and concerns are being met. This is the demand side of democratic governance, in that the approach focuses on the voice and capacity of citizens to directly demand greater accountability and responsiveness from public officials and service providers. At the centre of this idea is social accountability, a concept that relies on civic engagement in which ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations participate

directly or indirectly in holding officials to account (Malena et al., 2004). Social accountability is a close relative of the rights-based approach, because the obligation of government officials to be accountable to citizens derives from an idea of citizens' rights, such as the right to official information, to freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression. Furthermore, the concept of social accountability underlines the right of citizens to expect and ensure that government acts in the best interests of the people (World Bank, 2004).

It is the participation of citizens that distinguishes social accountability from conventional mechanisms of accountability. In many cases, citizens, communities, and civil society organizations do not merely participate in social accountability activities, but initiate and control them (as with the International IDEA's State of Democracy assessment). While many participatory approaches focus exclusively on the individual community or at the micro-level, social accountability mechanisms expand opportunities for participation at the macro-level. This may include, as Chapters 11 and 12 demonstrate, citizen involvement in the analysis and/or formulation of national or local budgets or linking the findings of local level participatory monitoring and evaluation exercises to budgetary, administrative, or governance issues at higher levels of the public service delivery chain (World Bank, 2004). These social accountability instruments are governance assessments in themselves, but also represent important information sources for broader and more comprehensive governance assessment initiatives. The key contribution of social accountability tools and techniques is in providing citizens with access to information. But there are important prerequisites for effective use of social accountability mechanisms, notably an active civil society that has the political space and resources to assist citizen action, and a vibrant media that can (and is willing to) work with NGOs and citizens groups in communicating governance deficits.

Turning now to the rights-based approach, this deals with the monitoring not only of outcomes, but also process and is essentially concerned with the accountability relationship that exists between duty-bearers, (state and government actors, including parliaments, ministries, local authorities, judges, police, and teachers), rights-holders (individuals, citizens, citizen groups, and non-government actors) and the capacities or lack thereof between those parties in fulfilling obligations and asserting rights (OHCHR, 2003).<sup>3</sup> It also emphasizes that it is impossible to evaluate development without first paying attention to how it was accomplished (Decker et al., 2005).

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3. OHCHR (2003): What is a rights-based approach to development?

Rights-based approaches require active and meaningful participation in the assessment process by communities, civil society, vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, women and others. Particular attention is given to addressing discrimination, ensuring equality, equity, and participation of vulnerable groups in the assessment process and collection of disaggregated data. Disaggregated data is of huge importance for governance assessments. Development data need to be disaggregated, as far as possible, by race, religion, ethnicity, language, sex, and other aspects. First and second wave governance assessments provided little or no disaggregated data for vulnerable groups, whereas third wave governance assessments attempt to capture and reflect the potentially different impacts that the mechanisms and processes of governance have on various social groups. It is even possible to capture sensitivity to vulnerable groups beyond using the same but disaggregated governance indicators for vulnerable groups as the rest of the population, by choosing governance indicators that measure a governance practice specifically targeted at a vulnerable group (e.g., percentage of prisons that have special facilities for pregnant prisoners) or having vulnerable groups themselves indicate, through participatory techniques (e.g., survey methods), the governance issues that are of special interest to them (UNDP, 2006b).

However, the rights based approach's usefulness for improving and shaping the evolution of how governance assessments are done exists more in potential than realization. Nevertheless, the basic principles of a rights based approach have already had a significant impact on the UNDP programme of governance assessments, especially in its emphasis on multi-stakeholder participation, disaggregated data for vulnerable groups, and capacity development.

### **Aid effectiveness: national ownership and capacity development**

While the main emphasis in recent years has been on strengthening bottom-up approaches, this chapter would be incomplete without a reference to the changes that have taken place also at macro level, and specifically in the way donors approach their partners in recipient countries. Most important is the effort to improve aid effectiveness, as enshrined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and, more recently, through the Accra Agenda for Action (2008). These two declarations have ushered in a new approach by donors to governance assessments, particularly in sharpening commitments to country ownership and alignment with national systems. This agenda aims to improve the quality of the delivery, management, and use of official development assistance to maximize its development impacts. The agenda proclaims that 'ownership of development' by developing countries is a prerequisite for development success, and argues for a shift in the way donors

support development through aligning programmes with country policies and systems, and to apply programmatic instruments, such as budget support (Meyer, 2009). The five basic principles of the Paris Declaration are:

1. **Ownership.** Partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies and co-ordinate development actions.
2. **Alignment.** Donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions and procedures.
3. **Harmonization.** Donors' actions are more transparent, collectively effective and harmonized with each other.
4. **Managing for Results.** Managing resources and improving decision-making with a focus on results.
5. **Mutual Accountability.** Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

Moreover, the Accra Agenda for Action reinforced donor commitments made in the Paris Declaration to national ownership, alignment, and harmonization with national development plans, and capacity development. It went further by calling on donors to “jointly assess the quality of country systems in a country-led process using mutually agreed diagnostic tools” (paragraph 15c).

During a two-day conference in London in 2009, governance specialists from development agencies, civil society, and academia discussed why, how, and when donors assess governance in partner countries, and the impact of these assessments. The conference sought to take stock of present practices, stimulate mutual learning, and find ways to cooperate so that assessments are better used by in-country stakeholders working on improving governance. The conference discussed a review of donor approaches to assessments undertaken in 2008. The review identified 11 development agencies having 17 general governance assessment tools in use, plus three under development, and stressed the risk of frequent duplication and overlap between governance assessment tools, along with the need to improve practice with regard to greater reliance on partner country assessment processes (OECD, 2008).

In response to the London meeting and the donor review, the OECD produced ‘guiding principles’ to improve donor impact, usage, and harmonization of governance assessments. The principles are intended to provide practical advice to governance specialists in donor agencies working on assessments and to donor agency staff working in other sectors who

encounter the realities of governance in their work every day (OECD, 2009). They are:

- Build on and strengthen nationally driven governance assessments.
- Identify a clear key purpose to drive the choice of assessment tools and processes.
- Assess and address governance from different entry points and perspectives.
- Harmonize assessments at country level when the aim is to stimulate dialogue and governance reform.
- Make results public unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

Many third-wave governance assessments have been fostered by UNDP, the International IDEA, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development's African Peer Review Mechanism at the international level. These complement the spread of local level smaller scale social accountability initiatives. They are characterized by citizen/country-driven assessment initiatives focused on utilizing national capacities and creating dialogue. The donor contribution to third wave assessments lies in its commitment to harmonize its own assessments with country led ones and to support indigenous assessment processes as much as it can. In the light of the Paris and Accra resolutions, however, donors are using the rhetoric of country ownership of assessments, but there remain obvious tensions in reconciling these prevailing development principles (participation, national ownership, capacity development) with an efficient appraisal of democratic governance. In many cases, donors are paying more attention to national consultation in their governance assessment activities, encouraging input to the assessment process, which is different from ownership in which local actors drive the process.

### **Conclusions**

The three waves of governance assessment that have been discussed in this chapter reflect in large part the shifts that have taken place in the governance concept itself. Many lessons have been learned and carried over to the next wave.

A conference of democracy indicator experts from academia was convened in Berkeley, California, in 2009 to assess the current state of democracy assessments and governance indicators and to develop an agenda for constructing better indicators. Two 'relevance' challenges were highlighted at the conference. One was a legitimacy challenge related to the need for greater transparency in measurement, i.e., who is doing the measuring and who is funding the research. The other was the challenge of contextual relevance

related to the need of the development and policy making community to have indicators for the sub-national level as well as measurement approaches that can highlight sub-national trends and differences, i.e., contextually specific indicators. This shows how much academics have come to realize the importance of being able to devise methods that speak not only to what is theoretically interesting, but also to what is practically valuable.

A second lesson that has been learned, if not fully embraced, is that the results-based management approach with its grounding in logical framework analysis is ill-suited for assessing the democracy or governance situation of a country at any level. Crawford argues that the logical framework “produces a narrow project-based, mainly quantitative, analysis, insufficiently grounded in the complexities and nuances of the political context in which such assistance take place” (Crawford, 2003). Another critic is Tom Carothers, who argues that it uses “highly reductionist indicators and is a deeply flawed undertaking that is consuming vast resources, producing little useful insight or knowledge, and introduces distortions into the design and implementation of aid” (Carothers, 1999). In response to this kind of criticism, there has been a gradual shift towards recognizing the importance of more contextualization in assessing governance.

A third lesson is reflected in the shift from cross-country comparisons based on global data sets towards country-led assessments involving local stakeholders. Much of this mirrors the growing influence of civil society organizations and citizens activists, but is also a consequence of the limited policy value provided by these global comparisons. The World Bank itself has cautioned that its governance indicators have substantial margins of error, so that careful empirical scrutiny is needed for borderline cases where the risk of misclassification is especially high (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2002).

Overall, it is appropriate to conclude that the task of assessing governance has moved over a significant intellectual and programmatic territory in the past 20 years. It has clearly moved in the direction of making democratic governance more practical and participatory. This is evident in the various case study contributions that form the main empirical part of this volume.

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## **UNDP AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS**

**Alexandra Wilde and Joachim Nahem**

### **Introduction**

Since its inception, UNDP has been engaged in governance assessments in one way or another. UNDP country offices have always used governance assessments (both basic and complex) as part of the country analyses that inform development programming and the UN development assistance frameworks for each country in which the UN(DP) works. Moreover, UNDP's work on human development reports has given the organization experience in developing and using a broad range of governance indicators for national, regional, and global human development reports.

There has been a tremendous growth in the use and influence of governance assessments in developing countries and that has brought a new role for UNDP in assisting its country partners. Building on its development assistance co-ordination experience, its neutrality as a development partner, and its focus on capacity development, UNDP has been a national and global voice advocating harmonization of donor assessments and encouraging alignment with country-led assessment exercises. This makes governance monitoring initiatives more relevant to national policymaking and builds national capacity for data collection and analysis. In 2009, the UN Secretary General's Guidance Note on Democracy highlighted nationally-owned assessments as an important area for UN focus and comparative advantage. It notes that

“UN assistance should start with a thorough and participatory assessment of national and public needs, capacities, and aspirations in the country concerned and that assessments and measurements of democracy should be driven by national actors and stakeholders to the extent possible. These processes can further democratic debate within the country, raise awareness about democratic values and standards,

and encourage and support the development of domestic ownership. Building national capacity in this regard is critical” (UNSG, 2010).

This chapter situates UNDP’s work on governance assessments in the context of other international actors, including donors. It explains how its unique approach to supporting governance assessments, which focus on engendering national responsibility for the assessment process, contrasts markedly with many donors and international NGOs. And it offers a brief overview of some of the activities supported by UNDP in partner countries and suggests some of the challenges that lie ahead for this approach in the future.

### **UNDP and democratic governance**

The foundation of UNDP’s work on governance assessments begins with its conception of democratic governance. This is a notion of democratic governance that is people-centered in that people should govern themselves through the systems they choose and through open and transparent participatory processes. Democratic governance implies that people have a say in the decisions that affect their lives, and that they can hold decision-makers accountable. It further requires that the rules, institutions, and practices that govern social interactions are inclusive and fair, and that people are free from discrimination based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, or any other attribute. And it means that economic and social policies are responsive to people’s needs and aspirations, that these policies aim to eradicate poverty, expand the choices that all people have in their lives, and that human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected (UNDP, 2002).

UNDP’s people-centered approach to governance draws from two important frameworks: the human development paradigm, as eloquently articulated by Amartya Sen (2000) and reflected in UNDP’s human development reporting, and the human rights based approach to development, which espouses the principles of inclusiveness, participation and transparency and is an important programming tool for UNDP. The human rights based approach is an important refinement of the human development framework, because it promotes the participation of vulnerable and marginalized groups in the development process by focusing on their specific interests. With this approach, the analysis of development challenges focuses on the relationship between the people and the state, between the entitlements and claims of the former and the corresponding obligations of the latter.

## **UNDP's position on democratic governance assessments**

Governance assessments are an important instrument and entry point for strengthening a country's democratic governance. UNDP's primary concern with governance assessments is to promote and support assessment processes that develop the capacities of local stakeholders to understand, participate in, and use governance assessments. Another key objective of UNDP's support relates to the policy impact of an assessment, through strategies aimed at increasing the uptake of governance data to feed into reform in the country. Aligning assessments to national planning tools and processes is one of the best strategies for engaging policy makers and citizens, and for nurturing 'ownership' of the exercise. (CMI and UNDP, 2007).

If governance assessment results are not locally owned and embedded in ongoing national development processes, they will likely be shelved and will not inform policy-making processes. Therefore, a central feature of country-led processes for assessing and monitoring democratic governance is that local and national stakeholders actively participate in key steps of the assessment process, including what is to be assessed, how to assess it, and how the assessment is to be used. Local engagement in all stages of an assessment is critical for linking the assessment results and the corrective actions needed, and for safeguarding the transparency and policy relevance of the assessment process (UNDP, 2009). However, national ownership may not be an objective or even a concern for many country governance assessments currently taking place. This is especially the case for donor-initiated assessments that are used to check a country's 'performance' before giving financial assistance.

Four key democratic governance principles underlie UNDP's preference for country-led governance assessments as opposed to external assessments (UNDP, 2009):

1. **Accountability**  
Country-led assessments act as a critical accountability mechanism for local stakeholders with regard to governance performance.
2. **Participation**  
A broad and representative range of national actors have opportunities to provide input to key stages of the assessment process.
3. **Transparency**  
National actors have unbiased access to information on the assessment process, and the results of the assessment are made available to the public as a public good.

#### 4. Legitimacy

National actors agree that the assessment process and its results are legitimate.

There are several different ways that country-led governance assessments have been initiated to date. Government actors are often initiators of governance assessments, but for such assessments to be country-led, there must be active engagement of non-governmental actors. NGOs might initiate assessments as part of their advocacy efforts to raise awareness on the extent of a governance problem, and to press the government to take action. Research institutions might embark on an assessment to inform a national dialogue on a particular public policy issue. While national stakeholders should be in the driver's seat in country-led governance assessments, this does not preclude an important role for international actors, including multilateral and regional organizations such as UNDP, the World Bank, bilateral donors, international civil society organizations, and independent experts. International actors can make an important contribution in sharing global and regional experience, in mobilizing resources, and in validating national assessments through their use in programmes and policies (UNDP, 2009).

UNDP also prioritizes governance assessment frameworks that measure and capture trends over time. There are two important reasons for this.

First is the crucial role of capacity development. The injection of short-term external consultants or academics, while useful in completing an assessment efficiently, will always run the risk of being unsustainable. The focus on institutionalizing assessments and investing in them from the outset, including investing in systematized data collection, characterizes UNDP's approach. Moreover, information is both powerful and sensitive, and a time-series collection of data on governance is a powerful accountability instrument in the hands of an NGO or other group.

Second, it has become more important to measure democracy and governance results in the framework of mutual accountability of aid relations and conditionality of aid, in which donors make decisions on financial assistance based on proven improvements in democratic governance. While UNDP is not an advocate of aid conditionality, donors that do take this approach prefer assessments to include local stakeholder engagement.

Not all actors promote country engagement, and there is a great diversity in donor approaches in this regard. This is linked to their varying motivations for undertaking these assessments, the different aid policies and governance definitions on which these are based, the different accountability

requirements to which they are subject, and the different uses donors make of the assessments (CMI and UNDP, 2007). Some donor countries use different approaches to fulfill different purposes. For example, in the United States, the Millennium Challenge Account assessment (see Chapter 2) is used to determine aid allocations, while USAID assessments are generally intended to inform country dialogue and programming (OECD, 2009b). UNDP's *Governance Indicators Users' Guide* provides an overview of governance indicators produced by international NGOs, such as Freedom House and Transparency International (UNDP, 2007).

There are many possible ways to differentiate governance assessment approaches based on the principles an assessment framework aspires to uphold. One principle is 'participation', which places value on engaging local stakeholders in the process. For example, are the indicators determined by local stakeholders? Are the data sources nationally generated through surveys, national statistics, etc., or are the data based on external experts' opinions and perceptions? Who is doing the assessing? Who is paying for the assessment? Are the assessment results shared with national stakeholders and/or used as a basis for dialogue, or is it a closed process, and is the relevant information shared within the country?

Although this is gradually changing, donor-driven governance assessments seldom emphasize the role of national partners in the assessment process, or provide opportunities for developing national capacities to monitor governance. Moreover, poor coordination and lack of harmonization in countries where several governance assessments are being undertaken simultaneously have undermined the commitments that donors have made in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (CMI and UNDP, 2007).

There are also differences between bilateral donor agencies, which are accountable to (or part of) a government, and multilateral development institutions, whose governance and accountability structures bring a different set of opportunities and constraints for governance assessments. As a general rule, the main purpose and rationale for donor-led governance assessments is internal, linked to donors' internal programming and accountability obligations. Conversely, the African Development Bank generally undertakes Country Governance Profiles at the request of regional member states to inform policy dialogue, country programming, and project design. As for the World Bank, the allocation of its concessional resources is based on an internal assessment of a country's institutional and policy performance, including its governance performance, through the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment and the 'Governance Factor' introduced in 2002 (CMI and UNDP, 2007).

Nevertheless, in 2009, donors, through the OECD DAC Governance Network, endorsed a set of guiding principles for “enhanced impact, usage and harmonization” of donor approaches to governance assessments (OECD, 2009a). The first principle calls for “building on and strengthening nationally driven governance assessments”, and highlights the importance of “engaging in strengthening domestic capacity to assess and debate governance issues”. In this respect, the approach of bilateral donor agencies is likely to increasingly reflect the principles that UNDP has endorsed and implemented for some time already.

### **UNDP’s practice and experience**

Given the numerous governance assessments in many developing countries, UNDP decided not to develop its own governance assessment tool and add to the dizzying array of external assessments. It chose rather to explore ways to support national initiatives and to encourage donors and development partners to strengthen local engagement in assessment processes. This approach, based on utilizing and strengthening local intellectual resources and producing policy relevant data and research, derives from UNDP’s experience in developing the National Human Development Reports. UNDP has a long tradition of supporting national human development reports, which are produced by local research institutes and experts. It has also accumulated considerable experience in governance-related human development reports that use governance indicators. A survey of national human development reports between 2000 and 2009 showed that there are about 63 reports that focus on democratic governance and use nationally-generated data to inform their analysis. The most common governance themes include local governance, decentralization, civil society, and citizenship. The research for the reports is most often based on surveys and national administrative data, e.g., public service delivery or electoral data (UNDP, 2010).

At the global level, the Charles Humana Index was an early instance of bringing human rights into the Human Development Report, but this proved to be politically and methodologically controversial.<sup>1</sup> Today, the primary political indicator used in the global human development reports relates to gender and it is the Gender Empowerment Measure that evaluates progress in women’s access to political power structures and economic resources, such as the female share of parliamentary seats, women’s share of managerial

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1. The Charles Humana Index was an attempt to assess countries’ adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This proved to be a fraught experience for UNDP, as several UN member States objected strongly to the methodology (the weighting that valued some rights higher than others) and to the concept that a UNDP-produced report would rank them in this area.

and administrative jobs, and the female share of professional and technical workers. The 1995 Human Development Report introduced the Gender Empowerment Measure and the Gender-related Development Index. These measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the Human Development Index, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology subtracts points for inequality, so that the Gender-related Development Index falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down, or when the disparity between their respective achievements increases. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's Gender-related Development Index compared to its Human Development Index. In other words, the Gender-related Development Index is simply the Human Development Index discounted, or adjusted downwards, for gender inequality.

The 2002 Human Development Report, *Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* (UNDP, 2002), provides a solid analysis of the role of democratic governance in the process of human development and social and economic growth. The report draws on national, regional, and global democracy and governance indicators from a range of sources, including international organizations, NGOs, and academic research. More recently, the 2010 Human Development Report, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development* (UNDP, 2010), delves into governance through a so-called empowerment index, which is a composite measurement for empowerment that draws on international datasets and consists of multiple governance indicator themes (i.e., accountability, civil liberties, political freedom, and agency). Regional human development reports have made a valuable contribution to generating new or presenting existing, democratic governance indicators measured at the country-level.

The first instance of a distinct analysis of governance through a human development lens can be found in the 1999 Asia-Pacific Human Development Report, *Crisis of Governance*, produced by the Mahbub ul Haq Development Centre. The Report created a Humane Governance Index to highlight regional governance challenges concerning human rights, military rule, elite capture, and decentralization. The index relied on a mix of global sources (e.g., Freedom House) and national studies. There have been several other regional reports since that have introduced other measures of governance, including the 2008 Asia Pacific Human Development Report on Corruption, *Tackling Corruption, Transforming Lives: Accelerating Human Development in the Asia Pacific*. This report presents comprehensive corruption indicators, including perception-based measures of corruption, and indicators measuring the political economy conditions and socio-economic factors that could be linked to corruption. The 2004 Latin

America regional report, *Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Citizens' Democracy*, includes two indices of democratic development in the region, as well as the results of public opinion surveys of close to 20,000 people in the 18 Latin American countries surveyed for the project. The 2004 Arab Human Development Report, *Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, also makes a valuable contribution in generating new governance indicators for Arab countries by drawing on public opinion polls on the pace of political change in five Arab countries.

In 2002, the newly established UNDP Oslo Governance Centre began exploring entry points for UNDP's engagement in governance assessments other than the Human Development Reports. The African Peer Review Mechanism and the International Conference on New and Restored Democracies have proven important initiatives for UNDP to advocate its position on country-owned assessments. UNDP, for example, has actively supported Mongolia's follow-up of the International Conference on New and Restored Democracies-5 in 2003 by providing technical support and expertise to the development of a national democratic governance indicator system. For almost a decade now, the Oslo Governance Centre has provided technical support and financial assistance to catalyse national assessment processes in more than 30 countries in most regions. These include countries as diverse as Mongolia, Nigeria, Djibouti, Chile, Macedonia, and Iraq. The Centre has held numerous international events and workshops on the technical dimensions and policy implications of governance assessments, bringing together a wide array of national actors and experts. It also manages a Governance Assessments portal, which is a reservoir of policy, programming, and methodological resources for assessments. And the Centre has developed a series of thematic Users' Guides that provide insight on existing measurement tools, case studies, interviews with practitioners, and quick tips for ensuring proper usage.

In 2008, the work of the Oslo Governance Centre was scaled up through a Global Programme on Capacity Development for Democratic Governance Assessments (UNDP, 2008). This is a multi-year programme managed by the Centre and executed through three windows: a 'country window' that offers technical and financial support to nationally-owned assessments through UNDP Country Offices; a 'regional window' that offers regional training, knowledge products, and workshops in partnership with UNDP regional bureaux and service centres; and a 'global window' that focuses on overall policy development, advocacy, and knowledge management.

At the country level, the programme has supported 20 countries from all regions. Two examples from Indonesia and Senegal illustrate the various ways of helping national assessment efforts, including financial support, connecting

international expertise from the North and South, promoting South-South cooperation, and increasing the policy relevance of assessment initiatives.

In Indonesia, the Global Programme was instrumental in making a national governance assessment process become a concrete and official yardstick for policy design and implementation. It supported the development of The Indonesia Democracy Index by the Indonesian National Development Planning Agency, which is now an official measure for Indonesia's National Medium-Term Development Plan 2010-2014. Indonesia has undergone an important transition towards democracy in the past decade. Milestones include democratic elections in 1999 and 2004, constitutional amendments, new democratic institutions, new political parties, and the reform of basic political laws. Simultaneously, the government has been decentralizing services and delegating power from the centre to 33 provinces and approximately 500 districts and municipalities. This has led to variations in democratic performance between different areas of the country. Global Programme support was provided in response to a demand from the Government of Indonesia to measure the country's progress, or lack of it, in different aspects of democratic governance. The Indonesia Democracy Index project was developed by the National Development Agency (*Bappenas*) in partnership with UNDP and in close collaboration with the Central Statistics Bureau and the Regional Development Planning Agencies. The project supports a nationally owned, inclusive and participatory process for assessing and monitoring democratic governance in all of Indonesia's 33 provinces.

With technical assistance and financial support from the Global Programme, Indonesia has equipped itself with a framework of 30 indicators to monitor democratic governance goals and targets expressed in the country's national and provincial development plans. The Indonesia Development Index is therefore the country's own index to measure civil liberties, political rights, and the quality of democratic institutions at the provincial level. The framework also provides a method for identifying good practices, for learning across provinces, and to further consolidate democratic reform. The 2014 national target on 'democracy consolidation' has been set at an Indonesia Development Index average score of 73/100. With this clearly measurable official target, and the transparent mechanism attached to it, Indonesia's government and citizens have in their hands the means to hold each other accountable and take their country forward towards effective democratic governance. Beyond its own success story, the Indonesian case has been used as a good practice in support of other countries.

In Senegal, the programme supports the establishment of a national governance monitoring system to track the implementation of the country's

National Programme on Good Governance. However, weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were hampering the implementation of the national programme. In an effort to enhance the quality of governance monitoring, the coordinating unit steering the implementation of the national governance programme embarked on a participatory process to develop a monitoring framework. During a first workshop held in September 2009, representatives from the central and local governments, the Planning Commission, the Parliament, civil society, and universities formed thematic working groups to develop indicators. The next step involved selecting appropriate data collection methods, and elaborating measurement guidelines for each indicator, such as identifying data sources and specifying the scoring criteria.

During a second workshop in June 2010, the Coordinator of the Governance Assessment Unit of a leading Indonesian NGO, Partnership for Governance Reform, was invited through the Global Programme to share his experience in developing data collection tools for Indonesia's Provincial Governance Index (see Chapter 8 for a more detailed case study). Sample measurement guidelines for the collection of administrative data (budget, planning documents, and statistics and audit reports) and for the collection of data from focus group discussions were shared with the Senegalese, and provided a helpful starting point for the design of data collection instruments specifically tailored to the Senegalese context. To support the development of a survey instrument, the workshop also benefited from the participation of the French research institute DIAL, a Global Programme partner with expertise in supporting national statistical offices in collecting governance data by adding a governance module to household surveys. Finally, a third workshop in December 2010 served to complete and finalize the full 'chart of governance indicators' for Senegal. Based on the work achieved in 2010, data collection activities will take place in 2011.

### **Existing and future challenges**

Country-led assessments are not a panacea. They come with many risks, sensitivities, and inefficiencies, including the risk of government co-option. They can also be time consuming and expensive processes.

#### ***Government co-option***

Country-led governance assessments are especially problematic in 'illiberal' and shallow democracies: contexts where there is the rhetoric of a commitment to democratic development, but without a culture of open government, inclusive participation, or transparency. In these contexts, assessments risk being government-led as opposed to country owned, and non-governmental actors risk being excluded from the process, or given only a superficial role. Governance assessments involve sharing information.

Therefore, there needs to be some degree of open government and trust to enable participation and transparency.

### *Role of civil society organizations*

The country-led approach is not necessarily a substitute to external assessments, such as those produced by Freedom House and Transparency International, or assessments by donors that are very useful advocacy tools, even at country level, and often trigger a more in-depth, country-specific assessment led by national actors. Some also argue that the prominent status of the donor community in designing and monitoring governance indicators is not inherently negative. As the international community often appears more willing to engage with civil society, and draw from the knowledge and expertise of its representatives, this provides a critical avenue of influence for this partner that tends to be sidelined by government in countries where a democratic culture is still weak or absent (Idasa, 2010). Indeed, it will simply not be possible to conduct a robust and legitimate country-led assessment of democratic governance without the active engagement of civil society organizations.

### *Time-consuming and lengthy process*

Because of their focus on an inclusive process, country-led assessments can be more time-consuming, which does not work well with the often short-time horizons of the donors. The length of time required is also due to weak capacities – for designing indicators, for data collection, and data processing and analysis.

In terms of future issues, there is a need for existing governance measurement methods and indicators to adapt to particular situations, such as crisis or post-conflict settings, and to new global challenges, such as the governance of climate change.

### *Assessments in post-conflict contexts*

There is mounting evidence to suggest that governance and conflict are intricately connected, and that poor or bad governance performance exacerbates underlying tensions and ignites violent conflict. In this sense, governance assessments carried out in conformity with a set of principles (e.g., inclusive participation, capacity development, national ownership) may shed light on the peace and conflict dynamics in a given society, and may therefore serve as a useful early warning mechanism. Moreover, there is growing demand for assessing governance in post-conflict environments as an integral part of broader peace-building strategies. This remains a challenging area, especially for citizen led assessments, and more knowledge is required on how to adapt existing governance assessments frameworks to the particular conditions of post-conflict settings, benchmarking for peace

operations and exit strategies, early warning systems, and more qualitative analysis when quantitative data are not available in post conflict situations.

### ***Assessments for measuring REDD+ compliance***

In terms of climate change, the innovative UN REDD+ programme (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), which provides an incentive for developing forested countries to protect and better manage their forest resources as part of the global effort to reduce climate change, will increase the need for governance monitoring frameworks and assessment tools. UN REDD+ is based on a premise of creating financial value for the carbon stored in standing forests. In the long term, payments for verified emission reductions and removals, either market or fund based, provide an incentive for better forest management. For the REDD+ community, monitoring governance of the forest sector, and of the REDD+ mechanism itself, is now considered as important as the system designed to monitor carbon. REDD+ takes place in forest governance contexts characterized by illegal logging, corruption, corporate and elite capture of forest lands, displacement of forest communities, etc. In many countries, the lack of appropriate policies on forest management, weak law enforcement, ambiguous land tenure, and poor regulation of the use of forests have all exacerbated the vulnerability of forests and their communities. As a response to these concerns, UNDP is supporting the development of tools that defines the governance data needed to identify the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, to design appropriate interventions to tackle these drivers, and to monitor the effects of these interventions.

### ***Popularizing or 'democratizing' governance assessments***

Other challenges include how to popularize governance assessments in ways that capture people's attention, and that make assessments a truly popular tool for democracy. In many present cases, assessments remain an intellectual exercise accessible only to closed-circles of researchers, detached from people who are directly affected by the issues being measured. Or assessment reports are kept confidential and only accessible to a select few in government and are not shared with the Parliament, civil society, or the media. National governance assessment and its indicators are a public good to be used by national stakeholders and individuals. The nature of a governance assessment as a public good assumes its dissemination to users in an accessible, equitable manner. That means that every effort should be made to ensure that the assessment is publicly available and accessible to the broadest range of stakeholders, using a variety of presentation and dissemination methods that are accessible and comprehensible. In countries where UNDP is facilitating country-led assessments, it advocates a communication strategy to be in place from the outset, based on a mapping

of producers and users of governance indicators. The mapping may include an overview of who does and does not use governance data, as well as for what purposes the data are used, and reasons why they are not used. Reasons for low use of governance data could arise from low awareness or a poor fit between existing governance data and policy needs.

An informative survey was undertaken by the University of the Philippines to better understand the Philippine policy makers' use of governance data and indicators. The study underlined the importance of making an investment in educating policy and decision makers on the value of evidence and data, and was based on a survey of 50 national-level policy makers in different agencies to understand what (if any) governance indicator sources they use in their work; their knowledge of national and global governance indicator sources; their needs and attitudes in terms of existing national sources and the potential of developing new sources; and the strengths and weaknesses/limitations of existing sources (so that data producers could be more responsive to the needs of data users) (National College of Public Administration and Governance of the University of the Philippines, 2005). The study complemented a survey of current governance indicators being monitored in the Philippines, and found numerous governance indicators being collected, but not used (Brillantes, 2007).

### *Measuring gendered impact of governance*

There is also a challenge of lack of quality data in developing countries, and especially of disaggregated governance data for minority and vulnerable groups. For gender, much work remains to be done to produce indicators on women and governance that move beyond statistics on women in parliaments. Indicators need to capture and reflect the potentially different impacts that the mechanisms and processes of governance have on men versus women, and that requires going beyond simply disaggregating data by sex to selecting indicators that are sensitive to possible differences from the outset (UNDP, 2006). For example, gender-specific indicators measure governance practices specifically targeted at women or men, such as the percentage of seats in a national parliament reserved for women. But equally important are implicit gender sensitive measures that make no explicit reference to gender, but when interpreted within a broader context it is clear that the indicator is of particular relevance to women or men. For example, the number and percentage of reported rape cases prosecuted in courts (victims are almost exclusively female), or the number and percentage of reported cases of domestic violence prosecuted in courts (victims predominantly female). There are also gender-sensitive measures that are chosen separately by men and women and need not refer to gender at all – they may simply reflect differences in men's and women's preferences and

priorities on different areas of governance, for instance the percentage of women who say that they receive adequate information from the government on policies and laws affecting them.

It is hoped that the next generation of governance assessments will include indicators that not only disaggregate data by sex, but also strive to incorporate some of these more advanced sensitivity measures.

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## **SQUARING GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS WITH THE ACCOUNTABILITY AGENDA**

**Ingvild Oia**

This chapter will argue that governance assessment can add significant value to the accountability agenda. This value is based on the comparative advantage of governance assessments in bridging the supply side with the demand side of accountability. It will be argued that distinctions are particularly apparent in dealing with the supply side, where governance assessments are more focussed on strengthening the interaction between the state's executive functions and public administration with formal and informal institutions of oversight, including civil society. The chapter will develop this argument by looking at how the governance assessment industry is increasingly influenced by the accountability trend. It will show that this convergence is driven largely by a growing need from within countries to address democratic deficits. It then looks closer at conceptual similarities and differences, and finally examines a common criticism of the accountability agenda called 'stunted institutional development'. The potential for governance assessments to bridge states with citizens will be illustrated with cases from Armenia and Nicaragua.

### **Development of two streams of thought**

Measuring governance performance became a development priority in the late 1990s, and was part of what became a paradigmatic shift in thinking. The end of the 'Washington Consensus' brought a renewed focus on the role of the state. The unprecedented explosion of interest in the quality of governance in the developing world ignited an equally explosive growth in the production and use of governance indicators (see Chapter 2). At the forefront of this trend were international investors, development agencies, and international civil society organizations (Arndt and Oman, 2006). More than a decade of development has been guided by the adage

that you cannot improve what you cannot measure. The result, so far, is a wilderness of comparative indicators that rank and shame countries on their governance performance.

The wave of comparative measurements has rightly lifted the issue of governance higher up the international agenda. Yet there are many limitations to these indicators. The range of governance assessment tools, methods, and evidence have not adequately answered questions about *agency*, *purpose*, and *outcome* of governance assessments. There is an increasing recognition that externally driven governance assessments may not be able to influence the process and quality of governance performance at the country level.

Against this backdrop, a new wave of governance assessments arose, referred to as a third wave, of which the International IDEA State of Democracy, UN-HABITAT Urban Governance Index, and UNDP's country-led approach were early pioneers. Most of these third generation assessments (or third wave, see Chapter 2) provide ready-made frameworks with indicators that can be rolled out at the country-level through national chapters of the organizations that promote them. In addition to the examples mentioned, other assessments frameworks include the Civil Society Index, Global Integrity Index, the Open Budget Index, Transparency International National Integrity Survey, and the Extractive Industry Transparency Index. Among these, UNDP's country-led approach is unique by not providing a ready-made framework of indicators, arguing that indicators should be developed uniquely in response to individual country needs and priorities, insisting only that they be gender-sensitive and pro-poor.

In parallel with the development of a third wave of governance assessments another stream of thought also developed that centred on "accountability".<sup>1</sup> The concept itself has been around for some time in the development discourse, and in its more conventional uses refers to a more technical process of accountancy, to be achieved through clear procedures, transparency, and compliance with regulations. Within this new stream of thought, conventional understanding was perceived as too narrow. John Gaventa,

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1. Several researchers identify and describe this new trend: In the book *Reinventing Accountability* (2005) Ann Marie Goetz and Rob Jenkins argue that there is a new accountability agenda emerging. In *Spaces for Change? The Politics of Participation in New Democratic Arenas* (2006) the editors Andrea Cornwall and Vera Schattan Coelho provide examples of what in essence are citizen accountability initiatives; In *Strengthening Participatory Approaches to Local Governance: Learning the Lessons from Abroad* (2004) John Gaventa points to local accountability initiatives from a range of countries; In *Governance and the Pluralization of the State: Implications for Democratic Citizenship* Neera Chandoke describe how the state of India now shares power with sub-national governments, proliferating forms of network and partnership organizations and NGOs.

for example, argues that “like other aspects of citizenship, accountability is not only created from above through institutional procedures and mandate, but also must be constantly claimed through strategies and mobilization, pressure and vigilance from below” (Gaventa, 2006: xiv). In many ways, the new accountability trend therefore came to focus on what Andrea Cornwall and Vera Schattan P. Coelho (2006) call the “profusion of new spaces for citizen engagement”. They argue that

“these hybrid ‘new democratic spaces’ are intermediate, situated as they are at the interface between the state and society [...] They may be provided and provided for by the state, backed in some settings by legal or constitutional guarantees and regarded by state actors as their space into which citizens and their representatives are invited. Yet they may also be seen as spaces conquered by civil society demands for inclusion” (Cornwall and Shatton 2006: 1).

In a similar vein, Goetz and Jenkins (2005) argue that the new accountability agenda can be described by three elements: “an insistence on 1) a more direct role for ordinary people and their associations in obtaining accountability, using 2) an expanded repertoire of methods, sometimes in new accountability jurisdictions, in the pursuit of 3) a more exacting standard of social justice” (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005:16).

The accountability trend is promoted by a large set of international and national non-governmental and civil society organizations, including social movements. With great creativity and drive, they have pioneered, campaigned, and advocated for increasing the responsiveness of institutions to the demands of citizens. As described by Goetz and Jenkins, the accountability agenda is marked by an intensified activism, driven from the bottom-up.

As with governance assessments, the accountability agenda has been promoted at both global and country levels. At the global level, the accountability agenda was initially spurred by globalization and the social and political consequences of the new economic powers of transnational corporations. As a result of the diminishing role of states in regulating global enterprise, citizens sought new arenas that transcended territorial boundaries, such as Seattle in 1999 and the annual World Economic Forum in Davos. Simultaneously with these global developments, there was an array of activities at the country level that addressed accountability issues between citizens and governments, such as participatory budgeting, social audits, and advocacy.

While the country level initiatives have marked the accountability agenda, illustrated in this book and elsewhere, the stories of international NGOs and their work in this area is less often told. The foundations and work of Social Watch, an international NGO watchdog network, may serve to illustrate how some of these organisations have also promoted the accountability agenda, both globally and at the country level. Social Watch was founded as a follow-up mechanism to the UN World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen from 6-12 March 1995,<sup>2</sup> an event which the UN Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Nittin Desai, argued was a turning point in terms of NGO-UN relations.<sup>3</sup> The Social Summit, as it was more commonly referred to, was attended by 117 governments and was the largest gathering of Heads of State until then. Around 20,000 people from 180 countries participated. NGOs had made a crucial contribution to preparing the Summit, which was not just a landmark at the official level, but a marking point for relations between the UN and NGOs. At the Summit, many realized that its worth lay not in the event itself, important as it may have been, but in the follow-up. The risk was “that the summit would become a lion that could roar but had no teeth”.<sup>4</sup> It was in this context that Social Watch was founded, to assist in the follow-up with the aim of turning the Summit’s aspirations into reality.

With the adoption of the MDGs, Social Watch undertook the task of monitoring their fulfilment with a more inclusive and comprehensive perspective, and kept its main role to measuring social development progress every year and in each country (Social Watch, 2009). Reflecting the same shift in attention from the global to the country level elsewhere, Social Watch has increasingly strengthened its work and attention to country level activities, which includes shadow reports of the MDGs. This shift was spurred by the 2000 evaluation of the organization, which stated that it was “not always clear how to use Social Watch at the national level”.<sup>5</sup> Among other activities, Social Watch has since started a three year programme to improve the capacity of its members in developing countries through a series of workshops in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.<sup>6</sup> Today the organization has a long-running series of successful country activities,

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2. Social Watch website accessed August 1, 2011.  
<http://www.socialwatch.org/sites/default/files/ZOOM-01-eng.pdf>
  3. UN-Non-Governmental Liaison Office, 1996. vii.
  4. Max van den Berg, the Director of Dutch NGO Novib, as quoted in van Reisen, 2001, p.10.
  5. Evaluation of Social Watch, presented at the Social Watch Assembly Nov 2000 Rome,  
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  6. Social Watch Strategy Document and Framework of Activities 2010-2011,  
<http://www.socialwatch.org/node/11152>

inclusive participatory budgeting, which illustrate a bottom-up approach where citizens find spaces to demand accountability (Social Watch, 2009).

The accountability agenda is also reflected in the work of several other prominent international NGOs. For example, the International Budget Partnership, formed in 1997, collaborates with civil society to undertake budget analysis and advocacy to improve governance and reduce poverty.<sup>7</sup> ActionAid's accountability work began in 1999 with a strategy that gave a high priority to participatory policy, emphasizing rights-based and people-centred advocacy. At the heart of this strategy was the perspective that projects alone are not going to overcome long term poverty, but that greater democracy, transparency, and the work of civil society to hold decision-makers accountable are more likely to achieve long-term sustainable improvements for poor people" (Chapman and Wameyo, 2001).

Other organizations include Christian Aid. In its current strategic framework (2010-2012), accountable governance is one of the six pillars, which include the goal of supporting citizens in actively monitoring the implementation of government budgets and policy decisions.<sup>8</sup> Together with two other faith-based organizations, Trócaire and Cafod, they have developed a very useful guide, *Monitoring Government Policies: A Toolkit for Civil Society Organizations in Africa*.<sup>9</sup> Finally, Oxfam is also engaged. Through its 'Right to be Heard' programme, which has been running since 2001, it aims to strengthen the participation of people in poverty reduction initiatives so that they become active citizens, capable of shaping policy decisions.<sup>10</sup> Through that work, Oxfam supports projects in 12 countries, including monitoring governments' service delivery. In addition to these international NGOs, a range of national organizations, campaigns, and movements have had a significant influence on driving democratic reform.

Finally, international organizations have also jumped on the new accountability wagon. UNDP has worked on 'transparency,' 'accountability,' and 'integrity' since the 1990s. With the MDGs and working towards human development generally, there has been a renewed focus on accountability in terms of state-society relations (UNDP, 2010). In response to this, UNDP developed a Guidance Note on Fostering Social Accountability in 2010.<sup>11</sup>

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7. History of International Budget Partnership from their website, <http://www.internationalbudget.org/who-we-are/?fa=history>

8. Christian Aid, 2010. Strategic Framework 2010-12.

9. CAFOD, Christian Aid and Trócaire.

10. Information about the Oxfam The Right to Be Heard, at [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/issues/right\\_heard/introduction.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/issues/right_heard/introduction.html)

11. *ibid.*

The World Bank's emphasis on participation and consultation began with the creation of the Participatory and Civic Engagement Group, which focused on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and Social Accountability. Today, their 'Demand for Good Governance' programme consists of approaches that strengthen the capacity of civil society, the media, parliaments, local communities, and the private sector to hold authorities accountable for better development results. Among donors, DFID signalled its focus on governance with its 2001 Target Strategy Paper: *Making Governance Work for Poor People*. 'Accountability' was introduced in the subsequent White Paper (2006), along with 'capability', and 'responsiveness' as key operational concepts in its approach to good governance, which together constituting the Capability Accountability and Responsiveness Framework (Holland and Thirkell, 2009). Finally, the OECD DAC Network on Governance launched a work stream on Aid and Domestic Accountability in 2009.

### **Converging in response to the same winds of change**

The development of a third wave of governance assessments and the accountability agenda happened at about the same time. Key drivers of these changes were the democratic deficits that became ever more apparent throughout the 1990s. Deficits were hard to ignore, because they so flagrantly contradicted popular expectations that had been soaring in the aftermath of the "third wave of democratization", the global trend that had seen more than 60 countries throughout Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa undergo some form of democratic transitions since Portugal's 'Carnation Revolution' in 1974 (Huntington, 1991).

The record of democratic systems in alleviating poverty, preventing conflict, and improving respect for human rights in developing countries is uneven at best. The expectation that the ballot box could rectify deep-rooted social, political, and economic inequities may always have been ill-founded, but popular expectations were nevertheless deeply dismayed. Continued elite capture, despite regular elections, has in turn led to deep-seated mistrust in formal institutions of democratic representations.

So why had democracy not worked as expected? Goetz and Jenkins argue that third wave democracies suffer from accountability failures that affect the poor, with particular regard to "1) markets and livelihoods, 2) access to education and health, 3) access to clean and safe environment and 4) right to physical safety" (Goetz and Jenkins 2005:45). In this argument, they suggest that institutions' inherent bias to already advantaged groups is as important

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12. About the World Bank's Demand for Good Governance, from their website  
<http://go.worldbank.org/09MJLAICW0>

as corruption in explaining why institutions have not worked for the poor (*ibid.*: 35). The argument is important, because it places the blame for failure on the more entrenched power asymmetries between social groups. From a new institutional perspective, this may be described as a situation in which the formal institutions of democratic governance have tended to reproduce as well as create new *informal* institutions with the effects of sustaining power inequities, as opposed to redistributing power. These informal institutions are embedded within and may severely compromise the democratic objectives of democracy's own formal institutions. Informal institutions may include patronage networks, but also incentive structures that induce politicians and bureaucrats to serve particular interest groups and/or particular socio-economic demographics. This is happening despite the formal purpose of these institutions to uphold democracy, with everything that entails, inclusive of bringing the state under the management and control of the people, for the benefit of the many instead of the few. In particular, two institutions of democracy tend to suffer from a lack of confidence by citizens: parliaments and political parties.

Parliaments are often weak compared with the executive branch in both *de jure* and *de facto* terms. The first report from the African Legislatures Project may provide some hints as why this persists. Based on a survey of MPs and citizens in six countries – Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Namibia, and South Africa, it finds that both citizens and MPs place a much greater emphasis on representation and constituency service than on legislating and oversight (Barkan, et al., 2010). This may be expected, given the demographics and history of African countries, but it still poses a dilemma for MPs: “do they emphasize representation and constituency service with the result that the legislature of which they are members will not develop into a sufficiently powerful institution capable of holding the executive accountable to the public? Or do they devote more time to legislating and oversight at the risk of displeasing the electorate and suffering defeat when running for re-election?” (*ibid.*) This dilemma may be one contributing factor to the continued weakness of some parliaments.

Other institutions that tend to suffer from a lack of confidence include political parties. In his book, *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*, Thomas Carothers (2006) says that parties are focused on single and dominating leaders and lack organization; they are corrupt, ideologically indifferent, dependent on rich financiers, and lack roots in their community. Again the causes seem persistent, and political parties seem stuck in a similar fix to that of parliaments. Carothers argues that there is a tendency in new as well as old democracies for parties to operate as an organization for electoral campaigns, with negative outcomes

on democracy. Young parties may have had barely enough time to establish an efficient organization based on civil society. Instead, they have been required to perform as an 'electoral party' from the outset. There is little reason to assume that such parties will reconnect with civil society with time alone. Today there is a tendency also among parties in old democracies of turning into organizations for electoral campaigns.<sup>13</sup> Similarly to the state of affair of parliaments, these weaknesses drive citizen action and demands through other channels, and give rise to civil society initiatives.

Against this backdrop, initiatives have therefore popped up to address these accountability failures, which provided the impetus and rise of the accountability agenda as well as of the third wave of governance assessments. To a certain extent, the development of the approach to governance assessments, and the rise of the new accountability agenda, has followed opposite paths towards the same goal. Today, these two approaches are converging. On the one hand, governance assessments have risen from the traditional support from donors. These have become more nationally or country-led and owned, and now have the explicit objective of strengthening domestic accountability. On the other hand, there is a plethora of citizen-led accountability initiatives that have sprung up around the world. This constitutes the new accountability agenda, and many initiatives rely on data and indicators in their efforts to hold government to account.

As an example of this convergence, as donors and the development industry became more aware of the growing discontent with democracy, the donor discourse on governance assessments have become more aligned to the accountability agenda. This is reflected by, inter alia, the OECD-DAC GOVNET's *Guiding Principles for Enhanced Impact, Usage and Harmonization*, published in 2009. The first principle in these guidelines includes 'building on and strengthening nationally driven governance assessments'. At the time of writing this chapter, GOVNET was in the process of drafting guidelines for a more systematic approach to domestic accountability, including addressing both horizontal (parliament, auditor) and vertical (people) accountability, formal and informal institutions, demand and supply, inclusive of capacity development of civil society organizations.

### **Conceptual overlaps and differences**

Many governance assessment projects and accountability initiatives are not very different. Conceptual overlap is extensive and labels are often interchangeable. It may, in some cases, be a question of discourse, project opportunities, or political decisions that determine whether an initiative

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13. Also see review by Erdmann, 2007.

is labelled as an accountability initiative or as a governance assessment. It may also depend on the choice of focus on the initiative's objective – accountability, or on the means – the governance assessment. In respect of added value, renaming 'accountability initiatives' that make use of indicators as 'governance assessment initiatives' is of little interest. Instead, governance assessments, and the third wave of governance assessments in particular, may add value to the extent that they provide new means, tools, and approaches to those that already exist under the accountability umbrella.

The overlap may be explained by describing governance assessments as a 'means' and accountability as an 'objective' of projects. From the perspective of accountability as an objective, indicators and data may serve as a means by providing benchmarking and evidence on governance performance. Such tools may serve as a basis for advocacy, dialogue, and negotiations, and may also strengthen the two key components of accountability: answerability and enforcement. Many accountability initiatives already use indicators and data, such as scorecards and social audits. These initiatives may therefore be called both accountability initiatives as well as governance assessments. On the other hand, from the perspective of governance assessments as a means, the question becomes "as a means towards what?" Governance assessments are effective only to the extent that the process, indicators, and results of the assessment are used to achieve something. For example, indicators and data on the extent and scope of corruption will only have potential to drive democratic reform if they are used by decision makers to improve on anti-corruption policies and implementation. The likelihood that indicators will be used for this purpose is strengthened if civil society actively engages with these tools to hold government to account. Most country-led governance assessments aim to have some form of accountability mechanism as an objective, and those that do, may therefore also be called accountability initiatives.

The list below provides examples of sub-types of accountability. It also explains how indicators and data may be useful means for strengthening a wide range of accountability relations.

- **Social accountability.** Indicators can be used by citizens and civil society organizations aiming to hold the state to account.
- **Upward accountability.** Indicators may be used to strengthen answerability of lower ranks to a higher-level authority, such as that of local government bodies to a national body.
- **Downward accountability.** Indicators may be used to strengthen answerability of a higher rank to a lower level, for example, a Ministry

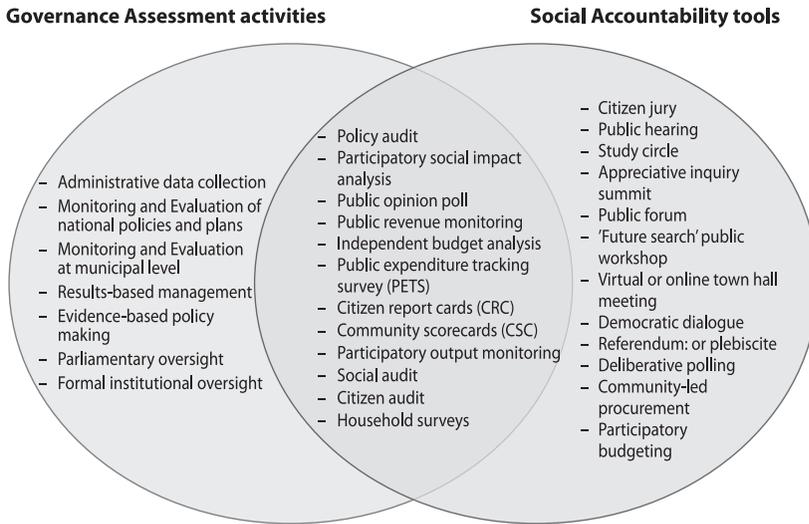
of Finance to municipalities that receive part of their funds from central level.

- **Vertical accountability.** Indicators and assessments, such as needs assessments and post-electoral reviews, may serve to strengthen the management of electoral processes.
- **Horizontal accountability.** Indicators may be used by Parliament to place a check on the executive, by ombudsmen, anti-corruption agencies and other public institutions charged with functions of oversight.
- **Hybrid accountability.** Indicators, including tools such as participatory budgeting, report cards, and citizen audits, may help in this form of accountability, where civil society itself takes on attributes of the state in supervising the performance of state agencies.
- **Domestic accountability.** This refers to all domestic accountability relationships, including vertical, horizontal, downward, upward, hybrid, and social accountability. Indicators may strengthen accountability in all of these relations.
- **Mutual accountability.** Country-led assessments may indirectly, but not primarily, serve this form of accountability, by strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems and reporting, and whose outputs can be used in the relationship between donors and aid recipients.
- **Outward accountability.** Country-led assessments may indirectly, but not primarily, also serve this form of accountability, by improving national monitoring and evaluation systems and thereby offer an evidence basis for the answerability of domestic/national actors to external donors.
- **Ex-ante accountability.** Inclusion of stakeholders that are likely to be affected by the policy action at the planning state through, for example, a consultative process of selecting policy targets and their monitoring indicators of the governance components of national development.

In turn, governance assessment as a means may be better delineated by looking more specifically at the portfolios of tools, approaches, and activities that are commonly used in governance assessment and in accountability initiatives. Here, there are many ways to cut the cake, and the mapping illustrated in Figure 4.1 has been narrowed to focus on tools and approaches that are typically used in country-led governance assessments to the left, and in social accountability initiatives to the right. Social accountability is perhaps the kind of accountability most often associated with the accountability agenda, particularly when this agenda is described as a grassroots movement. The figure shows which tools, activities, and approaches may be used in

governance assessments and in social accountability initiatives, which are used by both, and which are used exclusively in governance assessments or social accountability initiatives.

**Figure 4.1 Overview of activities and tools that fall under ‘governance assessments’ and/or ‘social accountability’**



What value does governance assessment add to the accountability agenda? The tools and activities that form part of governance assessments, but which are not so commonly associated with the accountability agenda, may be of most interest. These are listed on the left in Figure 4.1, and include activities that are normally associated with state administration, such as monitoring and evaluation of municipal and national plans and policies, and activities associated with formal institutions of democracy, such as parliamentary oversight based on governance indicators and data. The key to unleashing this potential value lies in determining how these activities can be conducted in a more participatory manner, and how they can be linked more directly with civil society and citizens.

The list of activities also highlights another useful way of identifying possible value added, namely by looking at who conducts the activities. For example, a household survey on corruption conducted by a civil society organization for advocacy purposes may be identified as an accountability initiative. One conducted by the national statistical offices for the purpose of producing information may be more appropriately labeled a

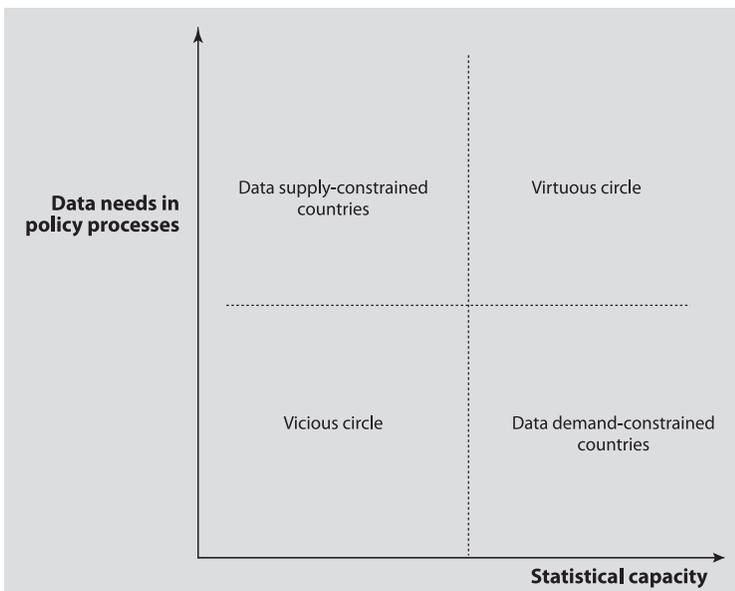
governance assessment. But one conducted with the involvement of a range of stakeholders, including government and civil society, may be most appropriately labelled a country-led governance assessment.

### **Bridging supply and demand**

Country-led governance assessments may add value to the accountability agenda based on their strong focus and particular approach to bridging state and citizens. The general idea is that no single actor can be said to represent the country, which means that “country-led assessments must involve the active participation of state and non-state actors, including NGOs. They should progressively involve and have the support of an increasing and representative number of national actors” (UNDP, 2009) In essence, a country-led governance assessment should include actors on both the supply and the demand side of accountability, and on both sides of governance data. It is by bridging these various groups of actors that a country-led governance assessment approach is distinct from, and may add value to, the accountability agenda.

The supply and demand sides of accountability describe the way that formal democratic institutions and state administration agencies respond to citizens’ demands and aspirations, and how citizens in turn respond to

**Figure 4.2 Identifying demand side and supply side constraints of governance data<sup>14</sup>**



14. Adapted from Scott 2005.

the level of accountability (or lack thereof) provided by state institutions. For example, countries suffering from democratic deficits find themselves in a situation where the demand for accountability outstrips the supply as provided by existing institutions. However, the supply and demand for accountability does not necessarily coincide with the supply and demand for governance data. Figure 4.2 illustrates supply and demand for governance data.

In data supply-constrained countries (upper-left quadrant), statistical capacity is unable to fully meet the demand for evidence. This often coincides with situations where demand for accountability also outstrips supply. And it is the case where democratic deficits fuel the demand for both more accountability initiatives and more governance assessment initiatives.

In demand-constrained countries (lower-right quadrant) the situation is opposite. The supply of data outstrips demand. It is important to note that these could be situations where the supply of data coincides with a strong demand for accountability, but where they are not linked. One example may be the call to translate transparency into accountability. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative supports improved governance in resource-rich countries by verification and full publication of company payments and government revenues from oil, gas, and mining. But the supply of data and information in these reports is not enough to guarantee a strengthening of the two key components of accountability: answerability and enforcement. There is, therefore, a need to improve the use of these reports.

Some countries have reached a vicious circle (lower-left quadrant). These are countries where poor supply often lowers expectations and thereby demand for statistics, and where low demand reduces political interest in improving statistical capacity. There probably would be users if relevant and good data were made available, particularly if aligned to the immediate interests and needs of informal and formal institutions of planning and oversight, such as indicators for measuring governance priorities of national development plans.

Finally, some countries that have achieved a virtuous circle (upper-right quadrant). Here, political interest and high demand are increasing statistical capacity, and good statistical research, quality, and quantity of data is attracting political interest and further demand.

Using such a matrix in a diagnostic stage, activities within a country-led assessment may be designed to narrow the gaps between supply and demand to a further extent than is typical of traditional accountability initiatives. That may focus on smaller set of actors, and a less holistic approach to

supply and demand. Commonly, accountability initiatives tend to focus on the demand side of the equation, which is of course very much needed. The strong focus on the demand side has been criticized, however, and that is what this chapter will turn to next.

### **The risk of ‘stunted institutional development’**

An important risk is found in the impact of the new accountability agenda on state institutions, including the formal institutions of democracy. According to Goetz and Jenkins (2005), the critique of ‘stunted institutional development’ is the charge that

“proponents of experimental techniques have been seduced by their own rhetoric of reconfiguring the state. It argues that in the thrall of “network governance” there are parishioners whose accountability innovations frequently bypass the institutions of the state, treating it as just one among many possible interlocutors, when in fact it is the one agency that has the potential to provide credible guarantees to promote human development.” (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005:184)

When parliaments and political parties do not represent citizens’ interests, perform adequate oversight or scrutinize legislative proposals, and do not engage with the experiences, opinions, and expertise of civil society organizations, it can be tempting to create parallel structures that can channel at least some of the interest and demands of civil society into the state’s decision-making processes. Bypassing seems a reasonable intermediate solution, given the weaknesses in the performance of critical democratic institutions. Yet such an approach may cause harm and result in the stunted development of the formal institutions that should be playing these roles.

The formulation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in low-income countries, a requirement for access to loans from the Bretton Woods Institutions, may serve as an example of such a scenario. During 2000-2002, Malawi’s compromised and weak Parliament was effectively bypassed in the consultation process that produced the country’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Jenkins and Tsoka, 2003).

But supporters of the accountability agenda argue that such examples of stunted institutional development as a result of accountability initiatives gone awry, do not constitute the norm. Goetz and Jenkins maintain that “hybrid forms of accountability seek not to override the rule of law, but to invest the process of rule-bound deliberation with additional checks, beyond those that exist. The focus is on institutions that should, in theory, be insulated from elite power, but that have in reality been either captured by

elites, or else compromised by prevailing social biases” (Goetz and Jenkins, 2005:186).

Rather than a critique of the new accountability agenda, ‘stunted institutional development’ may serve more as a reminder to include the supply side in the design of accountability initiatives. The Achilles heel is in the inadequacy of state mechanisms to amplify the voices of citizens in the running of its business. In a context where politics is dynamic and pressure from civil society is building, there may be entry-points for capacity development and reforms of democracies’ own institutions, inclusive of parliaments, political parties, public administration, local governments, and oversight institutions, such as anti-corruption agencies and ombudsmen, in addition to or combined with other accountability initiatives that serve to strengthen the demand side of accountability.

The country-led approach to governance assessment may serve to include supply side and demand side aspects in the design of initiatives. Instead of playing down the importance of civil society’s role in holding governments to account, greater attention should be given to bridging these initiatives with the state’s own efforts, ideally without depoliticizing the contestation which is necessary to further democratic reform. It is the pursuit of civil society as a magic bullet that is to blame, not the entire accountability agenda itself. At the time of writing, a country-led governance assessment initiative is underway in Malawi in support of a sector-wide approach to democratic governance. The project design includes a strong focus on strengthening the monitoring capacity of institutions in the sector, including Parliament, with a clear role for civil society inclusion. Illustration of the potential added value of governance assessment to the accountability agenda will be attempted in two cases below, from Armenia and Nicaragua.

***Participatory monitoring of national anti-corruption strategies in Armenia<sup>15</sup>***

This Armenian project illustrates how a governance assessment may provide an effective project modality for strengthening accountability and add value to the accountability agenda, in this particular case through an innovative alliance between the anti-corruption agency and civil society organizations. The approach of this project is based on consensus-building and it engages a range of stakeholders, inclusive of civil society and state institutions. It serves to bridge, or connect, the efforts of civil society and parts of the state apparatus, in an alliance that is pro- reform. As such, it serves to create new platforms for civil society engagement and strengthens social accountability.

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15. For more information on this project, please see <http://europeandcis.undp.org/anticorruption/show/E53F2114-F203-1EE9-B30B8E8931E76CF1>

The project is also interesting because it responds to challenges that are shared with many other anti-corruption agencies around the world. The prevalence of such agencies is increasing, partially as a result of the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in many countries, and is in itself another manifestation of the emerging accountability agenda.<sup>16</sup> The effectiveness of these agencies is challenged by a lack of political will, independence, resources, and adequate laws. Ackerman (2005: 10) says that, these institutions may also suffer from “a tendency of creating new “independent” bureaucracies in response to problems in order to make the Government appear as it is doing something”. This is all the more important in Armenia, because research shows a direct relationship between the effectiveness of independent pro-accountability institutions, such as anti-corruption agencies, and the level and intensity of their interaction with society.<sup>17</sup> This is echoed by representatives from Anti-Corruption Agencies at the 14th International Anti-Corruption Conference in Bangkok. One session, entitled ‘Anti-Corruption Agencies Achievements, Threats and Challenges in Diverse Environments’, concluded that civil society is crucial to ensuring that anti-corruption agencies can perform their functions.<sup>18</sup>

In strengthening monitoring and assessment activities, anti-corruption agencies require a clear legal and independent basis for their role as guardian of monitoring the national anti-corruption strategic plan, and a quality assurer of the ministerial integrity plans. Anti-corruption agencies also need to receive data from other institutions to be able to provide scores for these indicators. The Prosecution Office, the Ministry of Justice, and other competing anti-corruption bodies, such as ombudsmen and councils, may delay the submission of data. Establishing an interface and alliance with civil society could assist in leveraging sufficient political will to achieve both these requirements.

The project in Armenia assisted the Armenian Government in implementing the Anti-Corruption Strategy, and an Anti-Corruption Participatory Monitoring was developed. In 2007, monitoring was done by Civil Society Anti-Corruption groups in 44 educational and 22 medical institutions in 10 cities across Armenia, including the capital Yerevan. Over 130 members from 11 civil society anti-corruption groups received training in using the methodology and in the tools of anti-corruption participatory monitoring. The monitoring was conducted in public schools, in outpatient clinics, and hospitals.

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16. For more on this argument, see for example Ackerman, 2005.

17. O'Donnell, 2003.

18. Session report is available at [http://14iacc.org/wp-content/uploads/14thIAC\\_finalplenaryreport\\_Anti-CorruptionAgencies.pdf](http://14iacc.org/wp-content/uploads/14thIAC_finalplenaryreport_Anti-CorruptionAgencies.pdf)

Monitoring the Government's anti-corruption strategy by the public features prominently in the country's Anti-Corruption Strategy. It states, inter alia, that "the success of the Anti-Corruption Strategy will depend on the ability of the civil society (political parties, NGOs, trade unions) to monitor its implementation." The emphasis on the role of civil society in the anti-corruption strategy is not unique to Armenia, but is relatively common. The project implementation received support from the official Anti-Corruption Council, Anti-Corruption Monitoring Commission, local authorities, and regional bodies of public administration. The framework for the monitoring was based on the following strategic principles:

- The methodology and tools of the anti-corruption monitoring were designed to conform to the national monitoring system (e.g., the social monitoring system, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper monitoring system).
- The monitoring process and methodology were brought in line with regional/community development issues.
- The monitoring's principles and methodology should provide incentives for clear anti-corruption political initiatives, while avoiding destructive clashes in the community.
- The methodology's principles should not rule out the participation of interested State actors, but should insist on its independent status.
- The findings from the monitoring should be constructive and aim to make recommendations that can be submitted to top-level decision-making entities, and be included in other development-regulating frameworks.

***Strengthening monitoring capacities of the legislature in Nicaragua<sup>19</sup>***

Finally, the project in Nicaragua shows how governance assessment may potentially add value to the accountability agenda as a project modality for strengthening horizontal accountability, in this case through better equipping the National Assembly to provide a check on governance performance. It illustrates how relations between parliament and civil society can be mutually beneficial through a pro-reform alliance between civil society and formal democratic institutions that aims to strengthen the role of parliament in providing checks and balances, and that engages in planning and design of policies.

This project is designed to build the National Assembly's assessment capacities. It assesses governance in accordance with the political economic reality of the political system and with the country's national political

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19. For more information on this project, please see <http://gaportal.org/undp-supported/nicaragua>

culture. Several organizations are involved in implementing the project. It is primarily executed by the National Assembly's Public Expenditure Monitoring Unit (Unidad de Seguimiento del Gasto Público), which reports to the 'Modernization Commission', an official government body. An academic entity and several civil society organizations working on governance-related issues are also part of the coordination and quality assurance process.

There are three interdependent implementation phases. The first evaluates the capacities of the Public Expenditure Monitoring Unit to conduct a governance assessment, and designs a plan for strengthening these capacities. The second phase establishes a baseline on the situation of democratic governance in Nicaragua. Finally the third phase aims to strengthen the National Assembly's capacity to define and monitor public policy by developing a democratic governance assessment system.

At the time of writing, it is too early to know the extent to which the project achieved its expected outcomes and impact.

## **Conclusions**

Both the new accountability agenda and the field of governance assessments are responding to the same winds of change, and aim to address similar democratic deficits. However, their slight differences in history and approach mean that they also address the challenges related to this task somewhat differently. As a result, governance assessment may have something to offer the accountability agenda, particularly in channelling the energy of civic associations into decision-making processes and the business of formal institutions of democracy.

In answering what value governance assessments may add to the accountability agenda, tools and activities that form part of governance assessments, but which are not so commonly associated with the accountability agenda, were identified as of most interest. This includes activities that are normally associated with state administration, such as monitoring and evaluation of national plans and policies (see case from Armenia), and activities associated with formal institutions of democracy, such as parliamentary oversight based on governance indicators and data (see case of Nicaragua). The key to unleashing this potential value lies in determining how these activities can be conducted in a more participatory manner, and how they can be linked more directly with civil society and citizens. Cases have shown that country-led assessment may be able to provide a bridging space that serves to connect states and citizens, the supply and demand side of accountability, and the producers and users of governance data.

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## MULTI-STAKEHOLDER GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS IN MONGOLIA AND MDG-9

Hashbat Hulan

### Introduction

This chapter reports on a comprehensive multi-stakeholder governance assessment that was carried out in Mongolia as part of a nation-wide effort to lay the foundation for improved democratic governance. It brought together supporters and critics of government in an innovative exercise that has helped to consolidate democracy in the country. The chapter begins by offering the reader a background account of Mongolia. It then discusses the main features of the assessment exercise, which was divided into several components over a period of four to five years. It highlights Mongolia's experience in adopting and using an additional Millennium Development Goal related to governance, MDG-9. And it ends by looking at the key innovations of this exercise, and what lessons the stakeholders in Mongolia took away from participating in the assessment.

### General and political context

Mongolia is a landlocked country, nestled between Russia and China. Its population in 2009 was just over 2.7 million, with more than one million living in Ulaanbaatar, the capital, and the rest of the population dispersed over 1.6 million square kilometres. Per capita income rose from \$737 in 2005 to \$3,330 in 2010, a result of the high revenue of the country's mineral sector, which extracts copper, molybdenum, gold, and others. According to World Bank estimates, Mongolia entered the group of 'lower middle income countries' in 2010. Mongolia's average altitude is 1,580 metres above sea level. It has a cold, harsh climate and short growing seasons. It is not unusual for Mongolia to experience severe winters, known as *zuds*, and extended droughts.

Life expectancy at birth in 2008 was 67 years. Nearly two-thirds of the population is under 30 years. Over a million people live in rural areas, many still engaged in traditional livestock herding as their main source of livelihood. With rapid rural-urban migration, nearly three-fifths of the total population now lives in urban areas (Ulaanbaatar and the 21 provincial centres). Ulaanbaatar receives the most rural migrants, and its population grew by 18 percent between 2000 and 2004. Mongolia's Human Development Index score was 0.622 in 2010, giving it a ranking of 100 out of 169 countries.

Mongolia's economy has been in transition for the past 20 years, and it has experienced radical changes and reforms, particularly during the 1990s and early 2000s. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition to a market economy left the country with major financial difficulties, a severe lack of foreign currency, shortages of capital, consumer goods and materials, and high unemployment and deepening poverty. After 1990, the Government struggled to stabilize the economy, and established a market system that embraced principles of democracy, private ownership, and human rights. Radical reforms were introduced, including the privatization of many state-owned assets, the liberalization of prices and trade, and the establishment of private property rights, including land ownership.

Since 2002, Mongolia's efforts to establish a modern market economy have begun to pay dividends. Real GDP growth surged to 10.6 percent in 2004 (up from 5.5 percent in 2003), the highest rate in East Asia, and the highest since the start of Mongolia's economic transition in 1991. In 2008, growth stood at 8.9 percent, as reported by the National Statistical Office. This is attributed to a number of factors, including an expansion of the mining sector that benefited from increased international gold and copper prices.

Although continuing economic growth, spurred by a recovery from the steep recession of late 2008 to early 2009, is helping to raise living standards, poverty persists in both rural and urban areas: 36 percent of the population live below the national poverty line, on the equivalent of \$0.75 a day. Income inequality has widened, with the Gini coefficient rising from 0.31 in 1995 to 0.44 in 2002. Urban poverty is becoming a more serious problem owing to rapid internal migration, high unemployment rates, and higher living costs in urban areas. Poverty remains a major political, social, and economic problem for the country, despite the economic gains and political promises of the past 20 years.

According to the 1992 Constitution, Mongolia is a semi-presidential system. The President is directly elected with a wide range of powers, including that of submitting and vetoing legislation. The Parliament – the *Ulsyn Ih Hural* – is unicameral with 76 seats. It is led, as in other parliamentary

democracies, by a Prime Minister responsible to its members. The country also has an independent Constitutional Court. The constitution-makers sought to disperse power so as to prevent the emergence of a single strong leader. “Many Mongolians associated dispersing power with both democracy and national independence” (Fish, 2001). Since 1990, Mongolia has had six parliamentary elections and five presidential elections. Elections have been highly contested campaigns, resulting in consecutive transfers of government power from one party to another. Altogether, there are more than 20 registered political parties, with four parties having parliamentary representation in the current parliament. Mongolia has had no less than 13 Prime Ministers since 1990, 11 of them after 1996. Since 1996, Mongolia has experienced political instability, with legislative gridlock, delays in the appointment of Prime Minister, and intensive competition between political parties.

Increased poverty, unemployment, and income polarization, as well as factional strife within ruling parties and ruling coalitions, have created a political system characterized by strong individualism and ‘patron-client’ relationships. The political and institutional problems arising from the fierce power contests in the first decade of democratic rule led to a series of constitutional amendments adopted in 2000. But these did not completely remove the institutional frictions between the President on the one hand, and the Prime-Minister and the legislature on the other. Populist campaigns by parties and individual candidates, and the merger of economic and political interests, are still very much part of the country’s politics.

Mongolia is a unitary state with administrative units, such as the capital city, 21 provinces, and 331 sub-provinces. Most local governments are heavily dependent on transfers from the central government. Local self-governing bodies (*burals/assemblies*) are directly elected by local voters. Governors are nominated by local assemblies and appointed by the Prime Minister.

In recent years, important studies have assessed the quality of democracy in the country, and its main democratic challenges.<sup>1</sup> The general conclusion is that Mongolia, despite its populist and patronage type of politics, has established a competitive, multi-party political system that has seen significant alterations in power without interruption to democratic practices. Political pluralism is a firmly established principle in society. Mongolian citizens express strong support for the democratic transition and the democratic system, even during economic adversity, while expressing less support for the

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1. Vide *Democratic Governance Indicators: Assessing the State of Governance in Mongolia*, Ulaanbaatar, 2006; *Changes in the State of Democratic Governance in Mongolia, 2007-2008*, Ulaanbaatar, 2008; *Millennium Development Goal-9 and the State of Democracy in Mongolia*, Ulaanbaatar, 2009.

democratic process itself and mixed support for political institutions. There are significant areas of concern over the fullness of democracy in Mongolia, particularly in limitations of social and economic rights that impinge on the full exercise of civil and political rights. The main democratic challenges relate to implementing governance reforms for better accountability and transparency of government, electoral reform, strengthening political parties, independence of the judiciary, control of corruption at all levels of government, and greater civil society oversight of government decision-making. Mongolia's civil society is still at a nascent stage, as the country has strong traditions of clan and family networks rooted in traditional nomadic society. Despite this, Mongolia had more than 6,200 NGOs registered in 2007. Some of the more active urban civic movements and organizations demonstrated against political corruption in 2009–2010. In 2008, Mongolia had 1,680 newspapers, 55 magazines, and 237 radio and TV stations. But the proliferation of mass media has also been marred by private and economic interests, lack of professionalism, sensationalism, and copyright violations.

## **National assessments of democratic governance**

### *The ICNRD-5 Initiative (2003) and the follow-up process (2005–2006)*

In September 2003, Mongolia hosted the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies<sup>2</sup> (ICNRD-5), which brought together over 500 participants from 119 states to discuss democracy, good governance, and civil society. As host and chair of ICNRD-5, and with the support of UNDP, Mongolia engaged in a follow-up process that included the development of Democratic Governance Indicators, a Country Information Note, a National Plan of Action, and a Civil Society Index, as well as a series of national and international events and other complementary activities. It was envisioned that the Democratic Governance Indicators (DGI), the Country Information Note, and the National Plan of Action would help Mongolian stakeholders create a baseline assessment, an ongoing monitoring-mechanism, and offer policy guidance to realize the country's MDGs.

The follow-up national assessments used the methodology of a multi-stakeholder democracy assessment modelled on that of the International IDEA. Mongolia also became the first country to adopt the assessment within a government led process that included all stakeholders. The stakeholders included government agencies, NGOs, academia, political parties, and individuals, such as Members of Parliament, political and social

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2. The International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) is an intergovernmental process open to all UN member States. To date, a total of six ICNRDs were held in Manila, the Philippines (1988); Managua, Nicaragua (1994); Bucharest, Romania (1997); Cotonou, Benin (2000); Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (2003), and the latest in Doha, Qatar (2006).

activists, scholars, and experts. The engagement of stakeholders was made possible by advocacy and use of personal political and social contacts of the initial group that helped to organize ICNRD-5.

During the follow-up process, it was noted that for an assessment to have public impact it requires not just effective presentation, but public recognition of the legitimacy of the assessment process. Steps taken to secure a legitimate assessment process included careful selection of assessors, involvement of a range of stakeholders at every stage of the assessment, securing high quality and objective data/evidence, and submitting results for national and international validation.

In April 2005, a team of eight social science researchers, housed by the Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law, were selected to implement Mongolia's national assessments. To ensure legitimacy, great efforts were made to balance any political affiliation that the researchers had with political parties or causes.

An important innovation was the development of 'satellite indicators' and 'core indicators',<sup>3</sup> where the latter measures common values of democratic governance, while the former assesses national characteristics of democratic governance. Some 117 core and 14 satellite indicators were subsequently assessed using the four main democratic themes of the International IDEA.

The DGI assessment used a mix of methods drawn from mainstream social, legal, and political sciences to complete the indicator questions. This effort to assess the quality, depth, and breadth of the democratic experience drew on multiple sources of information and data in an attempt to 'triangulate' the democratic assessment and provide an inclusive process for democratic discussion and reform.

The national research team for the follow-up process used qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and analyse the data and information. Qualitatively, the research team used dialogues (N=12), focus groups (N=36), and narratives on democracy in Mongolia. The research identified concerns about the democratic experience and how that varies across different groups of Mongolian society. Quantitatively, the research team collected administrative statistics, elite surveys (N=118), mass surveys (N=1000), and expert judgements (N=5).

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3. In 2004, the author participated in a meeting with UNDP governance experts on a mission in Mongolia when the concept of 'core' and 'satellite' indicators was first introduced in Mongolia. Later, the concept was adapted into the Mongolia Democratic Governance Indicators concept. The UNDP mission included Messrs R. Sudarshan and Joachim Nahem, who later served as International Advisor to the Follow-up Project.

Developing the qualitative and quantitative methods was, in large part, based on participatory and action-oriented research activities, which included a diverse group of Mongolian citizens.

The research team collected data during the fall of 2005. That included a national survey in eight out of 21 Mongolian provinces, eliciting the views of 1,200 citizens on various aspects of democracy. The purpose was to capture the voice and opinions of groups seen as key to the democratic development in Mongolia. In particular, marginalized groups (e.g., herders, rural/urban poor, migrants, and low-skilled workers), which are normally not heard in the Mongolian society, were target audiences for these exercises. The views expressed in the various data gathering discussions were used for the DGI study and were also digitally recorded (thereby giving 'voice' to these groups in the public discussion on democracy).

The DGI process included several public and targeted consultations. The government-led, multi-stakeholder approach involved discussion of the DGI and other tools (e.g., the Country Information Note and the National Plan of Action) and their presentation to a wide variety of stakeholders, e.g., Government, Parliament, civil society, and academic institutions. The DGI research activities were, for the most part, also consultative, as they surveyed the perception of public citizens, target groups, experts, and parliamentarians.

Two national conferences on 'Democracy Development in Mongolia: Challenges and Opportunities' and 'Democratic Governance Indicators: Assessment and Challenges' were part of a series of events that enabled an all-inclusive national discussion of the quality of democracy in the country, its opportunities and challenges, and the democratic solutions to crucial developmental issues that Mongolia faced. More than 1,000 people attended the two conferences in 2005 and 2006.

An important aspect of the DGI process was to engage with key international partners specializing in democracy assessments. During 2005 and 2006, the International IDEA and Essex University provided crucial advice, training, and technical assistance to the DGI activities. In June 2006, the Government of Mongolia hosted a follow-up to the ICNRD-5 International Conference in Ulaanbaatar. Representatives of 12 countries and 23 international organizations, along with representatives of Mongolia's Government, the Parliament, academia, and civil society, attended the conference. It emphasized: (i) national and multi-stakeholder ownership (e.g., government, civil society), (ii) country specific characteristics of democracy (e.g., satellite indicators), and (iii) 'mixed' assessment methods.

Advocacy and media outreach were also essential components of the DGI process. In one outreach activity, over 3,000 brochures and other materials were distributed to citizens and stakeholders across Mongolia.

### ***Complementary DGI Exercises***

There were four separate exercises that complemented the DGI project: the Urban Governance Index, the Civil Society Index, Country Information Note, and the National Plan of Action. Each is described in brief below.

The assessment of urban governance was carried out in Ulaanbaatar using UN-HABITAT's methodology for producing an urban governance index. Urban Governance was identified as a 'satellite issue' for Mongolia by the DGI research team. The Urban Governance Index assessed the four areas of effectiveness, equity, participation, and accountability. The four categories of the assessment were evaluated using 25 core quantitative indicators. The Urban Governance Index for Ulaanbaatar was developed with the participation of more than 40 urban development stakeholders.

The Civil Society Index was developed by CEDAW Watch (now Citizens' Alliance Centre). The work on the Civil Society Index was based on the CIVICUS method, which assessed the quality of civil society across the four dimensions of structure, values, environment and impact. The Civil Society Index exercise in Mongolia produced the first comprehensive study of the state of civil society in the country. Unlike most existing assessments of Mongolia's civil society, the Civil Society Index research was initiated and conducted by Mongolian civil society activists, and involved a broad range of civil society organizations (CSOs). It used a range of methods and data sources, with a specific focus on information and analyses produced by Mongolian actors, and thus fostered CSO capacity for collective analysis and action.

Mongolia also implemented a Country Information Note, which is a shorter document assessing the quality of Mongolia's democracy. The Country Information Note was used as a complementary information source for the Democratic Governance Indicators, because it included an expert judgement exercise. By surveying a group of experts, the Country Information Note used the International IDEA's framework as a basis for judging the quality of Mongolian democracy on a scale ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The experts rated Mongolia's state of democratic governance at 3.02, which signified a proportional mix of democratic and non-democratic characteristics.<sup>4</sup>

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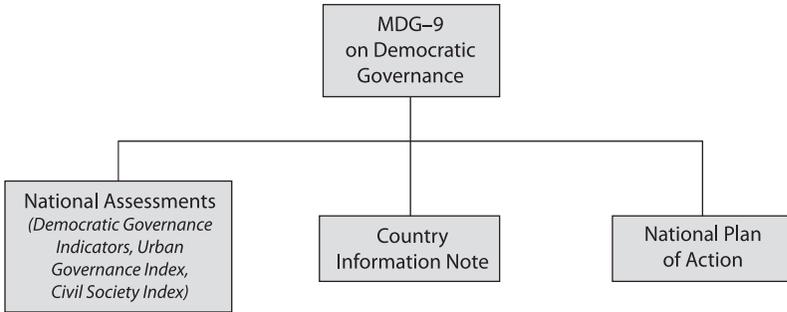
4. See Section IV "Country Information Note" in *Democratic Governance Indicators: Assessing the State of Governance in Mongolia*, Ulaanbaatar, 2006, pp. 55-66.

The National Plan of Action was developed in tandem with the DGI and the Country Information Note. It draws on the results of an entire set of follow-up activities to make recommendations for the continued monitoring of democracy in Mongolia. The Plan noted that despite citizen support for democracy as the preferred form of government, there continued to be widespread dissatisfaction with the process and implementation of democracy in Mongolia. Such a gap between general levels of support for democracy as form of rule and the de facto democratic experience is not uncommon among old and new democracies. Mongolia needs to overcome a series of challenges that are typical of new democracies, including access to information, control of corruption, limitations of state power, development of civil society, independence of the judiciary, and strengthening the rule of law.

### **Millennium Development Goal-9 on democratic governance and human rights**

On 21 April 2005, Mongolia adopted its 9th Millennium Development Goal on human rights, anti-corruption, and democracy. MDG-9 has three associated targets: (i) to uphold the rights found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, (ii) to uphold and inculcate democratic principles and values, and (iii) to show zero-tolerance of corruption. Mongolia remains the only country in the world to have formulated its own governance-related national MDG. The history of its formulation is closely related to the new knowledge and experience generated by the follow-up process and the national assessments described above. The impetus for MDG-9 came from a profound conviction that there was a strong link between better democratic governance in Mongolia and achieving the MDGs. The national assessments of the quality of democratic governance in Mongolia showed without bias the challenges it faced, and the performance of the state that adversely affected the socio-economic development of the country. When MDG-9 was officially endorsed by the Parliament, it was envisioned that the DGI method and results would be mainstreamed into targets for MDG-9. With its associated targets, which are to be achieved by 2015, MDG-9 presented a golden opportunity to institutionalize the DGI and ensure a sustainable democracy monitoring system over time. These became the objectives for a new project, *Support in Achieving MDG-9 on Human Rights and Democratic Governance*, funded by the United Nations Democracy Fund.

To achieve its objectives, the DGI were reviewed and specific target indicators and methodologies for data gathering developed. National consultations on the DGI and methodology took place with stakeholders, including the Parliament, NGOs, and the National Statistical Office conducted, and a network of MDG-9 stakeholders was established.

**Figure 5.1 Linkage between National Assessments and MDG-9**

The most important achievement was the approval of a resolution on the MDGs, including indicators for MDG-9, by the Parliament in January 2008. Another important step was the testing of MDG-9 survey questions by the National Statistical Office in December 2007 in its periodic household survey. It conducted a pilot household survey at the end of 2008 and early 2009. Other significant milestones included a national consultative meeting on MDG-9 in March 2008, established a MDG-9 website, and developed recommendations for government interventions to achieve MDG-9. The project activities included numerous consultations with stakeholders in 2007 and 2008, plus local training exercises on MDG-9 indicators in the three provinces of Dundgobi, Huvsgul, Dornod, and in Ulaanbaatar. In December 2008, a national wrap-up conference was held to discuss the project results with participation of all stakeholders.

Other important considerations in developing the MDG-9 indicators included the use of quantitative and qualitative measurements whenever possible, with a slightly stronger emphasis on quantitative indicators, selection of indicators where measurement data is sufficiently reliable in quality for confident decision-making, inclusion of the need to disaggregate indicators by gender or poverty status wherever possible in the methodological recommendations for government agencies in charge of data-gathering for MDG-9, and consideration of practical implications of cost and time for collecting measurement data.

Another crucial aspect in developing indicators for MDG-9 was an attempt to clarify the concepts to be measured (human rights, democratic governance, corruption) and key components of those concepts for use by the National Statistical Office in its design and conduct of the household surveys. The project team prepared a memorandum on definitions of democracy, governance, human rights, and corruption, which explained the use of terms and provided references to international sources, with a

Table 5.1 Baseline of MDG-9 indicators, 2008<sup>5</sup>

Target	Indicator	Data Collection		2008 Baseline as produced by "Support in Achieving MDG-9 on Human Rights and Democratic Governance in Mongolia – Phase I" Project in 2007–2008	Dimension of change
		Method	Who collects		
<p><b>Target 22:</b> Fully respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ensure the freedom of media, and provide the public with free access to information</p>	<p><b>Impact</b></p> <p>1. Human Development Index 1990: 0.652; 2000: 0.669; 2006: 0.691 (2004); 2015: 0.830</p>	Statistical data	UNDP, based on national statistics	<b>0.738 (2008)</b>	0–1
	2. Expert evaluation of conformity of Mongolian laws and regulations with international human rights treaties and conventions (percentage)	Expert evaluation	National Human Rights Commission	<b>3.4 (2008)</b>	1–5
	3. Percentage of implementation/enforcement of judicial decisions	Statistical data (agency level)	Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs	<b>73.4% (2008)</b>	0–100 %
	4. Number of attorneys that provide services to poor citizens	Statistical data	Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs	<b>293 advocates (May 2009)</b>	
	5. Public perception of political, economic, and financial independence of mass media	Household socio-economic survey data	National Statistical Office	<b>28.5 (2008)</b>	0–100 points
	6. Number of state organizations that regularly place reports of their budgets and expenditures on their websites	Statistical data	Ministry of Finance	<b>55.6%</b>	25 out of 45 general budgetary organizations with websites

<b>Target 23:</b> <i>Mainstream democratic principles and practices into life</i>	7. Public perception of activities of state organizations	Household socio-economic survey data	National Statistical Office	<b>53.3 (2008)</b>	0–100 points		
	8. Number of civil society organizations that have officially participated and expressed their views in the process of developing and approving the state budget	Statistical data	Ministry of Finance			n/a	
	9. Percentage of voters that have participated in nominating governors of soums and baghs	Statistical data	Government Secretariat			n/a	
<b>Target 24:</b> <i>Develop a zero-tolerance environment to corruption in all spheres of society</i>	10. Index of corruption	Public survey, specific index development methodology	Independent Authority Against Corruption	<b>0.64 (2009, calculated by the Independent Authority Against Corruption of Mongolia)</b>	0–1		
	11. Perception of corruption in political organizations, judicial and law enforcement institutions	Expert survey	Independent Authority Against Corruption			<b>4.09 (2008)</b>	1–5
	12. Public perception of corruption in public administration and public services	Household socio-economic survey data	National Statistical Office			<b>30.8 (2008)</b>	0–100 points

5. Indicators that are produced on an annual basis will be collected from annual household socio-economic surveys by the NSO; all others will be produced on a bi-annual basis as required by Parliamentary resolution. As of 2009, reporting on all MDGs is the responsibility of the newly established National Committee on Innovation and Development, a planning agency reporting directly to the Prime Minister. See *Millennium Development Goal-9 Indicators and the State of Democracy in Mongolia, Support in Achieving MDG-9 on Human Rights and Democratic Governance in Mongolia Project*, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2009, pp.11–12.

particular significance given to definitions used by the International IDEA. The memorandum was based on in-house expert consultations, followed by consultations with statistical experts of the National Statistical Office. To date, there have been three national household surveys that have used the democracy module.

The process of developing MDG-9 indicators was based on the principle of inclusion of all stakeholders (government, academia, and civil society) at all stages of the exercise. The project team supported the engagement of decision-makers, relevant experts and marginalized groups, networking with civil society, and advocacy with the participation of civil society organizations.

The process of selecting the final MDG-9 indicators involved numerous consultations with government and civil society representatives in 2007 and 2008. Particular significance was given to separate consultations and review by academic experts and practitioners who had been engaged with the DGI process earlier in 2005 and 2006. Review and reformulations that had taken place at meetings of the parliamentary working group, under both the Subcommittee on MDGs and the Standing Committee on Social Policy, helped to refine the selection of draft indicators and also to advocate at the level of senior government ministry officials, in particular from the Ministry of Finance and the Parliament Secretariat.

A national conference on MDG-9 indicators held in March 2008 contributed to verifying the selection of indicators, systematizing the understanding of the process of developing and selecting the indicators, and refining the public awareness campaign strategy. The conference was successful in building a consensus among stakeholders on both the process for MDG-9 indicators and the actual indicators.

The second generation DGI and the Country Information Note were produced in 2007 and 2008. They made possible a comparative analysis of the state of democratic governance in 2005-2006 and 2007-2008. The MDG-9 baseline data and the results of the second generation national assessment were presented at the national wrap-up conference in December 2008.

The baseline data were collected in 2009 for 10 of the 12 indicators. Recommendations, including proposals for a data reporting process and improvement for methodologies, were formally submitted to, and tested by, responsible ministries and agencies. Discussions with these institutions led to an agreement to establish a Working Group on MDG-9 under the National Development and Innovation Committee in the first quarter of 2010. The Division of Information, Research, Monitoring and Evaluation of the National Development and Innovation Committee is now the focal point for

monitoring and evaluating all MDGs. The Working Group consists of all reporting bodies, such as the Cabinet Secretariat, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs, Ministry of Finance, National Human Rights Committee of Mongolia, Independent Agency against Corruption, and others. All relevant staff from these organizations attended training sessions on MDG-9.

As part of institutionalizing of the reporting for MDG-9, a special MDG-9 module was attached to the Household Socio-economic Survey conducted annually by the National Statistical Office. The Independent Agency against Corruption separately collected the data for the expert survey on perception of grand corruption in 2009 (indicator: 'Perception of corruption in political organizations, judicial and law enforcement institutions'), using the MDG-9 project methodology.

A special focus was given to cooperating with civil society groups representing women and disadvantaged groups of citizens. An outreach campaign on MDG-9 was conducted in close collaboration with the 'Network of NGOs in support of MDG-9, involving 20 NGOs working on gender and assistance to disadvantaged citizens. Among them, there were the Mongolian National Federation of Disabled Citizens, the Centre for Democracy Education, MONFEMNET, the Centre for Human Rights and Development, Development Gateway, the National Centre against Violence, and many others. The media support activities were conducted in cooperation with the *Chuluut Setgelgee* (Free Thought) journal and four newspapers to raise public awareness of MDG-9 and its indicators. Altogether, the MDG-9 outreach and capacity-building programme produced 25 publications for various stakeholders, with a circulation of more than 14,000 copies between 2007 and 2010.

Two pilot exercises were completed in 2010 as part of tests on sector-specific governance indicators. The Mongolian National Association of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities developed its own set of seven indicators to measure implementation of rights of persons with disabilities and as of 2010 is working towards establishing the indicators baseline. And the Agency of Land Affairs, Construction, Geodesy and Cartography developed 42 indicators along five pillars, and prepared a report on their baseline data. In both cases, the indicators were created under guidelines and consultation with the MDG-9 project, which helps ensure national ownership and sustainability of assessments.

An expert survey on the governance implications of MDGs 1 to 9 was also completed as part of tests on decision-makers' understanding of linkages

between governance and MDG achievement in Mongolia, and their opinion on governance weaknesses. In total, 67 experts from the Parliament, ministries, academia, and civil society took part in the exercise. They evaluated nine questionnaires for each MDG. Table 5.2, below, depicts the areas of cooperation and other interaction with stakeholders in the process of implementing the MDG-9 project. The most in-depth interaction was registered with civil servants from such government agencies as the Ministry of Finance, the National Committee for Innovation and Development, the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and public institutions including the National Commission for Human Rights, the General Election Committee, the Independent Anti-Corruption Agency, the National Statistical Office, and others. Another very important active group were NGOs working on human rights, social accountability, and anti-corruption, including the Democracy Education Centre, Steps Without Borders, Open Society Institute, Centre for Citizens' Alliance, Network of Mongolian Women's NGOs, and many others. Mongolian scholars and other individuals provided a lot of assistance and engagement

**Table 5.2 MDG-9 Project Interaction with Stakeholders**

	Project Planning	Project Appraisal	Methodology Development Consultations	Methodology Testing and Validation	Baseline Data Collection and Analysis	Policy Recommendations	Advocacy		Knowledge-sharing		Capacity Building	Lobbying
							Public discussions	Media	Presentations	Publications		
<b>Public Sector Stakeholders</b>												
Parliament	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√
Ministries, agencies	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Local government							√	√	√	√	√	√
Civil servants	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Political parties							√	√		√	√	√
<b>Private Sector Stakeholders</b>												
Professional bodies			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Individual business leaders							√				√	√
<b>Civil Society Stakeholders</b>												
NGOs	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Media				√						√	√	√
Academia, universities	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Advocacy groups						√	√	√		√	√	√

throughout the process. The least engagement was displayed by Mongolia's political parties.

### **Key innovations**

Mongolia's national assessments of democratic governance conducted in 2005–2010 have contributed a number of innovations to the international experience in governance assessments.

1. Mongolia's exercise was government-led, with strong and substantive participation of stakeholders, such as academia and civil society. The government provided political support, while the experts and other stakeholders had complete freedom in their choice of methodological tools and their collaboration with CSOs.
2. The methodology included mixed approaches with 'core' and 'satellite' indicators that reflected universal aspects of democracy and specific features of Mongolian society. The experts had full ownership of research tools and control over the choice of institutional and individual research counterparts. All national assessments complemented one other and employed similar methodological and technical components. The design of the assessments allowed coverage of nearly all aspects of Mongolia's democratic governance and human rights.
3. While developing the national assessments, a wide network of stakeholders was established. They consisted of representatives from government, academia, and civil society, as well as individual experts, practitioners, and activists. The network achieved both vertical and horizontal reach. By using this network, sound professional and technical exchanges were made possible and the quality of research and policy relevance was ensured. Two smaller networks were particularly useful in outreach: the Centre for Democracy Education network, which united NGOs, and the media group that became active in 2007 and 2008. The national assessments had an important impact on linking institutions and key personalities who had never met or interacted before. For example, the National Statistical Office is interacting with the Association of Persons with Disabilities to help provide data for indicators on implementation of rights of persons with disabilities.
4. The first ever network of Mongolian NGOs in support of a single objective (MDG-9) was created, which marked an important turning point in the development of Mongolia's civil society. The Democracy Education Centre, a NGO focusing on disseminating democratic values, became its lead organization. Mongolia has since seen a proliferation of coalitions and alliances of NGOs aimed at a single goal (environmental, youth, socially oriented, etc.).

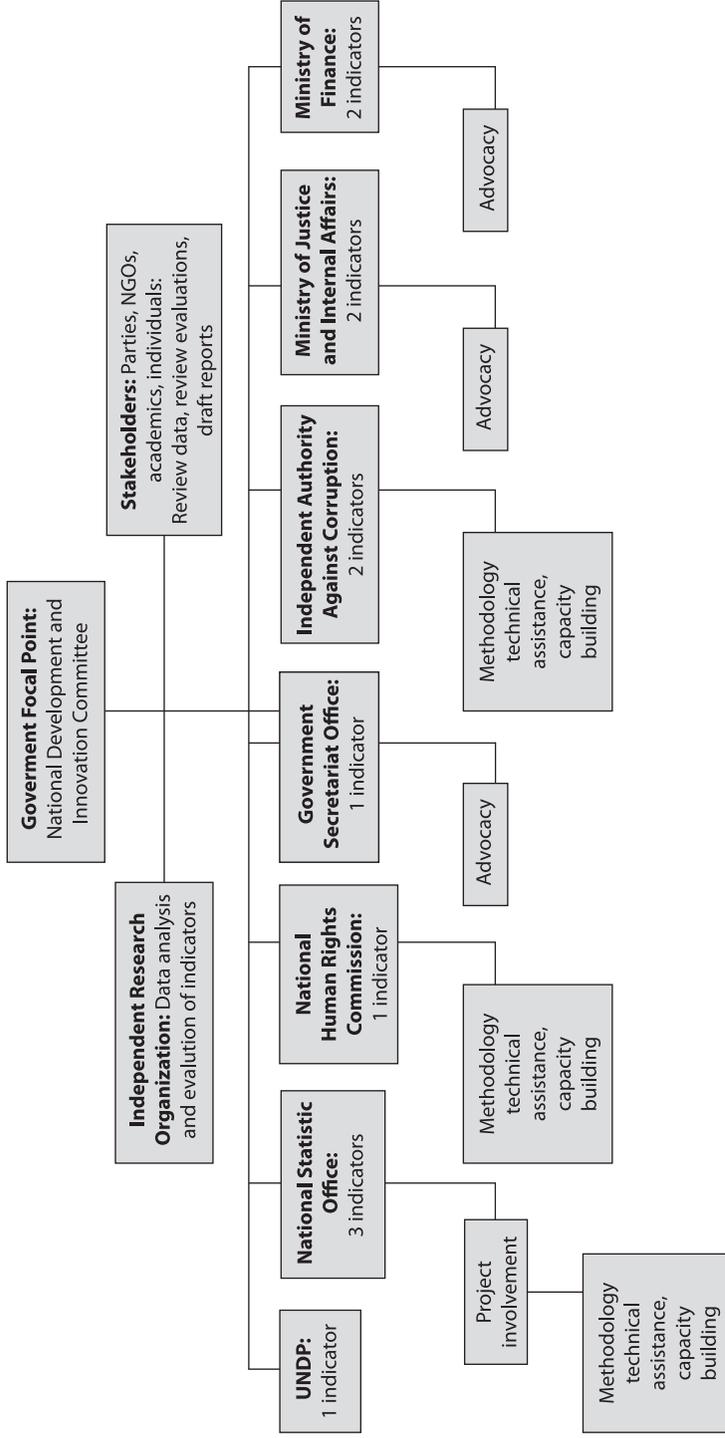
5. The MDG-9 indicators and their baseline are the first experience of creating a nationally legislated goal on democratic governance and human rights. The singularity of MDG-9 plays a catalytic role in institutionalizing national assessments and making them a routine tool with which to analyse governance. Mongolia's national assessments have been institutionalized by parliamentary resolutions and the creation of a working group within the focal government agency responsible for reporting on achieving all MDGs, including MDG-9. The parliamentary resolution identified ministries and other agencies responsible for collecting data on MDG-9 indicators. The institutional links have already been tested and by the end of 2010 the second-generation MDG-9 data will be collected. Also, the National Statistical Office is now responsible for a democracy module as part of the annual household survey.
6. A further key feature of the Mongolian exercise was the creation of a knowledge base of indicators as a tool for monitoring progress in various governance areas, wide dissemination of knowledge products to government agencies, academia, universities, and libraries across the country, and civil society and individuals. In a non-English speaking country with no access to academic and practical literature on democracy, governance, civil society development, and evaluation and monitoring tools, the MDG-9 knowledge products spawned a whole new field of research and study. A doctoral dissertation on the DGI was successfully completed, and two new courses on democratic governance were introduced at the Academy of Management under the auspices of the government agency responsible for training and retraining civil servants. This achievement will have a long term impact in developing governance studies in Mongolia. It will also contribute to sustaining pluralist thinking, and to the discourse on governance in the political community, academia, and civil society.

### **Key lessons learned**

There are many lessons that have been learned, and continue to be learned, from the MDG-9 initiative. The most important are summarized in the following three paragraphs.

1. The process of developing MDG-9 indicators revealed that producing the baseline and quantitative targets for MDG-9 indicators requires considerable time and effort, because the subject matter is hard to quantify, and the production of time-series requires more time than was available for the MDG-9 project. Cooperation and collaboration with and among stakeholders was successful and fruitful. However, understanding from top-ranking decision-makers was limited, and as a result the political reforms that the national assessments urged for were not fully initiated.

Figure 5.2 MDG-9 Monitoring and evaluation mechanism<sup>6</sup>



6. Millennium Development Goal-9 Indicators and the State of Democracy in Mongolia, Support in Achieving MDG-9 on Human Rights and Democratic Governance in Mongolia Project, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2009, p.39.

2. A range of institutions were involved in producing the indicators, with different levels of commitment and capacity of staff involved. Reflecting the realities of Mongolia's competitive politics and the partisan nature of civil service appointments, there has been and remains a high rate of staff turnover, and that leads to a loss of experience, capacity, and commitment to the MDGs. The mechanism for national monitoring and evaluation of the MDGs is still to be consolidated. There is a fundamental need to raise the awareness of decision-makers and citizens of the importance of the MDGs, and of their monitoring and evaluation. For example, many MPs still confuse MDGs with the USAID Millennium Challenge Account programme.
3. The most important challenge in developing national assessments is to ensure the participation of the political community, so that it understands the need for reforms and is willing to implement reforms using the national assessments as evidence, justification, and resource. In Mongolia, the vested political, group, and private interests, along with institutional barriers, have prevented the full application of the national assessments to politics. Substantive discourse on improving democratic governance, as well as a culture of evidence-based decision-making, is in short supply. Lack of a coherent governance agenda in the programmes government and political parties, plus a high turnover of civil servants, have so far prevented the full application of the results of national assessments for strategic interventions aimed at deepening and broadening democratic governance. For instance, a new electoral law has been sitting in Parliament since 2007, with members unable to decide which system would best boost their re-election prospects. During the 2009 autumn parliamentary session (October 2009 – February 2010), governance-related issues accounted for about 18 percent of the parliamentary decisions, with the majority dealing with government appointments.<sup>7</sup> However, there have been indirect results in terms of the changes in Mongolia's political agenda. The political community is now planning to introduce amendments to the electoral legislation (introduction of some degree of proportionality to allow for better and fuller representation of the society in the legislature, as well as to increase women's representation), paying more attention to the state of affairs in political parties, the introduction of social accountability among civil society activists, and greater accountability and transparency of the state budget.

The assessments revealed that accountability and transparency of government processes had become the weakest link in improving democratic governance in Mongolia. As a result of the project activities, this

vulnerability has been fully exposed and has now become the focal point of attention and efforts by a number of NGOs participating in the network established by the project. Dozens of capacity-building seminars and other training sessions organized by the project have made a strong contribution to applying the results of the national assessments to shaping the agenda of the NGOs to promote social accountability. In 2009, a Partnership for Social Accountability was set up by nine NGOs to introduce social accountability tools and mechanisms in Mongolia. The Partnership is now concentrating on accountability tools in, for example, healthcare, education, and environmental protection.

The assessments have also helped civil society to understand the need to monitor and participate in developing the state budget. Consequently, in 2010-2011, a series of discussions was held by NGOs to find ways of opening national and local budgets to citizens, decentralizing the budget process, and engaging stronger citizen participation in formulating the state budget.

Looking to the future, the following points drawn from the Mongolia's experience may be of special relevance:

- a. Democracy assessment provides a useful tool for the process of democratic consolidation if the political will and a well organized civil society can use it to stimulate reform.
- b. The process of democracy assessment should be inclusive, involving as far as possible members of governmental institutions, Parliament, civil society, and the media.
- c. The process of democracy assessment should be nationally-based and nationally-owned, while drawing on international experiences and expertise.
- d. Democracy assessment can pay careful attention to the unique features of a country, while maintaining a comparative element.
- e. Democracy assessment should adopt a mixed methodology to yield substantive knowledge, as well as provide concrete aims and objectives for democratic reforms.
- f. To sustain a national democracy assessment, it is advisable to institutionalize it.

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## MORE THAN JUST SELF-ASSESSMENT: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM

Steven Gruz

### Overview

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an African-owned and African-driven governance assessment process with the potential for significant scope, political impetus, national ownership, and meaningful involvement of citizens in policy-making. In practice, however, performance on these measures has been uneven across societies, with some states embracing the diagnosis of problems that the system unearthed, and others appearing to simply go through the motions. There are some concerning signs: many members have not paid their annual minimum contributions to the Continental APRM Secretariat; civil society involvement has been complex, controversial, and often disappointing; and the process is often a small blip on the national radar, dwarfed by other initiatives and affected by electoral cycles and constitutional reviews. Nevertheless, with renewed political will, institutional reform, and continued engagement with and by civil society, more of the peer review's potential can be fulfilled.

### Context and rationale

#### *Origins of the APRM*

The 1970s and 1980s were Africa's lost decades, when the promise of post-colonial rule was replaced by Cold War rivalries, military coups, and dictatorships. Economies stagnated, trade atrophied, and development stalled. The 1990s brought the end of apartheid, the horrors of the Rwandan genocide, and many brutal civil conflicts. Donor dependence and conditionality set in – typified by Structural Adjustment Programmes and then Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. By the turn of the Millennium,

it seemed clear that Western policy prescriptions – hatched outside the continent – had failed Africa, whose leaders seemed more accountable to donors (if to anyone at all) than to their own citizens.

But a new crop of leaders – especially Thabo Mbeki in South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria – began articulating that sustainable development would remain unattainable on a continent ravaged by conflict, corruption, and bad governance. Mbeki’s concept of an ‘African Renaissance’ posited the regeneration of Africa that he said was “rooted in four conditions: the history of Africa, which encompassed numerous achievements; the potential of Africa’s peoples; the values of democracy and good governance; and the power of information and modern technologies” (Mbeki, 2008:193).

To turn that vision into reality needed a strategic framework. Drawing on a series of grand plans from the 1980 Lagos Plan of Action onwards, in mid-2000, the Organization of African Unity, which transformed into the African Union in July 2002, mandated three leaders (Mbeki, Obasanjo, and Algeria’s Abdelaziz Bouteflika) to initiate discussions with the developed world on African development. They produced the Millennium Africa Recovery Plan by early 2001. This was merged with the Omega Plan (an initiative to develop infrastructure championed by Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade), first as the New African Initiative, and finally as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) that was established in October 2001.

This broad reform programme endorsed market economics, said Africa must end conflict, harness the benefits of globalization, and promote good governance. In return, Africa should expect increased and sustained development assistance, investment, debt relief, and trade. The initiative attracted considerable international support. A declaration in 2003 stated:

“Africa faces grave challenges and the most urgent of these are the eradication of poverty and the fostering of socio-economic development, in particular, through democracy and good governance. It is to the achievement of these twin objectives that the NEPAD process is principally directed.” (NEPAD, 2003:1).

The NEPAD founding document gave birth to the APRM, when it promised to “[set] up mechanisms for reviewing progress in the achievement of mutually agreed targets and in compliance with mutually agreed standards; [and review] progress in the implementation of past decisions, and [take] appropriate steps to address problems and delays” (African Union, 2001:58).

From this single sentence sprang the elaborate governance self-monitoring system that exists as the APRM today. As Dr Khabele Matlosa put it:

“NEPAD and the APRM recognize the stark reality that Africa will not succeed in righting its economic wrongs without simultaneously righting its political wrongs. Put more simply, development, democracy, and peace go hand-in-glove in understanding and dealing with Africa’s contemporary challenges.” (Matlosa, 2010:123).

Dr Kojo Busia, head of the APRM Support Unit at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa argues that NEPAD and the APRM act as a counterweight to Northern policy prescriptions:

“The overriding logic and strategic agenda of the APRM is to transform Africa’s governance systems from being accountable to its external partners, to being accountable to its primary constituents, its citizens; a situation that would ensure true ownership of its development destiny.” (Busia, 2010: 40).

### **Structures and stages**

The APRM is a voluntary, African-owned and African driven governance monitoring tool. Busia says:

“The designers of the APRM deliberately made it a non-punitive instrument to encourage adherence and commitment, perhaps out of the wisdom and lessons learnt that reforms that are enforced through mandatory sanctions usually receive little adherence, or countries only pay lip-service to reform.” (Busia, 2010: 32).

Its ‘Base Document’ was adopted by the African Union at its inaugural Summit in Durban, South Africa, on 8 July 2002. It states:

“The mandate of the African Peer Review Mechanism is to ensure that the policies and practices of participating states conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards contained in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. The APRM is the mutually agreed instrument for self-monitoring by the participating member governments.

The primary purpose of the African Peer Review Mechanism is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies, and assessing the needs for capacity building.

Every review exercise carried out under the authority of the Mechanism must be technically competent, credible, and free of political manipulation. These stipulations together constitute the core guiding principles of the Mechanism.” (OAU, 2002: 1).

### **The APRM in a nutshell<sup>1</sup>**

Through a series of voluntary governance ‘peer reviews’, member states diagnose deficiencies, propose solutions, share best practices, and follow recommendations made by the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons. The APRM began operations in 2003, and by June 2011, 30 African countries had acceded.

To begin active participation in the APRM, a country’s government signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the continental APRM authorities. This indicates its willingness to undergo review and its commitment to the process. The next step involves gathering information and documentation on the performance of the government and other stakeholders in key areas. To help gather this data and manage the process, the country typically forms a multi-stakeholder APRM National Governing Council charged with this responsibility and appoints Technical Research Institutes to carry out the technical aspects of the review.<sup>2</sup>

All parts of society – including civil society groups, religious institutions, labour unions, business groups, and the government – should contribute to answering questions on a wide range of issues. The APRM Self-Assessment Questionnaire guides the review process by highlighting the country’s performance in four broad areas. These are Democracy and Political Governance, Economic Governance, Corporate Governance, and Socio-Economic Development. Issues include human rights, health care provision, the state of the economy, the role of the judiciary, and the behaviour of corporations.

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1. This box appears in “Progress in Implementing the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in South Africa: Views from Civil Society”, Report 1 of the APRM Monitoring Project (AMP), Johannesburg, 2011. It was in turn adapted from Corrigan T, ‘Mastering the APRM: Creating your Submission: *A guide to writing a submission to influence policy*’, Johannesburg: SAIIA, 2007, p. 1.
  2. Similar APRM institutions in different countries have different names. For instance, in most Francophone states, the management body is usually called a National Commission, the equivalent of the National Governing Council in Anglophone states. Technical Research Institutions were called Lead Technical Agencies in Kenya, and Technical Support Agencies in South Africa. In Mozambique, the national Secretariat was known as a Technical Unit. This chapter uses the most commonly used terms, unless otherwise indicated.

The results of this review are incorporated into a Country Self-Assessment Report, drafted by the National Governing Council and Technical Research Institutes. The Country Self-Assessment Report includes a draft National Programme of Action, which sets out plans to address the problems identified in the review. Once the Country Self-Assessment Report is completed, a Country Review Mission visits the country. This is a delegation of respected scholars and experts, who conduct an independent study of the country and produce their own report. They are led by a member of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons, which is a small body of highly respected Africans, who are responsible for managing the APRM process across the continent.<sup>3</sup> The Panel and its Secretariat submit a draft Country Review Report to the country for comment. Recommendations are also included in the Country Review Report, and the country is expected to amend its National Programme of Action accordingly. A final Country Review Report is then produced and presented to the Forum of Participating Heads of State and Government for discussion and peer review. This body consists of the participating countries' leaders, and generally convenes on the margins of African Union summits. Following the Forum's review, the country must agree to address the various problems that have been identified. Other states undertake to assist the country in its efforts, and to take action should the country not attempt to address these issues. Finally, the country must report annually on progress in implementing the National Programme of Action and prepare itself for subsequent reviews.

### **Status**

At present, there are 31 participating states: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Republic of Congo, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Togo, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Its current members are: Professor Mohamed-Seghir Bábes, (Algeria, representing North Africa), chairman; Maître Domitilla Mukantaganzwa, (Rwanda, representing East Africa), deputy chairman; Maître Akere Muna (Cameroon, representing Central Africa); Barrister Julienne Ondziel-Gnelenga, (Congo-Brazzaville, representing Central Africa); and Professor Amos Sawyer, (Liberia, representing West Africa). At the time of writing, there was no Southern African representative, following the death of Dr Siteke Mwale of Zambia at the end of 2010.
  4. Cape Verde is sometimes erroneously listed; although it expressed interest, has not yet formally signed the Accession MOU.

By July 2011, some 14 states had completed their first full review: in 2006, Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya; in 2007, Algeria and South Africa; in 2008, Benin, Uganda, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso; in 2009, Mali, Mozambique, and Lesotho; in 2010, Mauritius; and Ethiopia in 2011. The first twelve Country Review Reports have been published to date. All countries up to Lesotho have reported on implementation of their National Programmes of Action at least once. The likely next countries to be reviewed are Tanzania and Sierra Leone.

### **Methodological significance**

Far from simply being a self-assessment, the APRM entails evaluating governance on at least three levels. First is the internal review, to compile the Country Self-Assessment Report, second is the external assessment made by the visiting Country Review Mission, and third is the discussion of the Country Review Report among the 'peer' heads of state. Once the Country Review Reports are published, others, such as academics, CSOs, and development partners, may make their own assessments.

The APRM's founding documents did not outline in great detail how the Country Self-Assessment Report should be compiled, and its architects underestimated the time and effort required (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:85–86). The system had to be flexible enough to accommodate vastly different states, in terms of their levels of development, political systems and traditions, colonial heritage, language and cultures, yet also be sufficiently uniform to generate similar reports. It also was careful not to rank states against one another, but rather to compare their potential and actual performance against themselves.

As the first countries to undergo review – particularly Ghana and Kenya – grappled with how to develop their Country Self-Assessment Reports, they soon realized that responding adequately to the APRM Self-Assessment Questionnaire would require a mixture of research methods. (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:51–70). Both decided to appoint independent experts (from think tanks, universities, or consultants) for each of the four thematic areas, to ensure both technical expertise and some measure of independence from government (and, hence, technical credibility). Think tanks from both countries had worked on the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's African Governance Review, and borrowed its four-pronged research methodology: desk work, expert interviews, household surveys, and focus group discussions. Most subsequent states adopted this methodology. Other countries innovated. South Africa solicited written submissions from stakeholders, and held parliamentary hearings. In addition, all countries have held 'consultations' – a variety of workshops, seminars, and public gatherings –

throughout their major population areas, to sensitize the population and elicit their views on governance issues. There is currently a project underway to 'streamline and fast-track' the APRM by the continental APRM Secretariat, which includes revising and updating the questionnaire, and standardizing the research methodology outlined above.

Two important elements of the APRM's methodology are its emphasis on national ownership, and its participatory, multi-stakeholder approach.

### **National ownership**

The APRM exhibits complex, constant interplay between the internal and the external dimensions, between sovereignty and solidarity. For instance, an individual country chooses to join a continental endeavour. It implements its own national process and generates a self-assessment, which is then externally scrutinized. The head of state shares concerns over internal affairs with peers at the continental level. The National Programme of Action is implemented nationally, but reported at the continental level, and so on.

Strong critics of NEPAD and the APRM, such as Professor Patrick Bond, argue that these programmes only *appear* to be African, but in fact are driven by the North. He says they perpetuate Africa's continued subordination in the global economy, and hold no prospect for lasting governance reform or benefits for African citizens (Bond, 2006).

In contrast, APRM proponents present these as initiatives designed and owned by Africans, to advance governance in Africa's interests. Busia argues that NEPAD and the APRM represent an African assumption of responsibility for their own development, in direct reaction to failed externally-designed, donor-driven governance processes and paradigms. He wrote that NEPAD "captured Africa's sense of disempowerment and lack of ownership of its development agenda in the midst of an increasingly globalized world that continued to marginalize the continent and its citizens" (Busia, 2010:36), and said "the APRM is an exercise in strengthening domestic accountability that is sorely missing in externally driven (donor) accountability mechanisms that have so far proven to be ineffective in fostering governance reforms in Africa" (Busia, 2010:40). The APRM promotes "African solutions for African problems."

Nevertheless, the process is not wholly financed by Africa. An analysis of the total contributions to the APRM of US\$33.6 million from 2004 to 2009 (the latest available figures) by member states, foreign governments, and development organizations shows that the split between African and non-African funding is 60:40 (APRM Secretariat, 2009). External funds are mostly deposited in the UNDP-managed multi-donor trust fund, so as to

minimize donor influence and interference in APRM operations. However, there is a concerning reliance on the ‘special contributions’ from four rich African states – Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa – that made ‘special contributions’ of \$11 million, with South Africa contributing almost half of this amount. Instability in North Africa could seriously jeopardize future funding, given the high previous contributions from Algeria and Egypt. Many members are in arrears with their annual minimum contributions of \$100,000. And funds sought for implementing the National Programmes of Action run into several billions of dollars in most countries.

While the Panel and the Secretariat can offer advice and general support, implementing the APRM at country level rests with the sitting government. But to ensure integrity, credibility, and frankness, APRM authorities have tried to implement measures to mitigate perceived or actual dominance by the executive. Former Panel member, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, stated in a video interview in April 2006 that:

“The basic document clearly states that it should be a tri-partite arrangement of the civil society, the corporate sector and the government. I think the formula we have been trying to encourage is one-third, one-third, one-third and that the leadership of that national commission or national committee or governing council, whatever name you want to call it, should come from the civil society or the corporate sector and not from the government because we don’t want to see this as a government project. The government cannot be driving a programme for which itself [sic.] is being evaluated. So this is why we want to make sure of its autonomy and independence, to make sure there is no domination, the government is not saying we cannot do that or we cannot do this.” (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:26–27).

For the process to be credible, government should not be seen to dominate a review of its own performance. Therefore, the composition of the National Governing Council and the degree to which it can operate autonomously of government is one important indicator of the ‘independence’ of the process, and the *nature* of country ownership and leadership. Factors such as the proportion of representatives from various sectors (government, the private sector, civil society), their ideological positions, how they were selected, the size and functions of the National Governing Council, and who chairs it, can be significant.

National ownership has generated considerable variations. Ghana attempted to ensure a depoliticized, high-profile process by appointing a National Governing Council of seven eminent and respected citizens,

mirroring the continental Panel of Eminent Persons (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:159), while Nigeria, in contrast, tried to ensure representativeness on its National Working Group, appointing 216 people, approximately 60 percent of whom were non-state actors, including CSOs and other social groups (Jinadu, 2010: 257).

The national is thus the most significant locus of ownership, and one of the challenges is to enhance the sense of joint ownership between the national and continental levels.

### **Participatory process**

The APRM is noteworthy as an exercise in participatory evaluation, involving extensive consultation. One analysis noted:

“The APRM is ... extraordinary for the opportunity that it presents to civil society and business to contribute to policy-making. Potentially, it can open a national conversation that moves beyond the cycle of blame and denial that characterizes politics in many countries. By requiring broad public participation, the APRM has the potential to rebuild trust in politics and inject fresh thinking into national problem solving. Too often, politics is a game played by elites who can retain power despite poor performance because the public is insufficiently informed and mobilized. Politicians frequently compete by appealing to ethnic and regional biases rather than advocating particular policy changes. The APRM offers an opportunity to change this political dynamic and focus the national conversation on progress and policy.” (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008:5).

The extent to which this potential has materialized varies. APRM Guidelines envisage an accessible, inclusive process that will involve citizens:

“The APRM process is designed to be open and participatory. Through a participatory process, the APRM will engage key stakeholders to facilitate exchange of information and national dialogue on good governance and socio-economic development programmes, thereby increase [sic.] the transparency of the decision-making processes, and build trust in the pursuit of national development goals.” (APRM Secretariat, 2003:3).

While governments play a central role, through the Focal Points, APR Forum members and the fact that they set the pace and determine the contours of the national APRM process, the roles of other actors – in particular parliament, civil society, and the private sector – merit brief attention.

Parliaments have generally had a low level of involvement. A 2008 seminar in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, noted that in most cases “the missing link or weak chain in the APRM country processes has been the feeble or ‘scant’ engagement of parliaments in acceding member states” (PAP and UNECA, 2008: 41). In general, some MPs might have attended the occasional workshop, received a briefing, or met with the National Governing Council or visiting Country Review Mission. In some countries, such as Algeria, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Rwanda, MPs sat on National Governing Councils.

There were some exceptions. South Africa’s parliament was proactive, holding hearings and conducting research originally intended as a stand-alone report, but eventually incorporated into the Country Self-Assessment Report (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008: 260–261). However, the only MPs sitting on the National Governing Council were ministers and deputy ministers from the ruling party, and the ad hoc committees on the APRM formed during 2005–2006 are dormant. Uganda’s MPs have reportedly been involved in sensitization and oversight, receiving both the Country Self-Assessment Report and the National Programme of Action, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts. More countries should emulate these positive examples, and parliaments – including the Pan-African Parliament – could be ideal forums to debate Country Self-Assessment Reports, Country Review Reports, National Programmes of Action, and implementation reports, exercise oversight, and enhance peer learning.

Civil society involvement is stressed in APRM documents, and the extent of its interaction can influence the credibility of the national process, the Country Self-Assessment Report and Country Review Report. Who represents civil society, how they were selected, and what power they wield are all important considerations.

Ghana’s initial plans generated civil society criticism of executive dominance, and forced the government to develop a more transparent and accountable model. Trust-building measures include appointing to its seven-person National Governing Council eminent, respected, non-partisan citizens, including clergymen, a gender activist, and a former head of the Bar Association; establishing its secretariat outside government premises; employing Technical Research Institutes; and the National Governing Council members not swearing a traditional oath of loyalty to the president (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008: 160–162). Ghana established the principle of prominent civil society representation, although none followed this civil society only National Governing Council model. Kenya strengthened ownership of CSOs when the sector was allowed to choose its National Governing Council members, but a messy, competitive process ensued, propelled by avarice and influence seeking (Herbert and Gruzd,

2008: 192–193). Two-thirds of South Africa’s National Governing Council was drawn from civil society, although they were not selected transparently and most were ideologically close to the ruling party (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008: 260). In Rwanda, there were more government members or government-aligned officials, with organizations critical of government noticeably absent (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008: 219–220).

Another vital avenue for the involvement of CSOs is through written or oral submissions. Some, like the Open Democracy Advice Centre in South Africa, ensured that whistleblower protection and freedom of information issues were in the Country Self-Assessment Report, the Country Review Report, and National Programme of Action, through strong position papers, lobbying the National Governing Council and the Country Review Mission, and their tenacity. The Minority Rights Group International succeeded similarly in highlighting issues pertinent to ethnic minorities in Uganda (Gruzd, 2010c). Zambia’s APRM Civil Society Secretariat coordinates the involvement of its 35 member organizations in APRM activities.

Civil society involvement has been complicated. Organizations have had to guard against being compromised, with their participation being used to legitimize a flawed government-dominated process. In Kenya, some unscrupulous organizations saw the APRM as a money-making opportunity for civil society groups and their leaders. Participation has also tended to favour better resourced, urban-based organizations in national capitals or large cities. And ultimately, it is government that makes the big decisions and is expected to implement the National Programme of Action.

The private sector has been, at best, peripherally involved. Almost all National Governing Councils have had business organizations as members who made some inputs to economic and corporate governance issues, but with little to no involvement thereafter. This low engagement suggests that business has not fully bought into the APRM, or may not be convinced or aware of the potential benefits of participation compared to the opportunity costs of resources and time. They may also have good access to government independently of the APRM.

In theory, the APRM should be open to all stakeholders. There have been attempts to involve marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities and ethnic minorities, mainly by assigning National Governing Council seats to their associations, particularly in countries with large National Governing Councils organized by sector. In South Africa, the Disabled People’s Association of South Africa made a submission to the process, and its chair, Looks Matoto, has remained an active National Governing Council member. Also in South Africa, the Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Transgendered, and Intersexual sector took the initiative to make a strong written submission for the Country Self-Assessment Report. In Uganda, Minority Rights Group International spearheaded efforts to get issues related to minorities into the Country Self-Assessment Report, the Country Review Report, and the National Programme of Action. In other countries, there is a mixed record of involvement, and these groups may not have been specifically targeted for inclusion.

The effectiveness of non-state actors' participation is contingent on the degree of political space, relations with the executive, resources, energy, and interest. Their involvement noticeably peaks during the self-assessment and then drops off. Momentum and passion tend to dissolve over time, particularly if it is difficult to demonstrate where the APRM adds value.

It is hard to assess how inclusive the process was across all countries. Certainly, an effort was made in each to include stakeholders, enable consultation, and sensitize the population with varying degrees of professionalism, enthusiasm, and sincerity. It is simply not possible to involve every citizen, and consultations can become expensive. When it has shed its customary passive stance, civil society *has* been able to demand and achieve greater involvement and influence the process. Grant Masterson argues that rather than radically transforming relations between state and civil society, the APRM has tended to reinforce current patterns of engagement in each state (Masterson, 2010). Ghana asserted it interacted with about 50,000 people across the country (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008: 167), and an official implementation report on the South African process claimed that 5 to 6 million people were 'reached', (Herbert and Gruzd, 2008: 289), a claim unsupported by evidence and dismissed as wildly inflated.

The extent to which stakeholders have taken ownership of the assessment has depended on the openness of the particular government to the process. In comparatively open processes, such as in Ghana and Uganda, there is continued interest in the APRM and its outcomes several years after the Country Review Reports were completed. In more closed processes, such as in Rwanda and Algeria, the already modest involvement of CSOs has evaporated. In larger states, such as Nigeria and South Africa, which arguably felt that undergoing review was more about demonstrating their African leadership credentials if they expected others to undergo review, other processes have taken priority. In countries with weak political opposition, power has tended to rest squarely with government, with civil society and media involvement in the APRM being viewed with suspicion.

The APRM has also been affected by electoral cycles, with governments frequently delaying the process before and after polls. In Zambia, the process

has been negatively affected by two simultaneous endeavours: negotiations over a new constitution, and impending NGO legislation, with tensions between government and civil society spilling over into APRM activities. These findings suggest that the APRM alone cannot revolutionize political and social dynamics, and remains profoundly affected by sovereignty, power differentials, and mistrust.

Of course, every process has its detractors, but CSOs have mainly considered the APRM as another platform to raise concerns. In Uganda (through the Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform), and in Lesotho and South Africa (through the APRM Monitoring Project), groups of CSOs have produced alternative National Programme of Action implementation reports, recognizing deficiencies in the official ones produced by their governments. However, the APRM has yet to ignite mass popular interest, and engagement will wane if they see no results.

Governments have generally accepted the review conclusions as constructive, but all have exercised their official right to comment on the Country Review Reports, often robustly. The APRM competes with other programmes and processes, and is a small blip on the national radar. It also has not replaced the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper as the primary reference for development partners, and most donors continue to perform their own governance assessments. There is a clear need for the APRM and its resulting National Programme of Action to be more fully integrated into national governance and development dialogue. It is in the implementation of the National Programmes of Action where there is much more work to be done.

### **Innovation**

The APRM has been innovative both at the continental and national levels. As a system, although it drew inspiration from the OECD's sectoral peer reviews, the APRM is far more comprehensive, participatory, and all-encompassing, covering the entire gamut of governance and development. It was also the first time on any continent that leaders were regularly convened to discuss governance. Being voluntary makes it atypical of African processes (Gruzd, 2010). It also challenges traditional notions of sovereignty, with the internal affairs of African countries now, to some extent, subject to scrutiny.

The entire system is novel and innovative. There was no blueprint or template, and it was left to the pioneer countries to be creative in rolling out the peer review process, with healthy competition pushing further innovation. Ghana, as the first pioneer, played a significant role in developing domestic institutions such as the National Governing Council and the Technical research Institutes, which was replicated by all subsequent states. It also assigned 'focal persons' on the APRM in all government ministries,

departments, and agencies. Early states like Ghana and Kenya also laid down the most-used research template, combining desk work, household surveys, expert interviews, and focus group discussions, and standardized the holding of a workshop to validate the final Country Self-Assessment Report. Kenya allowed CSOs to choose their own National Governing Council representatives, and was the first to publish a popular version of its Country Review Report, and the first to serialize sections of its Country Review Report in newspapers. South Africa was one of the first to translate an abbreviated questionnaire into all of its official languages. It also established Provincial Governing Councils in all nine provinces, used community development workers to gather views from the country's poorest communities, pioneered greater parliamentary involvement through public hearings to *ad hoc* committees, and encouraged interest groups to make written submissions that were uploaded to its website. Algeria instituted structured interviews with government officials. Uganda was the first country to publish its Country Self-Assessment Report, promoting transparency. Ghana has pioneered the use of citizen report cards and participatory monitoring in APRM reporting. Ugandan civil society was the first to publish an independent annual review of APRM implementation through the Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform. There is also growing evidence of peer learning, knowledge exchange, and inter-country networks by both governments and CSOs (Gruzd, 2011). Many of these innovations have been adopted and adapted by other countries, and have served to increase transparency, accountability, and local ownership of the process.

Developing capacity is an explicit objective of the APRM. Evidence suggests that capacity has been built at many levels – empowering citizens to raise their voices to demand better governance, strengthening the governance research and analysis skills of think tanks, and conditioning governments to pay more attention to governance in policy formulation and execution – but it has been episodic and *ad hoc* rather than systematic and sustained (Gruzd, 2011).

### **Impact**

The APRM has chalked up many successes. A recent book identified ten key APRM achievements, albeit with variations across countries: the unique existence of a regular high-level meeting to discuss African governance openly; the durability of the system since 2003, despite the political departure of its initial champions; growing membership to 30 states, with new ones joining almost every year; increased pace and momentum, from the first peer review in January 2006, to the fourteenth by January 2011; comprehensive, robust, and frank reports in the public domain that diagnose governance deficiencies, including on sensitive subjects; reforms have been stimulated,

including laws, policies, and institutional strengthening; good practices have been highlighted and shared; civil society has been empowered and involved in policy-making; peer learning has been promoted; and the APRM has garnered considerable international support and interest (Gruzd, 2011:210–212). Time will tell whether these outcomes will be sustained into medium-term and long-term impacts.

It has helped to empower citizens to expect and demand better governance and better services, and to condition leaders that criticism can be constructive. It has begun to entrench the common language of governance – largely absent in previous decades – and to standardize governance assessment methods. The APRM has also emboldened activists, as another channel to air concerns, raise awareness, and propose alternatives. The Open Democracy Advice Centre utilized the APRM process in South Africa to press for better application of information disclosure legislation and protection of whistleblowers (Hutchings, Dimba, and Tilley, 2010), while the Minority Rights Group International used the APRM process to draw attention to issues affecting ethnic minorities in Uganda (Odoi, 2010). More recently, Ugandan activists have successfully linked advocacy campaigns around gender issues and electoral codes of conduct directly to the APRM, compelling positive policy change (Gruzd, 2011). One interviewee said:

“Importantly, it has shown governments that a process plagued with exclusionary and manipulative practices will only backfire: citizens will resent it, and governments will only lose ... the importance of frank, evidence-based state-citizen dialogue has thus been clearly underlined by APRM pioneers.” (Gruzd, 2011).

The APRM exhibits considerable potential as an example of successful intra-African South-South Cooperation (Gruzd, 2011). There have been many visits by delegations from one country to another for peer learning purposes, and increasing exchange of experts. Figures such as the late Dr Francis Appiah, Executive Secretary of Ghana’s National Governing Council, who won the 2008 German-Africa award for his contribution to the APRM, actively mentored those in other countries, particularly but not exclusively in West Africa. Uganda is helping Lesotho to integrate its National Programme of Action into its new national development plan. Civil society groups have produced independent, participatory evaluations of APRM implementation in Lesotho, Uganda, and South Africa. And the APRM has convened and strengthened many groups, to cross-pollinate ideas, including CSOs, researchers, and parliamentarians (Gruzd, 2011).

## **Challenges and opportunities**

The system faces many challenges currently, and going forward. A recent analysis identified the “Five Is”: institutionalization (embedding itself at national and continental level, to be less dependent on particular leaders); implementation of National Programmes of Action; integration with other processes (such as national visions, development plans, and budgets); impact, showing where this process actually adds value; and influence, discerning how the APRM has encouraged peer learning and good practices (Gruzd, 2011:212–214). Two more “Is” – ensuring inclusion and maintaining integrity – are also vital.

To these may be added the challenge of sustained funding. The APRM is not a cheap process. It is estimated to cost between \$1 million and \$3 million per country for the self-assessment, which is over and above the minimum annual subscription of \$100,000 that each state is meant to pay to the continental Secretariat. The price-tags for the National Programmes of Action are much higher, running to several billion dollars each. A recent analysis by Adotey Bing-Pappoe, based on the experiences of Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, indicated poor coordination between those responsible for developing National Programme of Action costs and those financing the action items, along with difficulty in identifying initiatives generated by the APRM and National Programmes of Action in national budgets. He discusses the fact that National Programmes of Action often underestimated maintenance and salary costs, were hastily assembled and contained errors, and tended to double-count pre-existing programmes (between 30 percent and 70 percent of National Programmes of Action) without making this explicit. He also notes poor integration with other national plans, funding gaps, varied disbursement levels, over-reliance on donor funding and poor monitoring and evaluation (Bing-Pappoe, 2010). Unless the APRM can prove that it adds value and provides value for money, it risks atrophy and loss of support.

But with renewed political will and commitment, a concerted effort to review and reform the system, greater openness to civil society, a focus on results, and genuine shared vision and values, the APRM could be poised to grow to greater strengths in coming years.

## **Lessons learned**

This chapter has shown that the APRM is about more than just self-assessment. It is beginning to create a dynamic, vibrant learning community within and across states. In the APRM, Africa has shown that it can create a credible, robust, indigenous governance monitoring tool. Slowly, it is changing attitudes and behaviours.

The APRM needs a strong, credible champion at the highest level, and committed buy-in from all members. Leaders must restore flagging faith in the APRM, from citizens, governments, and development partners. There is a need to institutionalize the process and delink it from the heavy dependence on political will. Action must match rhetoric. The APRM could be futile and farcical with poorly governed states peer reviewing one another. To remain credible, a system dedicated to better governance needs to set and exhibit the highest standards of corporate governance, transparency, and accountability at all levels.

Governments should appreciate that the APRM gives them an unprecedented opportunity to learn about their societies and their concerns. Some Country Review Reports also flagged key concerns (xenophobia in South Africa, and ethnically-charged electoral disputes in Kenya) that the respective governments ignored or dismissed, with violent consequences. If ignored, challenges might eventually be addressed through violent conflict and civil unrest, as was witnessed in the Middle East and North Africa in early 2011. Governments are realizing the benefits of listening to the voice of citizens. But opening up without following through on citizen demands can lead to a dramatic drop in politicians' legitimacy and an increase in resentment and alienation.

There has also been limited peer pressure when countries fail to deliver on their agreements and obligations. As the vaguely worded sanctions have not yet been invoked, there appears to be no consequence for deviating from the National Programme of Action. This has led to claims that it is toothless.

The APRM is one of the most people-driven processes in the African Union, and could herald a new beginning for Africa to address governance challenges. Citizens' clamour for a better life is evident and, when given the opportunity, most engage robustly. The APRM has promoted the norm of inclusiveness and transparency in planning and decision-making. Equally, the APRM can reinforce existing power structures rather than alter them. Citizens can become disillusioned when results fail to materialize.

This chapter also shows the need for lessons from the APRM process to be better documented, discussed and acted upon. Where this has happened, it has often been ad hoc, unsystematic and anecdotal. Pockets of knowledge, expertise, and experience remain largely unconnected. Often, newer participants reinvent the wheel.

A more deliberate, systematic, and collaborative approach to developing, managing, and exchanging knowledge should be developed and implemented,

to fully reap the potential of this unique African experiment. Capacity will need to be developed, and a strategy for doing so is essential.

Country Review Reports should be made public at the same time as they are discussed by the Forum. They are meant to be tabled and discussed in a variety of African political forums after publication, including the Pan-African Parliament; Economic, Social and Cultural Council; Regional Economic Communities, and national parliaments, yet this happens infrequently or not at all. Such events would create more opportunities for peer learning. The Pan-African Parliament in particular could play an important oversight role.

Highlighting successes is a unique aspect of the reports and an innovative way of sharing experiences to improve governance in Africa. More must be done to test and document *why* and how these policies work, so they might be adapted and replicated by others.

This chapter has briefly tried to unpack participation, and the questions of who is chosen and how are important. This multi-stakeholder process can become unwieldy and untidy, but arguably it is in the nature of contest that progress is achieved. The system must guard against tokenism and abuse of civil society to endorse sub-standard practices. Civil society pressure and demands have undoubtedly strengthened the system across the continent, and the growing trend of independently monitoring implementation looks likely to grab the attention of governments, the media, and development partners.

And finally, unless the proponents and participants are better able to tell the stories of how peer review has made a difference, its potential will remain latent. While ultimately citizens do not care which acronym has brought change, it is important for the APRM to demonstrate its utility and success. The APRM system needs to be more user-friendly and results-oriented. Deficient monitoring and reporting make it extremely difficult to analyse the impact of the APRM. In some countries, APRM structures run parallel to existing institutions, duplicating efforts or gaining little traction or resources. This makes it difficult to identify which policy outcomes are due to the APRM. If the APRM cannot clearly demonstrate its added value, its utility and attractiveness will slowly but surely erode.

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## JOINT GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT: LESSONS FROM RWANDA

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### Introduction

A joint governance assessment aims to bring government and development partners together in a joint assessment of governance performance based on commonly agreed indicators. The first assessment of this kind was undertaken in Rwanda during 2008 (MINALOC, 2008). This paper reflects on the utility of a joint approach to governance assessment, and offers practical guidance on how it might be applied elsewhere. It reflects on the experience of consultants from The Policy Practice, who contributed to the research work and drafting of the report in 2008. Since 2008, there have been further developments with the joint governance assessment process. These are not covered in this paper, but include the strengthened role of the Rwanda Governance Advisory Council, the commissioning of perceptions surveys presented in a Joint Governance Assessment update report in 2011, and preparations for a second fully fledged Joint Governance Assessment in 2012.

The Joint Governance Assessment in 2008 was a joint initiative of the Government of Rwanda and its development partners. It sought both to assess performance and to devise indicators for future monitoring. The model of a joint governance assessment has attracted interest as an alternative to conventional practice, where donors have undertaken separate assessments with little or no government involvement. Ideally, such an exercise could be an important way to advance the Paris Principles for aid effectiveness.

The potential advantages include reducing donor duplication, creating a basis for a frank and constructive dialogue between government, development

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website: [www.thepolicypractice.com](http://www.thepolicypractice.com)

partners, and other stakeholders, establishing a shared evidence-based framework for analysis, strengthening government ownership of aspects of the agenda, and agreeing on arrangements for joint performance monitoring. While offering these potential benefits, a joint governance assessment also carries inherent risks, because the issues are likely to be sensitive. Consequently, it may generate damaging disagreements between the various parties who bring different interests and agendas to the process, or may inhibit frank assessment.

There is very little experience of joint governance assessments in practice. However, the Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment, as the first of its kind, provides an interesting test case. The process was generally regarded by the main stakeholders as productive, but it has also faced significant challenges. This chapter draws on this experience of The Policy Practice, an international consultancy team involved in supporting the Joint Governance Assessment in Rwanda.

### **How did the Rwanda joint governance assessment come about?**

The Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment arose from a particular context and set of circumstances. Among all parties (including government, donors, and civil society organizations), there was a sense of dissatisfaction with existing processes of governance assessment and dialogue, which were fragmented and had led to miscommunication and misunderstanding. The weak evidence base on Rwanda's governance performance was a key obstacle to informed discussion, partly a reflection of the fact that 'objective' assessment of governance problems is particularly challenging in Rwanda, because there are still important social and political divisions in society left by sectarianism and genocide.

There were a number of existing information sources on governance in Rwanda, but their quality was mixed, and coverage was incomplete. The Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Report on Rwanda, published in 2006, is generally well regarded, but has generated little in the way of follow-up actions and monitoring. While the increasing number of studies and indicators has brought many issues to the fore, some stakeholders in Rwanda have criticized certain sources (indicators of corruption, in particular) for being inaccurate or insensitive to Rwanda's specific history and institutional context. Because of Rwanda's troubled history, international comparative indicators are only of limited use in informing the design of national governance reforms. There was a particular sense of frustration on the part of the Government of Rwanda that many of the indicators and commentaries on governance in Rwanda appear to repeat

the same message year after year, without acknowledging the important governance reforms that have taken place.

The joint governance assessment was initiated in response to the recognition, by both the government and donors, that processes for assessment and dialogue on governance were not working well. At the Development Partners Meeting in November 2006, President Kagame called for governance issues and concerns to be discussed much more openly between the Government of Rwanda and its development partners. The President's challenge provided an important impetus for the joint governance assessment, and a signal that the process would be taken seriously at the highest political levels.

### **What is a joint governance assessment?**

Over the last decade, development agencies have increasingly emphasized the importance of good governance as a condition for development. They have fashioned many tools for the analysis and monitoring of governance conditions in the countries they support. However, growing interest in good governance has not led to analytical coherence. A review by the OECD in 2008 found 30 separate analytical tools, used by eleven different donors, to assess governance in developing countries (OECD, 2008). This situation has inevitably led to duplication of effort, fragmentation of knowledge, uncoordinated action, and high transactions costs.

These weaknesses suggest that significant benefits would accrue from: (i) greater coordination, information-sharing, and joint analysis among donors carrying out governance assessment work, and (ii) directly involving developing country governments in governance assessments. While there has been modest progress in the first of these two areas, government involvement has typically been limited. Enhancing the role of government in the assessment process could help to encourage its ownership of the governance reform agenda. It could also help create a framework for mutual accountability, where governments and their development partners are able to agree on a joint programme to support reforms and monitor progress. This, of course, depends on willingness on all sides to enter into a frank assessment of governance weaknesses.

In undertaking the joint governance assessment, the aspiration has been that the assessment should be jointly owned and directed by the Government of Rwanda and its development partners, for donor co-ordination to be strengthened, and for the principles mentioned below to be followed.

## **Objectives and guiding principles for the Rwanda joint governance assessment**

The design of the Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment was intended to ensure full and equal partnership between the Government of Rwanda and its development partners, working together to achieve these three objectives:

1. To undertake a thorough and rigorous analysis of existing institutions, laws, and practices affecting governance in Rwanda, and propose policy improvements.
2. To define and monitor indicators to measure performance, assess progress, highlight weaknesses, and establish priorities for action.
3. To make recommendations on establishing an ongoing system to monitor the agreed indicators, including training for the Rwanda Governance Advisory Council.

Early in the joint governance assessment process, ten guiding principles were agreed for the assessment. It should:

1. Be jointly 'owned' by the Government of Rwanda and its development partners.
2. Be conducted in an open and consultative manner.
3. Be forward looking and aim to provide a basis to identify priorities for action.
4. Be acceptable to development partners as a basis for their own governance reporting.
5. Be credible by virtue of the thoroughness and rigour of the analysis,
6. Take due account of Rwanda's specific governance and historical context.
7. Analyse underlying explanations of governance that need to be addressed to bring about improvements.
8. Be of high professional quality and based on sound evidence.
9. Provide a basis for well-informed, on-going dialogue among stakeholders on governance issues.
10. Establish a monitoring framework for continuing assessments over the coming years.

It was recognized from the outset that trade-offs and compromises would sometimes have to be made between these objectives and principles. In resolving potential conflicts, it was agreed that the guiding principle of the joint governance assessment would be to provide a basis for joint ownership

and constructive discussion to improve the quality and usefulness of dialogue around issues of good governance.

Reflecting the goal of joint ownership by the Rwanda government and the development agencies, the joint governance assessment was directed by a Steering Committee co-chaired by the Minister of Local Government (whose portfolio includes responsibility for broad programmes of governance reform) and the World Bank Country Manager. It also included other government ministers and heads of agencies. A Technical Committee and the Rwanda Governance Advisory Council provided support. A team of international and local consultants managed by The Policy Practice undertook the research and analysis, organized consultations with key stakeholders and drafted the report in consultation with the Steering and Technical Committees. The primary responsibilities for each stage of the assessment were agreed by the Steering Committee.

**Table 7.1 Primary responsibilities for each stage in the assessment process**

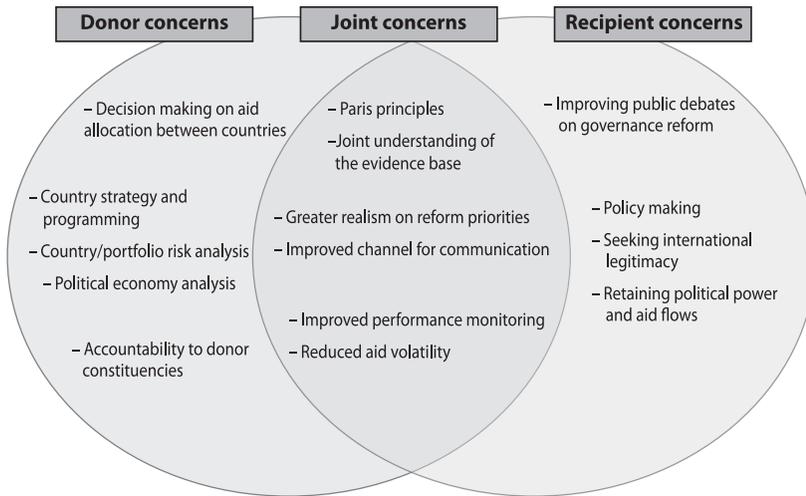
<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead responsibility</b>
Decision to conduct assessment	Government and Development Partners at Annual Development Partners Meeting
Timing of assessment	Joint Steering Committee
Terms of reference for assessment	Joint Steering Committee
Funding of assessment	Selected development partners
Recruitment of consultant team	International competitive tender managed by UNDP. Decisions taken by Joint Steering Committee
Research work and consultations	Consultant team
Provision of logistical support	Consultant team
Drafting of first draft	Consultant team
Comments on first draft	Channelled through Joint Steering Committee
Preparation of final draft	Consultant team
Adoption of report	Joint Steering Committee, Cabinet
Dissemination of results	Government and development partners
Practical follow-up	Government and development partners

### **Why undertake a joint governance assessment?**

In a joint governance assessment, it is important to set realistic expectations that reflect the nature of the process and the requirement for joint ownership. A joint governance assessment is a specific tool, whose primary purpose is to better manage certain aspects of the aid relationship. It cannot serve all the purposes of governance analysis, for which a wide range of other tools exist.

Donors and government have a number of individual and joint needs, some of which are consistent, while others may be conflicting (Figure 7.1).

**Figure 7.1 Purposes and users of governance assessment**



A joint governance assessment will work best when it focuses on those requirements that are common to both donors and recipients, and centre on better managing the aid relationship.

These include:

- Reducing duplication of effort, fragmentation of knowledge, uncoordinated action, and high transactions costs (consistent with Paris Declaration principles).
- Testing the evidence basis for assessments, identifying and resolving misunderstandings and misinformation, and promoting better understanding of country specific considerations.
- Reducing donor-induced reform overload, and making the possible scope and pace of change more realistic.
- Identifying areas of overlap between the interests of donors and government.
- Providing a formal channel for communication through which governance issues can be collectively raised by donors.
- Building mutual accountability around a joint framework for performance assessment as a means to increase aid predictability and reduce aid volatility.

## **What are the risks?**

Risks to a joint governance assessment arise when expectations are raised beyond meeting the fairly narrow set of objectives, labelled as ‘joint concerns’ in Figure 7.1. The individual concerns of donors and recipients are incompatible in several cases. A particular risk will arise where the joint governance assessment is linked to donor decision making about future aid flows. This will almost certainly reduce the space for deep analysis of governance challenges, and for conducting a neutral assessment of performance. In such conditions government may well wish to avoid discussing sensitive or contentious issues, and donors may wish to avoid pushing the debate to the point where such issues jeopardize the aid relationship. There will be an incentive for all parties not to ‘rock the boat’, and this may limit the extent to which the assessment can address difficult issues incisively. The risk is that raising the stakes of a joint governance assessment too high will push the results down to the lowest common denominator.

A joint governance assessment may be of some use in addressing donor concerns, shown on the left side of Figure 7.1. However, pushing these agendas too far will compromise the common objectives of a joint governance assessment. For example, several donors are currently interested in political economy analysis, which seeks to examine the power relations, institutions, and incentive systems that underlie formal governance systems. Such analysis may well prove to be too sensitive and contentious for inclusion in a joint governance assessment. However, the risk is that by avoiding a political economy perspective, the assessment will adopt an overly technocratic view of governance that focuses more on formal institutions and legal provisions, rather than on the informal institutions that are often most important to explaining how a country is governed in practice.

There are a number of other risks that reflect the government’s interests as shown on the right side of Figure 7.1. The format of a joint governance assessment is unlikely to offer a basis for wide public debate on governance priorities. Although a wide range of civil society stakeholders should be consulted to inform the joint governance assessment, it must be recognized that the process is driven by governments and their development partners, and cannot substitute for national debates on governance reform.

There is also a significant risk that governments will enter into a governance assessment, mainly for reasons of public relations, and may view the exercise primarily as an opportunity to strengthen their international legitimacy and deflect domestic criticism. This may be justified when government believes that its record has been misrepresented or misunderstood in the past. However, attempts by the government to push its position too hard are likely to erode confidence in the process.

In view of these potentially serious problems, it is essential to make a careful judgement of the likely risks and benefits before embarking on a joint governance assessment. Where conditions are not conducive to success, a joint governance assessment should not be undertaken.

However, there may be intermediate conditions where it is possible to introduce the approach gradually, starting with a limited agenda focussing on less contentious areas. Such judgements need to be informed by an understanding of the positions of the various stakeholders, and the interests and incentives facing them. A careful analysis of the country situation, and of the nature of the relationship between government and donors, is required. Political economy analysis can be useful to inform such decisions.

While the risks of undertaking a joint governance assessment should be fully appreciated, these alone should not discourage parties from going ahead. In the right conditions the risks are likely to be manageable and the benefits could be significant. The risks will be lower where the various parties have strong and well-established relationships, and where governments are genuinely committed to broad-ranging governance reform. It is also important to structure the assessment process around mechanisms and approaches that help build trust and encourage effective communication.

**Table 7.2 Potential benefits and risks of a joint governance assessment**

<b>Donors</b>	<b>Government</b>
<p><b>Potential benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– More objective basis for performance assessment.</li> <li>– More effective channel to raise governance concerns.</li> <li>– Donors can demonstrate more credibly to their domestic constituencies that aid funds are being used accountably and to promote better governance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Potential benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Stronger 'ownership' of governance agenda.</li> <li>– Streamlined channel for dialogue with donors on governance reduced transactions costs and improved information flow.</li> <li>– Closer relationship with donors, less risk of misunderstanding, miscommunication and aid interruption.</li> <li>– Potential for reputational enhancement and access to additional aid.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Potential risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Government engagement becomes cosmetic, i.e., aimed solely at sending the right messages to donors without real reform commitment.</li> <li>– It proves impossible to raise sensitive or contentious issues without risking derailing the process. The assessment is reduced to a lowest common denominator type exercise lacking substance.</li> <li>– Possible breakdown of joint governance assessment would make it more difficult to justify continued aid spending.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Potential risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Joint governance assessment imposed by donors as an additional form of conditionality.</li> <li>– Government treated unfairly because the analysis is either inaccurate or unbalanced.</li> <li>– Assessment raises highly sensitive issues that alienate certain stakeholders and threaten broader reform commitment.</li> <li>– Possible breakdown of joint governance assessment may risk a reduction in aid flows.</li> </ul>

## **What should a joint governance assessment be expected to deliver?**

Expectations for the results of a joint governance assessment need to be limited to a modest set of goals. Most usefully, a joint governance assessment can set out a common framework for analysis, provide a forum for the discussion of the evidence base, bring about a meeting of minds on difficult issues, and establish a framework for ongoing monitoring. However, the extent to which the assessment can claim to be definitive, neutral, and comprehensive will be limited. While a joint governance assessment should strive to be as objective and evidence-based as possible, there will always be difficult issues where disagreements between the various parties make it impossible to arrive at a single judgement. A well-managed process can reduce the scope for disagreement by requiring the debate to be based on high standards of evidence, encouraging a degree of negotiation and compromise, and finding constructive language that balances critical comments with positive statements, acknowledging progress made, and identifying opportunities for change. But attempts to seek too much consensus risk a discussion that covers only the issues on which everyone agrees, and may address controversial issues superficially. The better approach is to agree to differ on certain issues, and to acknowledge this publicly rather than forcing consensus. This requires a mature partnership, and acceptance at the outset that it may be impossible to agree on everything and that this should not derail the process.

In view of these constraints, it is clear that there will always be a need for independent analysis of governance from multiple sources. Donors should be willing to support other research and assessment processes, notably those undertaken by local institutions and individuals, and should continue their own analytical work on governance issues. This is part of the central responsibility of all development agencies to meet due diligence requirements and to invest in their own knowledge, so that they are in a position to identify strategic opportunities to promote change.

## **What did the Rwanda joint governance assessment achieve?**

It is too early to judge the results of the joint governance assessment, particularly because it is intended as ongoing process rather than a single report. However, most significant is the strong government involvement. The initiative originated principally with government, senior political figures reviewed drafts, the final report was approved by Cabinet, and government is leading in developing a results matrix from the governance indicators. This certainly represents a more country-led governance approach and a more constructive process of engagement with donors.

Initial reactions suggest that the joint governance assessment has been quite successful so far in creating a common focus on some priority issues, even though there are areas where the government's view differs from that of some donors. The report provides a wide-ranging analysis of governance issues, identifies clear priorities, and recommendations, and proposes 45 indicators for ongoing monitoring. The joint governance assessment report draws on wide range of sources (from government and non-state actors) to provide a comprehensive assessment of governance covering numerous topics. These are grouped under three main chapters: ruling justly, government effectiveness, and the investment climate and corporate governance. Key issues for ruling justly include national reconciliation and transitional justice (including the reinvented customary *Gacaca* courts), human rights, civil liberties and press freedom, political competition, and the performance of formal institutions of accountability. Under government effectiveness, the report reviews progress in public financial management, anti-corruption, decentralization, public service delivery, and public sector reform. The investment climate chapter considers issues relating to regulatory reform, corporate law and governance, private sector advocacy, and the links between the state, political parties, and business.

Reaching this point has not been a straightforward process. At times there were difficult exchanges on the more politically sensitive issues raised by the report, particularly in relation to freedom of expression and the openness of political competition. Initially, it had been expected that the consultants would provide an independent assessment, but midway through the process it became clear that this was not leading to a draft that could be jointly owned by donors and government. It was therefore agreed by the Steering Committee that the consultants should play a more facilitative role by assembling and reviewing evidence, and providing support to the Technical and Steering Committees in drafting a commonly agreed text.

Viewed positively, these difficulties are an indication that the process enabled meaningful discussion to take place. Although the final report represents a degree of compromise between the views of the various parties, it is by no means a lowest common denominator, and has succeeded in opening up debate on sensitive but important issues. However, it was also evident to the consultants that it was difficult to move the discussion beyond consideration of the working of formal institutions to examine the underlying structural political factors and informal power relationships that many governance professionals, including The Policy Practice, regard as fundamentally important. This reflected the limitations of the terms of reference, the preference given to easily-measurable indicators, and

the sensitivity of some of the issues raised by political economy analysis. Consequently, the final report adopts a rather technocratic view of good governance, and focuses its recommendations on reform options for improving formal institutions.

In making this observation, it is important to make clear that the joint governance assessment report does not ignore issues relating to informal institutions and how power is perceived and operates in practice. There is a good deal of discussion in the report on sensitive questions of political space, the fairness of political competition, party financing, inclusiveness, non-discrimination, press freedom, and the use of laws to prevent sectarianism. In addition, perceptions of government legitimacy and inclusiveness are also discussed, and are reflected in the framework of indicators. In the consultants' view, these are essential elements of the analysis, and the discussion needs to be taken further. It is hoped that the joint governance assessment has provided the groundwork for further analysis and dialogue.

Another strength of the joint governance assessment has been its sensitivity to the country context, and its coverage of institutions that are specific to Rwanda, including the *Gacaca* courts, and the *Imihigo* system of performance contracts in local government that engenders public accountability at the community level. This has helped to shift donor discourse away from normative views of good governance towards a greater appreciation of what works in the Rwanda context given the country's particular history and institutions. The joint governance assessment has enabled donors to maintain their focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms, while developing a greater appreciation of the importance of taking account of national specificity in achieving better governance.

Acknowledging the complexity and difficulty of the joint governance assessment, most participants have expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the process so far. It is recognized that the joint governance assessment represents a great improvement on previous processes for governance dialogue and assessment. There has been a significant opening of debate on challenging issues. The report is generally considered to be a balanced statement, which recognizes the achievements that have been made, does not make light of the remaining governance challenges, and sets out a substantial and meaningful agenda for change.

### **How should a joint governance assessment be undertaken?**

Based on the limited experience gained so far in joint governance assessment work, it is difficult to provide definitive guidelines that would be widely applicable to different country situations. However, a number

of lessons can be drawn from the preceding discussion and the Rwanda experience.

**Clarity of purpose.** One of the most important lessons is to seek clarity, at the outset, on the purpose of the assessment, and to manage expectations according to a realistic assessment of what the exercise is likely to deliver. It is essential to avoid setting up unrealistic or conflicting objectives, or at least to recognize and manage potential trade-offs. The initial difficulties experienced with the Rwanda joint governance assessment were largely a result of the unrealistic expectation that the report could be both an independent assessment of the consultants and be jointly owned by the government and donors. Clarity is thus needed from the beginning that the assessment will be a joint product of government and donors, and that it should not be regarded as independent of these influences. The assessment should aim to be fair, balanced, and constructive in the light of the purpose for which it was designed.

**Oversight arrangements.** Having clarified the purpose of the assessment, it is essential to put in place arrangements to ensure that the outcome is regarded as credible and of high quality. Much will depend on the composition of the committees overseeing the assessment, whether they represent a balanced set of viewpoints, and whether or not they enable a full and frank debate to take place on equal terms between partners. It needs to be understood that discussions will sometimes be tough, but that arriving at a positive outcome depends on maintaining an atmosphere of openness and trust. The successful result of the Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment was partly due to the balanced composition and strength of the Steering Committee. However, the process could have benefitted from a clearer initial understanding of how the committee should work to create joint ownership, and how it should handle the discussion of contentious topics.

**Willingness to disagree.** The Rwanda experience demonstrated that it is not realistic to expect consensus on every topic, nor should differences in viewpoint between the donors and the government be concealed. It is better to have a frank admission where agreement is not achieved and recognize that these matters need to continue to be raised and discussed. Agreement needs to be reached at the beginning of the process on how to handle differences of view, both in verbal discussions and in the written report.

**Role of consultants.** The role and professionalism of the consultants supporting the process is also crucial. The consultant team needs to be given the resources, operational independence, time, and space to prepare a thorough and well researched report that brings together evidence from a wide range of sources. While the consultants should play a role in interpreting

the evidence, the final document should not be seen as their independent assessment, but rather as the product of the organizations commissioning and overseeing the work. In the Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment, these principles should have been better defined at the outset. Lessons learned during the process enabled the consultants to find a productive and supporting role. This is crucial to finding agreement on a text that is acceptable to the various parties, but is not reduced to a lowest common denominator. The consultants play a key role in facilitating agreement, but need also to play a challenge function, seeking to maintain focus on the more important issues, even if they are controversial.

**Scope and focus.** In setting up a joint governance assessment, agreement is needed on its scope, focus, and depth. Initially, a broad-ranging study is likely to be required, covering the whole range of good governance concerns, including human rights, safety and security, political competition, accountability, voice, and effective administration. Subsequent updates might focus more narrowly on priority issues. The realm of government will be the focus of enquiry, but depending on the country setting it may also be important to consider non-state bodies, for example good corporate governance, and civil society organisations' internal governance. This would recognize that improved governance depends not only on the supply side (i.e., institutional reform), but also on generating internal demand. An issue is whether to widen the analysis to assess whether donors are following best practice within the country.

**Broad consultation.** The assessment's quality will depend on the breadth of consultation with national stakeholders. It is essential to invest time in this process, and to consult widely across the country, including with government representatives (central and local), the private sector, civil society, and local communities. There may be merit in including civil society and private sector views on the steering committee. In addition, some form of information-gathering or validation workshops might be envisaged. While acknowledging the value of stakeholder consultation to inform the analysis, it is important to manage expectations of the degree of public participation in drafting the assessment, which is ultimately a donor-government document, and which may be made unmanageable by attempting to seek broad consensus across all sections of society. For the Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment, a large national stakeholder workshop was held during the initial evidence-gathering phase, followed by more focussed groups at district level.

**Political economy analysis.** While covering a broad range of issues, it is important that the assessment should attempt to focus on those factors that are of greatest importance to realizing development and human rights goals. This will require an understanding of the principal economic and

political processes shaping the governance environment. In the Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment, political sensitivity limited the extent to which a political economy analysis could be explicitly presented in the report. However, it was recognized that the focus of the study and the indicators needed to reflect an understanding of the political economy, and that the joint governance assessment needed to provide sufficient emphasis on the workings of informal institutions and power structures and the incentives, both formal and informal, that influence decision-makers.

**Country-specificity and international norms.** While international best practice provides a useful benchmark, to be realistic a joint governance assessment needs to be rooted in an understanding of country-specific constraints and opportunities, rather than emphasizing international comparison. The Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment sought to ground itself in an understanding of local institutions and their historical contexts. It has followed the principle that looking for positive opportunities to build on existing institutions will prove more fruitful in promoting better governance than assessing how a country measures against its peers. It will generally be more productive to use local norms, such as those set out within the Constitution or laws, or in a government's own policy statements, as a basis for setting objectives, rather than seeking to promote an assumed model of best practice. However, it was also necessary to refer to international norms and experience, where these provide a relevant set of principles for strengthening governance. Achieving an assessment that is both internationally credible and sensitive to local realities requires the exercise of good judgement, and a balanced approach that avoids being overly normative and prescriptive, but provides a clear sense of direction for bringing about better governance.

**Indicators.** The selection of indicators is an important, but difficult, part of the assessment exercise. In Rwanda, considerable discussion was required to reach agreement on a provisional list of indicators. The principles for selection were that the set of indicators should capture the range of priority issues, but should neither be too costly nor too burdensome on statistical capacities. From the huge number of potential indicators available, priority was given to those that are relevant to the most important governance issues, those that measure outcome and impact, and those that minimize scope for statistical error or disagreement over interpretation. An attempt has been made to ensure triangulation between information providers, in particular in relation to contentious issues where government, civil society, and foreign organizations use different sources or apply different interpretations. It has been recognized that some of the most important aspects of good governance, particularly those relating to informal institutions, are less amenable to quantification using fact-based indicators. Perceptions-based surveys can

prove useful to assess such factors, but in some cases the assessment must rely on the best judgement of informed observers.

**Research methods.** A meaningful and credible joint governance assessment that seeks to extend understanding beyond existing reports will require in-depth and in-country research. In Rwanda, a combination of research methods was required, including interviews with key stakeholders, workshops at national and local level, gathering of data from a wide range of agencies, and careful review of secondary sources. It was emphasized throughout that the assessment must provide high standards of evidence, backed by robust sources that withstand scrutiny. For the Rwanda Joint Governance Assessment, the consultant team consisted of both international and Rwandan consultants, the latter being crucial to ensuring the quality of evidence gathering.

**Sustaining the process.** The maximum benefit gained from a joint governance assessment is only likely to emerge if the exercise is seen as a long-term process subject to regular update and review. In Rwanda, the first report has served as a baseline for establishing some indicators, and commissioning surveys to provide data for the perceptions indicators. A light-touch update of the indicators has recently been concluded, but more in-depth reviews, of the indicators as well as more qualitative assessment, will be needed to provide robust measures of change, and to sustain the process and the valuable political dialogue it creates.

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## MEASURING LOCAL DEMOCRACY: TWO INDONESIAN EXPERIENCES

Abdul Malik Gismar

This chapter focuses on the Partnership Governance Index and the Indonesia Democracy Index, two major and complementary initiatives to assess democratic governance in post-reform Indonesia. The Partnership Governance Index was developed by the Partnership for Governance Reform, a Jakarta-based NGO, to assess the broad governance performance of all provinces in Indonesia. The Indonesia Democracy Index was developed by the National Planning Agency, with initial support from UNDP. Its purpose is to capture the state of provincial political democracy. Both indices are country-specific and are designed to measure the progress of Indonesia's democratic transition, and the major government reforms that go along with this transition.

### **Democratic transition, governance reform, and the need for objective assessments**

The democratic movement that toppled President Suharto – *Reformasi 1998* – has transformed Indonesia's collective consciousness from, to borrow from Robert Jay Lifton, a state of 'psychic numbing' as a result of living too long in an oppressive atmosphere, to an optimistic collective consciousness that allows them to hope for a better Indonesia (Lifton, 1999). *Reformasi 1998* was a psychological revolution that brought nothing less than citizen awakening (Gismar, 2011).

Emboldened by a new collective consciousness, citizens demanded a return to the true meaning of 'republic'. They wanted a regime of government of the people, for the people, and by the people. They called for a citizen-centred state that was based on democratic principles and protected civil and political rights and ensured citizens' welfare.

In the new atmosphere of freedom, the relationship between state and society also takes on a new meaning. In Suharto's Indonesia, implied in the words *pemerintah* (government – or, literally, one who gives order) and *memerintah* (governing – or, literally, to give order), is the idea that the state was free to do anything, while the citizens were not. The state, in pursuit of what it saw as national goals, could walk over the rights and needs of its citizens. Such practices are no longer acceptable. Citizens need to be protected by the government, but they also need protection against the government.<sup>1</sup>

In *reformasi* spirit, Indonesia embarked on a major reform of all sectors, and at all levels, of government. In this *big-bang* reform, the Constitution was amended, basic political laws were passed, and many institutional reforms were adopted, including establishing freedom of press, direct presidential elections and promulgating legislative framework for decentralized governance.

The main purpose of the decentralization laws, such as Law No. 32/2004 and Law No. 33/2004, was to restructure local political institutions, grant fiscal responsibility to local governments, and improve their professionalism, transparency and efficiency. The laws also strengthened the role of public interests groups at the local level (Zuhro, 2010; Eckardt and Shan, 2006).

This sudden and substantial change represented a challenge for local governments in all the 33 provinces and about 480 districts and municipalities, which had accrued little experience under the dominance of central government. Some observers argued that involving citizens in the governance process was simply “too much, too soon” (Hidayat, 2007).

The dynamic of the *big-bang* decentralization approach has coloured Indonesian democracy and created variable performance in the provinces. Indonesia has seen pronounced local differences in democratic performance, as a result of variations in institutional establishment, leadership, and political culture. Extreme variations of this kind can be destabilizing and pose a serious challenge to the idea of democracy itself.

These variations are often explained in terms of natural, structural, and human resource differences, but these give little indication of how to improve the situation. An absence of measurement makes it difficult to compare one province with another, lessons learned are hard to draw, and the dissemination of good practice is hindered. There is a strong need for comprehensive and objective assessments, which can also generate discourse

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1. As early as 1848, John Stuart Mill realized that the state with all its power can be predatory and it is crucial to be able to establish “protection by the government and protection against the government” and, according to Mill, the latter is the more important because against all other predators there is still a hope of defending oneself.

among stakeholders, promote healthy competition and sharing of experiences between local governments, and provide much needed information on areas of democratic governance that need improvement.

In mid-2007, two independent initiatives were launched in response to those needs: the Partnership Governance Index and the Indonesia Democracy Index. While both use a province as their unit of analysis, they differ in their assessment focus. The Partnership Governance Index focuses on measuring the quality of provincial governance, while the Indonesia Democracy Index tries to capture the state of political democracy at the provincial level.

### **The Partnership Governance Index: measuring provincial governance**

The Partnership Governance Index (PGI) was developed by the Partnership for Governance Reform to assess the quality of provincial governance across Indonesia. Specifically, it is an attempt to assess how well different arenas of provincial governance perform their specific functions.

### **The Partnership Governance Index concept of governance**

To understand the PGI conception of governance, it is essential to emphasize the fundamental difference between the terms *governance* and *governing*.

Governing is state-centred, a political reality in which the state is the centre of gravity. Governance, meanwhile, is citizen-centred. To paraphrase Shah and Shah (2006), 'government' refers to specific institutions or entities created by national or local constitutions, legislation, or by executive order, to deliver a range of specified services to a geographically delineated area. Governance is defined as the formulation and execution of a collective action (i.e., policy formulation and public services delivery), involving the direct and indirect interactions between government (political office and bureaucracy), civil society and economic society. In this concept of governance, government is just one actor or 'arena' involved in the process of formulation and execution of a collective action and achieving societal goals.

The PGI specifically attempts to assess the performance of four arenas of governance according to their respective core functions and principles of good governance.<sup>2</sup> The four arenas are, i) *Government* - the political office (in this case Governor and Provincial Parliament), ii) *Bureaucracy* - the implementing body, iii) *Civil Society*, and iv) *Economic Society*. The core functions of each are defined respectively as: provision of regulatory framework, budget

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2. See Partnership Governance Index ([www.kemitraan.or.id/govindex](http://www.kemitraan.or.id/govindex)).

allocation, and coordination of development (Political Office); regulation of the economy, public service delivery, revenue collection (Bureaucracy); monitoring and advocacy (Civil Society); and participation in government tender (Economic Society). The six principles of good governance are *transparency, participation, accountability, fairness, efficiency, and effectiveness*.

### **The process of developing the Partnership Governance Index**

To ensure credibility, the index was developed using a comprehensive mapping of existing assessments, along with extensive consultation with experts and stakeholders in a series of focus group discussions and workshops in 2007. Stakeholders are engaged at two levels: first at the development phase, where they are vitally important to an understanding of all aspects of governance at the conceptual, policy, and practical levels; and second at the data collection level, where provincial stakeholders representing all governance arenas serve as 'well informed persons'. A very tight set of criteria is used to select these well informed persons to ensure representativeness and competence.

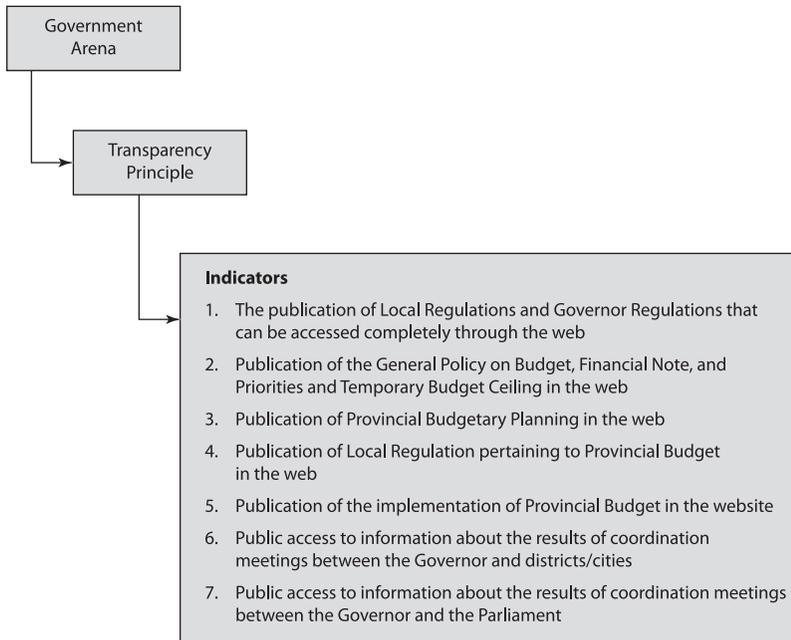
Through a long process of discussion, debates, and deliberation involving various stakeholders, indicators are generated for every principle in every arena, according to their respective functions. The PGI uses three types of indicators - outcome, process and actionable indicators. It sought to include as many actionable indicators as possible, that is indicators that point directly to tangible problems and the policy alternatives or directions to remedy those problems. There are 74 indicators in total; 33 for Government, 19 for Bureaucracy, 13 for Civil Society, and 9 for Economic Society. Example of indicators is shown in Figure 8.1.

Data for these indicators came from various sources. The resulting index is a composite of objective data (such as data from Provincial Budget, provincial statistics, Chambers of Commerce, National Audit Agency, as well as various government and parliament records), and opinions of well informed persons.

One of the biggest challenges in developing the PGI was in selecting indicators that are common across all 33 provinces, so that measurements would be comparable. This limits the use of all available data. If an indicator is not appropriate, or if the data is not available in one province, that indicator cannot be used, although it might provide a rich picture in other provinces.

Another challenge is that the arenas, principles, and indicators may contribute in different ways to governance performance. For example, a law requiring transparency of public office is certainly more important than a government agency website providing information on a particular issue. However, we cannot be sure how important each arena and principle

**Figure 8.1 Example Partnership Governance Index indicators – Government Transparency**



of governance is, relative to others. In other words, each arena, principle, and indicator has its own weight that needs to be taken into account in calculating the index. The PGI solves this problem by using the Analytical Hierarchy Process.<sup>3</sup>

A pre-test was conducted in Banten Province in December 2007 to test the validity of the instruments, followed by a pilot study in four provinces: Jakarta, Papua, West Sumatera, and West Nusa Tenggara in January 2008. A full-scale assessment of all provinces then took place in July 2008. The data collection in all provinces is conducted by local researchers, mostly university-based, to collect data and write reports on the local provincial results.

The PGI was originally planned to be conducted bi-annually. But for various reasons the next index is delayed by a year and will be conducted in 2011.

3. Analytical Hierarchy Process involves a complex process and mathematical procedure. A brief description in this paper does not do justice to the value of the technique. For a full description, see Thomas L. Saaty (1990), *Analytic Hierarchy Process*.

## **Presenting the results of the Partnership Governance Index**

The PGI was not designed as a purely academic exercise. Most importantly, it aimed to provide a monitoring and advocacy instrument for all stakeholders. For this reason, the presentation of the index to the public is of vital importance. It is publically available at [www.kemitraan.or.id/govindex](http://www.kemitraan.or.id/govindex). Although the data and computation is complex, the presentation makes for simple and intuitive reading. As well as providing reports, the website also serves as a research tool for those interested in analysing the data further. For example, comparisons between provinces, arenas, and/or principles can be made on the website.

### ***Ranking and Profiling Provincial Governance***

Undoubtedly, two of the index's most powerful results are the ranking and profile of provincial governance performance. While index scores measure the quality of provincial governance, ranking positions every province in relation to others. In PGI's experience in engaging provincial stakeholders, one of the first things they want to know is how they compare to neighbouring or adjacent provinces, and the reason for their ranking. This helps to understand what should be improved.

The Governance Profile generated by the PGI points to the areas that can be improved. Table 8.1 below provides an example of the governance profile generated by the index on the PGI website ([www.kemitraan.or.id/govindex](http://www.kemitraan.or.id/govindex)). Every number in each cell can be further explored to reveal the score of all contributing indicators. In the example (Table 8.1), if the highlighted cell is clicked, the following table will appear.

From the above example, we can see that the low score on government fairness in Sumatra Barat Province is associated with low budget allocation for education, health, and poverty eradication. Provinces' real budgetary allocations are also included in the website.

### ***Low performing local governance***

The overall score of the provinces ranges from 3.55 to the 6.51, with an average of 5.11. The scores for each arena ranges from 4.79 to 5.61. With a highest possible index of 10, the overall performance is decidedly poor. More troubling, however, is the range which suggests a great diversity in the performance of provinces.

Among arenas, the highest average score is obtained by Bureaucracy (5.61), followed by Civil Society (4.97), and Government (4.95). Economic Society ranks lowest (4.79). It is interesting to note that Bureaucracy performs much better than Government. This difference is true across provinces. Since the government role is crucial in determining what the bureaucracy can or

**Table 8.1 Example of provincial governance profile Sumatera Barat Province (overall governance index: 5.98)**

	Index of Arena	Participation	Fairness	Accountability	Transparency	Efficiency	Effectiveness
<b>Government</b>	5.35	6.30	1.73	8.31	3.59	5.51	6.99
<b>Bureaucracy</b>	5.87	2.37	7.91	6.72	4.92	4.82	7.11
<b>Civil Society</b>	6.61	5.22	5.85	7.84	10.00	4.13	4.83
<b>Economic Society</b>	6.62	8.26	7.00	7.35	10.00	1.00	5.50



Code	Description	Score
<b>G2F1</b>	Budget allocation in the provincial budget for health (excluding civil servant expenditure) per capita adjusted to the price index	2.42
<b>G2F2</b>	Allocation in the provincial budget for poverty eradication per capita adjusted to the price index	1.31
<b>G2F3</b>	Allocation in the provincial budget for the education sector per student adjusted to the price index	1.24
<b>G3F1</b>	Level of discrimination in terms of coordination by the governor with the districts/cities	10.00

cannot do, this finding raises the issue of whether political offices constrain the performance of bureaucracy.

Bureaucracy, in a sense, faces a performance ceiling. There is a de facto ceiling on what bureaucracy can achieve, and this ceiling is put in place indirectly by low performing political offices. For example, if the Governor and the provincial parliament are three months late in finalizing the budget, then any public service programme planned by the bureaucracy will also be at least three months late. The consequences can be severe – a three-month delay in an immunization programme can translate into a three-month longer exposure to disease.

***Performance variation across principles of governance***

Among the principles of governance, a diverse level of performance can also be seen. For both political offices and bureaucracy, effectiveness and accountability received the highest score. The lowest score for political offices is fairness, while transparency and participation score was the lowest in bureaucracy .

It is interesting to note the score for government fairness. It almost seems to have been ‘neglected’ (Presanti and Sulisty, 2011). This is disconcerting,

because fairness, as measured by the Partnership Governance Index mainly through budget allocation for education, health, and poverty alleviation, is the principle that most directly relates to citizens' welfare.

In both Government and Bureaucracy, there is an interesting tendency for contradictory performance in the principles that might have been expected to rise and fall together. Participation does not raise transparency, accountability does not enhance fairness, and effectiveness does not produce greater efficiency. One possible explanation is that, in the index, principles measured by more routine or procedural indicators (there are more of these indicators to measure participation, effectiveness, and accountability) tend to achieve higher scores, while principles measured more by performance indicators (there are more of these indicators to measure fairness, transparency, and efficiency) tend to fare less well. In this case, then, government tends to focus more on the procedural aspects and less on the actual capacity or performance.

#### *Accountability without transparency*

Accountability and transparency are two principles widely considered as the most fundamental for the establishment of good governance and the attainment of development goals. Data from the Partnership Governance Index tell an interesting story. In both Government and Bureaucracy, transparency trails accountability. The pattern is consistent across provinces. It may be assumed that transparency is easier to fulfill than accountability, but why in this case is transparency trailing significantly, and why can government or bureaucracy not be accountable and transparent at the same time?

One possible explanation is that the indicators for accountability are procedural indicators, such as audit conducted by National Audit Agency for bureaucracy. This is a procedural audit more than anything else. For local government in Indonesia, it may be easier to be procedurally accountable than to be transparent. On the other hand, the low transparency score may be due to either an absence of a 'transparency culture' or, more cynically, because the government and bureaucracy have something to hide.

The puzzling picture becomes disturbing when we consider that the accountability measure has no correlation with well-established measures of people's welfare, such as the Human Development Index ( $r = 0.03$ ), while there is a surprising and significant correlation between the transparency measure and the Human Development Index ( $r = 0.39$ ). It is interesting to note that transparency is a better predictor of people's welfare than accountability.

## **Indonesia Democracy Index 2009: Capturing the state of political democracy in Indonesian provinces**

The Indonesia Democracy Index (IDI) is an attempt to capture the state of political democracy in Indonesia's provinces. The Pilot index was implemented in 2007. The 2009 IDI was implemented with significant changes in the number of indicators, and in some aspects of the technical calculation of scores. Comparisons between 2007 and 2009 are therefore avoided. The 2009 index results are considered the baseline. Data were being collected beginning August 2011 for Indonesia Democracy Index 2010, and the exercise was expected to have been completed by the end of 2011. Because there is usually a year's delay in the publication of most data, the picture provided by the index is also at least a year behind.

The IDI was initiated by the National Planning Agency, with support from UNDP. It has a practical goal of providing an inclusive consultative framework to assess and monitor the goals and targets in Indonesia's national and regional development plans.

In developing the index, the National Planning Agency was assisted by a panel of five social and democracy experts. The panel was tasked with defining how the concept of democracy was to be measured, and developing the measurement methodology.

### **The Indonesia Democracy Index conception of democracy**

Any attempt to operationalize the concept of democracy into measurable aspects, variables, and indicators will inevitably experience difficulties and will be incomplete. The task, then, is not to attempt to develop an all-encompassing tool that is able to cover every aspect and nuance of democracy, but to create a measure that can assess the most important aspects of democratic realities in a specific place, i.e., Indonesia's provinces, and for specific purposes. The Indonesia Democracy Index assessment of democracy focuses on civil liberty, democratic institution, and political rights.

#### ***Civil liberty***

Civil liberty consists of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of worship. This index defines civil liberty as the freedom of citizens and groups of individuals to come together and to associate or organize, to voice their opinions or speak up, and to have a belief or faith in something. It also means freedom from discrimination, and from restraint exercised by other individuals in the name of the state.

The index captures civil liberty through four variables:

1. *Freedom of assembly and freedom of association*: ‘Assembly’ refers to a societal/people-based activity in the form of a meeting involving more than two persons. ‘Association’ refers to the activity of establishing or forming an organization, registered or not.
2. *Freedom of expression*: The freedom of an individual and/or group to voice their opinions, views, will, and feelings without the impediments of physical or psychological pressure and restrictions.
3. *Freedom of faith (or religion)*: The freedom to embrace a belief or a religion outside the beliefs or religions officially adopted/recognized by the government, and the absence of repressive acts by one group against another group.
4. *Freedom from discrimination*: The freedom from treatment that discriminates against the rights of individual on the grounds of gender, religion, political affiliation, ethnicity/race, age, HIV/ AIDS status, and other physical barriers.

### ***Political rights***

Kenneth A. Bollen (1993) wrote that: “political rights exist to the extent that the national government is accountable to the general population and each individual is entitled to participate in the government directly or through representatives.” This implies that political rights are sufficiently comprehensive indicators of political democracy. Robert Dahl (1971) gave five indicators of political rights: the right to cast a vote, the right to fight for public positions, the right to compete for votes, free and fair elections, and policy-making based on public votes or inputs.

The IDI has elaborated the aspect of political rights into two variables:

1. The right to vote and the right to get elected in a general election. The first right refers to the right of each individual to freely give his/her vote in the election of a public official. The right to get elected is the right of each individual to freely compete for votes in an election for the post of a public official.
2. Political participation in decision making and monitoring. Participation in a political context refers to involvement or engagement in political processes. One form of political participation is the right of citizens to vote in a general election. Another form is the involvement of citizens in all stages of policy-making, from decision-making, to assessing or evaluating that decision, and the opportunity to participate in the implementation or monitoring of that decision.

### ***Institution of democracy***

The crucial role of the institution of democracy cannot be underestimated. It may be argued that one difference between ‘democracy’ and ‘anarchy’ is that civil liberties are institutional in a democracy; in other words, they are based on rules, norms, procedures, and a collectively agreed institutional framework.

The Indonesia Democracy Index understands institution as a public body established to regulate and carry out the activities of the state, and/or the government. Institutions of democracy may exist in the form of executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, as well general elections, political parties, the media, and interest groups.

The IDI disaggregates democracy into the following variables:

1. *Free and fair general elections.* This refers to general elections that meet democratic standards, which are reflected in, for example, the existence of the equal opportunities for all in election campaigns, the absence of manipulation in the counting of votes, and the absence of intimidation and/or physical violence in the casting of votes.
2. *The role of regional parliament.* An effective parliament is the one that prioritizes the interests of the people, and is reflected by high levels of political participation and free competition, the effective working of checks and balances, strong political accountability, and strong relationships between politicians and their constituents.
3. *The role of political parties.* A political party has several functions, including representing people’s aspirations, carrying out political communication (between constituents and state administrators), forming cadres and recruiting prospective political leaders and political awareness raising.
4. *The role of provincial bureaucracy.* In this case, the role of provincial administration is limited to consolidating democracy, that is, the openness and commitment to listen to, and follow up on, people’s complaints, suggestions, and aspirations.
5. *Independent judiciary.* This refers to the implementation of the rule of law that is free from intervention and consistently enforced, and equality before the law. A judiciary free from bureaucratic and political intervention (and the intervention of other branches of government or powers), and consistent law enforcement indicates the supremacy of the law.

These variables are further translated into 10 indicators for Civil Liberty, seven for Political Rights, and six for Democratic Institution.

## **The process of developing the Indonesia Democracy Index**

Developing the IDI begins with conceptualizing the aspects of democracy to be measured, and deciding on the variables and indicators that can be used to measure them. It may be argued that this is most difficult stage of the process.

Once the concept is clear, we can move to the technical aspect of measuring it. The 2009 index used four data collection methods: newspaper reviews (analysis of relevant news articles), document reviews (analysis of the contents of official government documents), focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews.

We believe that, despite its limitations (such as the potential editorial or journalistic bias), newspapers are still an excellent source of data on the condition of democracy in Indonesia's provinces, as they record the participation of citizens in political life throughout the year. One leading newspaper is chosen in each province, and its indicator-relevant contents are analysed for one year.

Government documents include official documents issued by regional governments and regional parliaments, such as regulations (*Perda*), gubernatorial decrees and decision letters, and other official documents, including police data on demonstrations, and statistics on voters issued by the Regional General Elections Commission.

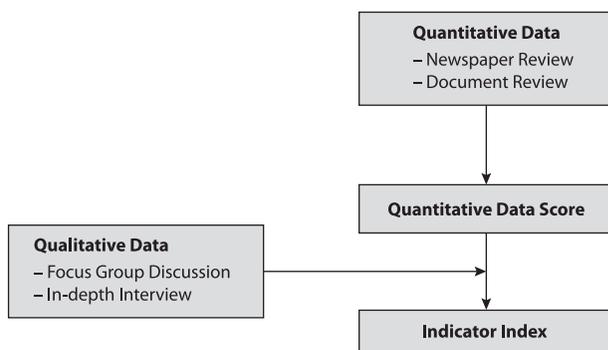
Focus group discussions and in-depth interview are conducted to verify, qualify, and elaborate data obtained through document and newspaper review.

These four methods of data collection are used in conjunction with one another. The newspaper and document reviews serve to capture quantitative data pertaining to the index's aspects, variables, and indicators. This data is then verified and elaborated upon using the qualitative data obtained through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

The IDI is calculated in three stages. First, the final index for each indicator is calculated. Then the index for each province is calculated. And finally the overall index is calculated, taking account of all aspects, variables, and indicators for each province. These three stages relate to each other hierarchically – the calculation of the index for indicators precedes and contributes to the calculation of the index for variables; the index for variables determines the calculation of the index for aspects; the index for aspects determines provincial indices; and finally, provincial indices determine the overall score of the Indonesia Democracy Index.

Before the index itself can be calculated, a separate process calculates the weight of each indicator, variable, and aspect. The aspects of civil liberties, political rights, and institutions of democracy have different contributions to democracy in Indonesia. The same is true of the variables and indicators. The index calculates weightings through an analytical hierarchy process.

**Figure 8.2** Scheme of calculation of final score of each indicator



To describe the outcome of democratic performance in each province, a scale of 1 to 100 is used. This scale is a normative scale in which a score of 1 indicates the lowest performance, with 100 being the highest. The lowest performance is theoretically possible if all the indicators receive the lowest score. The highest performance is theoretically possible if all the indicators receive the highest score.

### ***Some results***

The Indonesia Democracy Index is a measure of provincial democracy. But with 33 provinces in Indonesia, this chapter presents only the provincial aggregate score.

**Figure 8.3** Democracy Index 2009 (aggregate of all provinces score)

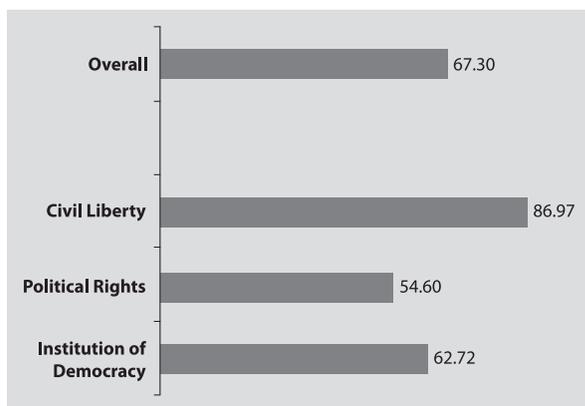
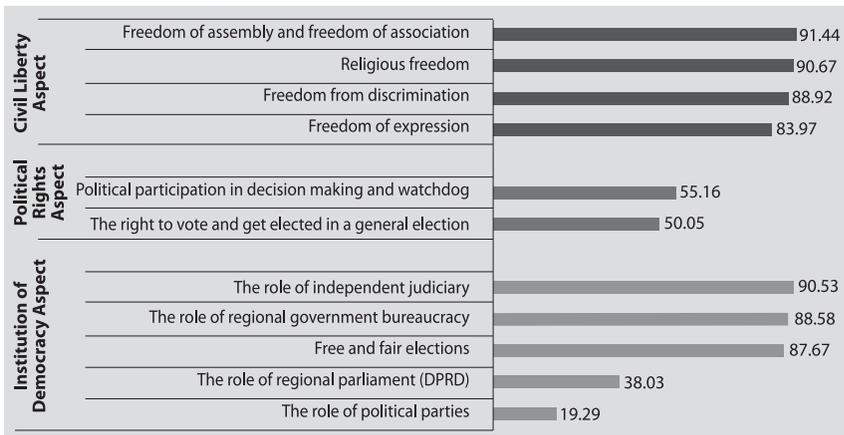


Figure 8.3. shows that the 2009 National Democracy Index is 67.30. The index for civil liberties is made up of four variables: i) freedom of assembly and association; ii) religious freedom; iii) freedom from discrimination; and iv) freedom of expression. The variables for political rights are: i) political participation in decision-making and monitoring; and ii) the right to vote and to be elected in a general election (less than 60). For the institutions of democracy, three of the five variables have a high score: i) the role of independent judiciary; ii) the role of government bureaucracy; and iii) free and fair general elections. The other two variables have a lower index score: iv) the role of regional parliaments; and v) the role of political parties. The aggregation of the indices of these five variables provides the national index of 62.72 for institutions of democracy. The aggregation of the index of each variable that makes up the Indonesia Democracy Index aspects is shown in Figure 8.4.

**Figure 8.4 Democracy Index 2009, by variables**



**Table 8.2 Indicators for the Right to Vote and Get Elected in a general election**

Indicator	Score
Number of incidents in which people's right to vote or be elected is curbed	<b>84.52</b>
Number of incidents that show lack/shortage of facilities for people with disabilities as a result of which they cannot exercise their rights to vote	<b>50.00</b>
The quality of the lists of Permanent Voters	<b>30.00</b>
Voter turnout (%)	<b>73.82</b>
Percentage of women elected to provincial parliament to the total members of provincial parliament	<b>52.07</b>

One explanation for the significant gap in the aspects of democracy may be that despite successes in allowing the expression of civil liberties and the establishment of institutions of democracy, the political rights aspect is far behind. This explanation can be further supported by showing exactly what indicators contribute to the performance (Table 8.2.).

### **Insights from the Partnership Governance Index and the Indonesia Democracy Index**

While the Partnership Governance Index is useful in providing a simple but comprehensive picture, it lacks the nuances and dynamics of governance processes on the ground. To appreciate the many results and understand them fully, the index must be placed in the broader context of democratic governance. When that is done, an interesting picture of Indonesia emerges.

The concept of governance is essentially a way to envision the state–society relationship within a political regime that put citizens as its centre of gravity. It is a concept that delineates the roles of state and society to solve a collective challenges. Embedded within the concept of governance is the idea of a responsive, responsible, and accountable state<sup>4</sup> interacting with virtuous citizens.<sup>5</sup> As such, the concept of governance contains interlocking ideological and technical components. This fundamental understanding of governance is important for analysing governance, or good governance programmes, and its relation to democratic transition.

In Indonesia, the meaning of governance is often reduced to creating an accountable, transparent, efficient, and effective ‘government’ (or state). Furthermore, this emphasis on the state is also myopically focused on bureaucracy only, while political office is virtually neglected. This reduced understanding is manifest in a plethora of programmes aimed as technocratic fixes of the ‘problems’ of bureaucracy. Most recently, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s government launched a road map for bureaucratic reform without linking it with the ‘performance ceiling’ imposed by political office on bureaucracy; Through regulatory framework and budget allocation, political office sets the limits on what the bureaucracy can or cannot do.

The picture coming from the IDI helps to identify the most serious problem in Indonesian political democracy. The index shows, first, that a

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4. Shah and Shah (2006) explain it this way: Responsive: doing the right things – delivering services that are consistent with citizens’ preferences; Responsible: doing the right thing the right way – working better but costing less and benchmarking with the best; Accountable – to citizens through a right based approach.
  5. Virtuous citizens are citizen who have civic virtues; who know their rights and duties and participate in the social political affairs of their society (see Sandel, 1996).

high civil liberties index is found almost evenly across all provinces. This reflects a state in which people are 'free to' rather than 'free from'. This is important for decision makers and policy analysts to understand.

Second, there is a gap between the aspects of civil liberties and political liberty, and institutions of democracy. Abundant civil liberties lead to high political passion and participation by society. But, as the statistics show, citizens face a challenge in actually participating, because of poor management of general elections.

Third, Indonesia has been successful in developing institutions of democracy, but is hampered by weaknesses in capacity. Cadre formation amongst political parties is weak, and the performance of regional parliaments is poor. Political freedom is high, but at the same time, is not accompanied by the institutions required to support it.

In a newly democratizing country such as Indonesia, democracy is not yet complete.<sup>6</sup> Good governance in its fullest meaning can help the completion of democracy.<sup>7</sup> It does so through the strengthening of all arenas of governance, and subsequently through the roles of these strengthened arenas in narrowing the gap between the democratic supply from the political elites and the demand of the people. On the state side, reform must also focus on political office, not just on the bureaucracy. This is crucial, because political office that does not perform well and fails to respond to people's demands (i.e., it is unfair, unaccountable, and inefficient) will result in incomplete or broken democracy.<sup>7</sup>

### **Some notes on the process of developing democratic governance assessment**

The journey to the index is not always smooth. Measuring democracy is a complex and sensitive issue. Both indices had challengers. Academe and public intellectuals doubt that measuring democracy and democratic governance at the local level can be done at all, believing that Indonesia is too big, too diverse, and too complex to be simplified by an assessment tool. It was relevant to assess and compare provincial governments and bureaucracies, although they were very reluctant for this to happen. Since the IDI was initiated by the National Planning Agency, civil society organizations were suspicious that it would be a government effort to justify its own record.

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6. See Rose, Mishler, Haerper (1998); A system of government in which the laws invariably prevail and the institutions of civil societies are able to impose constraint on governance, holding it accountable between elections.

7. It is called broken backed democracy "because it is incapable of dealing with the burdens and responsibilities that it faces" (see Rose, et al., p. 218).

Some provincial governments questioned the central government's motive for 'meddling' in the affairs of the provinces. Both projects were able to move on only after a long discussion with all stakeholders, covering all sensitive issues, e.g., what is the concept of democracy that would be used, how will the assessment be conducted, and who will participate. It was a long process, but one that has helped ensure the assessments' credibility and gain buy-in from all stakeholders.

Both indices begin with a comprehensive mapping of efforts to assess democracy or democratic governance in Indonesia and beyond, followed by a series of discussions with experts and/or stakeholders to enrich the findings and gain buy-in. A team of experts further developed workable concepts and generated indicators. This was not an easy process, and was very time consuming. Relevance, significance, availability of data, and discriminating power are criteria that guide the selection of indicators.<sup>8</sup> Data collection instruments were then developed, in which every indicator must be operationalized into a clear unit of measure, with the source and location of data recorded. With 33 provinces spread over 3,000 km, the management of the research was a significant undertaking.

The 2009 IDI was developed through even broader cooperation within and between stakeholders (much broader than the PGI and the IDI pilot in 2007); within central government agencies (the National Agency for Development Planning, National Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Coordinating Ministry for Politics, Law and Security). A Provincial Working Group of local stakeholders (e.g., civil society organizations, journalists, academe, religious leaders, government, and political party leaders) was formed to ensure a comprehensive picture of the local democratic realities. This group also helped monitor and ensure data quality throughout the process. Although the Provincial Working Groups have not yet functioned fully, they have provided opportunities for interaction between local stakeholders and this is eventually expected to create a better partnership for future Indonesia Democracy Indices.

The launch of the Indonesia Democracy Index 2009 was attended by Coordinating Minister of Politics, Law and Security; Minister of National Development Planning, Head of Statistics Indonesia, and other central government and provincial level officials. This is indicative of strong endorsement by the government, although the results in some cases are particularly critical of government performance.

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8. In the beginning, there was a tendency of trying to come up with too many indicators, forgetting what Einstein once said that: "not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." (*Sign hanging in Albert Einstein's office at Princeton*).

In terms of policy, this endorsement is shown by the acceptance of Indonesia Democracy Index results as valid. The index has been mentioned as a sectoral target in the Medium Term National Development Plan 2010–2014. In addition, the Government of Indonesia is also providing state funding for the Indonesia Democracy Index for 2011–2014.

The results of PGI have been used to initiate discussions involving stakeholders on the state of provincial governance in 22 provinces. For many, if not all, this was the first time they engaged with each other on common issues, using objective data as the basis for discussion.

In early 2011, the Presidential Work Unit for Development Control and Monitoring used the results of the PGI as one of the criteria for selecting pilot provinces for the REDD+ programme. The use of the index's results helps to ensure that the provinces selected for the pilot indeed have the governance requirements (capacity and adherence to governance principles) to implement the programme.

Less dramatic, but equally important, impacts of the Partnership Governance Index can be found in its referral, discussion, and citation by other organizations for various purposes.

In terms of capacity building, both indices have had a tremendous impact. One of the most important decisions made in the process of designing the PGI was to collaborate with local researchers, most of whom were university based. Their job was to collect data and write provincial reports. This became a very important part of the overall strategy to cultivate and empower local experts on democratic governance issues. With this collaboration, the Partnership Governance Index has established a network of well-informed local experts on governance issues across Indonesia. Equipped with comprehensive data on their province and its relative position to other provinces, they can be expected to participate in, or even start, a data driven and intelligent discourse on governance in their respective provinces. They can also engage their local government whenever necessary. Some researchers are actively vocal in local governance issues. They appear on radio, or sometimes even host a radio talk show, write opinion columns in local newspapers, and teach, bringing governance to the attention of both the government and the people. They have become an important part of what the PGI was initially envisioned for, that is to contribute to data-driven and intelligent discourse on governance in Indonesia. The index also uses the higher education learning network, connecting more than 200 campuses in Indonesia, for further dissemination. The index's methodology and results were presented in a lecture using this network.

The IDI has had a similar impact, but in a different form. Some local governments are interested to learn why they scored as they did. They have invited the index team to their coordination meeting to discover what has contributed to their (low) score and how to improve the situation. These coordination meetings are usually also attended by representatives from civil society and academe. The IDI is accompanied by an implementation module, which guides provincial governments on how to develop political development programmes in the province based on the index results. Beyond its original objectives of assessing and monitoring goals and targets in Indonesia's national and local development plans, the IDI is actually used for planning and designing policies and programmes on democratic politics in the province.

The above achievements of the two indices present a promising picture for the use of governance assessment in Indonesia. The two indices have not only helped improve the quality of people's participation and promote government accountability, but have also contributed to the democratization of knowledge.

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# LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE DYNAMICS BEHIND THE FAÇADE

Paul J.M. van Hoof

## Introduction and context

In 2005, the Institute for Democracy in Southern Africa (Idasa), Pact and SNV Netherlands Development Organization, launched the Local Governance Barometer as an assessment tool to measure the state of governance at local level, specifically tuned to the African context.

In this context, ‘governance’<sup>1</sup> is defined as the formation and stewardship of the rules and institutions that regulate the public realm: the space where state interacts with economic and societal actors to make decisions. Therefore, governance is not just about the state’s ability to serve citizens, i.e., the manner in which public functions are carried out, how public resources are managed, and public regulatory powers are exercised, but it also relates to how government and other social organizations interact and how they relate to their citizens. The quality of governance, therefore, is measured by how well various actors handle the rules and institutions, both formal and informal, which make up the basic dimensions of the political regime (Hyden, Court, and Mease, 2004).

Good or democratic governance is thus both a means and an end. It is a means to achieve the goals of human development, and it is an end in itself – as values, policies, and institutions that are governed by human rights principles, i.e., equality and non-discrimination, participation and inclusiveness, accountability, and the rule of law.

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1. This definition is based on the one used by the World Governance Assessment Project that was started at the United Nations University in 1999 and later transferred to the Overseas Development Institute in London.

Although there are huge differences between countries in Africa in the way the state has been shaped and functions, it could be said that the state in Africa is generally overpowered and underdeveloped at the same time (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). The formal structures and institutions of a modern democratic state are established in most countries, but remain weak and are often overshadowed by strong neo-patrimonial relationships. The allocation of resources is less dependent on the formulation of policies and administrative procedures, and much more on the functioning of clientelistic relationships. Knowing the right person is more important in getting access to public resources than knowing the laws and policies. As a result, policies and decentralized government mechanisms look almost perfect on paper, but are, in practice, underdeveloped and hardly able to deliver.

These patterns exist both at national and local government level. The public and private spheres overlap. “The consequence is double: on the one hand, public service remains personalized by way of clientelism and nepotism; on the other hand, access to the public institutions of the state is seen as the main means of personal enrichment” (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:9). These informal structures thus dictate to a large extent how public resources are allocated, and result in public resources and services intended to improve the situation of the most marginalized people in society hardly reaching them at all.

When we talk about informal structures and the impact they have on (public) resource allocation, it is important to note that not all informal structures are negative or historical remnants. No society is able to function well without informal structures, such as customary law or social networks, from which we derive our identity and that provide us with social control and social support. In most cases, these informal structures share, support, and strengthen the values and norms that form the foundations of any democratic society. There are, however, informal structures, such as clientelism, that potentially undermine and sometimes supersede the functioning of formal democratic structures, which are degraded to a façade behind which actual decision-making about resource allocation takes place.

Recently, however, we notice all over Africa that these mechanisms are not as perpetual as they once seemed, when elections led, at best, to a rotation of persons or factions within the same political elite. For a variety of reasons, but mainly a combination of a sharp economic downturn combined with improved access to information, people seem to evolve from voiceless ‘subjects’ to demanding ‘citizens’,<sup>2</sup> whether in South Africa (service delivery

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2. For a detailed description and clarification of these concepts, see Mamdani, 1996.

protests), Swaziland (demanding a democratic constitution), Tunisia, or Egypt (lack of political freedom and access to economic resources). Citizens stand up and demand of their governments the rule of law, transparency, and accountability. In short, they demand democratic governance.

Supporting 'good' or democratic governance in this African context, as is the objective of the partners in this process, means that one cannot limit oneself only to strengthening the functioning and performance of the formal state structures and institutions, like independent audit facilities and the functioning of council and parliaments, without also understanding and, if possible, finding means to countervail the negative impact of some of the existing informal structures on local governance and public expenditure.

This chapter describes the development and practical application of the Local Governance Barometer within this African context as a local governance assessment tool that aims to analyse and improve our understanding of the dynamics of governance at local level as a starting-point for dialogue and capacity development.

### **The Local Governance Barometer**

Governance and governance assessments are not only important at a national level. Increasingly, greater proportions of government budgets are spent at local level as a result of decentralization processes that have taken place over recent decades. In addition, it is at the local level where state and citizen interact directly. The quality of that interaction determines to a large degree the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its citizens. Finally, more and more evidence is collected to show a direct relationship between the quality of service delivery of local government, and the quality of governance.

To gain insight into the quality of governance at local level, and to define relevant capacity development support activities either at local level or at national level to improve the decentralized local government system, various local governance assessment tools have been developed over time, each with a slightly different purpose, perspective and scope.<sup>3</sup> Local governance assessments are generally not a translation or simplification of national level governance assessments. They differ in character mainly due to the fact that service providers and end users of these services interact directly, adding different dimensions and complexities to governance assessments, but also opening up opportunities for multi-stakeholder involvement. The provider and user of social services can enter into a dialogue on the quality of the services provided.

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3. For an overview of 22 different Local Governance Assessment tools, see UNDP (*A User's Guide to Measuring Local Governance*), UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, 2009.

Before deciding to develop a new local governance assessment tool in 2005, the partners in the process evaluated various emerging tools – the Urban Governance Index, for example – but decided that these tools didn't meet their purpose, because they:

- Assessed local government performance (is local government delivering the services it should deliver?), but not the underlying governance dimensions that explain why the services are not delivered in accordance with the local government mandate.
- Did not involve stakeholders other than (local) government in the assessment process.
- Only addressed the supply side of governance (the capacity of local government to deliver), but not its demand side (the ability of citizens to hold government accountable).
- Used indicators that were not relevant in the context of local governance in Africa, and demanded high quality objective data that are usually unavailable or unreliable in most African local government institutions.

The existing tools are very useful in assessing the actual performance of local government institutions against national standards (if available), and are able to identify qualitative and quantitative capacity gaps within these institutions. They are, therefore, well suited to identifying gaps in performance of local governments against the expected performance, as defined in the existing local government system. But they are unable to analyse structural systemic flaws in the system that explain, for example, how clientelistic informal structures defined by neo-patrimonial relationships in society lead to elite capture, corruption, and a continued marginalization of certain groups in society; and the politics of governance. The partners in this initiative were looking for a tool that could not only strengthen the functioning of formal structures, but could also help actors to understand the impact of such clientelistic informal structures on governance and service delivery, and start to question and hopefully contain or change the impact of these informal structures.

Governance addresses the interaction between the state and other actors in society, so it seemed imperative to the designers of this new assessment tool to involve all stakeholders in the actual assessment process. That would help them to dig deeper into the actual practice of resources allocation and, most of all, to start a dialogue process between stakeholders around important aspects of governance, such as transparency, rule of law, and vertical accountability. The tool had to be able to compare governance situations over time and space through a scoring and indexation process, but also be

specific enough to identify distinct priority issues related to governance in a participating municipality that would require collective action to tackle.

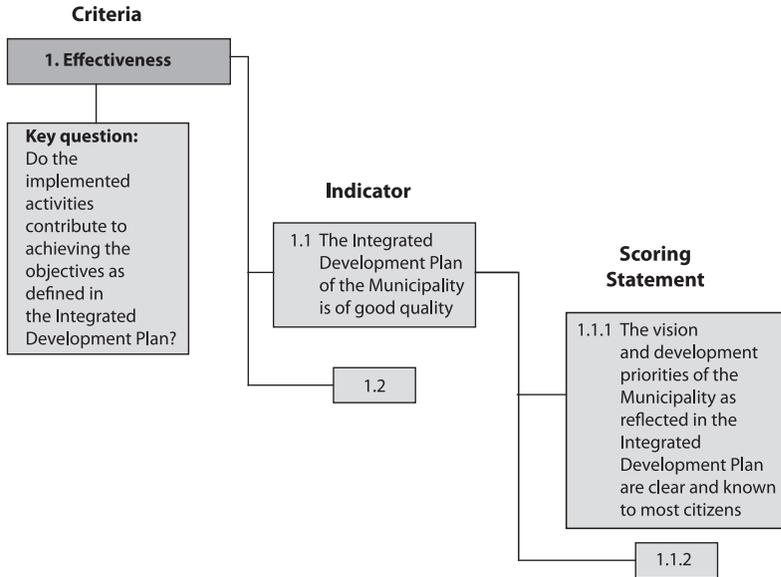
The starting point for designing the Local Governance Barometer was the notion that governance cannot be measured through quantifiable indicators alone, but must include the perceptions of citizens, elected representatives, and administrative officials, and also address the relationships between these actors.

The point of departure for the barometer's assessment is a global model of good local governance, using the following dimensions or criteria of good governance that are of particular relevance at the local level:

1. **Effectiveness and Efficiency:** the way in which planned activities are realized and the expected results are achieved in a cost-effective way.
2. **Rule of Law and Transparency:** the application, compliance, and enforcement of legislation and policies regulating local government and safeguarding the division of power between legislative and executive institutions, as well as the way in which information about decisions made by various actors is made available to citizens.
3. **Accountability:** the extent to which the administration and politicians explain and justify decisions taken to internal supervisory bodies (administrative accountability), to political actors (political accountability), and to their constituents and the public (social accountability).
4. **Participation and Civic Agency:** measures not only the space offered by government for citizens to participate in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of local governance processes, but also the agency of civil society and its ability to claim space for participation.
5. **Equity:** the extent to which there is equal access to municipal services and inclusiveness amongst citizens in the municipal developmental activities.

Together with representatives of stakeholders at local level, such as councillors, NGO and business sector representatives, these abstract criteria are extensively discussed and translated into measurable proxy indicators and scoring statements that are specific for that country context. They stay close to the reality at local level, and can easily be understood by everyone involved in the assessment process. The resulting statements are formulated in a positive way, and participants are asked to declare the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. Collectively, the 100-plus statements can be seen as a practical standard of what good governance means within their local context. It happens often that participants take a blank questionnaire home, as it becomes for them their own benchmark for good governance in their municipality.

**Figure 9.1 Example of the link between Local Governance Barometer criteria, proxy indicator and measurement statement**



The actual assessment at municipal level takes about a week to implement. It starts with a set of one-day workshops with each of the stakeholder groups separately. Depending on the setting, five or six stakeholder groups are identified: councillors, government staff (both from central and local government), civil society organizations, ward committees, business sector representatives, and traditional authorities where relevant. These groups, consisting of 20–30 representatives each, fill out the questionnaire individually and discuss and select the most important practical governance issues they have identified. The division into stakeholder groups is important to avoid intimidation, and for the groups to be able to discuss real life governance issues, such as corruption in plot allocation or nepotism in tender procedures, from their own perspective.

The scores are analysed, compared, and discussed at the end of the week in a plenary session where representatives of all stakeholder groups meet. The differences in scores are analysed and discussed in detail, e.g., why is the overall score given by councillors to the ‘transparency’ criterion 65 out of 100 and that of NGOs only 35? These discussions create awareness among stakeholders that there is not a single understanding or truth in governance and that it is important to listen to the perspectives of others.

The facilitators pre-select the most important governance issues mentioned during the workshops and present them in a depersonalised way,

e.g., the issue of “our mayor is corrupt” is presented as “why does the system, or why do we, allow political leaders to be corrupt”. Collectively, the three most important governance issues are selected that relate directly to the quality of service delivery and that fall within the scope of the actors to tackle, e.g., the lack of transparency by the municipal administration in the outcome of procurement tenders. These assessment exercises themselves are too short to resolve the selected priority issues, but the roles of each stakeholder group in the follow-up process are identified, as are their related capacity needs. In a follow-up process that can last up to three years, these capacity needs are addressed, the dialogue process around these governance issues is facilitated, and the governance issues are hopefully resolved. This creates an enhanced level of generic and intrinsic capacities within the municipality to tackle other governance issues as well.

At a higher level, the scores at both index and criteria level of the participating municipalities are compared and analysed. Where possible, best practices are identified and peer learning mechanisms are established between municipalities.

In practice, the most important lesson that participants learn in this Local Governance Barometer exercise is the fact that civic stakeholders (such as ward committees, community based organisations or business sector representatives) start to realize that they are entitled and able, and thereby empowered, to hold those who govern to account through proper channels. In this way, the Local Governance Barometer process simultaneously *measures* and *builds* local governance capacity, while it also promotes consensus around alternative mechanisms to resolve governance issues.

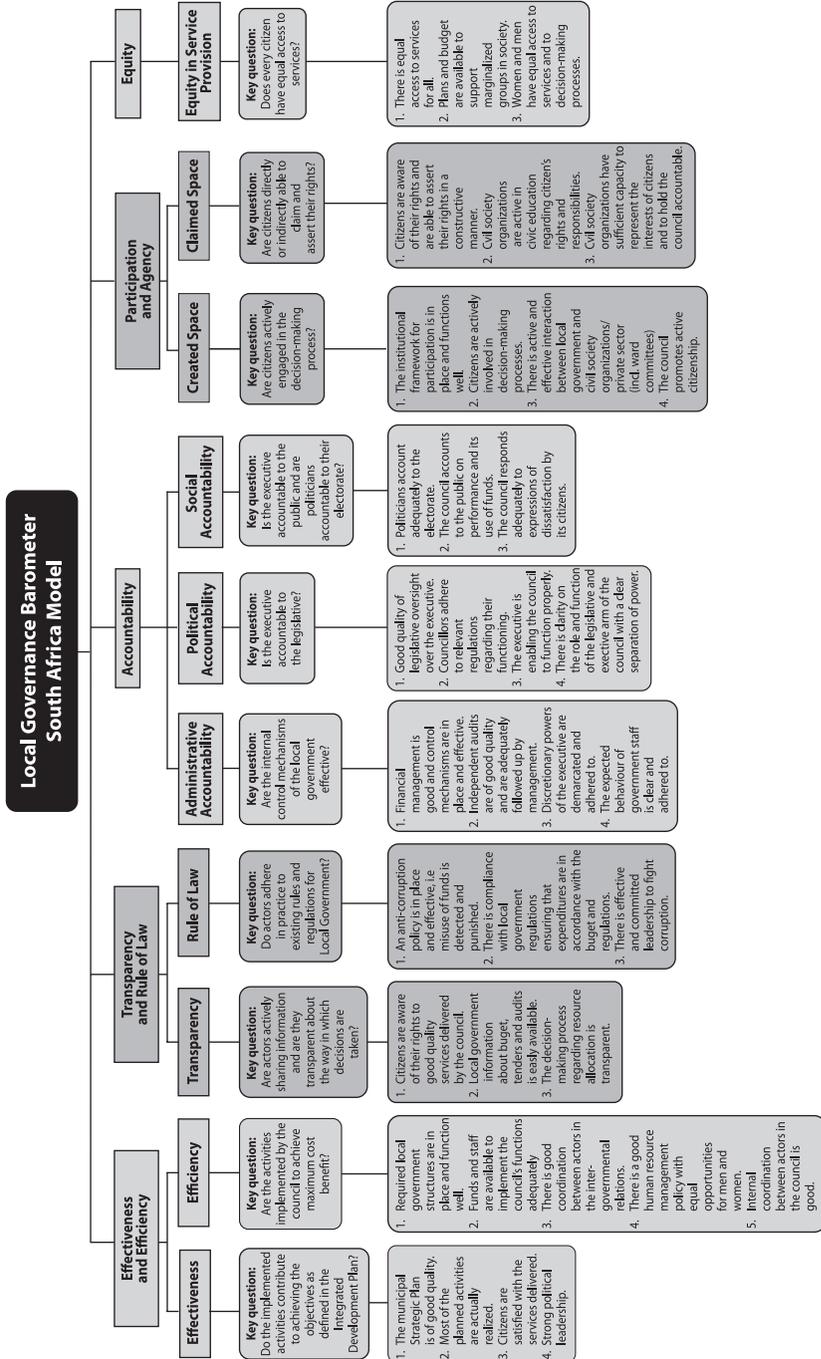
### **Findings and conclusions from South Africa**

South Africa has a distinct Local Government system that finds itself in the final stages of transition from the system inherited from the apartheid era and is not yet operating at its required level of capacity. At the same time, it has to deal with a tremendous backlog in basic service delivery from the past. Objectively seen, Local Government in South Africa has in general been able to improve its service delivery substantively over the past ten years at an unprecedented pace and extend hardly seen anywhere else in the world, but local government is facing a deepening legitimacy crisis.<sup>4</sup> To understand this crisis better, it is imperative to assess the perception of citizens and various stakeholder groups of the change in quality of governance over the last few years.

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4. For a detailed analysis of the extent of this crisis see: COGTA (*State of Local Government in South Africa; Overview Report National State of Local Government Assessments*). Working Documents COGTA 2009.

Figure 9.2 Local Governance Barometer: The South African model



Idasa, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Canadian International Development Agency, implemented the Local Governance Barometer in 15 rural municipalities in the four northern provinces of South Africa in 2007, and again in 14 rural municipalities in 2010/2011. Below are some of the major findings and conclusions<sup>5</sup> (Figure 9.2).

The average Local Governance Barometer governance index for these two groups of municipalities has declined over the last four years from 51 (out of hundred) in 2007 to 43 in 2011, which is a decline of almost 16 percent. This reflects a deepening local government crisis in South Africa over the last decade. During that period, the number, the intensity, and the violence of service delivery protests in former townships all over the country have increased, while the level of citizens' satisfaction with the performance of their municipalities has declined. Objectively seen, the quality of service delivery at local level has continued to improve, but a sharp decline in citizens' perception of the quality of governance is behind these protests and also explains the decline in the Local Governance Barometer index. In the words of one participant in these violent protests, "we are burning stuff, because those who are our mayors took money for themselves".

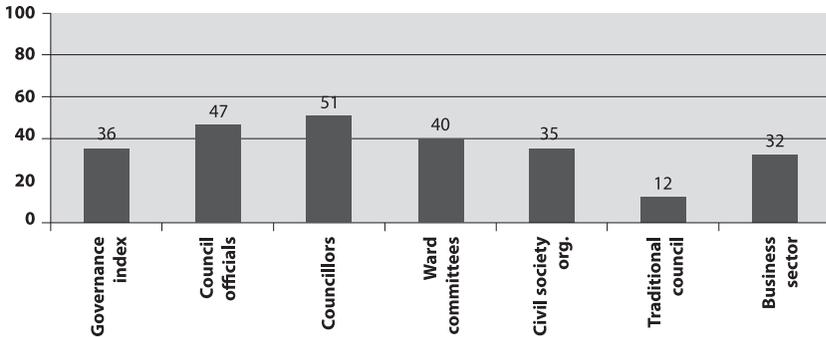
All stakeholder groups participating in both series of Local Governance Barometer exercises attributed the lowest score to the transparency' and 'rule of law' criteria, and the relative highest score to 'equity' and 'citizen agency'. As may be expected, the average score of the group of municipal officials on all of the governance criteria used in the Local Governance Barometer was the highest, followed closely by the group of councillors, while the scores of civil society organizations, business sector representatives, and ward committees was much lower (Figure 9.3.).

Respondents were asked to motivate their scores, while the overall scores were discussed in plenary to unearth the underlying justifications and causes. The main issues to emerge from these discussions are presented below per criteria.

### ***Effectiveness and efficiency***

Most municipal councils have not effectively communicated their development vision and plan, as reflected in the Integrated Development Plans, to their citizens. At the same time, these plans are rarely used to guide councils' actual decision making. As a result, most municipalities have no or only a weak relationship between the integrated development plan and the annual budget expenditures reflected in the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans. Nor do most municipal councils achieve consensus on service delivery priorities, resulting in inefficient use of their limited resources.

**Figure 9.3 Overall Local Governance Index and Local Governance Index per stakeholder group for Thaba Chweu, South Africa 2010**



Communication from the administration to both councillors and citizens on progress and audit reports and remedial actions is minimal, if it exists at all. When it is provided, it is usually presented in a way that is too technical for citizens or councillors to understand.

In most municipalities, all stakeholder groups perceive the political and managerial leadership to be poor, resulting in lack of vision and indecisiveness on important issues. Councillors are in general not well aware of their roles as councillor. They are not properly equipped to fulfil their role effectively, often resulting in interference in administrative matters. Most municipalities have no mechanisms in place to measure customer satisfaction or to deal with customer complaints systematically.

Intergovernmental relationships remain problematic. Most Joint Services Forums are ineffective in stimulating cooperation and coordination between government service providers. The reason given by most respondents is a lack of commitment from both departmental and provincial government. That is reflected in the fact that only junior staff from these institutions attend the intergovernmental relations forum meetings at local level.

### *Transparency and rule of law*

The information flow from councils to their citizens on matters that directly affect their citizens, such as resolutions adopted by the council, budgets, plans, and information on council performance, is generally very poor. Adherence to laws and regulations received the lowest overall average score, and is seen by civil society organizations particularly as a major problem at municipal level. In general, the behaviour of councillors is not guided by the councillor's code of conduct, while misconduct by councillors is usually covered up, especially by the dominant political parties.

Administrative staff members are often entangled in party politics, and are therefore not seen as impartial in resource allocation and service delivery.

Most municipalities have no effective anti-corruption strategy or whistle blower policy in place, while corruption cases are dealt with behind closed (party) doors. In most of the municipalities that were part of this study, civil society organizations had the impression that anti-corruption and rule of law is not high on the agenda of officials and councillors.

CSOs, meanwhile, often lack understanding of local government legislation and operations. That may negatively affect the way they think about abiding within the law. Nor are citizens particularly well aware of local by-laws and the way they are enforced, which is often randomly. Most municipalities have no strategy or mechanisms in place to educate citizens on existing by-laws.

### **Accountability**

The lack of a good performance monitoring system in most municipalities makes it difficult for councillors and CSOs to monitor progress and, therefore, to hold the administration accountable. Most municipalities have no mechanism for citizens to review council resolutions or to lodge complaints. If such mechanisms do exist, they do not function properly, as complaints are not dealt with systematically and feedback is rarely received after submitting a complaint. Most local service providers and users are unaware of the expected standards of service that customers are entitled to, which makes it difficult for the customer to hold the service provider accountable.

Ward committees do not yet function properly as an intermediate between council and citizens, or as a communication channel both upwards and downwards. This is, in most instances, a result of lack of proper organizational structures in the speakers' offices to support the ward participatory system.

CSOs, on the other hand, do not keep the municipal councils on their toes, because they are not making full use of existing mechanisms to hold the council accountable. This is partly explained by the fact that most CSOs have specific humanitarian objectives, are not strong in advocacy and lobby matters, and in general lack basic knowledge about the functioning of local government.

### **Participation and civic engagement**

Of all five criteria used, the difference in scoring between council (both councillors and officials) and civil society and business sector representatives is the highest on this criterion. Government in general assesses participation as fairly good (60) while CSOs assess it as poor (40). From the discussions

held, this might be related to differences in perception on what real participation should look like (Tapscott, 2007).

Consulting communities and citizens is usually limited to the compulsory consultation moments as defined in the various acts (Integrated Development Plans and annual budgets). They are usually held for compliance reasons and less for genuine consultation and are not connected to decision-making (Thompson 2007). Or, as one citizen said pointedly, “we are informed about decisions already taken”. Conclusions from consultations are not recorded and ward or community plans are seldom included in the municipal plans or budgets without providing feedback to the communities on why their plans were not included.

CSOs are heard as part of the planning process, but lack detailed understanding of the workings of local government. They do not know how to lobby and advocate effectively to significantly influence planning and decision-making. As a result, they tend to be dissatisfied with the responsiveness of local government in addressing citizens’ needs. Civil society organizations acknowledge that there is lack of interest amongst citizens in participating actively in municipal matters. That is partly because most meetings and budget explanations are too technical for most people to comprehend, and because the general public is increasingly disillusioned with local government in terms of taking their concerns seriously (Ballard, 2008).

### ***Equity***

On internal equity (meeting the standards defined in the Employment Equity Policy), most municipalities face a challenge to employ enough women (especially in management positions), and disabled people (almost none). Hardly any municipalities included in this study have a localized policy that addresses the special needs of the disabled, youth, women, and elderly people. On HIV/AIDS, the situation is slightly better, partly because there are more CSOs active in this field, but they usually work with sector departments without the involvement of the municipalities. No municipality included in the study had established a consultation structure for the above disadvantaged groups to table their needs to the municipal council.

Equity issues, such as gender mainstreaming, are usually seen as additional burdens (or unaffordable luxuries) on already overstretched municipal budgets. They are not viewed as core tasks of the municipalities, but more as a social welfare issue. As a result, in only a few municipalities is there a budget earmarked for the disadvantaged groups, while there are only a few projects financed by the municipal councils targeting these groups.

Most municipalities do have a Local Economic Development policy in place, but most respondents describe it as ineffective and unviable, often supporting economically non-sustainable projects and/or favouring council officials.

### **Practical action**

Examples of important practical governance issues raised during these Local Governance Barometer exercises, and that were included in the plans of action of these municipalities, include:

- lack of transparency and alleged corruption in the allocation of houses built by the provincial and local government under the Reconstruction and Development Programme's housing scheme.
- lack of transparency in the council's award of procurement contracts.
- lack of clarity among citizens on the roles and responsibilities of the municipal council and the minimum quality standards of the services it provides.
- lack of responsiveness from the municipality to address the real needs from its citizens.
- insufficient communication and information supply on every aspect of the operations of the municipal council to its citizens.

The Local Governance Barometer created awareness of the importance of governance and initiated a dialogue between local government institutions and non-state actors. It also turned out to be valuable diagnostic tool for Idasa and other support agencies to identify capacity gaps in all local governance actors that inhibited their ability to play an optimal role in this process. The Local Governance Barometer exercises that have been implemented so far all pointed in the same direction regarding local capacity needs. It enabled Idasa to define its capacity development strategy. This strategy has four groups of activities directed towards an improvement in the governance capacities of both local government institutions and non-state actors, and is implemented over three years. Since the actual implementation has only recently started, it is too early to evaluate the impact of the strategy. However, to measure the impact of these support activities at the end of the on-going project, the Local Governance Barometer will again be used to assess whether there has been any significant improvement in governance in these municipalities at the level of main governance criteria.

These support activities focus, during the first year, on improving communication structures and on improving information supply from the municipality to its citizens. That is followed, in the second year, by a group

of activities aimed at improving transparency and participation. In the final year, based on the foundation laid in the previous years, the focus will shift towards improved social accountability. This general strategy is, of course, adjusted to the specific needs of each participating municipality.

The support activities identified include:

- improving communication structures between municipalities and citizens.
- establishing (or strengthening) a dialogue platform between municipality and other actors that enables every stakeholder group to participate equally and to contribute to defining the agenda.
- assisting the municipalities in changing their tender procedures, and allowing for independent oversight of the tender board by citizen representatives.
- assisting the municipality with the introduction of Service Charters for key council services – define minimum quality standards for its services that are made known to the public and to which they can hold the service provider accountable.
- train councillors and civil society organizations in Public Expenditure Tracking.
- involve ward committees actively in the allocation process for houses constructed under the Reconstruction and Development Programme
- conduct corruption risk assessments and, together with all stakeholders, design risk mitigation strategies.

At a higher level, Idasa has used the outcomes of these Local Governance Barometer exercises to analyse the present local government crisis and to provide the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs with policy advice on how it could turn this trend around by steering lower level governments more towards outputs than inputs, by including minimum governance standards in its performance management system, and by practicing (instead of paying lip service to) zero tolerance to corruption.

As a democracy institute, Idasa also uses these findings in its publications, newspaper articles, and presentations in the run up to the local government elections in South Africa to stimulate public debate on the quality of governance at local level.

Idasa's findings confirm that the local government crisis in South Africa is deepening and starting to become a structurally systemic crisis that is embedded in the system of local government. The governance issues raised by this survey (lack of transparency, lack of communication between council

and citizens, and lack of social accountability) seem related to a disdain of basic democratic governance principles and values that are increasingly sacrificed by politicians and those who govern for individual benefits and political power. The distance between those who govern and the governed is increasing in South Africa. Local government is more and more governing the municipalities on behalf of its citizens and not with its citizens. That negatively affects its legitimacy and steers South Africa away from its collective vision of establishing a developmental democracy. As a result, citizens lose confidence in local government as an institution that is able to respond effectively to the challenges they face as citizens. The municipal councils, meanwhile, feel overburdened and even suffocated by the number of regulations and demands they receive from all sides. The result is that they become even less flexible and less able to respond to citizens' needs and demands. Whether based on fact or on perception, the sense is growing that democracy does not work for the poor and unemployed.

### **Findings and conclusions from Zambia**

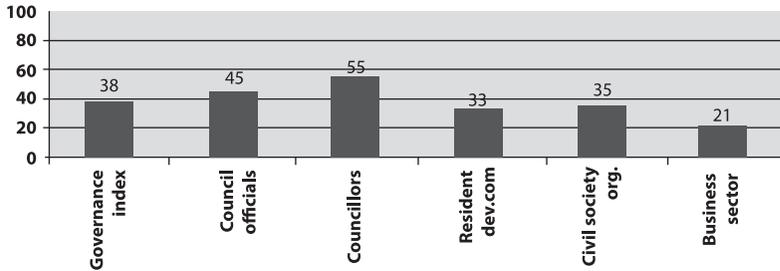
Decentralization in Zambia has been a slow and drawn-out process since the country's independence in 1964 (Chikulo, 2009). Despite various attempts, on paper, in 1968 and again in 1980, it never received sufficient political support from the ruling parties at national level, which were and are reluctant to delegate power to local level institutions that could possibly be taken over by the opposition. Its most recent decentralization policy document of 2002 still awaits implementation, resulting in district and city councils that are under-resourced and under-staffed to implement the functions delegated to them.

With support from the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, Idasa is implementing a governance support programme in five district councils, beginning in each with an assessment of the present state of governance. It recently implemented a Local Governance Barometer exercise in Kabwe district, a two hour drive north of the capital Lusaka.

The overall governance index for Kabwe district was 38, which is rather low, but comparable to other councils in Zambia. Remarkable, however, was the huge difference in scores between the different stakeholder groups, with the group of councillors having the highest overall score of 55 and the business sector having the lowest overall score of only 21 (Figure 9.4).

During discussion of the underlying motivation for these scores, it became clear that they were related to disregard of the rule of law and lack of transparency within the council. Digging deeper, it became clear that a limited number of plots for commercial and residential use were surveyed and demarcated in Kabwe in recent years. Since the demand for new plots was

**Figure 9.4 Overall Local Governance Index and Local Governance Index per stakeholder group, Kabwe district, Zambia 2010**



exceeding the number of surveyed plots by far, the council had established a committee, consisting of councillors, who were in charge of allocating these plots. As a result of this allocation exercise, most plots ended up in the hands of the councillors themselves (or their relatives), who subsequently sold them to other residents and business people for huge profits. During the fiery debate that followed, the councillors argued that they acted within the boundaries of the land law that stipulates that everyone is entitled to a maximum of five plots. The citizens were not aware of these regulations and, in addition, considered the allocation process unfair and an abuse of power, because not everyone had an equal chance of obtaining a plot. They also considered selling the plots afterwards for huge profits not in line with the intentions of the land allocation procedures.

While the conflict was not resolved completely at the end of the meeting, the councillors agreed that they understood the grievances and would be willing to consider discussing the matter further, and adjust or develop local bylaws that would make the allocation process fairer and more transparent. Idasa and its local partner organization agreed to assist Kabwe in this process by offering legal assistance and improving the capacity of local NGOs, the local media, and the chamber of commerce to monitor the allocation process in future.

## **Conclusions**

The Local Governance Barometer has proved itself in practice as a useful tool for addressing local governance issues in Southern Africa, because it translates complex governance concepts into locally contextualised and relevant issues. It functions as a mirror for participating groups, as they receive critical but constructive feedback from other groups of stakeholders in the municipality. At the same time, it creates a certain minimum level of understanding of the position of other stakeholders in the local arena, which is essential for a constructive dialogue process. In most cases, it was the first time that stakeholders collectively addressed process issues at a

local level by addressing the question of “how do we want to relate to each other?” Besides creating awareness and initiating a dialogue process around important governance issues at local level, the Local Governance Barometer is a very practical diagnostic tool, assisting actors and support agencies alike to identify critical capacity gaps in the roles various actors play, or should play, in a local governance process.

As the two practical examples of the application of the Local Governance Barometer in Zambia and South Africa show, the Local Governance Barometer has the ability to make informal power relations visible and discussable. It creates an opportunity for citizens to question the mechanisms that ensure that public services remain personalized by way of nepotism and, by exposing misuse of power by those who govern, they can discuss ways to avoid access to the public institutions of the state leading to personal enrichment, and thus strengthen democratic local governance in a very practical manner.

Exposing corruption and mismanagement of public funds can be very dangerous for individual whistleblowers, as numerous examples in South Africa have shown over the last few years. The Local Governance Barometer aims to depersonalize these incidences and stimulate a debate on the mechanisms that make mismanagement of public funds possible within the public arena, thereby reducing the potential for individuals to be victimized for exposing corruption.

As can be expected, the major practical challenge is to get commitment from local political and administrative leaders to participate in a Local Governance Barometer venture, particularly if they feel that certain unethical practices might be exposed through this exercise. Convincing them, however, of the potential negative political impact of not dealing with allegations of mismanagement has worked in practice.

Another challenge that Idasa is currently facing in South Africa is the question of how best to institutionalize the Local Governance Barometer. Institutionalization is important not only for ensuring a country-wide application, but also because local governance assessment tools are most valuable if they are implemented on a regular base (e.g., every three years) to assess progress in governance over time. On the one hand it would be attractive to integrate the Local Governance Barometer in the regular performance management system of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, especially since the Barometer has proven an effective early warning mechanism for social unrest. Several municipalities that received a low overall score in the recent past were experiencing protests related to service delivery only a few months after the implementation of

the Local Governance Barometer. On the other hand, institutionalization within the formal local governance performance management system might make the Local Governance Barometer a compulsory exercise that is part of the internal administrative accountability process, resulting in the Barometer losing its self-assessment character as getting a high score will become more important than getting a true score. In Idasa's view, it would therefore be most appropriate if the South African Local Government Association would become the owner of the methodology and offer it as a service to its members.

The main benefit of the Local Governance Barometer remains its ability to create awareness of the relationship between the quality of service delivery and the quality of governance. In this way, it would highlight the importance of addressing governance locally. It would also demonstrate that governance is not the exclusive responsibility of government, but requires the active involvement of other stakeholders in society. Becoming aware of the actual process of governance and of the role that every non-state actor has to play in this process individually and collectively is a highly empowering experience.

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**DEVELOPING A DEMAND SIDE  
GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
PERFORMANCE INDEX:  
THE VIET NAM EXPERIENCE**

**Jairo Acuña – Alfaro<sup>1</sup>**

**Introduction**

Over the last three decades, Viet Nam has engineered and implemented a remarkable economic and social transition that brought the country into the middle-income category. The *doi moi* (renovation) reforms undertaken since the 1980s aimed to create a ‘socialist oriented market economy’ by way of providing a less centrally-managed framework for realizing human development objectives and improving people’s living conditions. Through this reform process, Viet Nam made impressive gains in poverty reduction and substantially improved social development indicators at the aggregate levels, notably in health and education.

However, for Viet Nam to continue on its path of economic growth and avoid the middle-income country trap of economic stagnation, it not only needs to concentrate on promoting internal growth and better macroeconomic management, but must also focus on improving public sector efficiency and effectiveness to deliver services, reduce inequity, combat corruption, broaden people’s participation, and meet their political, social, and economic aspirations.

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1. The author would like to thank and acknowledge the joint collaboration effort of the PAPI research process with Do Thanh Huyen, Policy Support Officer at UNDP Viet Nam, Dang Ngoc Dinh and Dang Hoang Giang from the Centre for Community Support and Development Studies (CECODES), as well as to Edmund J. Malesky and Pierre F. Landry, international experts on quantitative methodology in measuring governance for their inputs in this joint research work.

Within this reform process, the one-party state regime has also undertaken an ambitious and comprehensive set of public administration reforms. These sub-sets of reform are aimed at creating a “democratic, clean, strong, professional, modern, effective, and efficient public administration system” (Government of Viet Nam, 2001).

With this objective in mind, Viet Nam’s Public Administration Reform Master Programme for 2001–2010 aimed to reorganize the governmental structures, modernize and professionalize the civil service system, enhance public finance management mechanisms, simplify bureaucracy, and reduce corruption and nepotism. Improvements have been observed in each of these areas. However, the speed and pace of the reform remains uneven and little evidence exists on the extent to which these efforts have helped to advance socio-economic development by delivering better quality public and administrative services to citizens, particularly to poor people. Despite high-level political rhetoric on the importance of Public Administration Reform, there has been a constant fluctuation in the budgetary allocation for implementing the Public Administration Reform Master Programme. This has led to unequal distribution of resources between government bodies and between provinces, which has in turn affected performance levels across both the public administration system and public services (Acuña-Alfaro, 2009).

The end of the Public Administration Reform Master Programme in 2010 provided an important opportunity to review and revise the existing normative framework of public administration towards provision of better services, to create a deeper understanding of what had been reformed and what was still in need of reform, and to propose alternative scenarios for the way forward. To understand what has and what has not worked, there was wide acceptance of the importance of end users’ perspectives on the quality of public administrative services.

The Public Administration Reform Master Programme, in addition to several laws and ordinances in Viet Nam, has provisions for citizen monitoring and assessment of public services to fight corruption and promote transparency, efficiency, and accountability of the public administration sector. But when it comes to monitoring and assessing the overall public administration performance from the perspective of citizens as end-users, there are neither regular mechanisms nor instruments to gauge the perceptions and experiences of citizens and non-state actors on public administration performance at the provincial level.

To address this shortcoming, UNDP in collaboration with the Centre of Community Support and Development Studies (CECODES)<sup>2</sup> and the Viet Nam Fatherland Front,<sup>3</sup> have jointly worked since 2009 to develop the provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI). This index was developed using a gradual implementation approach in which the index was piloted, tested, and refined over several stages. The PAPI measures governance and public administration performance at the provincial level, from the perspective of citizens as end-users of public and administrative services. The findings from the Index's implementation provide evidence for policy discussion, and contributing to bridging the gap between policy and practice.

The PAPI also exemplifies UNDP's country-led governance assessment approach, because it promotes multi-stakeholder participation, local level engagement and ownership, and strengthens evidence-based policymaking. It also serves as a critical accountability and transparency mechanisms for governance performance.

This chapter traces the development and implementation of the PAPI, and offers some lessons regarding rationale, methodology, findings, and policy implications for using assessments for evidence-based public sector performance. It also provides lessons on how this type of policy instrument can promote wider citizens' engagement in governance processes.

### **Developing the Public Administration Performance Index<sup>4</sup>**

Public administration reform in Viet Nam, as in other countries, is a complex process that aims to improve the quantity and quality of public services delivered. It encompasses a comprehensive and inclusive process of change, within the broader process of political, social, and economic transition of the country's *doi moi* reforms.

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2. CECODES, established by the Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations in 2007, is a non-governmental organization specialized in development research and community support. Its overall function is to conduct evidence-based research to assess policy impact. It works to improve governance performance, and focuses on facilitating interaction between the state, the market, and the civil society (CECODES, VFF, and UNDP, 2011).
  3. VFF, founded in 1977, is the largest politico-social organization in Viet Nam. It consists of numerous mass organizations and plays a significant role in promoting 'national solidarity'. Many of the government's social programmes are implemented through the Front. The Front also oversees the activities of government organizations, elected officials, political officials, and civil servants, as well as the election of members of the National Assembly and all levels of people's councils. It also monitors anti-corruption strategy and the social and economic development plans (CECODES, VFF and UNDP, 2011).
  4. The following sections are adapted from Acuña-Alfaro, Jairo, et al 2010, and CECODES, VFF and UNDP, 2011, in particular chapter 3.

In the fall of 2008 UNDP, as part of its policy advisory role, started to engage in policy research to identify options for an improved public administration system to sustain Viet Nam's middle income status. The research sought to provide a better understanding of public administration reform in Viet Nam in terms of the existing normative framework, systematizing lessons learned from recent achievements and shortcomings, as well as identifying areas that require further attention. UNDP helped establish an informal research network consisting of senior international and national governance experts. This network produced a series of policy discussion papers on (i) institutional reform, (ii) organization structure, (iii) civil service reform, (iv) public finance management, (v) public administration reform and economic development, and (vi) corruption and public administration.<sup>5</sup>

Each policy paper highlighted key challenges, and proposed specific and detailed recommendations for the way forward. The papers helped to build knowledge and influence the debate on the nature and complexity of the public administration reform and, more importantly, the options and way forward.

The policy research was based on three key principles: (i) academic rigour and independence of analysis, (ii) social legitimacy and a participatory process, and (iii) a substantive research agenda and rigorous and systematic identification of policy options on key reform areas. The research has provided significant inputs to dialogue, discussions, and referencing for an independent review of a decade of public administration reform in Viet Nam from 2001 to 2010 (Acuña-Alfaro, 2009).

This policy research also helped to identify a significant shortcoming of the reform process – lack of monitoring mechanisms to assess public administration performance, and the near absence of instruments aimed at measuring the experiences and perceptions of non-business and non-public sector actors.

A key point in the discussions was the fact that a country's transition from low-income to middle-income status implies a shift in the relationship between the state and society. In low-income countries, policy-makers generally rely on anecdotal evidence to assess the quality of its public administration and public services' delivery. However, this information is at best incomplete, and is often misleading. Citizens, as the end-users of public administration system outputs, are also increasingly demanding that these systems be free of bureaucratic and administrative corruption, patronage,

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5. The policy discussion papers are available at: <http://www.undp.org.vn/detail/publications/publication-details/?contentId=3013&languageId=1&categoryName=All&CategoryConditionUse=>

nepotism, diversion, and theft of public funds. They are demanding systems that promote development and equity, more participation in the decision-making processes of public policies, as well as implementation and monitoring.

In recent years, Viet Nam has seen a proliferation of instruments and mechanisms trying to gauge non-state actors' perceptions of local governance and public service delivery as well as citizens' satisfaction surveys. Yet, while there are definitely positive developments, these exercises have been sporadic and lack sustainability and replication at the national level. An exception is the Viet Nam Provincial Competitiveness Index. This index has become a recognized instrument for measuring economic governance in private sector development across Viet Nam's 63 provinces. In doing so, it surveys businesses and firms on a nation-wide basis, ranks provinces according to their responsiveness towards private sector development, and forms the basis for policy discussion and intervention at the provincial level.<sup>6</sup>

The success of the Provincial Competitiveness Index in informing economic reforms led to consideration of a similar initiative by the research network as a relevant and essential way of gauging the experiences of non-state actors, particularly of local citizens, of the performance of local governance and public administration at the provincial level. This resulted in further collaboration among the research network actors and led to the development of the Governance and PAPI.

The Governance and PAPI was piloted in three provinces (Phu Tho, Da Nang, and Dong Thap) in 2009.<sup>7</sup> Encouraged by the endorsement and useful feedback provided by stakeholders in the pilot provinces, the methodology was further improved to develop a rigorous and objective index that complies with high quality international standards of research. The improved methodology was tested in 30 selected provinces in 2010 and provides information about the direct experiences of 5,568 randomly selected citizens across the country on various aspects of local governance and public administration.

The index aims to give citizens from different demographic backgrounds a voice with which to express their experiences of public service delivery. It assesses three mutually reinforcing processes: policy making, policy implementation, and monitoring of public service delivery.

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6. For more details see PCI website: [www.pcvietnam.org](http://www.pcvietnam.org)

7. The report of the pilot process is available at: [http://papi.vn/sites/default/files/docs/2009PAPI\\_Pilot\\_Final\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](http://papi.vn/sites/default/files/docs/2009PAPI_Pilot_Final_Report_EN.pdf)

Governance and public administration are understood by referring to three mutually reinforcing processes: policy-making, policy implementation, and policy monitoring.

**Policy-making** is key to public administration, because it is policy decisions that will affect the operation and implementation of public services. Policy decisions can influence behaviour and therefore improve or reduce the quality and reliability of public services. Moreover, policy-making processes that involve joint decision-making and dialogue are believed to produce better results. In addition, the policy making process at the provincial level is crucial, not only to ensure a consistent and correct interpretation of national policies, but also as it is most likely at this level that the opinions of end-users and public service beneficiaries will be considered.

**Policy implementation** refers to the mechanisms, resources, and capabilities of the public sector to ensure conditions to deliver public and private services. This process requires constant monitoring of how well the public administration is performing in a particular thematic area or sector. During implementation, monitoring is useful in helping to determine achievements and deficiencies as per previously defined criteria and objectives.

Thirdly, **policy monitoring** is directly related to the implementation process. Here, there are usually two ways to assess performance. One is from the service providers' perspective in the form of self-assessments, for example, that simply require management to provide opinions on users' satisfaction. The other is in the form of user-satisfaction surveys, which actually ask citizens for their views and opinions on the availability and quality of the services.

To understand the role of the end-user in these three processes, and to measure the effective and efficient delivery of public services, the PAPI considers six dimensions of provincial governance and public administration: (i) participation at local levels; (ii) transparency; (iii) vertical accountability; (iv) control of corruption; (v) public administrative procedures, and (vi) public service delivery. While the dimensions are presented separately for ease of assessment, they are both mutually inclusive and complementary. The dimensions were further divided into 21 sub-dimensions, with 82 indicators.

**Dimension one is deals with citizens' participation** at the local level. It assesses the mechanisms citizens use to participate in governance and public administration processes. The main issues addressed include citizens' knowledge of their opportunities for participation, experience in direct elections and satisfaction with village heads, the quality of elections, and citizens' contributions to the development of communes/wards' public

works and projects. This dimension contributes to the measurement of the implementation of the Grassroots Democracy Ordinance.<sup>8</sup>

**Dimension two concerns transparency.** This assesses the flow of timely and reliable information (economic, social, and public) on government services provision. In particular, this dimension focuses on citizens' awareness and levels of information of social policies for the poor; legislation that affects the everyday life of citizens; budget and expenditure by communes/wards' public administration agencies; and land plans and land compensation.

**Dimension three deals with vertical accountability** issues and assesses the extent to which those who act on behalf of the government are answerable for what they do. This dimension looks into levels of contacting public officials and civil servants at different levels to settle personal, household, or village matters; citizens' complaints and denouncements; and citizen mechanisms in keeping local governments accountable for public investment projects (e.g., people's inspection boards and community investment supervision boards).

**Dimension four is about corruption,** a systemic and extensive problem in Viet Nam. It examines the current problem of corruption and the extent to which citizens are motivated to denounce corrupt activities. Although corruption is endemic, for the purposes of this analysis, the focus is on diversion of state funds for personal benefits, bribery, abuse of public property by vested interests, nepotism, abuses in handling public administrative procedures, citizen awareness of legislation on anti-corruption, and perceptions of the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts by relevant state bodies.

**Dimension five focuses on a selected group of public administrative procedures.** This dimension evaluates the implementation and performance of selected, relevant public administration procedures in terms of intensity of use and efficiency of services rendered. In particular, the dimension looks at the implementation and performance of existing One Stop Shops in the provinces, citizens' experiences of public administration procedures when

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8. Viet Nam formally introduced local governance and decentralization reforms through a legal decree (Decree No. 29/ND-CP, dated 15 May 1998). These set of reforms are called Grassroots Democracy (GRD) as they grants citizens the right to participate in local governance processes. The Decree was upgraded into an Ordinance on the Implementation of Grassroot Democracy (GDO) in 2007. GDO focuses on strengthening decentralization processes and enhancing transparency and accountability of state institutions at all administrative tiers. The GDO also provides the legal framework for participation of people in policy making and implementation. It grants people the right to official information, the right to be consulted, the right to inspect and supervise public services as well as the right to direct decision making at the village and commune level. The specific details of the rights and entitlements are spelled out in Decree No. 79/ND-CP, 2003.

applying for new or renewed construction permits, land use right certificates at the commune/ward and district levels, and citizen satisfaction with services received from public notary offices.

**The sixth dimension is about the performance of public service delivery.** Here, a selection of public services, considered key in terms of improving the wellbeing of citizens (i.e., health care, education, water supply and personal safety of citizens), are examined. In particular, this dimension looks into citizen access to health care, citizen experiences in and satisfaction with health care and primary education services provided at the commune/ward level, and citizen access to basic water and sanitation services, as well as local safety conditions.

By capturing the varying experiences of citizens, and comparing provinces by ranking their performance against each other, provincial governments have incentives as well as information on how to improve their performance. In addition, it empowers citizens by providing an opportunity for their preferences, frustrations, and recommendations to be heard.

The dimensions are specifically tailored to Viet Nam's context. By giving provincial administrators detailed information about citizens' perceptions, and ranking provinces against each other, partner organizations hope to improve transparency, stimulate reform, enlarge the 'space' for civil society involvement in policy planning, implementation, and monitoring, and also significantly expand the pool of quantitative data available for policy formulation. Data from the PAPI can now be used by government agencies to track changes and performance levels, and become advocacy tools to enhance transparency in local government.<sup>9</sup>

## **Methodology**

The PAPI obtains data from a representative selection of ordinary citizens, rather than from household-heads. This helps to measure the perception of a cross-section of the population, including gender and age-differentiated groups. The index follows a rigorous and objective sampling procedure, using 'probability proportion to size' for selecting districts, communes and villages from the 30 provinces, along with the Propensity Score Matching method, and 'random selection' to identify respondents.

A rigorous multi-stage sampling approach was used to select geographical units and the construction of a representative sample in each province. To ensure that comparisons of the PAPI results would be fair across all sampled provinces, three categories of 'certainty units' were created. The index

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9. Data from the implementation of the Index is available at [www.papi.vn](http://www.papi.vn)

purposely included every district that serves as provincial capital. In each district (whether purposely or randomly selected), the commune that serves as the district seat was purposively selected, while another commune in the same district was randomly selected by probability proportion to size. Within each commune (or ward), the village (or residential group) that is the seat of the commune was purposely selected, while another village/residential group in the same commune/ward was randomly selected by probability proportion to size. The design thus ensured measurement of administrative performance across the full range of possible situations within a province, ranging from urban residential groups located in the immediate vicinity of the provincial institutions all the way down to villages.

The second consideration was that all residents in any sampled cluster would have the same probability of being selected by the study. The selection of units based on the probability of selection proportional to measures of size ensures that any two respondents who live in different clusters of a given sampling unit (for instance, residents of different villages of the same commune) have the same chance of being included in the study, regardless of the absolute size of each village.

After the selection of districts, communes, and villages using probability proportion to size, respondents were randomly selected from the villages or residential groups using the official list of village households. Lists were compiled with the assistance of the local Viet Nam Fatherland Front chapter. From each list, 20 households were randomly drawn, along with a replacement list of 10 households. The targeted number of households in each province was set at 240 people (3 districts x 2 communes/wards x 2 villages/residential groups x 20 households). From each household, one adult between the ages of 18 and 65, and currently living in the selected province, was selected randomly to become the final respondent.

The actual survey was conducted in the form of one-on-one interviews, mostly in a neutral space and within easy access for respondents, such as schools or cultural houses. The interviews were conducted partly by CECODES, and partly by the local Viet Nam Fatherland Front staff. In no case were staff from the local authorities involved during the interview process.

The PAPI can be viewed as a large scale survey that considers key demographic characteristics of the Vietnamese population structure. The final number of randomly selected and interviewed respondents is 5,568 citizens (48 percent male, 52 percent female). The mean age of respondents was 41 years old (98.9 percent between 18 and 65; and 1.1 percent above 65); 85 percent are Kinh (Viet Nam's largest ethnic group), and 15 percent are from

other ethnic groups. Regarding education levels, in a nutshell, five percent of respondents had no formal education, 10 percent had not completed primary school, seven percent had completed primary school, 16 percent had not completed secondary school, 21 percent had completed secondary school, six percent had not completed high school, 21 percent had completed high school, two percent had not completed university, and 11 percent had completed their university education. In addition, the selection of respondents also included a wide range of occupation, with 39 percent of respondents working in the agriculture sector, 12 percent working in government, five percent working in private industry, three percent working in State Owned Enterprises, 20 percent working in private services, two percent employed by the military, and 19 percent working in other occupations.

### **Key Public Administration Performance Index 2010 findings**

Respondents answered a broad range of questions that measured their knowledge and experience of a wide array of governance and public administration services and institutions in Viet Nam. The dimensions that citizens assessed included participation opportunities at local levels, awareness of commune budgets, interaction with commune officials, quality of administrative procedures (public notary, construction permits, land use plans), experiences with corruption, quality of public services such as water and sanitation, education, health care, electricity, social security services, and other services offered by the provincial government, including garbage collection services.<sup>10</sup>

Based on inputs from citizens, the PAPI's six dimensions were calculated and a composite performance dashboard was created. Presenting findings in a dashboard format enables efficient dissemination of the findings to policy-makers at both central and provincial levels. The dashboard format also allows the sharing of critical information on where best practices in governance and public administration reforms are, and where more work is still needed. Ranking of, and comparisons between, provinces is advantageous for generating competition among local leaders, and as an incentive to develop creative approaches to meeting the needs of their constituents.

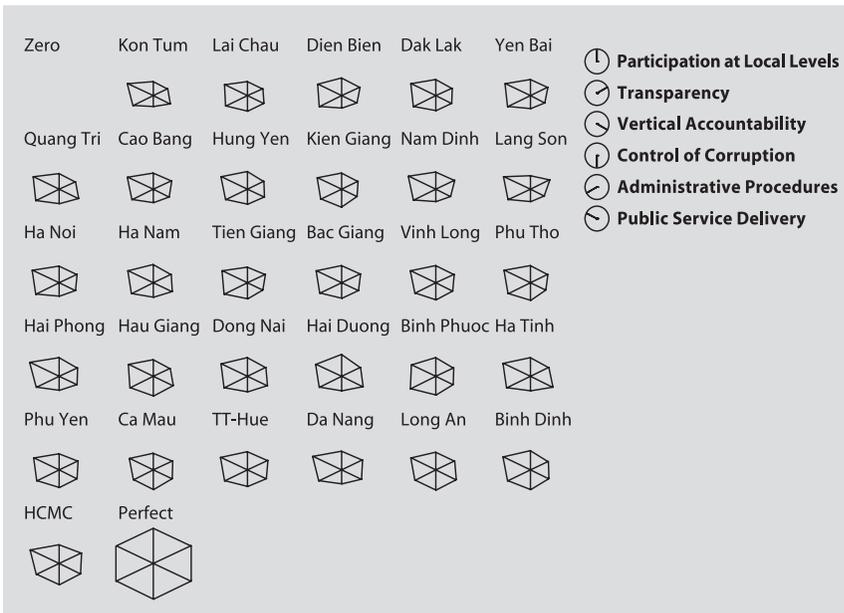
Figure 10.1. illustrates the dashboard approach to aggregation. Each dimension is ordered on a 1 to 10-point scale, with 1 representing a province receiving the worst score on every indicator within a dimension and 10 representing a province with a top score on all indicators in that dimension. All provinces had the potential for a score of 10 on each dimension, which

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10. For detailed presentation of indicators used to construct PAPI, and PAPI analysis and the Questionnaire used for interviewing respondents, see CECODES, VFF & UNDP (2011).

is reflected in the ‘Perfect’ star in the bottom corner of the chart. Each branch of the star represents progress towards the perfect score of 10. The benefit of the dashboard is that it helps to identify weaknesses even in highly performing provinces, which are obscured in an additive index. For instance, Ho Chi Minh City, while the most consistently high-performing province, has room for improvement in administrative procedures. Da Nang, another top-performing province, scores quite poorly in its control of corruption. In contrast, the lowest performing location, Kon Tum, scores relatively well on public service delivery.

**Figure 10.1 Dashboard of six dimensions of the Public Administration Performance Index**



A significant finding at the aggregate level concerns the relationship between the PAPI and economic growth in provincial Viet Nam. As suggested in Figure 10.2., the relationship is strongly positively correlated ( $r=0.60$ ). However, this association is difficult to interpret, because it cannot be said with certainty in which direction the causality runs. It could be, first, that better governed provinces grow faster and become wealthier, from a strong hypothesis in the development literature. Or, second, it could be that richer provinces have more money to invest in governance and higher capacity officials to hire. Third, it may simply be that wealthy citizens feel more comfortable and rate their governments more highly, or, fourth, that governance and wealth may be both caused by some deep-seated sociocultural

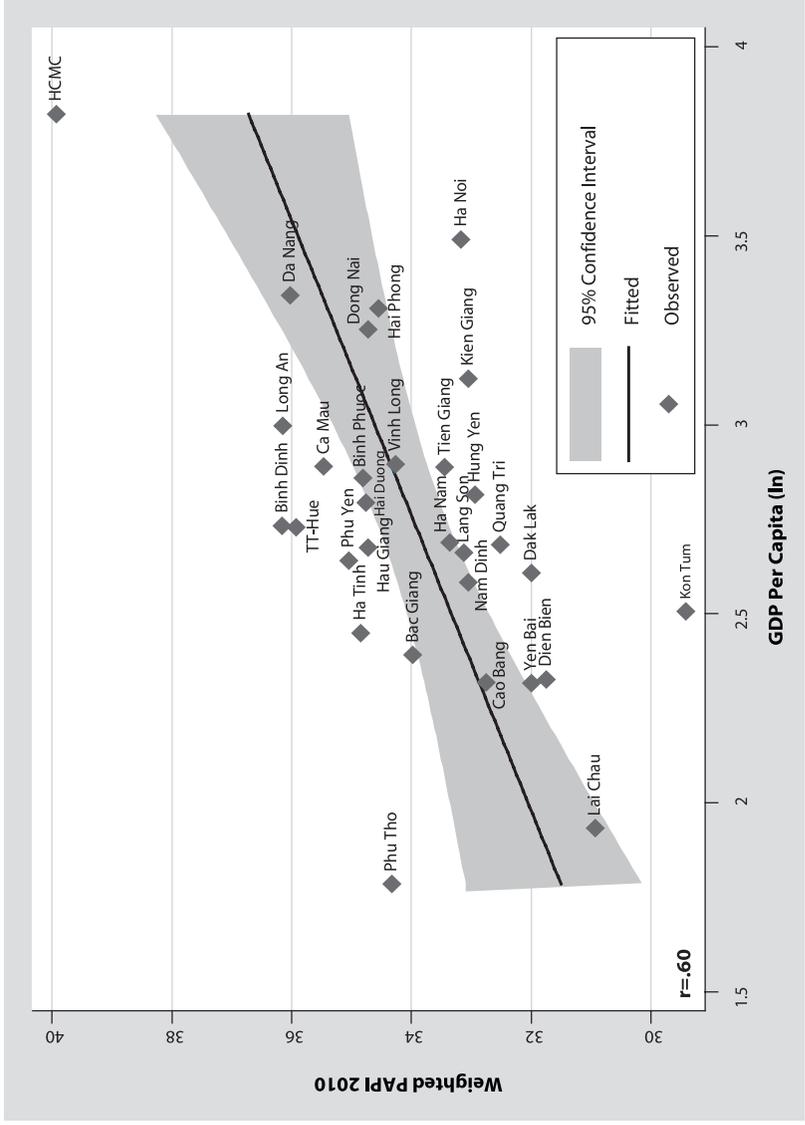
or historical factor. So although the two variables tend to move together, there is no direct relationship between them. Indeed, readers should be suspicious of this fourth factor, because of the high proportion of minority-rich provinces at the bottom of the performance levels. These provinces also tend to be the poorest in the country (each 10 percent change in the share of minorities leads to astounding half point decrease in the weighted PAPI measure in regression analysis).

However, the most likely scenario is that all of these four factors contribute somewhat to the relationship. Given the current data, the separate effects cannot be parsed out. But the 2010 PAPI is only the baseline measure. Over time, through iteration, it is expected to identify changes in governance in locations, which will allow for better understanding of how those changes in governance contribute to local wealth and welfare.

An additional finding at the aggregate provincial level deals with the relationship between governance, public administration, and human development. This finding is relevant, because it provides evidence on the importance of governance and public administration in improving the life of citizens. From a human development perspective, governance and public administration are interwoven when (i) people's rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, allowing them to live with dignity, (ii) people have a say in decisions that affect their lives, (iii) people can hold public decision-makers to account for public matters, (iv) inclusive and fair rules and institutions and practices govern social interactions, (v) people are free from discrimination, (vi) economic and social policies are responsive to people's needs and aspirations, as well as seeking to eradicate poverty and expand the choices that all people have in their lives (see UNDP, 2002:51). Human development has traditionally emphasized investment in education and health and the promotion of equitable economic growth. But a third pillar of human development has recently been highlighted. It considers the promotion of participation through governance and public administration. In this respect, enjoying opportunities for participation, being knowledgeable and enjoying good health, and enjoying a decent standard of living are all three mutually reinforcing capabilities (UNDP, 2002).

Therefore, a question worth exploring in terms of human development is how well the PAPI and its dimensions correlate with provincial measures of human development. This allows a better understanding of how well elements of governance relate to overall human development levels. Table 10.1. and Figure 10.2. do precisely that, by looking at the correlations between the PAPI 2010 dimensions and human development index at the provincial level in 2008. Table 10.1., for instance, shows that public service delivery, perhaps unsurprisingly, is the dimension with the highest level of

Figure 10.2 Association between the Public Administration Performance Index and GDP per capita



correlation (0.6262), followed by transparency (0.5402), participation at local levels (0.4763), and vertical accountability (0.4660), all statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The control of corruption dimension is also highly correlated (0.3588) at the 0.05 significance level. In addition, contrary to all other five dimensions included in the index, it is noted that there is no statistical association between measured aspects of administrative procedures and overall provincial human development levels.

Another way of visualizing the possible association between the composite PAPI 2010 and the dimensions of the overall 2008 Human Development Index at the provincial level is shown in Figure 10.3. This shows that the composite PAPI is strongly associated with the overall Human Development Index ( $r=0.6799$ ). This means that, overall, provinces with higher levels of performance in governance and public administration also tend to have higher human development levels. It is important to stress, though, that while the association is positive and strong, correlation does not mean causality. The relationship can run either way. Nevertheless, it is already a significant piece of evidence, because both processes seem to go hand in hand at the provincial level in Viet Nam. This test comparison between the Human Development Index at the provincial level in Viet Nam and the PAPI shows that if data is generated annually for both indices, policy implications can be drawn to inform both central and provincial governments.

At the individual indicator level, the PAPI also provides a wealth of information and data that highlights significant differences in provincial performance. For instance, Ha Noi scored the lowest on the awareness of Grassroots Democracy Ordinance (16.27 percent), with Da Nang the highest (70.66 percent). Only 27.53 percent of respondents in Phu Tho indicated that more than one candidate is fielded during the local election, while in Da Nang only 10.85 percent indicated that paper ballots were used in local elections. In Kon Tum, the respondents did not monitor voluntary contributions.

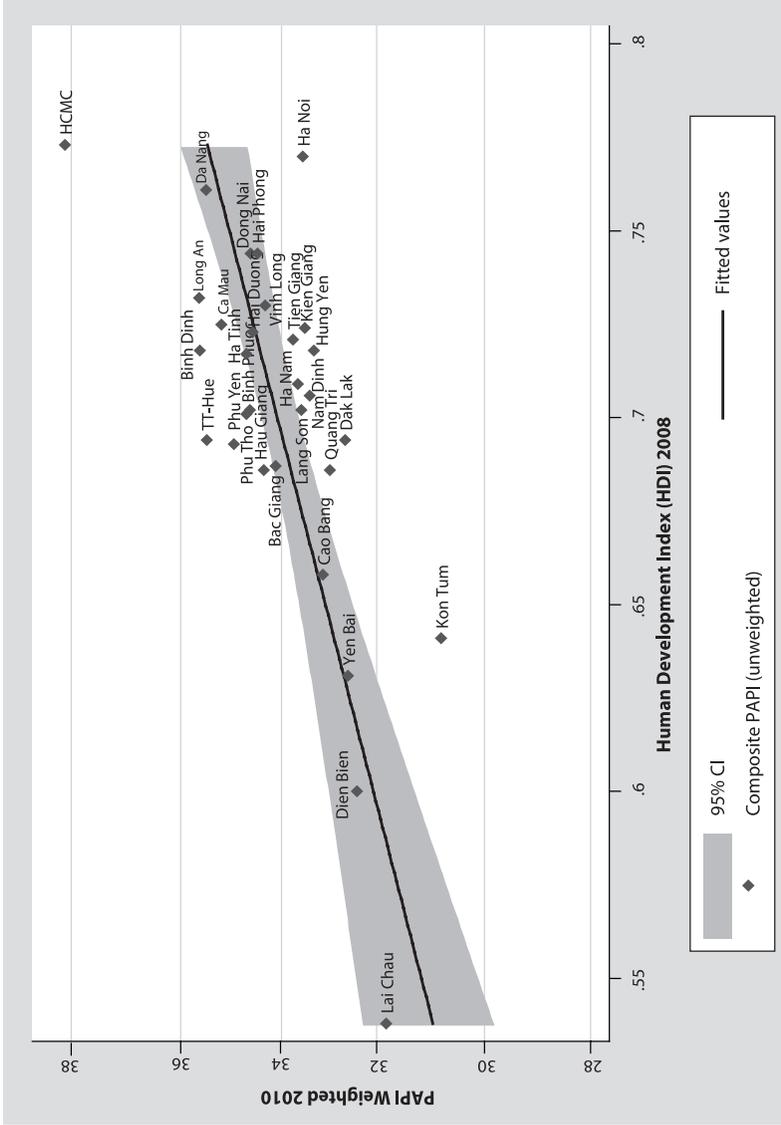
On transparency, the quality of the list of poor households produced at the commune level, almost 70 percent of respondents in Quang Tri suggested that the lists miss out poor households who should be included, while the number of respondents who indicated that the lists deliberately left out poor households was below 20 percent in four provinces, including Thue Thien-Hue, Yen Bai, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City. Around 10 percent in Cao Bang and Da Nang, and as much as 50 percent and more in Ha Nam and Quang Tri, reported that non-poor households are included in the list of poor households. On average, just 26.13 percent of respondents indicated that the communal budget was made available to the public and, also on average, only 20.05 percent knew about the Land Use Plan.

**Table 10.1 Correlations between Public Administration Performance Index dimensions and Human Development Index at the provincial level**

	Participation at local levels	Transparency	Vertical Accountability	Corrupt of Control	Administrative Procedures	Public Services	Composite PAPI (unweighted)
Human Development Index	0.4763***	0.5402***	0.4660***	0.3588**	0.1805	0.6262***	0.6799***
Composite PAPI (unweighted)	0.7507***	0.7149***	0.7513***	0.6614***	0.4099**	0.5047***	
Public Services	0.4007**	0.5327***	0.2323	-0.0900	0.2643		
Public Admin Proc	0.3284*	0.1701	0.2106	0.0541			
Control Corruption	0.2708	0.3045	0.4619**				
Accountability	0.5055***	0.3480*					
Transparency	0.4908***						

**Notes:** Pairwise correlations, \*\* significant at 0.05 level, \*\*\* significant at 0.01 level  
**Source:** Index data available at [www.papi.vn](http://www.papi.vn) and *UNDP for Human Development Index*.

**Figure 10.3 Association between composite Public Administration Performance Index and overall Human Development Index at the provincial level**



On vertical accountability, an average of only 27.4 percent had any interaction with the village head, while just 15.34 percent interacted with the commune officials. Over 80 percent of those who did interact with village and commune officials felt that their meeting was useful. And an average of only 30.20 percent said they were aware of the People's Inception Board at the village level (the lowest was Kien Giang with 9.5 percent; the highest, with 69.49 percent, was Hai Duong). This finding is relevant in a context where people's inception boards are mandated to supervise the implementation of all regulations and policies at the grassroots level, and are responsible for overseeing implementation of the Anti-Corruption Law at the commune level, in state agencies, and state-owned enterprises, including detection of corruption cases. From this background, the PAPI investigates aspects of the implementation and performance of people's inception boards from the observation and experiences of ordinary citizens to see if they are functioning as mandated, and if they are effective.<sup>11</sup>

On corruption, only 13.53 percent in Kon Tum disagreed with the statement that state officials are diverting funds for personal use, whereas in Ho Chi Minh City the figure was as high as 73.08 percent. The percentage of respondents who were victims of corruption, but chose not to respond, was high in Dak Lag and Dong Noi provinces, with 100 percent responding positively to the indicator.

On administrative procedures, only 0.29 percent in Cao Bang applied for construction permits, while Quang Tri, with 15.58 percent, had the highest. In regard to getting a land use permit in the last three years, only 3.31 percent in Ca Mau responded positively, whereas 51.01 percent had done so in Binh Phuoc.

Finally, on public service delivery, 33.03 percent of Lai Chau households had electricity, while there was 100 percent coverage in Ho Chi Minh City. In Kien Giang, 53.57 percent said that poor households receive subsidized medical insurance, but in Phu Tho that figure was substantially higher at 91.86 percent. On law and order, Ha Nam province recorded a negative score (-0.11 percent) on improvements in public safety in the previous three years. The highest score for this indicator was a meagre 0.31 percent in Hung Yen province.

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11. The implementation of people's inception boards has continued for more than six years under the 2004 Law on Inspections. On a nationwide scale there are 11,102 people's inception boards in 11,116 communes/wards.

## **Policy implications of the Public Administration Performance Index**

It is still too early to adequately assess the specific impact of the PAPI on strengthening the engagement of citizens in the policy process, or in improving governance and public administration. Nevertheless, during the index's gradual implementation in 2009 and 2010, stakeholders have acknowledged and applauded the novelty of the approach, the careful and gradual implementation methods, and the potential uses of the evidence and data made available.

The PAPI serves as an effective and unique tool to link the demand and supply sides of governance. It not only enables citizens to oversee the performance of the public administration system at the provincial level, but also has the potential to strengthen the downward and vertical accountability of the provincial administration. The composite index helps to identify provinces that are performing well and learning from their good practices.

The PAPI, and the vigorous demand side methodology it uses, enables it to highlight citizen experiences in dealing with the public administration system at different levels. It also gives a voice to their needs and expectations as users of the public administration system. This approach addresses a critical deficiency in public administration reform, i.e., availability and reliability of client-side data in public administration, a rare and still nascent industry in countries such as Viet Nam. The index also draws attention to the role of citizens and other non-state actors in providing and monitoring basic public services.

The index's implementation, and the use of data it generates for policy reform, also compels state institutions to clarify the relationship between state agencies and citizens and civil society organizations. The index can help to create a multi-stakeholder participation mechanism to provide and oversee basic public services, with a gradually expanding role for civil society organizations. In addition, the data that the index generates provides a tool for public officials and authorities at different administrative levels to monitor public sector performance, from a beneficiary perspective. As data matters, PAPI has the potential to become a useful reference source, not only for policy makers, but for other stakeholders – academics, researchers, and advisors – and international development partners providing aid and technical assistance to Viet Nam.

The PAPI also complements public administrative reform efforts. The scientific methodology and robust index implementation gives an accurate picture of subnational governance, which helps to tailor reform policies and initiatives by province. The findings can also support evidence-based policy making, implementation, and policy monitoring at national and provincial

levels. This was confirmed by the Vice Minister of Home Affairs at the National Validation Workshop in December 2010, when he argued that the index's findings "provide an important channel of evidence drawn from citizens' experiences that contributes to reflecting the performance of public administration at the provincial levels".

The quantitative data from the PAPI, which is publicly available on the index's website, can be potentially used by state and non-state actors to inform policy development and implementation. For instance, the Vice Chairwoman of the National Assembly's Justice Committee, at the PAPI National Advisory Board group meeting in November 2010, said that findings from research for the index "are a reference source that complements assessments from the Government". She added that results from the annual PAPI implementation would serve as useful inputs for discussions at the National Assembly, and as reference for the National Assembly's Annual Report.

Media sources are also able to report and use PAPI data to generate public debate about policy implementation issues. After the official launch of the 2010 data, report, and website in March 2011, the media were particularly proactive in calling for public authorities to implement the policies and obtain results.<sup>12</sup>

It is expected that the 2010 index data will serve as a baseline measure. Over time, through iteration, changes in governance and public administration in some locations are expected, and that will allow a better understanding of how those changes contribute to local wealth and welfare. The words of a Standing Member of the Provincial Party Committee and Head of the Office of Hau Giang Provincial People's Committee at the validation workshop for the index's findings from the southern provinces in December 2010, offer particular encouragement: "The assessments and findings from the index research regarding the performance of Hau Giang province are very valid. They will help us in public administration reform efforts. The Report helps to understand better our provincial problems in order to find solutions. We will take the findings seriously as they reflect the reality of the province."

## **Conclusions**

The PAPI is not merely a single index, but a dashboard with which to address existing information gaps in public sector performance identified by service end-users. Through its collection of data from citizens' own experiences, the index aims to identify pathways for improvements in policy-making and policy implementation processes.

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12. A selection of media coverage and use of Public Administration Performance Index data and results is available at [www.papi.vn](http://www.papi.vn) under section entitled "News and Media".

The index is a robust scientific tool to measure the performance of provincial governments. Its rigorous scientific methodology makes the findings more credible, and it is harder for provincial and national government to ignore. Given its initial success, the index will be implemented in all of Viet Nam's 63 provinces in 2011, with the participation of an estimated 13,500 citizens, whose views of and experiences of the effectiveness and efficiency of the public sector will be collected, analysed, and presented in the composite index to spur local reforms. The index will be further improved to disaggregate data and conduct better analytical work at the dimensional and sub-dimensional level, so that a comprehensive understanding of the reasons for variations between provinces can be understood.

A significant finding, in terms of provincial governance and public administration performance, is the association of the PAPI scores with economic growth and human development. Data analysis shows that provinces do not need to be wealthy to perform well, with relatively resource-poor provinces performing better than those with similar or higher GDP per capita. Another test association between the PAPI and the Human Development Index shows that the two indices are significantly correlated ( $r=0.6799$ , statistically significant at 0.001 level). This means that provinces with higher levels of performance in the PAPI generally tend to have higher human development levels. While the association is positive and strong, correlation does not mean causality. The relationship can run either way. Nevertheless, the test provides a piece of evidence as both processes seems to go hand in hand at the provincial level in Viet Nam.

The PAPI aims to establish an effective tool for citizens to oversee the performance of the state apparatus and public administration system at the provincial level. Ultimately, provinces and cities will be provided with a monitoring tool to enhance local governance, and to support national efforts in making the public administration system and local governments more accountable to citizens and society generally.

To summarize, the PAPI is a useful tool for dialogue, policy research, and evidence-based policy reform, because:

- Its scientific character and robust implementation reflects accurately what is happening at the provincial level.
- It helps provincial authorities to see their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the reasons for differences in performance, enabling them to identify practical solutions to improve the performance of the public administration system.

- It presents the experiences (or feedback) of citizens from provinces on the performance of governance and public administration.
- It serves as a reference for provinces, as it reflects whether the efforts to reform and improve the quality and availability of governance and public administration are having an impact.
- It complements public administration reform efforts at the provincial level.
- It provides objective information that supports policy-making, implementation, and monitoring processes at national and provincial levels.

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Further documentation materials regarding methodology, implementation, findings and data can be found at [www.papi.vn](http://www.papi.vn) – The Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index in Viet Nam.

## GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: THE INDIA EXPERIENCE

Praveen Jha and John Samuel

The search for accountability is not new. It has resonance in theories from long ago, such as the Greco-Roman perspectives, or Chanakya's renowned treatise on statecraft, *Arthashastra*, from the Mauryan period.<sup>1</sup> It is there, too, in more modern thinking on social contracts,<sup>2</sup> which gave legitimacy to governments to rule the people, based on their consent. The idea is reflected in various versions of the contemporary advocates for accountability that have come to include civil society<sup>3</sup> initiatives to hold governments to account. The demand that governments must be transparent and accountable also comes from the notion of citizen rights (Samuel, 2007), which have become more prominent in discourses on Human and Development Rights. This chapter analyses three of several such major citizens' initiatives in India that engage and seek accountability from the government.

One story of a citizens' successful initiative to claim accountability was led by civil society organizations. They used the Right to Information Act as a tool to make government functionaries answerable for the use of public resources. This was part of a larger social audit movement. A second case

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1. Chanakya, also known as Kautilya (350-283 BC) authored *Arthashastra*, which documented principles of governance, state affairs, economic policy and security of a nation state. It also laid down the duties and conduct of the government functionaries, thereby making the officials accountable to the people.
  2. For instance by Plato in *Crito*, 360 B.C.; Jean Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract or Principles of Political Right*, 1762 and more recently by John Rawls in *Theory of Justice* (1971) and David Gauthier's *Morals by Agreement* (1986), among others, are justly regarded as major contributions in this respect.
  3. The notion of civil society as a theoretical construct has become an extremely contentious one as it gets used in multiple ways, often far-removed from its original conception as put forth by the famous Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci.

study highlights an interesting experiment in assessing the strength of the pillars of governance by regular monitoring and concerted assessment of institutions of governance and public policy (Governance Assessment). A third example examines the growth of budget work as an instrument to assess the priority of the government, and its focus on, the poor and the excluded sections of population (Budget Analysis and Budget Advocacy). These case studies are part of a 'rights' perspective (Right to Information through Social Audit) and 'monitoring' framework (Governance Assessment and Budget Analysis to assess government priority).

It is important to position the ongoing, citizen-led assessment and accountability initiatives within their particular historical and political contexts. Many social accountability initiatives have been triggered in response to growing social and political unrest against widespread corruption, and lack of public accountability and transparency. The social accountability initiatives in India are also an outcome of the country's history of democratization. A brief sketch of the history of social movements in India is essential to understand the prominence of social accountability initiatives in the country.

### **Role of social movements**

India has historically been home to a rich *mélange* of social movements and experiments, with citizen-led initiatives to transform and democratize society and the state. The long collective experience and shared memories of struggles for freedom and various social movements that emerged over the last one hundred years have shaped the current discourse on governance assessments and popular movements for social accountability.

"A social movement is a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction (Wilkinson, 1971), and such movements, may be 'accumulative, alternative and transformatory'.<sup>4</sup>

The vast canvas of social movements in India offers many ways and means of seeking accountability, and such quests may be considered both 'intrinsic' (i.e., a subset of social movements) as well as 'instrumental' (i.e., pushing for more effective strategies), and one may argue that it is difficult to put them into separate watertight compartments

The objective of the Indian independence movement (1857-1947) was not just self-rule and freedom from the colonial British Empire, it also promised a new social and political order where all citizens – irrespective of gender, caste, and creed – could enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms.

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4. Shah, Ghanshyam (2004) cites Partha Mukherji, 1977, 'Social Movement and Social Change: To a Conceptual Clarification and Theoretical Framework', *Sociological Bulletin*, 26(1).

This goal of the national freedom movement was greatly influenced by the leadership and thinking of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated equality, non-violence and decentralization of political power and economic production.

At the same time, there were also alternative movements in India that sought to challenge and change the injustices perpetrated by the traditional caste-system.<sup>5</sup> Social reformers and activists, such as Jyotirao Phule and Bhim Rao Ambedkar,<sup>6</sup> strived to advance the social, political, and economic rights of the *dalits* (previously known as Untouchables), historically marginalized people within the entrenched cast system of India. The left movement<sup>7</sup> focused on addressing class-based inequality and advocating for the rights of workers and rural poor.

The influence of these divergent social and political movements can be discerned in the contemporary advocacy for gender rights, environmental rights, adivasi (indigenous people) rights, and local governance.<sup>8</sup> These initiatives reflect the many heterogeneities of India in its political views, perspectives, ethnicities, castes, languages, and regional diversities, and cover a wide spectrum of issues – yet they have remained conspicuously outside the mainstream political party processes.

Since the late 1980s, several advocacy networks and grassroots organizations have engendered novel initiatives<sup>9</sup> relating to diverse issues that led to the development of new methods and tools to assess the performance of governance, and the institutions of government, in an effort to seek accountability from the government. These tools provided greater scope for people's voice to be heard and to engage with the formal institutions to claim accountability. The various participatory approaches and citizens reports on environment, women, local governance, and the informal sector were initial efforts to assess the trends and status of various sectors and the performance

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5. A section of the advocates of dalit movements believe that Gandhi's concern for the untouchables (or '*harijans*'/ the people of God as he called them) was based on upper caste 'compassion', and hence false, rather than a recognition of their social, political and economic rights as equal citizens of India.

6. For more details on the life and achievement of Phule see <http://www.mahatmaphule.com/> and on Ambedkar see <http://www.ambedkar.org/>

7. The Left has, by and large, been critical of Gandhian views since 'class' was not embedded in Mahatma Gandhi's frame.

8. Some of the well-known Gandhian movements would include the Sarvodaya movement that concentrated on the redistribution of land in the fifties and sixties but is fairly dormant now, the movement for bringing in Panchayati Raj (local governance), and a plethora of Gandhian institutions all over the country.

9. Notable among these are the Silent Valley movement, Apikko Movement, land rights movement spearheaded by Ekta Parishad, People's Science Movement, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, and electoral reforms movement by Lok Satta,

of government in those sectors. The Shramashakti Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and the Govt. of India, 1998, was an excellent example of participatory and multi-stakeholder assessments that significantly influenced the public policy framework. The report was a result of the decade long advocacy by the Self-Employed Women's Association, a membership-based women's labour movement.

With the market liberalization of the 1990s, the conflict between the marginalized and the impoverished and the government has visibly increased. Several new social movements and advocacy networks have expanded the scope of accountability to include corporate accountability, particularly in relation to human rights. The rights based approach to development and social issues created a normative and conceptual framework to monitor the performance of government, and to demand social and political accountability. Further, the nature of representative democracy in India has also pushed citizen activists to support participatory democracy approaches where people's voices can resonate in political decision-making.

The movements for accountability are inextricably and organically connected with wider social movements that are products of a combination of several motivating factors. Among these, the growing quest and demands for (a) increased development effectiveness, (b) improved governance, and (c) civil society empowerment are seen as major factors for the germination of a range of social accountability initiatives, as has also been noted by eminent sociologists like Marc Edelman (Edelman, 2001). The following case studies derive their relevance not as isolated civil society projects, but a continuation of developing innovative approaches to assert rights and seek accountability.

### ***Social audit and right to information***

Social audit implies a participatory assessment, or monitoring, of government records of the various projects and expenditures at the community level, which hold government agencies accountable. While this has come to the fore in recent years, the term has been in use since the early 1950s as a tool to focus on the neglected social impact of any intervention or initiative. Ideally, Social audit is a collaborative process between government and local communities, where official records and data are made available to local communities to monitor and evaluate the implementation of a scheme, programme, policy or even a law. However, the process very often turns combative, as the government officials are, in most cases, responsible for the corruption and mismanagement and are therefore are unwilling to respond to request for accountability.

Social audits are based on the principles of open information policy, willingness to share information with all key stakeholders, and public display

of the details of the strategies, programmes, budgets, and institutional capacity. There is, however, a wide range of methods and tools applied in the process of social audit, based on the context, purpose, and actors involved in the audit process.

The social audit movement emerged from grassroots advocacy for the right to minimum wages in the early 1990s for workers in Rajasthan state. While agitating for people's rights for work and minimum wage, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), a mass-based organization of workers and farmers, exposed entrenched corruption wherein a large proportion of development funds did not reach the intended beneficiaries. While agitating for the rights of farmers and workers, the organization found that development funds were being misused and local development for the poor was consequently being hampered. Government authorities often refused to give the required information or document, claiming it to be 'classified' in a textbook evocation of the colonial Official Secrets Act. This official reluctance triggered a demand for the appropriate information when people realized that they were given much lower wages than recorded in local government ledgers. This was conclusively linked to rampant corruption in the government apparatus. The first public hearing, or '*jansunwai*', for social audit was held in 1994, when official records and financial statements were subjected to critical scrutiny by the local community in the presence of local government officials. This exercise and every subsequent meeting led to public exposure of corruption.

*Jansunwai* ensured stakeholder engagement and made the process of seeking accountability participatory and inclusive. For the first time, most of these poor and the marginalized people were able to question the government's policy and perspective. This innovative yet rudimentary hearing successful created the space for citizen and public official engagement. Within this space the process of seeking accountability from local officials on the utilization of public funds was integrated, thereby ensuring maximizing local ownership of the entire process. It also acted as a rallying point for bringing together marginalized and the poor landless farmers and labourers to question government officials, seek explanation for the diversion of funds or lack of expenditure and poor implementation. The above grassroots participatory process of seeking public sector accountability came to be known as social audit.

Initially, MKSS had to rely on sympathetic government officials to access official documents. Throughout the exercise, however, they were often confronted with obstacles in accessing government records and procuring information. This compelled them to engage with the issue of public

access to government records and official information. And that led to the campaign for right to information in Rajasthan. The various initiatives in the states of Maharashtra, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, and in urban areas, were organized as a National Campaign for the Right to Information. While MKSS played an active leadership role in the campaign, there were also several grassroots organizations and advocacy networks involved. The first Right to Information law was passed in 1995. However, its implementation only began a year later after vigorous campaigns and strikes organized by MKSS and other organizations in different parts of India. When the act was finally implemented, it was implemented only partially. Finally, in 2000, the Rajasthan government enacted the Right to Information Act, which addressed the demands of civil society groups. And the Right to Information at the national level was enacted by the Indian Parliament in 2005.

The Act facilitated adoption of social audit methodology by others actors. While an NGO may help to facilitate the audit, it is the participation of citizens – particularly marginalized groups – that makes social audit a powerful tool to assess governance and to promote accountability. The right to demand information empowered people and gave them the means to assess government performance in local development and governance, and to expose corruption.

The public hearings, or jansunwai, are a strategy to ensure the maximum participation of people in the process of a social audit. In a society where a significant number of people are still illiterate, public hearings help to ensure a high level of participation. The design of the social audit depends on the context. In many cases, information on budget allocations, programme details, and implementation, is often publicized by posters at the audit venue so that citizens are armed with the information they need to question government officials. A hearing is usually attended by all the important stakeholders, including government officials, the organization responsible for conducting the audit, community members, local media representatives, and by eminent persons with a link to the community. CSOs read out the discrepancies that have been discovered during the validation of official records, with the help of local knowledge provided by the community members. The villagers can then contribute.

It is widely believed that social audits and the Right to Information Act have significantly enhanced the capacity of the local people to demand accountability from government. The availability of, and access to, information has further propelled public demands for transparency and accountability. Increasingly, government information and records can be scrutinized and checked for discrepancies, and people seeking accountability can demand information as a right (Goetz and Jenkins, 1999). The most

prominent impact of this combination of right to information and social audit has been a significant improvement in the use of development funds to benefit poor people. The successes of MKSS has prompted similar campaigns elsewhere – from a campaign to expose corruption in the public distribution system in Surguja (Madhya Pradesh) “to protests against police harassment of rickshaw-pullers and hawkers in other Indian cities. A nationwide campaign for the people’s right to official information, which includes lobbying for appropriate legislative reform, has also emerged from these initiatives” (Dreze and Sen, 2002). State governments have realized the utility of the MKSS approach to social accountability and have, in several instances, initiated social audits themselves to be held under the supervision of a CSO. This has proved an extremely effective example of government and civil society partnership in furthering accountability, transparency, and good governance.

The major impact of the social audit process has been its wider acceptance and use at the national and international level as an important way of promoting social accountability.

Social audit is also increasingly used as a means of participatory self-assessments by civil society organizations to make themselves more accountable, and to increase their social legitimacy. Government at the national and state level uses social audit to promote public accountability and legitimacy of public service delivery, including anti-poverty programmes. The Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee scheme, one of the world’s largest social protection and rights to work programmes, incorporated social audit into its work. Many government departments followed suit, adopting social audit as a method of participatory assessment of local development and service delivery. In this way, the social audit process, developed by a civil society organization as a means to demand accountability, is now being used as a supply-side transparency and accountability mechanism by the government. This new dynamic can help to facilitate inclusive participation and the government’s ability to respond. Although the government’s adoption of social audit is a positive outcome of public campaigning, there is criticism that social audit often fails, or becomes a bureaucratic exercise rather than a genuine participatory audit or assessment.

As a recent Government of India Report of the Task Group on Social Audit found:

“While social audits are a powerful tool for programme audit and monitoring by the beneficiaries and direct stakeholders, its limitations should be recognized in determining its positioning in the public

sector audit framework. The scope of social audits is intensive but highly localized and covers only certain selected aspects out of a wide range of audit concerns in the financial, compliance and performance audits. These are also sporadic and ad hoc, except where broad-based monitoring by Gram Sabha (village councils/assemblies) has been embedded in the social sector programmes. Even in these cases, the monitoring is informal and unprocessed. Moreover, the documentation of social audits is not in a form as to provide consistent evidence. The findings of social audit, unless carried out on a representative basis, cannot be either generalized or estimations over the entire population be made” (Government of India, 2010).

### **Social Watch movement for governance assessment**

The Social Watch network in India has been involved in assessing institutions of governance, social development, and the MDGs for more than a decade. The annual assessments of the Parliament, Judiciary, national social development policies, and local government institutions are brought together in the form of a ‘Citizens Report on Governance and Development’. Since 2001, the annual Citizens reports cumulatively raised the accountability of key institutions and social development policy. The information and analysis generated through the assessments and reports are used for advocacy campaigns to challenge and change the public policies. The Social Watch assessments also focus on the delivery of social development and the MDGs in relation to the government’s policy promises.

The key purpose of the Social Watch approach to governance assessments is well captured by the latest Citizens Report on Governance and Development (2010): “It is essential for India to improve the delivery of core public services such as health care, education, power and water supply to all citizens. This means empowering the citizens to demand better services through reform that create effective systems of public sector accountability. The report aims to assess the governance and development process in India and inform the citizens so that a debate can be generated and public accountability can be ensured.”

The assessments use a human rights approach to development, and are based on the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India. The assessment framework also considers the government’s plans and annual promises. The annual citizens’ report is presented to a multi-stakeholder assembly of representatives from civil society organizations, social movements, academia, the media, and the government. The report is also formally presented to the Prime Minister and to the President of India. The report’s release in India’s

states brings public discussions and media debates, which help to focus on the quality of institutions, the criminalization of politics, and corruption in India.

Social Watch<sup>10</sup> India is part of a global advocacy network involved in systematically monitoring social development and governance. The global social watch report has developed a governance assessment framework to annually monitor the performance of various governments in the global South and North in social development and governance.

Social Watch India<sup>11</sup> was established in 1996. It was promoted by civil society organizations, think-tanks, and researchers. The network is now active in more than 15 states across India and is also involved in promoting social watch assessments at the state and local levels. In an attempt to measure the gap between government promises and government delivery, the coalition monitors the institutions of governance and their commitment towards citizens and principles of democracy.

Social Watch India developed a set of indicators and processes to assess the functioning of the Indian Parliament, implementation of social development policies, the judiciary, and local governance institutions. These indicators have been developed through a series of participatory workshops in various parts of India.

The Parliamentary Performance Index consists of a set of indicators, such as time spent on key issues of legislation, budget discussions, participation of political parties and members, the criminal records of Members of Parliament, the functioning of committees, and the quality of performance of Parliament, in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. The assessment also looks at the quality of debate during the lower house's Question Hour, and the general discussion on social policy in Parliament. The policy assessment indicators include budget priorities, expenditure patterns, people's participation in formulating and implementing policies, and the gap between promised policy, budget allocation, and actual performance. The Social Watch network documented case studies that demonstrate the gap between policy intentions and actual delivery.

The assessment framework on the Indian judiciary is based on responsiveness, sensitivity of the court to social issues such as poverty,

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10. Social Watch emerged as an advocacy network – to monitor the promise made during the UN World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) in 1995 was held in Copenhagen. World leaders committed themselves to a Declaration and Action Programme covering the broad spectrum of political, economic, and social measures necessary to eradicate poverty. The summit was a landmark, not only in terms of the size of participation, but also in terms of the depth of issues dealt with.

11. For more details see [www.socialwatchininda.net](http://www.socialwatchininda.net)

environmental protection, and human rights. Local self-governance is assessed by the extent of decentralization of finance, function and functionaries, women's political participation, and the quality of public service delivery through local government institutions.

Annual assessments are made by a team of researchers. They are based on a multi-stakeholder process. The priorities and focus of the assessment are guided by an advisory committee and the national Social Watch coalition, consisting of Members of Parliament, journalists, former civil servants, lawyers, academics, policy researchers, and social activists. Assessment is made at two levels: i) at the level of key institutions, using available information and analysis, and based on an agreed framework; and ii) at the grassroots level, in terms of the positive or negative impact of policies and programmes.

The assessments of social development and public service delivery also focus on the gaps in achieving the MDGs. In 2005, Social Watch organized a citizens' perception survey to assess the quality of MDG delivery in India. The survey used focus group discussions on key indicators to develop a collective report card on the performance of government service delivery on the ground. More than 25,000 people participated, and produced a report, *MDGs: As if People Matter*.

The information and analysis generated by the report is used for advocacy campaigns for strengthening public service delivery, achieving the MDGs, and seeking government accountability. The *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan*<sup>12</sup> (Don't Break Your Promises) Campaign is an advocacy campaign network closely associated with the Social Watch network and has been at the forefront of public demands for effective delivery of services and the MDGs at both national and local level.

Over a decade of concerted efforts in monitoring and assessing the function of governance institutions and delivery of public services has had a significant impact on public policy debates and processes in India. Social Watch was able not only to generate evidence to expose issues like corruption and lack of judicial accountability, but most significantly has been instrumental in opening up the national planning processes. In 2007, when the Social Watch report was formally submitted to Prime Minister

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12. "Wada Na Todo Abhiyan" is a national campaign to hold the government accountable to its promise to end poverty, social exclusion, and discrimination. The Campaign emerged from the consensus among human rights activists and social action groups who were part of the World Social Forum 2004 (Mumbai) on the need for a forceful, focused and concerted effort to make a difference to the fact that one-fourth of the world's poor live in India, and continue to experience intense deprivation from opportunities to learn, live and work in dignity.

Dr. Manmohan Singh, he forwarded the report to the Planning Commission with instructions to take account of the findings and incorporate them into the planning process. Following this, the Planning Commission initiated a consultative process to ensure the participation and voice of civil society in the development of social policies and local governance. While the Planning Commission had initiated its own mid-term review of the government's 11th Five-Year Plan, it also encouraged civil society stakeholders to assess the Plan milestones. The Social Watch network, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, and other organizations were invited by the Planning Commission to review the Plan, and they presented the first ever civil society review of a Five-Year Plan. Further, the 12th Five-Year Plan took the process one step further by integrating civil society into the planning process.

The assessment process has therefore evolved into a citizen-led governance assessment process that continuously seeks accountability and transparency in the implementation of pro-poor policies from the government.

### **Budget analysis for budget and policy monitoring**

A key concern with many social accountability initiatives and mechanisms is the government budget. Policies formulated by governments become effective only if they have resources committed to their implementation. But resource allocation is not an exercise governed purely by the logic of economic rationality or technocratic considerations, but rather a product of political choices and is thus subject to political forces. There are a number of stakeholders who attempt to manoeuvre resources through their political and economic influence. As a result, the interests, needs, and concerns of those groups that do not enjoy political and economic power and cannot influence the process of resource allocation can be excluded from the budget formulation process. Scrutiny of budget allocations is also vital in questioning the (lack of) accountability mechanisms within government. With no built-in feedback or grievance redress mechanism to correct the inadequacy of the public services, the monitoring and assessments of budgets is a key instrument in seeking accountability and stronger public service delivery.

Budget analysis, with a human rights based approach, allows assessment and scrutiny of sectoral allocations with a focus on vulnerable and marginalized groups (Das and Ahmed, 2004). This analysis is important when neo-liberal reforms and structural adjustment programmes have sought to reduce expenditure in the social sector and weakened the role of the welfare state.

Budgets articulate the government's macroeconomic policies and impact basic social services, employment, and poverty alleviation, all of which significantly influence the life of the poor and the marginalized sections of the society. How effectively the budget is implemented reflects the extent to

which policy is translated into results. Too often, budgets have benefitted the politically and economically dominant sections of society. The views of poor people and organizations representing them are rarely considered in planning macroeconomic policies and their associated budgets.

The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA)<sup>13</sup> was established by citizen activists and advocacy organizations involved in monitoring and assessing government budgets. It first aimed to have the interests of poor and marginalized groups considered in macroeconomic policies and budgets. It then moved towards budget and policy analysis and advocacy through a network of countrywide alliances of grassroots civil society groups and social movements. The Centre advocates budget analysis as a way to make the government accountable. It has worked to unravel the complexities of budgets and make them comprehensible to a wide audience. This helps to identify reasons for poor development outcomes in, for example, education, health, food security, and rural development, and for marginalized populations, such as women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and religious minorities. It also offers an opportunity to evaluate the government's performance in fulfilling its policy commitments.

The Centre's work has increased civil society understanding of budgets and has contributed to the creation of the People's Budget Initiative alliance to assess the government's budgetary priorities.

Nevertheless, there are limitations to civil society budget monitoring and assessment. The most important is that budgetary resource allocation does not guarantee availability of funds for programmes and, in most cases, budget analysis does not cover proposals on other possible or potential sources of budgets or re-allocation opportunities. Since money is fungible and government exercises allocation priorities throughout the year, it is highly possible that despite the budgetary allocation the funds are shifted to another programme or project.

Capacity building is extremely important if the exercise is to be successful. Budgets are technical documents and civil society groups need to develop the expertise and skills required to understand it before they begin to suggest policy changes. Developing local capacities for budget analysis is therefore critical if budgets are to be an entry point in the search for accountability. While the CBGA has endeavoured to engage consistently with civil society actors from diverse backgrounds and equip them with the requisite skills, the Centre also recognizes that a lot more needs to be done. In using budget analysis as a tool, care should be taken to involve not only

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13. For more details see [www.cbgaindia.org](http://www.cbgaindia.org)

technical experts, but also activists, grassroots leaders, women *panchayat* (local council) representatives, and government service providers. The Centre has consistently deepened the scope of budget analysis by moving from examining sector priorities to assessing governance and implementation. Of the Centre's many achievements, there are four results of particular note.

First, the central government introduced modifications in the Union budget documents for 2011–12 by providing information on actual expenditure incurred by its various ministries and departments. That was a result of the Centre's sustained advocacy efforts and those of other organizations. It is also clearly an acknowledgment by the government that people's initiatives have developed adequate expertise in assessing the quality and depth of the information provided by the government.

Second, the Union government incorporated specific changes in its Gender Budgeting Statement (a separate statement in the central government's budget document that outlines the budgetary provisions that are specifically for the welfare of women) in 2007 based on the suggestions made by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability. This modified the assumptions that were made to include specific government schemes and initiatives under the statement. That was followed by considerable deepening of the methodology adopted by policymakers in the approach to gender budgeting (a budgetary practice that allows for earmarking specific amount of funds accruing specifically to women).

Third, the Union government introduced a special statement specifically outlining the provisions made for the welfare of children in 2008. That, again, was a result of the concerted efforts of advocacy groups, including the CBGA.

Fourth, CBGA has broadened and deepened the public discourse on budgets outside academia. Debates and discussions related to the budgets are more visible in the public sphere than they were a decade ago.

### **Lessons and challenges**

Citizen-led assessment initiatives have brought human rights principles and dialogue (particularly on accountability, participation, rule of law, equality, and non-discrimination) to governance processes. However, applying the human rights based approach to governance is political and a function of power relationships within and beyond the institutions of government. While these citizen-led initiatives have influenced the public policy discourse to a certain extent, significant challenges remain

in influencing the larger political process that shape the power-relations embedded in governance, which is essential for democratizing governance, ensuring human rights, and eradicating poverty.

Most social accountability movements in India started as part of the mainstream political process, largely led by the political parties. But since the 1990's, new initiatives for social advocacy and accountability have largely been driven by wide range of civil society organizations. Civil society is the driving force behind social mobilization, and using citizen-led assessments and monitoring as tools to influence public policy priorities and make the state more responsive. Despite growing civil society activism, the broad political conditions or contexts that shape the politics of governance seem to remain unchanged, and that raises questions about the political economy of knowledge-based activism and the impact of periodic assessments or audits.

***Assessments – not just technical tools, but potential heralds of new political processes***

The process of assessing and monitoring, particularly in the Indian context, is not just about using technical tools, or applying methods. It is a fine combination of politics of knowledge, social mobilization, and evidence-based policy making.

The success of the right to information movement and social audits clearly demonstrate how grassroots initiatives can influence larger political discourse. The social mobilization undertaken by MKSS has helped to empower communities and create a sense of agency and ownership of the social audit initiatives. This has helped to strengthen the capacity of people to ask questions, demand services, and assert rights. That has brought increased state responsiveness and accountability.

Efforts by Social Watch and the CBGA, combined with similar endeavours by scores of CSOs have also helped to open up the space for participatory planning and budgeting nationally. The continuing political discourse and public demand to fight corruption at every level of government is also a consequence of the cumulative impact of grassroots and civil society efforts.

To have a genuinely significant impact, assessments and audits need to be part of wider civil society and political processes that can effectively use knowledge networking, advocacy, and social mobilization. These processes are, by definition, long-term and may not yield measurable results within a year or two or even over the course of a project.

### ***Addressing exclusion and promoting inclusive participation***

As the primary objective of the transparency and accountability agenda is ensuring equitable distribution of public services and promoting state responsiveness and accountability, the movements and assessment processes aiming to achieve that objective should address exclusion and facilitate the genuine participation of the large majority of the excluded, poor, and marginalized people. However, encouraging broad-based participation may be difficult in countries such as India with large and diverse populations (1.2 billion), where different groups often have conflicting priorities. The assessment processes should address the challenge of diversity and conflicting priorities and seek to actively involve diverse groups, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, to enhance the assessments' legitimacy, widen their scope and impact, and eventually democratize governance processes.

### **A concluding remark**

There are many more illustrations of citizens' initiatives that pursue accountability in India. These include the introduction of Citizen's Report Cards<sup>14</sup> as an instrument to seek answerability from the government, the adoption of Citizen's Charters in most government departments, the development of e-governance initiatives that have increased access to government information, outcome surveys (such as the Annual Status of Education Report), and advocacy movements.

With increasing concerns relating to governance deficits in South Asia and globally, serious accountability gaps are partially responsible for government failure to provide basic services to the poorest citizens. Over the last decade or so, citizen initiatives and social movements have started to use new forms of activism to monitor the operations of the state and demand greater accountability from governments at all levels. The focus of those initiatives is, to a large extent, almost entirely on social policy and the role and responsibility of the state in providing basic social goods to its citizens. These innovations are diverse in their techniques and varied in their scope. They hold enormous potential to enhance government accountability.

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14. A successful experiment worth noting in the context of strengthening the capacity of people to analyse budgets is the use of Citizen's Report Card as an effective tool to seek accountability from the government. Similar to the efforts of assessing the priority of the government through scrutinizing the budgets, Citizen's Report Cards examine the extent of public service delivery by gauging the response of the end-users, i.e. the people who use the services provided by the government.

Activism is a new kind of engagement with the state. It is built around the principle of access to information as its core. This new approach involves a systematic collection and analysis of data, which is subsequently used to evaluate the performance and quality of services. Citizens monitor services, track inefficiencies and misappropriations (e.g., through corruption). After evaluation, citizens negotiate with the government using the evaluation information, and attempt to make the government more transparent, responsive, and accountable. They engage with the state in a much more constructive, systematic, and organized way. This greatly increases the chance of bringing about positive policy changes. The three case studies described in this chapter also suggest scope for increased democratization of the spaces to seek accountability by locating citizens' initiatives within a framework of basic 'rights', which are every citizen's entitlement.

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## **GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN BRAZIL**

**Atila Roque and Alexandre Ciconello**

### **Introduction**

A Reflection of the recent history of democracy building in Brazil will be filled with a sense of achievement – all the more so given the challenges that lay ahead in the early days of political transition in the 1980s. Much of that achievement has to do with the centrality of a concept of democracy that is firmly grounded on the idea that peoples' participation and shared governance is essential to public life.

To meet the new participatory demands, the state and political system were transformed to incorporate expectations of participation by social movements and civil society organizations at different levels of state governance in Brazil, particularly those related to assessing priorities and the impact of public policies. In other South American countries too, this was a process that brought greater awareness of the importance of a strong civil society that was able to effectively take part in a public discussion on the priorities of government policies, and to establish formal mechanisms to monitor and to assess their implementation.

Most of the political and social forces in Brazil's re-democratization process in the 1980s and 1990s were motivated by a governance perspective that was not restricted to re-establishing a representative electoral system, but adopted a notion of participatory democracy as its central objective.

This process was slow and not without conflict, particularly in a context strongly marked by inequality, centralism, and authoritarian political practices. Despite these constraints, a culture of 'active citizenship' has become increasingly visible. For decades, civil society organizations, social

movements, grassroots groups, and human rights activists struggled to overcome a well-established culture where the state was seen as a tool mainly for the benefit of private elite interests, which was used to repress and control society's poor and marginalized groups.

The challenge that faced the democratic movement at that time was to promote changes from within the existing framework of an authoritarian state through gradual shifts in the power structure and relations. The central pillar of this process was the idea of promoting progress by enhancing citizen participation in the political decisions that affect their lives.

Over the past 20 years, formal participation spaces were built at the federal, state, and municipal levels. It was also a period of experimentation, with new institutional mechanisms established to increase control of public budgeting processes and social policy implementation, including participatory budget experiences and citizens initiatives to monitor international commitments established during United Nations Social Conferences.

This study aims to analyse the process leading to those institutional innovations, as well as its impacts and challenges for consolidating and expanding democracy in Brazil. The emphasis is on the establishment of new mechanisms of citizens' participation and social control over public policies processes, enhancing democratic assessment, ownership, and transparency of the choices made by governments.

It is not an exhaustive description or presentation of cases, but is indicative of the challenges the country faces in expanding citizen participation in governance assessment processes. As part of this exercise, we present a brief analysis of the Social Watch network experience in Brazil, as it shows the potential of connecting national and international rights initiatives as part of domestic processes of citizen empowerment.

### **Brief background of social participation in Brazil**

Military dictatorship (1964–1985) imposed limits on the freedom of expression and association of individuals, political, and social groups opposing the authoritarian regime. The National Security Law (1967/69) and the Institutional Act Number 5 (1968) were the two main legal tools that limited political life. They were the basis for criminalizing opposition parties, suppressing elected mandates, and controlling civil liberties. During the hardest time of the dictatorship, between 1968 and 1978, torture and 'disappearance' of opponents of the military regime were common.

However, the institutional architecture built to repress any sign of protest against the military regime also left some room for mobilization and debate

at the grassroots level. This space was strategically identified and used by thousands of formal and informal organizations, activists, religious people, intellectuals, and social movements. Their actions were based on popular educational processes developed for low-income groups, with the aim of promoting their empowerment and awareness as citizens, many of them inspired by Paulo Freire's methodology of popular education. The goal was to educate the population as a way of promoting social change.

An important sector of the pro-democracy movement in this period came about as a result of the actions of progressive sectors of the Catholic Church, through the *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* (or Christian Base Communities), groups linked to thousands of Catholic parishes spread throughout the country. These communities became known for their pedagogic approach, which emphasized participation, community links, and egalitarian ideals. It is estimated that, in the early 1980s, there were about 80,000 such communities in Brazil, with a membership of approximately two million people (Viola and Mainwaring, 1987).

In parallel to this movement, and as a result of an intense process of urbanization in Brazil since the 1950s, an extensive network of neighbourhood associations and community organizations were established, claiming better public services, such as water supply, sanitation, transportation, and electricity services, as well as schools and health stations. The 'community association' movement of the 1970s and 1980s was perceived as a means of tackling pressing daily problems and of developing spaces to foster democratic relations and establish identities (Boschi, 1987).

During the same period, the first NGOs were set up in response to the loss of social and political spaces of organizations, such as unions and political parties. These NGOs focused on ensuring human rights and on establishing new rights. They played a key role in promoting new political actions as well as new social processes, and they established a new dimension, or sector, in the history of Brazilian civil society. In addition, these organisations were connected to a web of international solidarity networks made up of European and North American cooperation agencies, church-based organizations and human rights groups. This ensured crucial support for their financial and political sustainability (Roque, 2000).

These processes were central in the creation of a culture of civic participation in public life and in laying the foundations for further demands for the creation of participatory mechanisms to enhance the influence of citizens in the design, decision-making, and evaluation of public policies.

## **Participatory processes since the federal constitution of 1988**

The federal constitution of 1988, which to a large extent was the product of the struggles for democracy during military rule, consolidated a legal framework for the state in Brazil with a clear emphasis on people's participation and human rights. It also promulgated a set of principles and guidelines to ensure the involvement of citizens in the design, implementation, and social control of public policies that were later applied to, and implemented in, institutional mechanisms at the three levels of the federation (federal, state, and municipal levels).

The constitution also recognized new responsibilities for CSOs within the Brazilian political system, highlighting their supportive role in the management of public affairs. For these and other reasons, it was nicknamed the 'citizen's constitution'. As part of the process of putting in practice the new constitutional guidelines two main mechanisms for collective deliberations were established: public policy councils and national conferences.

### **Public policy councils**

The public policy councils were created to implement the participatory ideals provided for in the federal constitution. They allowed people to participate more meaningfully in the definition, implementation, and social control of public policies. Governmental decisions were no longer restricted to members of the executive branch and public managers, as responsibility for making them started to be shared with civil society.

Although collegiate institutions, such as councils, were not new in the Brazilian state, their configuration after the implementation of the 1988 Constitution represented a remarkable institutional innovation. One of the first public policies to be fully redefined as a result of this participatory and decentralizing approach was the health policy. The Unified Health System was created to link all public and universal health-care services at federal, state, and municipal levels. A deliberative and permanent health council was established at each of these administrative levels, half of which were mandated to be civil-society representatives.<sup>1</sup> The council has many legal responsibilities, including the definition of strategies and priorities for the health sector and approving public funds earmarked for implementing

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1. Law 8142/90 - Art. 1° The Unified Health System (SUS) provided for in Law n. 8,080 of September 19, 1990 will be composed of the following collegiate bodies in each governmental sphere, without prejudice to the functions of the Legislative Branch: (...) Paragraph 2 - The Health Council shall be a permanent and deliberative collegiate body made up of government representatives, service providers, health professionals and users in charge of defining strategies and controlling the implementation of the health policy at the corresponding level, including in its economic and financial aspects, whose decisions shall be ratified by those in charge of the legally established branch in each sphere of government.

government programmes and actions. Another of the councils' major roles is to ensure social control of the health policy by monitoring and evaluating government actions.

This model was subsequently extended to other social policies, particularly to those which, according to the constitution, should involve social participation. These notably included social assistance policies and policies for children and adolescents.

There is general agreement that a public policy council should ideally be based on:

- Equal representation (same number of government and civil society representatives).
- Deliberative power (the Council is in charge of deliberating on the design of the policy and on its priorities and budget).
- Shared management of the policy, allowing for its social control by civil society organizations and movements (monitoring and evaluation).
- Implementation at the three levels of the federation (federal, state, and municipal), ensuring a federal management framework for public policies
- Election of civil society representatives in an appropriate forum, not unilaterally assigned by government.

Drawing on the new constitutional principles, social movements have focused their efforts on building and defending universal public policies that can ensure rights through the creation of decentralized and participatory systems in the policy-making arena. This has resulted in the creation of thousands of councils throughout the country, and in intense regulation and structuring of public policies. This process has raised new challenges, both for government and civil society, because it established a new level of co-responsibility in the governance of social policies.

In 2003, when Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, from the Workers' Party, was elected President, a new generation of councils was structured and/or strengthened to discuss what was referred to as a 'new generation' of rights in areas such as gender, youth, food security, urban life, racial equality, and public transparency. Although these new participatory councils usually have a consultative status, whose decisions do not bind public managers, they constitute new 'public arenas' where diverse social interests can be democratically disputed and negotiated. They are also national councils not necessarily linked to the participatory systems existing at the sub-national levels. But it is important to highlight that they are influential in establishing guidelines for the policy making process.

Today, there are about 35 national councils with civil society representatives in the federal public administration alone. According to a recent study, these councils rely on the participation of over 400 organizations representing various segments of civil society. Of these, 31 percent are NGOs focused on defending human rights; 23 percent are organizations representing the interests of particular social sector services or professional categories; 14 percent are linked to rural and environmental social movements; another 14 percent are urban union organizations; eight percent are urban grassroots movements; and 10 percent are other movements, e.g., religious, cultural, educational (Institute for Applied Economic Research, 2007).

Unfortunately, no national mapping of state and municipal councils is currently available. Information provided by the Institute for Applied Economic Research, a governmental think-tank, and the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics, show that there are about 20,000 municipal councils in Brazil today, dealing with policies related to social assistance, health care, children and adolescents, rural development, housing, and the environment. This is more than three times the number of city councils, the *loci* of representative democracy (local legislative branch), of which there are 5,564 today. In addition to the municipal councils, there are other councils dealing with policy issues related to education, labour and income, food security, culture, and cities, among others, which could increase this figure to approximately 40,000.

### **National conferences**

Parallel to the process of establishing national and sub-national participatory councils, other complementary institutional mechanisms of participation, called National Conferences, were created. These public policy conferences are held every two or four years, bringing together thousands of people from all over the country to address particular issues, such as health, education, women, communication, and racism. These conferences are more than just an event, they constitute a process that starts at the local level, where the participants elect delegates to attend state level conferences and, finally, the national conference. Throughout these often year-long processes, constituencies and stakeholders have an opportunity to air their views on the impact, successes and/or failures of government programmes, as well as to engage in direct dialogue with public agents responsible for their implementation.

A key potential of this mechanism lies in the fact that its participants can contribute to creating policy agendas and priorities that will influence future public policy. This agenda is then monitored by CSOs in political forums, including the councils.

During President Lula's government, the number of conferences held throughout the country increased remarkably. That was a result of the greater stimulus given by the federal administration to this participatory arrangement. Between 2003 and 2006, about 40 national conferences were held. These were attended by over two million people, including civil-society representatives (e.g., unions, NGOs, social movements, professional associations, corporate associations, churches) and representatives of municipal, state, and federal agencies. Many of their inputs and recommendations were actually incorporated to some extent into the design of public policies and programmes (Institute for Applied Economic Research, 2007). It is important to highlight the fact that for the first time, two national conferences were held on subjects considered critical for democratic governance in Brazil: Communications and Public Security. Another conference, dealing with the issue of Transparency and Participation, is scheduled for 2012.

In this scenario of intense activism, however, certain questions arise. To what extent has this quantitative increase in participatory mechanisms made it possible to truly incorporate citizens' demands into state policies? How many of the deliberations have actually been considered or implemented through policies by the federal administration? In what ways has this participatory framework been effective, or limited? To answer these questions, we will try to identify some of the outcomes and challenges experienced by Brazilian society through social participation arrangements.

### **The challenge of opening up the state**

Within the state bureaucracy, there is no unanimous position in relation to social participation. Many public managers are not willing to share power outside the space of representative democracy. These managers are reluctant to engage in a dialogue with society and to accept the deliberations of participatory spaces/institutions, such as the councils and conferences. This resistance is not disconnected from a long-term political tradition in which the incumbent government uses 'politics of favour' to distribute public benefits as currency, and thereby obtain political support or, worse, as form of corruption. In this sense, councils and conferences function as a mechanism not only to assess and influence public policies choices, but also to bring negotiations into the open that would otherwise have been dealt with the shadow of private arrangements. For instance, decisions related to social investments and budget allocations are often negotiated in the light of the guidelines and directions provided by the work of the councils.

This low level of commitment from some parts of the government sector also contributes to poor integration and coordination of participatory

processes. Decisions made in conferences or councils are often inconsistent. In an attempt to overcome this challenge, President Lula's administration created a ministerial-level Secretariat linked to the President's Office. It was charged with, among other things, "ensuring closer links and synergy in the political relations between the government and organized civil society, and among all existing social participation mechanisms and initiatives, and following up on and controlling public policies".<sup>2</sup> It should be noted, however, that this objective has only been partially achieved until now.

### **The challenge of enforcing rights and reducing inequality**

Although the federal constitution set forth guidelines for a participatory democracy, particularly for social policies, the managerial reform of the state in Brazil since the 1990s – inspired by neoliberal ideas – led to institutional changes in another direction.

During the 1990s, a policy aimed at reducing the size of the state, valuing the 'market', and outsourcing the implementation of public policies to civil society organizations and the private sector was implemented throughout Latin America. According to Nogueira (2004), the so-called state reform may, in some cases, have enhanced the efficiency and rational use of the public apparatus, but it affected the image of the state in the eyes of citizens and disorganized its technical and administrative apparatus. A lack of understanding of the benefits of participatory democracy affected, or even limited, the dynamic state-civil society relationship.

Brazil remains a country controlled by a political and economic elite, and structured around privileges. This helps to explain why laws and rights are complied with only partially, and why poor people are systematically excluded from social benefits. It also explains why Brazilian inequality rates remain among the world's highest, despite significant progress achieved over the last decade in the fight against extreme poverty. Wealth continues to be concentrated at the very top of the social pyramid, and a highly regressive tax system continues as a powerful limitation to social change processes in Brazil. The political representation distortions caused by a system still dominated by powerful economic elites works as a constant impediment to social participation and the progressive inputs from an increasing presence of organized citizens in public life.

There is, therefore, an immediate need to consolidate an appropriate institutional framework that actually enforces rights and enables social participation.

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2. General Secretariat of the Office of the President of the Republic  
[www.secretariageral.gov.br](http://www.secretariageral.gov.br)

### **The challenge of strengthening civil society organizations**

A framework for ensuring participation in public policies presupposes the existence of strengthened and autonomous civil society organizations. Skilled human resources are required for representatives of society to participate in councils and conferences in a technically and politically appropriate way. These representatives must have at least a minimal understanding of elements of the state business, such as planning, management, and public budget tools. So it is necessary to make information available to these representatives, and also to build their capacity in these subjects, which in most cases does not happen.

It should also be mentioned that the legal framework governing relations between civil society organizations and the Brazilian state is outdated. Historically, it was based on the instrumental perspective of providing services supplementary to government action.

With all these hindrances, many civil society organizations have to decide between focusing resources and efforts on their institutional struggle within the state (through policy councils and conferences, and participatory budget mechanisms), or on political mobilization and training processes in society. For many, the so-called ‘institutional struggle’ can only be supported by professional activists with enough time and willingness to understand and act as required inside the state apparatus. It should also be said that, given the financial constraints of many CSOs, high-qualified professionals and activists are hard to find, which makes it a challenge for CSOs to engage in policy and budget processes despite considerable institutional innovations to support such engagement over the last decade.

### **The challenge of social participation in the economic arena**

While councils and conferences were created to discuss and deliberate social policies, no mechanisms were implemented to ensure participation in economic policy decisions. This has been a real contradiction and a barrier to participation, because the restrictions imposed by macroeconomic policies affect the reach and design of social policies. Arguments in favour of making economic measures more transparent and subject to social influence and control are rejected by the mainstream discourse. Their reasoning is that these are essentially technical measures to be taken by experts, and to bring civil society into such discussions would mean a threat to financial and economic stability. Arguably, this reasoning has allowed the economy to ‘colonize’ politics, because indisputable ‘technical’ decisions affect spaces available for political decision-making, including that of the councils and conferences and even the space for parliamentary decision-making.

The government itself admits how difficult it is to create spaces for participation in economic decision-making, including the definition of priorities for allocating resources. The ministries dealing with economic and infrastructure issues, along with development banks, are those that strongly resist the idea of citizen participation in government. The road to creating participatory spaces in these areas – which define the core of the state's development model and significantly affect socio-environmental impacts – is long and winding.

### **Making government accountable: the rise of social watch**

The visibility and influence acquired by international civil society networks in recent years is widely acknowledged. Although not an entirely new phenomenon, the circumstances under which this has occurred lead to a reflection on its significance. As promoters of a human rights approach not strictly or exclusively linked to the nation-state, international civil society networks are playing an important role in combating the disintegrating forces built into some areas of globalization. To a large extent, these networks are the main spokespersons for a “counter-hegemonic globalization” (Santos, 1998).

Recent United Nations processes offer one of the best angles from which to observe the ongoing changes in the international order. They reveal tensions generated in structures, mainly limited to government actors, when these structures are submitted to increasing pressures from civil society organizations.

The cycle of social development conferences in the 1990s was particularly innovative in two fundamental aspects. The debate on development was re-launched to extend beyond strict economic assumptions. The linkages between themes involving, for example, the environment, human rights, and women, and development, call into question traditional economic-based thinking on development policy.

The Social Watch initiative originated from quite a simple idea, namely that commitments assumed by governments must be fulfilled. Thus, civil society needed an effective instrument to monitor government and demand that they comply with what they had pledged. This was called the ‘strategy of shame’. The concept was shared by a group of NGOs who saw the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 as an excellent opportunity for governments to commit to an agenda for social change that would affect both international and national policies.<sup>3</sup>

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3. For a detailed and extremely interesting account of Social Watch's origins, Mirjam van Reisen's “The ‘Prehistory’ of ‘Social Watch’: The transforming of NGO Networking in ongoing International Negotiations” (Montevideo: Social Watch, March 2000) is highly recommended.

Mobilizing social actors nationally was a key challenge for Social Watch, insofar as it legitimized its participation in UN negotiations. Building ‘national platforms’ was crucial to establishing the network’s supporting architecture. The annual publication of a report evaluating the implementation of development commitments works both as a lobbying tool to pressure governments and a vehicle for national mobilization. It is also a tool for moving forward the rights-based agenda that emerged from these UN-sponsored social conferences.

In preparing the report’s national chapters, the organizations responsible for Social Watch in each country – the ‘social watchers’ – mobilize civil society networks, social movements, NGOs, intellectuals, and other social actors making up the network’s national platforms. The key role of these platforms is to act as spaces for dialogue that are open to diversity and controversy. They also raise awareness within civil society and apply pressure to governments. Since 1996, there has been consolidation of platforms in Africa, Central America, Mexico, Peru, Brazil, the Philippines, and the Arab world. In addition, Social Watch currently has reference groups that ensure regular publication of annual reports in about fifty countries.

### **Social watch in a national context: the case of Brazil**

The Brazilian experience is an interesting example of how Social Watch has tried to influence national public policies, pushing to link them to global interests. Brazilian organizations working with the Network have employed a combination of participatory mechanisms. First, they pursue a cooperative process among different social actors, including NGOs, women’s organizations, trade unions, academic research institutions, environmentalists, and various social movements/networks (i.e., the landless movement, human rights coalitions, and indigenous people’s organizations). Once a year, Social Watch organizes a national seminar and invites these groups to examine whether or not different sets of public policies comply with the goals agreed at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen (1995) and the Beijing Conference on Women (1995). These seminars are also important examples of cross-sectoral dialogue between government and civil society representatives, many of whom are active players in the National Conferences and Public Policy Councils.

In addition to the annual seminars, Social Watch’s Brazilian initiative organizes issue-oriented workshops, or dialogues, which aim to closely evaluate specific policies. It is also a way to increase the contribution to the Social Watch process from participating groups and individuals concerned with specific aspects of the social agenda. This has been particularly successful in addressing gender and racial discrimination.

The Brazilian Social Watch initiative has made continuing efforts to reach a high level of cooperation between organizations and sectors working with the social agenda. It has also tried to interact with the processes of national conferences and councils, being part of an overall exercise in creating a collective critical mass that is able to reflect on government policies and strategies. It has been a particularly rich experience, one that has helped to demonstrate real potential to overcome the fragmentation that still exists among organizations working on social issues and poverty eradication.

A second important mechanism used by the Social Watch initiative in Brazil has been the production of a Brazilian edition of the organization's international report. The intention behind this special edition is to create a publication in which the Brazil chapter brings more substance than the necessarily limited space of the international edition can allow.

The production of this publication is a political process in itself. It first calls for identification of organizations, within the Social Watch Brazil Network, that have the expertise and capacity to assess the implementation of social policies. It then presents the findings and analysis. The content covered in the publication also includes discussions and suggestions made during the annual seminar and workshops. The publication serves as a main evaluative measure in the context of this national Social Watch initiative.

A third mechanism is the publication of a series of papers called *Cadernos do Observatório*. These papers cover various themes related to the agenda of the United Nations social conferences. In addition, the papers also deal with issues and problems beyond the commitments monitored by the Social Watch initiative in Brazil. Thus, these papers enable CSOs to gain more insight on specific issues. They also fulfil an educational purpose and provide important instructional materials for the many players involved with the Network in Brazil.

The seminars, workshops, and publications produced in Brazil are essential tools to make the Social Watch initiative a relevant reference point on how the United Nations social agenda is translated into national policies. The mass media's growing attention to the assessments and proposals of Social Watch in Brazil is a sign of the organization's effectiveness. Social Watch's public visibility in Brazil has played an important role in integrating the pledges made during the United Nations conferences into the national agenda. The challenge for Social Watch in Brazil is to reinvent itself in a context where government policies have made measurable progress in reducing poverty, but lag in addressing the huge inequality gap that still exists in Brazil.

## **The way forward: lessons and recommendations**

No discussion of democracy in Brazil today is complete without considering its abundant participation experiences, and the institutional framework established to discuss social policies. Dialogue forums involving the government and society, particularly the public policy councils and national conferences, offer the following advantages:

- They contribute to developing closer relations between public authorities and citizens, both men and women, and to weakening patronage networks, bringing alliances and conflicts of interests to the public decision-making arena.
- They allow for a higher rate of decisions that promote equitable social development.
- They are instrumental in identifying problems and building alternatives and
- They enhance administrative transparency, and encourage governments to produce tangible results.

The achievements, to which civil society organizations have contributed much, are all the more remarkable in light of the relatively recent resumption of participatory democracy in Brazil. And the processes have, albeit recently, gained an increasingly institutional status. Nevertheless, problems remain, and many are far from insubstantial, particularly given Brazil's high social exclusion rates.

Despite these problems, social participation holds much promise. It is a strategic requirement for building an effective democracy that represents the interests of society and creates spaces for tolerance and recognition. Participation is also a strategic requirement for ensuring rights (civil, political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental), and for promoting development (Ciconello, 2006).

Looking at these instructive experiences and recognizing how much the global context has changed, we can only conclude that change is not just about getting into the 'halls of power' with a clear set of alternative ideas and proposals. It is not just getting a seat at the table with something powerful to say – although that, too, is important. Rather, it is about changing the size and shape of the table and, ultimately, who sits at it. In practice, then, it is a matter of balancing engagement in existing policy spaces with effective political efforts to reshape and claim new spaces of power. It is about critiquing and proposing policy alternatives, while continuously building and communicating an alternative agenda and way of looking at the world. It is about creating enough continuous political pressure to democratize

the policy agenda and process, so that whatever gains are achieved can be sustained and expanded. That is a deeply political task involving:

- Sharper analysis and identification of alternatives.
- Broad agendas to frame an alternative vision.
- Compelling communication strategies tailored for different audiences.
- Greater dialogue, openness, and mutual constructive criticism amongst civil society organizations (networks, campaigns, and individual organizations) to build a countervailing movement able to incorporate the diversity that exists in the world.
- Collective, organized citizen power, capable of sustaining pressure on decision-makers and powerbrokers to democratize the global economic policy process and agenda.
- Effective change strategies that combine and link research, citizen education, organization, communication, and engagement efforts.

The Brazilian experience shows that to build a strong culture of democratic governance based on participatory processes of policy design, implementation, and assessment often involves walking on thin ice, combining social pressures with political dialogue. The debate with government representatives on the qualities and shortcomings of national public policies requires new technical and communications skills, as well as political empowerment. Although this challenge is also there at the international level, as many United Nations processes demonstrate, it is felt particularly strongly at national and local levels. The examples of democratic governance assessments that consider the role played by civil society can be a powerful argumentative tool in the debates that lie ahead for the rights-based, democratic development community.

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## TOWARDS THE DEMOCRATIC MONITORING OF GOVERNANCE: THE METAGORA EXPERIENCE

Mark Orkin, Claire Naval, Jan Robert Suesser, and  
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### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The importance of measuring and monitoring governance issues, particularly with a focus on human rights and democracy, is widely accepted today. The introductory chapter to this volume traces the evolution of different approaches used to track governance. Until relatively recently, the variety of possible methods and institutional actors, and the general feasibility and relevance of such endeavours to track governance, were intensely controversial in the international human rights community, the international statistical community, and in academia.

In view of this controversy, it is valuable to reflect on the origins and endeavours of Metagora – an innovative international project launched in 2004 to explore options to contribute to measuring and monitoring governance, with particular focus on its human rights and democracy dimensions. The Metagora approach was essentially embodied in a number of pilot projects and national activities<sup>2</sup> that were coordinated under its rubric. Its experiences span not only the role that suitable methods and processes can play in identifying, measuring, and monitoring relevant governance issues at

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1. This article draws on the thirteen chapters of Naval, Walter, and Suarez de Miguel, eds. (2008); and on materials developed during the implementation of the Metagora project that have been lodged with the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre.
  2. The project was implemented thanks to generous contributions from Canada (CIDA), France (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance-Adetef), Sweden (Sida), Switzerland (SDC), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the European Union (under the budget of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights).

the national level, but also the importance of achieving the requisite cross-sectoral institutional collaborations.

Basing our reflection on these coordinated case studies, we recommend a participatory and bottom-up approach, local ownership, multi-disciplinary work, a combination of methodological tools, and South-South methodological collaboration, in sustainably carrying forward the measurement and assessment of governance, and in impacting on public policy-making processes. This distinctive approach supports the introductory chapter's proposal for a future agenda that has a "new way of looking at governance as a mechanism for making the state more inclusive, responsive, and capable of pursuing sustainable human development". Indeed, we believe that the Metagora recommendations, in the way they address different dimensions of governance, also show the *practical* contributions that suitable measurement and assessment methodologies and processes can make to promoting better governance.

### **A historical perspective**

In the last two decades, a remarkable range of institutional actors – international organizations, development agencies, human rights institutions, national policy makers, and civil society organizations – have turned to applied statistics and quantitative indicators to develop an evidence-based assessment of the implementation and improvement of governance, with a specific focus on human rights and democracy.

This increased awareness has also led to promising forms of collaboration between such institutional actors, human rights practitioners, and academic or official statisticians. That marks a significant departure from the reluctance and lack of communication that previously characterized the 'measuring' of governance. It is illuminating to recall the sequence by which this collaboration was won.

#### ***From scepticism and concerns to the development of a measurement trend***

By the early 1990s, many national and international NGOs were extensively involved in monitoring governance and human rights. But they tended to be unwilling to combine their qualitative assessments, based on expertise and extensive field experience, with statistically-based facts and figures, believing that numbers could not reflect the multi-dimensional complexity of the issues.

However, UN Treaty Bodies increasingly requested statistical data and indicators to inform their work on monitoring national compliance with international standards. For example, General Comments of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the scope of

obligations related to specific rights, such as education, health, and water, have called for the development of statistically-based indicators. The data and indicators that were produced proved to be relevant, comprehensive, and politically useful for advocacy. But the international human rights community were reluctant to build aggregate indices or rank countries, and was concerned that the use of aggregate figures was inappropriate in addressing particular human rights breaches.

Academic and government statisticians, for their part, had long been reluctant to engage in the measurement of sensitive political issues. Many considered that this would invite political pressure on their work, lead to a questioning of their legitimacy and neutrality, and put at risk their other data collection activities. Others believed that, especially in countries where such issues were most salient, individual respondents would be reluctant to participate.

An early challenge to this reluctance came from academic statisticians. In the late 1970s, the American Statistical Association created a Standing Committee on Scientific Freedom and Human Rights. Then, from the early 1980s, the potential of statistical analysis for rigorous reporting on human rights and governance issues was evidenced in developing country contexts,<sup>3</sup> some under the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and others under local auspices.<sup>4</sup>

Conversely, the reluctance of official statisticians to engage with governance issues came under pressure in the late 1990s in the MDG consultations conducted by the IMF, World Bank, OECD, other supra-national and national development agencies, and representatives of national statistical offices from all continents. However, consensus on the measures to be used for governance proved impossible to achieve, and on the agencies to supply the statistics. In particular, Southern representatives felt that Northern proposals for indicators were more concerned with market freedom than with governance, and that the providers of indicators might have a conservative political agenda. Consequently, governance indicators were not included in the MDG framework.

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3. David Banks, Richard Claude, Thomas Jabine and Herbert Spierer were particularly active in this field, and later Patrick Ball. See for example Jabine and Claude, eds. (1992), and Ball, Spierer and Spierer, eds. (2000). A more recent collection is Asher, Banks and Scheuren, eds. (2008).
  4. Early case studies from Guatemala, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan are included in Jabine and Claude, eds. (1992). The data-basing and analysis of the tens of thousands of deaths in the lead-up to South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 are described in Greenstein, ed. (2003). Many case studies were reported at the Montreux conference mentioned below (they are available at IAOS, 2000), and others are cited in the extensive Bibliography in Naval, Walter and Suarez de Miguel, eds. (2008).

Reluctant to accept this outcome, a small group of representatives from national statistical offices and international development agencies came together informally, under the aegis of the International Association of Official Statistics. They resolved to pursue the issue by convening a multi-stakeholder international conference on measuring and monitoring governance. The Swiss Federal Statistical Office agreed to organize the event.

***The Montreux Conference on statistics, development and human rights***

The International Association of Official Statistics conference, “Statistics, Development and Human Rights”, was held in 2000 in Montreux, Switzerland. It was attended by policy analysts, governmental officials, international organizations, governance and human rights practitioners, and professional statisticians from more than 120 countries. This diversity of inputs confirmed that, to address governance issues and their human rights dimension effectively in empirically-based terms, it was advisable to go beyond the approaches that so far had characterized reports and monitoring mechanisms; and that multi-way institutional relationships were likely to be involved in any comprehensive country-wide instance.

It was seen that the many studies had tended to rely on human rights institutions and judicial decisions for occasional reports of cases of individual or group violations. This type of monitoring is fundamental to the efficient defence of individual cases. But it usually under-reflects the magnitude of the given phenomena, and does not produce information on trends or patterns in human rights violations, still less on broader governance problems and public policies.

For the first time, the Montreux Conference allowed representatives of three international communities with a shared concern for development – governance and human rights practitioners, official and academic statisticians, and non-governmental organisations – to share expectations and experiences on why, and how best, to conduct evidence-based assessment and monitoring of governance. It became clear during the conference that sound statistical measurement, complemented by equally sound qualitative work, could effectively empower the work of practitioners and development experts.

A broad consensus emerged on a number of fundamental requirements, or ‘operational conclusions’, for effective monitoring of the dimension and impact of governance issues. Those issues include human rights violations, considered not merely as series of events but as structural and structuring phenomena of the political, economic and social context:

- An increase in the use of well-established quantitative methods and analytical tools.

- A multi-disciplinary approach, based on qualitative and quantitative methodologies, historical understanding of contexts, and professional scientific skills.
- The establishment of consultative processes and participatory work mechanisms to identify and scope the problems and policies that require monitoring.
- Efficient collaboration among relevant institutions – civil society organizations, academic research centres, human rights institutions, official statistics institutes, and governmental or semi-governmental-like institutions.

The Montreux conference had three consequences. First, a multi-disciplinary and multi-organisational North/South network emerged, and gave rise to a series of international workshops and consultations as a follow-up to the Montreux ‘operational conclusions’.

Second, Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Community, mandated the Human Rights Centre of the University of Essex to conduct a broad mapping of the main international initiatives involved with indicators on democracy and good governance. Eurostat also conducted, jointly with the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, a first review of the enormous variety of existing sources for governance indicators.

Third, under the initial umbrella of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office, an informal post-Montreux task force was convened, to shape a project on how such diverse dimensions and approaches could be integrated within a coherent framework. By means of pilot projects in selected countries, it would yield a well-filled measurement ‘toolbox’. That ‘toolbox’ would include reliable, documented and efficient methods and instruments applicable to the evidence-based assessment of governance, with strong democracy and human rights dimensions. These became the strategic goals of Metagora, an international project launched in 2004 and hosted by PARIS21, within OECD.

### **Metagora: a laboratory of innovative measurement and monitoring processes**

The name, Meta-*agora*, highlighted the project’s vision. The dimensions of increased critical knowledge, robust analysis, and transformational collective action that are today required all over the world build on the fundamentals of our modern *agora*: the rule of law, the respect for human dignity, effective progressive implementation of social, economic and cultural rights, as well as increased democratic participation and fair, transparent, and accountable governance mechanisms.

It followed that Metagora expected to draw on a variety of stakeholders – public authorities, civil society organizations, and the international development community – interested in, for example, establishing trends in human rights violations; or, for given public policies, analysing gaps between people’s expectations and actual situations; or assessing their implementation and outcomes.

### **Metagora overview: the simultaneous implementation of pilot experiences**

To proceed in a manner consonant with its vision, Metagora was designed and implemented as a decentralized laboratory. It was the first international project on measuring governance, democracy, and human rights to undertake several pilot ‘experiences’ in different regions of the world, which shared the same strategic goals, while advancing in an interactive and consultative fashion.

The experiences included:

- Three pilot surveys on governance, human rights, and democracy issues. These studies were carried out in Mexico City (on abuse and ill-treatment by police forces), in the Philippines (on the rights of indigenous peoples), and in South Africa (on the implementation of land reform).
- Two multi-country surveys on poverty, democracy, and governance issues, progressively implemented by National Statistical Offices in eight capital cities of Francophone Africa,<sup>5</sup> and in three Andean Community countries.<sup>6</sup>
- The development of indicators and a database on the right to education in Palestine.
- The establishment of a Controlled Vocabulary, allowing NGOs to collect and analyse harmonized data on large-scale human rights violations in Sri Lanka.
- A worldwide survey to identify and record local and national initiatives to enhance evidence-based monitoring and assessments of governance, democracy, and human rights.
- The production of a substantive set of online training materials, largely based on the results, achievements, and lessons of the various pilot experiences.

These projects were deliberately designed to address ‘sensitive’ issues. They were conducted in complex environments, difficult circumstances, and in diverse political, social and cultural contexts. Through this exacting

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5. Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo, and Madagascar.

6. Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru.

selection of cases, Metagora has aimed to demonstrate that measuring, monitoring, and assessing governance issues is both technically feasible and politically relevant.

***Addressing concerns on the relevance and feasibility of measuring governance***

All pilot experiences produced valuable information with significant national policy implications. However, their main interest lies in the answers they generated to a series of questions on the feasibility, relevance, and usefulness of viewing governance issues, and their democracy and human rights dimensions, with statistical methods and tools.

So, for example, the three surveys on governance issues in Mexico, the Philippines, and South Africa specifically aimed to address:

- Will randomly selected people (who are not necessarily motivated or committed to the issue at stake) accept being interviewed, and will they respond to sensitive questions?
- How can a survey questionnaire target and reflect the multi-dimensional complexity of phenomena such as human rights violations, abuses by public authorities, or failure of key policies to reach their goals?
- How can data collected through a survey questionnaire allow the assessment of broader governance issues, such as accountability of public institutions and political authorities, policy weaknesses, and policy needs?
- How can qualitative approaches inform questionnaire design, and how can they relate to quantitative approaches in the interpretation of survey results?

***An innovative bottom-up approach and participatory process***

Work done in the wake of the Montreux Conference noted that the contextual situation of the actors involved in governance assessments will profoundly affect the assessment's approach, scope, and purpose. The Metagora project was designed accordingly to reflect, for each chosen topic, the concerns and priorities of relevant country actors. Most importantly, local actors actually conducted the assessment, rather than foreign experts on drop-in visits. This proved essential for the initiatives' focus, relevance, and impact.

In this way, Metagora systematically followed an innovative bottom-up approach, aimed at strengthening national capacities and leadership in governance issues, and at establishing a sound working methodology based on genuinely participatory and local processes. Its originality in comparison to other international initiatives and projects – too often driven by the international community, donors, and visiting consultants – lies in this commitment.

Each pilot experience consisted of:

- The identification by major local stakeholders and experts (in line with the Paris Declaration) of key governance issues for which evidence-based assessment could be relevant and useful.
- The measurement and analysis of the selected issues with data collection tools and statistical methods that, combined with qualitative approaches, were adapted to the particular topic and its national context.
- The assessment of these methods for their capacity to provide reliable and relevant information for the formulation and evaluation of public policies.
- Initiating and steering of public debate and policy dialogue with the authorities by local stakeholders, based on their acquired knowledge of the issues at stake.
- The identification of methodological insights of a global scope through the assessment of the processes, results, and outcomes of each pilot experience.

The project broadly proved that such a nationally-based and -owned approach plays a significant role in complementing the traditional top-down approach of standardized and comparative indicators produced by governments and NGOs. Indeed, the latter tend to have limited application for assessing national policies and their related governance dimensions.

To ensure the genuine implementation of the bottom-up approach, the organizations involved in Metagora all developed in-country consultative mechanisms and participatory working methods. Such processes have been decisive in the success of the various Metagora pilot experiences.

#### *A multidisciplinary network of North/South institutions*

Metagora emerged from a multidisciplinary network of North/South institutions. Project implementation relied upon an extensive community of leading organizations and individuals from different continents, including governance and human rights practitioners, political analysts, statisticians, and academics. A Coordination Team hosted by OECD managed the overall project.

Representatives and experts from seven institutions formed the heart of this community: American Association for the Advancement of Science (Washington); DIAL, Institute for Development Research (Paris); Fundar, Centre for Analysis and Research (Mexico City); Human Sciences Research Council (Pretoria); Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (Ramallah); CHR, National Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (Manila); and SG-CAN, General Secretariat of the Andean Community (Lima).

The Asia Foundation and the member organizations of the Human Rights Accountability Coalition of Sri Lanka became additional project partners at a later stage. The diversity of skills, organizational profiles, specific missions, and particular agendas were a major asset for the Metagora community.

The Partner Organizations, each led by a Coordinator, played different roles within the project, at different levels. Some conducted multi-disciplinary pilot operations and policy-oriented studies in their countries, while others coordinated regional multi-country actions or provided technical assistance and intellectual services.

The Partner Organizations' directors and experts, the project's Coordination Team, and international consultants for successive phases made up the Partners' Group. This was Metagora's true driving force. The Partners' Group ensured the project's ongoing momentum, methodological consistency, organizational cohesion, fruitful interactions among the project's initiatives, and the adequacy of each within the project's overall objectives.

Associated consultants provided Partner Organizations with international technical assistance in survey questionnaire design, sampling, analysis, data encoding, or development of databases. Some experts drove or supported crosscutting activities, such as the production of training materials and the inventory of initiatives. Others conducted training courses for stakeholders and staff of Partner Organizations, particularly on the use and misuse of governance-related statistics, on coding and building databases, and on using narrative information.

***Decentralized national initiatives within a common working framework***

Because Metagora operated with largely decentralized working structures, a common working framework was essential to ensure coherence, sharing, and the meeting of deadlines. Synchronizing the schedule was a major operational challenge for the project, and also a constraint for the Partner Organizations.

Metagora was able to take advantage of some prior substantive work in Francophone Africa, Peru, and Sri Lanka. In all other instances, Partner Organizations succeeded in designing and implementing all planned field operations within 14 months. They then produced and released results and analysis, and drafted and disseminated policy-oriented reports, based on these results.

The various pilot experiences progressed through six main phases: preparatory work; implementation of field activities; analysis of results and the production of technical reports; review and evaluation of the methods

and tools used and the validation of the results obtained; driving the policy debate based on the information gathered; and formulation of lessons and recommendations for application of the tested methods elsewhere.

Throughout these phases, the Partner Organizations participated in professional exchanges with the consultants and in lively South-South workshops. Through these exchanges and cross-fertilization process, Metagora enabled the institutions involved to support and learn from each other, at both the local and the global level.

### **Main results and lessons learned**

The previous section identified three key organizational features of Metagora: a participative and bottom-up approach, a multidisciplinary network of North/South institutions, and decentralized national initiatives united by a common working framework. Proceeding in this novel way, as an experimental governance measurement and assessment project that was democratically governed, it yielded six substantial lessons that may be carried forward as recommendations for similar endeavours.

#### ***1. Feasibility and relevance of measuring governance-related issues***

The Metagora pilot experiences confirmed that it is technically feasible and politically relevant for data on governance, and in particular on its democracy and human rights dimensions, to be collected, and indicators and analysis produced, that are of central relevance in formulating and evaluating public policies – not only for policy makers but also for society generally.

In Sri Lanka, the methodology used to document, encode, and analyse information on large-scale human rights violations helped create a scientifically rigorous record of reported and estimated total numbers of violations, patterns of abuse, and the nature and identity of perpetrators and victims.<sup>7</sup> The analysis indicated the patterns of various forms of large-scale human rights violations, suggesting that these were the result of specific causes, with perpetrators that can be identified over time. This kind of analysis is invaluable in helping to end perpetrators' sense of impunity, for truth and reconciliation work, and in due course to shape process and policies to promote greater human rights protection.

The three pilot surveys in Mexico, the Philippines, and South Africa showed that well-established statistical survey methods – informed by prior qualitative investigations – can be applied to measure specific governance issues despite their 'sensitivity'.<sup>8</sup> The data collected provided significant

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7. Chapter 8 in Naval, Walter and Suarez de Miguel, eds. (2008).

8. Chapters 3, 4 and 5, in Naval, Walter and Suarez de Miguel, eds. (2008).

information on the nature, causes, and magnitude of the issues at stake, and also on how well or badly the relevant public institutions were working. In Mexico City, the survey investigated the incidence of ill-treatment and abuse by law enforcement officers. A sample of more than 3,600 respondents was individually interviewed in households, representing 6.4 million teenagers and adults. Of the one-quarter reporting contact with officers from one or other enforcement agency, half reported some form of abuse. Lower socioeconomic categories were disproportionately affected. Requests for bribes were most common, at 30 percent, and often solicited during *ad hoc* 'rides' in police vehicles. And almost none of the respondents had lodged complaints, mainly because they believed that they would not be addressed, or they could not offer proof.

Protection of the rights to ancestral land among indigenous peoples was covered in the Philippines. In a survey of 750 households across three tribes, awareness of legislated ancestral rights was uniformly high, at more than two-thirds of respondents. Experience of encroachment, meanwhile, varied greatly among the tribes, from 21 percent to 57 percent. Government or tribal elders were most mentioned as having secured the rights. The survey also indicated primary needs, such as food, housing, water, livelihoods, and education.

In South Africa, the issue focused on land reform since the advent of democracy. The right to land had different connotations – ownership, access, or affordability – among respondents on communal lands or farms, and in informal or formal urban areas. Up to one-fifth of black respondents had been dispossessed under apartheid. They were divided roughly equally between those seeking financial compensation, and those preferring land restoration, but only about one-quarter were aware of the restitution process. A majority of all black respondents sought relative small amounts of arable land, to provide household food security. Perhaps unsurprisingly, between one-third and one-half of black respondents were satisfied with the government's land-reform process, compared to only 13 percent of white commercial farmers.

More broadly, studies in several countries of Francophone Africa and the Andean Community demonstrated that it is possible to collect sensibly comparative, relevant data – across countries and/or over time – and develop indicators to evaluate how well institutions and democracies are working.<sup>9</sup> One study of eight Francophone African countries benefited from the support of their national statistical offices. There was high support, especially among poor people, for key dimensions of democracy: freedom of expression,

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9. Chapter 6 in Naval, Walter and Suarez de Miguel, eds. (2008). The countries are mentioned in notes 6 and 7 above.

worship, and movement, equality before the law, and freedom of choice in transparent elections. In contrast, respondents' perceptions varied widely on the extent to which these freedoms were actually respected in their particular countries. Another, longitudinal, study in Madagascar showed how petty corruption in the public service diminished as real wages rose; and vice versa, following a political crisis. These findings are particularly relevant for addressing key governance issues, for confirming or correcting stakeholders' perceptions and policy assumptions, and also for using evidence-based analysis in the appropriate design of policies and programmes to redress rights and enhance accountability.

With such surveys intended to capture sensitive or complex data, proper design and testing of unique questionnaires are preconditions for obtaining valid, reliable, and relevant data. It is essential that the instruments are adapted to the people's language and perceptions, as well as to the specific national political, social, and cultural context in which the measurement is conducted. As Udesh Pillay, an Executive Director of the Human Sciences Research Council that conducted the survey in South Africa, noted:

“Our Metagora experience has shown how important it is that endogenous institutions define and lead the policy-oriented research process in order to ensure that assessments of human rights and democratic governance issues are of genuine national significance.”

## **2. *Combining quantitative and qualitative data***

The previous section identified the importance, at the stages of design and interpretation, of understanding relevant local issues and being alert to contextual nuances. For this, accurate qualitative research and documentation of the situation, including the varied perceptions of target populations and the assumptions and expectations of a variety of stakeholders, must also inform the process.

In South Africa, for example, multiple stakeholders were consulted, from the rich farmers' union, to the landless people's NGOs, and the land reform administration. In the Philippines, multiple qualitative methods were used, including focus group discussions with target populations, substantive reports by local experts, and thematic discussions with all relevant stakeholders. The design of the Mexican pilot survey questionnaire was based on extensive qualitative consultation with experts, and on in-depth narrative interviews with victims of abuse by law enforcement authorities – and also with police officers. Additionally, after the survey, further qualitative work was conducted to complement and help understand the statistical results obtained. In all three instances, the qualitative work was invaluable: in conceiving and designing the questionnaire, in clarifying significant variations in the local

population on specific issues, in interpreting and validating the findings, and in ensuring that the overall investigation was aligned and responsive to local conceptualizations and priorities.

The pilots also explored new or better ways of matching quantitative and qualitative sources of information. In Palestine, for example, official statisticians and qualitative researchers integrated their information on the right to education within a single database. And in Sri Lanka, the statistical data series used data encoded from narrative reports on human rights violations.

### ***3. Local ownership and leadership and participatory processes***

International indicator projects and associated assessments rarely impact materially on the domestic processes and national policies of the target countries if they are driven solely by international organizations, donor agencies, or academic experts from the global North, if national actors are merely passive recipients of the results, or if they are only ‘associated’ after the event in discussions to legitimize the results.

Metagora’s distinctive bottom-up approach, in contrast, demonstrated that governance assessments can be relevant, truly shared, and have effective policy impact if they are based on domestic ownership, driven by authoritative national actors, involve a wide range of national stakeholders, and are implemented on a multidisciplinary basis. By following the principles of ownership and participation formulated in the Paris Declaration, this model appears to be more efficient, effective, and legitimate than external assessments.

When local conditions allow for such an approach to be implemented, a diversified and inclusive community of domestic stakeholders can best take the decision to conduct an assessment, formulate its rationale, identify the key issues to be measured, and define the assumptions and expectations that have to guide the design of measurement tools, such as survey questionnaires and samples. That is one of the project’s most powerful experiences and recommendations. It is only through such processes that the measurement and assessment of governance issues can produce ‘shared knowledge’ of the policy issues at stake, and thereby be of interest for, and have impact on, governance in society. We shall elaborate below on this value-added and impact.

Participatory processes were a crosscutting characteristic of the Metagora pilots, even though they varied in form from one pilot experience to another. In the Philippines, the participatory processes were based on strong inter-institutional mechanisms among statutory bodies, elaborated below; in

Palestine, three consultation workshops, each involving thirty or more representatives from stakeholder organizations, fed into a national steering committee involving key civil society and policy actors; and in Mexico, Peru, and South Africa, they were based on *ad hoc* groups of experts and key stakeholders.

For such processes to be effective, they must go beyond mere consultation and involve structured, organized, and regular work processes oriented towards obtaining concrete results and products. More than 300 domestic stakeholders and qualified local consultants participated during the overall project, whether in the design and implementation of the pilots or in related processes; and around 1,000 stakeholders and experts attended consultative meetings and workshops at the national and international levels.

Local multidisciplinary teams consisting of human rights practitioners, policy actors, statisticians, social scientists, and civil society stakeholders conducted most pilots. Since these actors had different backgrounds, interests, and working methods, discussions were often time-consuming. However, sufficient time was allocated to allow teams to establish common ground and start working together, based on the complementarity of their skills and diversity in their interests. As a result, in several countries the Metagora pilots had a notable impact in transforming and empowering relations between the actors involved in the measuring processes.

Dr. Romulo Virola, Secretary General of the National Statistical Coordination Board of the Philippines, the lead institution in the conception and implementation of the Metagora project in that country, described this impact:

“[Initially] my Institution was reluctant to play any kind of role in measuring human rights or governance-related issues. Nevertheless, this position started to evolve once the initiative... matured in a more institutional form, under the leadership of our national Commission on Human Rights. In this context, we started to talk with institutions and persons we had never met until then: the Commission on Human Rights itself, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, and several senior scholars working in the fields of human rights, democracy, and governance. Thus we discovered highly qualified potential partners and started to explore with them how to work together... in this process of dialogue and incipient collaboration. We finally decided to provide a strong technical support to the design and implementation of the Metagora pilot in our country, aimed at measuring indigenous peoples’ rights. The Metagora pilot has been a success, not only in terms of production of relevant and valuable

information, but also – and perhaps mainly – in terms of the impact it had in transforming and empowering the relations between the many ‘actors of change’ committed in this process.”

This statement, however, does not mean that all actors should play the same role. Rather, it means that wide participatory processes should be sought to take account of the diversity of potential stakeholders’ concerns. Moreover, their respective roles should rely on the capacity of the actors involved to define clearly their specific contributions and expectations. Finally, the quality of the participatory process, and the legitimacy of the measurement exercise, relies on identifying and designating a leading organization recognized by major actors.

#### ***4. Possibility and benefits of participation by national statistical offices***

As the previous section demonstrates, one of the project’s main lessons learned is that, contrary to a prejudice still broadly ingrained within a large part of the international official statistical community, national statistical offices can conduct surveys on governance and democracy issues, provide qualified technical assistance and field logistics to other governmental agencies or human rights institutions, and develop proper tools for systematic evidence-based monitoring of social, economic, and cultural rights, in collaboration and interaction with civil society actors.

In Francophone Africa and the Andean region, survey questionnaires on governance issues have been attached as a supplement to regular household surveys conducted by eleven national statistical offices. Well-established official surveys have obvious advantages: the size and quality of the sampling frames, the care and standardization of data collection, the analytical resources available, as well as the cost savings achieved by appending specific modules to existing questionnaires. Analysis of the resulting data is further enriched by information on respondents collected from the regular questionnaire modules, for example on social and development problems, such as poverty and exclusion. Disaggregated data also proved invaluable for the evidence-based assessment of local governance. Indeed, in Madagascar, Peru, and Ecuador, the survey has been incorporated, allowing time series to be built.

In the Philippines, the National Statistical Coordination Board provided expertise to the Commission on Human Rights on design and analysis. It also coordinated the training, sampling work, and field support provided by the National Statistical Office and the Statistical Research and Training Centre. Experts from these statistical offices were involved throughout the process, from the participatory consultation of stakeholders and communities of indigenous peoples, to the statistical analysis and presentation of findings to the stakeholders and the media. This not only helped to ensure that the survey

conformed to established professional standards, but also enhanced the culture of evidence-based assessment among the other main institutional partners.

In Palestine, the Central Bureau of Statistics cooperated closely with civil society actors to develop a prototype database on the right to education and its indicators. The Bureau was responsible for the identification and processing of relevant data, as well as for the development, maintenance, and public access of the database. The analysis and interpretation of the information provided by the database, however, was the independent responsibility of the users (NGOs, academic and independent research centres, the media, and bodies of the Palestinian National Authority).

All these experiences show that national statistical offices can efficiently and successfully take part in measuring governance issues in various ways. Nevertheless, the decision for a national statistical office to conduct or support measurement exercises in these areas will take two criteria into account: its institutional legitimacy in the eyes of the stakeholders, and its technical capacity.

#### ***5. Value added for human rights institutions and civil society***

Statistical analysis and quantitative indicators can bring significant value-added to both the work of national human rights institutions and the advocacy work of NGOs in governance. However, their agents often lack the technical knowledge and skills necessary to work with and analyse quantitative data. Many tend to consider statistics to be an overly reductive approach unable to capture the multiple complex dimensions inherent in human rights issues.

Several Metagora pilots proved that working arrangements involving different institutions with the appropriate substantive and technical skills can facilitate the measurement of governance issues. They also showed that a long process of dialogue and mutual learning is required to overcome prejudices, as well as the unfamiliarity of the various actors with the approaches and skills of the others. However, strong leadership by human rights institutions, coupled with suitable extensive field support and technical assistance from national statistical offices, could bring about the success of this kind of initiative – as has been seen from surveying of the rights of indigenous peoples in the Philippines.

Likewise, in the project on mapping political and ethnic violence in Sri Lanka, technical expertise was provided to the Human Rights Accountability Coalition, in which NGOs joined efforts to systematically collect and share data on human rights violations and analyse them together. And, in Palestine, the pilot experience confirmed that appropriate training in data collection

and data processing, as well as appropriate skills-building, enabled NGOs to play a double role as both providers and users of relevant information. These projects demonstrated that training in well-established methods for ensuring harmonized data collection and coding reinforce the capacity and action of NGOs. This is essential to ensure the local sustainability of the work on an autonomous scientific and technical basis.

All these instances confirm that appropriate training in data collection and data processing, as well as appropriate skills-building, can substantially empower NGOs' monitoring capacities and enrich their advocacy. On the basis of this training, NGOs can now play a double role as providers and users of relevant information.

#### **6. *Impact on public policies***

The enhanced capabilities for measurement and analysis of governance data generated by Metagora, through local ownership and multi-method collaboration and training among institutions, have become powerful in the hands of practitioners, civil society actors, stakeholders and policy actors who formulate and evaluate public policies.

This happened in four related ways: in the new substantive results that were generated, by linking and empowering domestic actors of change, through supplementary policy-oriented reports based on the materials generated by the project that created common ground among national stakeholders and policy makers; and, in some countries, in the institutionalization of household surveys on poverty, democratic participation, and governance issues conducted by national statistical offices that generate time series as a basis for monitoring progress.

This powerful conjunction is described vividly by Emilio Álvarez-Icaza, former Chairman of the Commission of Human Rights of Mexico City (Federal District):

“Why has an Ombudsman like me been involved in Metagora? My first and spontaneous answer is: because this project is enhancing my work as human rights defender, enlarging the scope of my mission and opening new perspectives to my action...The Metagora survey on abuses and ill-treatment by police forces in the Federal District provided me – and Mexican society generally – with an evidence-based picture of the magnitude and main characteristics of this phenomenon... After the Metagora survey results were released, I got in touch with the government of the Federal District and with the local legislative Congress to discuss how to address, through policy and legislation, the problem of massive abuses by police forces. Discussing

this issue on the basis of solid data marked a substantial difference in the kind of dialogue I used to have with public officials and political authorities... Confronted with facts and figures, they agreed to enter into a more constructive and positive policy dialogue... We are considering the possibility of drafting a law aimed at controlling abuses of police forces. Moreover, we are trying to set up a five-year human rights programme for the Federal District.”

In the Philippines, one of the project’s most important public policy impacts was the review, by the National Statistical Coordination Board, of the design and structure of the national population census. For the first time, the demographic and social profile of indigenous peoples – who constitute a significant part of the country’s total population – was included in the census. This was a significant methodological and political gain.

### **7. *Documentation for learning and training***

Throughout the project’s implementation (2004-2008), the Coordination Team documented the problems encountered and lessons learned. The rationale was that Metagora could enable others to learn from its successful innovations and its difficulties, and thus to gain from and build on existing work.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, an extensive repository of online training materials – conceptual, methodological, and practical – was developed, building upon and greatly extending the documentation used for consultant training and South-South exchanges. To validate and further enrich the content, the materials were subject to an extensive international peer-review process. This involved Metagora partners and external scholars, including statisticians, social and political scientists, and experts in governance and human rights monitoring.

The materials are thus intended to achieve several related purposes: facilitate the achieving of a common understanding among a variety of actors; guiding policy- and decision-makers in understanding how appropriate methods of data collection and analysis can inform the governance policy formulation; enabling potential data users to understand the complementary roles of quantitative and qualitative information in their work, and how to create statistically rigorous projects for data collection and analysis; raising awareness among professionals working with data on the specificities of policy processes related to governance issues, as well as on the particular information needs of policy makers; and conveying the specific challenges inherent to projects such as Metagora.

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10. See especially Chapter 9 in Naval, Walter and Suarez de Miguel, eds. (2008).

On several occasions, Metagora hosted or facilitated exchanges among key international actors, along with initiatives aimed at evidence-based assessment of governance with particular focus on its human rights and democracy dimensions. It developed close ties with leading institutions, such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, and was fully integrated within the OECD global programme on “Measuring the Progress of Societies”.

On completion of the project, and based on the hope expressed by the Metagora partners that their efforts would help other projects and initiatives to measure governance, these documented experiences, products, and lessons learned were handed to the international community through the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre.

## **Conclusion**

Metagora’s distinctive *methodological* contribution can be summarized as follows:

- Measuring governance and its human rights and democracy dimensions is technically feasible and politically relevant.
- Quantitative and qualitative data can and should interrelate to properly inform governance assessments and policy-making processes.
- For relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability, governance assessments ought to be based on domestic ownership and inclusive national participatory processes, be driven by authoritative national actors, and be implemented on a multidisciplinary basis.
- National statistical offices can be efficiently involved in measuring governance issues.
- Statistical analysis and quantitative indicators can add significant value to the work of civil society actors, national human rights institutions, and academics.

As important, though, was the project’s distinctive *organizational* modus operandi with partners, reflected also in its own governance structure. It embraced a genuinely participative and bottom-up approach, that involved canvassing citizens and local stakeholders, who chose their focus; locally-led assessments, based on ownership of tools and processes; inter-institutional working structures, connecting statistical, social, and research agencies, both at country level and in the organization’s own structures; and sustained South-South collaboration.

With these methodological and organizational innovations, Metagora was able to help empower local actors through sound governance assessments to contribute *practically* to improved governance, notably to improved design

and implementation of specific public policies. As the introductory chapter puts it, the project helped identify “endogenous social forces that can help build sustainable governance structures”.

The element of sustainability is as crucial as local ownership. To give sustainability to the relationships built, knowledge acquired, and capacities developed, and to enable experiences to be replicated, continuity is a key element. This issue is still at stake today. In many countries, the financial and political commitments, which are preconditions to the relevance, efficiency, and impact of policy-oriented governance assessments, often remain weak.

The introductory chapter describes the transformation in governance discourse and practice, and proposes six dichotomies: from managerial to political, global to country-level, numerical to narrative, quantitative to qualitative, top-down to bottom-up, and representative-democratic to monitory. The approach bequeathed by Metagora agrees vigorously in one key respect, the shift from top-down to bottom-up; and, appreciably, in another, the shift from global to country-level with a strong focus on major national policies. But it will be evident from this chapter that, in the other respects, Metagora proposes a transcendence or synthesis of the alternatives rather than a choice between them.

We recalled earlier in this chapter that Metagora had its origins in the formative process of the MDGs. This determinedly sought to set quantified indicators and targets in various important domains, to monitor and encourage the development process. Because contextual specificity is so important in governance issues, the MDG process itself did not succeed in extending the top-down process of setting internationally comparative quantitative goals to governance.

The founding mandate of Metagora was, crucially, not to abandon or downplay quantitative methods, but to retain their power and persuasiveness at the country level. At the same time, the validity of their design and contextualisation was improved, by involving national statistical offices where possible, and by enriching their interpretations, but also by applying qualitative and narrative methods. On this reinforced foundation, the project was not shy, as in the Andean and Francophone African studies and in its own South-South deliberations, to gain insight from appropriate cross-country comparisons, without the taint of prejudicial ranking.

Moreover, it continued to emphasize, in its governance assessments and in the dimensions considered, the importance of the administrative alongside the political, i.e., the results-based alongside the rights-based aspects of governance, as the introductory chapter so elegantly puts it.

And, most importantly, far from retreating to a monitory conception of their democratic role, Metagora's country partners resolutely sought to build actively on their governance assessments – bottom-up, mixed-method, inter-institutional – to interact with the state towards improved policy and legislation. In several instances, as we have seen, they achieved some success, notably in Mexico and the Philippines.

In these distinctive ways, we suggest, the Metagora approach was not only ahead of its time in contributing to the ongoing revisiting of governance theory and practice analysed in the introductory chapter, but it has prefigured the next desirable re-conception of mixed-method, democratically-convened governance assessment: one that is also intrinsically intended to achieve effective political engagement with the authorities in the contexts in which it is implemented.

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## **CLAIMING THE STATE: LESSONS LEARNED**

**Göran Hydén and John Samuel**

One of this volume's objectives has been to bring governance practice into a theoretical framework that captures its principal dimensions and offers an understanding of the premises on which governance assessments are increasingly conducted. To be sure, there is still a managerial strand to governance, but even where this approach prevails, in development banks for example, there is a growing realization that governance is not merely a technical, but also a political matter. The definition offered in Chapter 1 emphasizes the connection of governance to regime theory. Such a theory may be applied to many contexts, but in development, regime refers to the norms and values that infuse the public realm, the arena where government and citizens, or state and society actors, interact with a view to making policy.

This definition has the benefit of making governance what it is: the politics that determines the rules of the game within which policy is formulated and implemented. Governance bears on effectiveness, but is not the same as the results of specific policy interventions. It has a more direct link to legitimacy, because it is how people perceive the rules – whether or not they are fair and just – that increasingly sets governance apart as a political exercise. It is in this respect that governance is not so much about what governments do, but how they do it.

Interactions between stakeholders in the public realm differ, as this volume demonstrates. It may be confrontational and a direct challenge to authorities, as Praveen Jha and John Samuel show in Chapter 11, and the discussion of linking citizen initiatives to political accountability. It may be more consensual and, in fact, led by government, as Hashbat Hulan discusses in Chapter 5 with reference to Mongolia. What these and other cases covered in this volume have in common is the growing awareness and readiness among non-state stakeholders to engage in civic action. It is in

this respect that they all, in their own way, highlight a move in citizenry to claim the state and make it more inclusive, responsive, and capable of serving their interest and cause. This claim may not always be identical. Wealthier groups in society do not have the same interests as poor and marginalized groups. The point is, of course, that to the extent that these divisions include differences over what rules should prevail and be implemented, this will be an integral part of the governance dynamics.

The rest of this concluding chapter will be devoted to the more important lessons that have been learned on (a) inclusiveness, (b) responsiveness, and (c) capability. It will end with a discussion of the implications for the community of development partners and the role of the UNDP.

### **Inclusiveness**

Perhaps the most important lesson that has been learned is that institutional innovations rarely succeed if they are introduced from the outside, e.g., by development partners operating with a particular agenda or model in mind. In some countries, for example Rwanda as discussed in Chapter 7, the host government prefers its own institutional model and finds it difficult to accept the preferences of the development partners outright. The battle over the nature of the public realm, therefore, is over the extent to which the public realm is a sovereign national sphere, an issue that was evident in the Joint Governance Assessment made in that country.

In other countries with a democratic or civic tradition, the battle is more directly over the nature of the social contract between government and citizens, as the cases of India and Brazil demonstrate. Although institutional innovations do not come automatically, and are often the result of political, if not violent battles, concerted action by activist groups can make a difference to the destiny of groups of poor and marginalized people. What these cases also show is that social audit activities sometimes, if not always, lead to changes in the approach of the authorities. In India and Brazil, therefore, civic or political space is occupied by groups of citizens as part of their move to make the state more responsive to their interests.

Claiming political space is controversial and is not readily accepted by government. Some governments remain reluctant to accept challenges to their position, whether it comes from the legal political opposition or civil society activists. Others, however, are realizing that improving governance may be in their own interest. This is what has happened in Mongolia, as discussed in Chapter 5, and in many African countries that have accepted self-assessment under the auspices of the African Peer Review Mechanism, analysed by Stephen Grudz in Chapter 6. In these instances, space is offered on an invitational basis and usually comes with certain conditions.

Yet, in certain circumstances, that is better than nothing, because it raises the antes and sets precedents that citizens can use to challenge authorities in the future. So, even if it is not a full step toward inclusion, it is an important first step with potential for more progress ahead.

A second lesson is that making the public policy process more inclusive appears to be easier when it comes to formulation than to implementation. Civil society organizations are often invited to parliamentary hearings and may, through the media, influence the design of specific policies. Their voice may not be final, but their participation in the process is increasingly accepted by governments. The situation is less clear in monitoring policy implementation. With some exceptions, as described in this volume, citizen watchdog institutions are still met with suspicion in official circles. Governments prefer to retain as much control as possible of such institutions as anti-corruption bureaux, inspectors-general, human rights commissions, and even the judiciary. Releasing these institutions from the government leash is the cause of political battles in a growing number of countries. Those battles, whether focused on an independent judiciary as in many African countries undergoing constitutional reform, or on any other target institution, are evidence of a continuing effort to reclaim the state.

A third lesson is that concerns with governance are increasingly being expressed at sub-national levels. It happens in Indonesia and India and in South Africa, as Paul van Hoof shows in Chapter 9. Regime theory does not apply only at the country level, but to lower levels of government equally. The rules of the game for how local government authorities are meant to behave constitute a regime of their own. So far, the regime at the local level has been given far less attention than what goes on at the national level. That is partly a result of the transition to democracy and the emphasis that has been laid in many countries on constitutional reform. Local government has simply been overshadowed by concerns at the higher level. As the South African case shows, much of the central government's legitimacy relies on how well it is able to facilitate action at sub-national levels. Split preferences may exist among some citizens, but most of them would have a political preference, e.g., in South Africa, for or against the ruling African National Congress, that is identical at national and sub-national levels. Thus, the reputation and legitimacy of central government may be influenced by what is going on locally, and those in power are increasingly aware of this.

The local governance barometer in South Africa is a first step towards making the polity more inclusive by raising awareness among citizens, and attention in official circles, on how local authorities perform. Again, the emphasis is not so much on specific policy outcomes as it is on how citizens

perceive the rules that apply to local government performance. Do they respect the country's constitutions and laws? Are they acting in a way that comes across as just and fair? These are the issues that concern citizens in their wish to make the state more inclusive.

A fourth lesson is that the push for greater inclusiveness is also dependent on greater transparency. Bureaucracies the world over tend to operate on the principle of secrecy and confidentiality. Public service reforms in recent years have challenged this principle and made the call for greater transparency, including providing information that is accessible and intelligible to non-experts. This has led, for instance, toward attempts to publish 'citizen budgets'. These supply-side efforts by governments, however, have not been particularly successful, at least so far. Information has been issued selectively, and is often just based on the proposed government budget rather than on what happens to the money during the budget year. In this respect, many of these reforms, even where they are pursued in a genuine manner, have become 'formalities' rather than part of a fresh governance dynamic. As the cases of Brazil and India clearly show, transparency in government must be demanded by citizens to produce the results that lead to a truly inclusive system of governance.

Overall, one can conclude that the case studies in this volume show many entry points for extending inclusiveness in the public policy process, but none is an easy ride. Each requires courage and commitment as well as prudent judgment of what works in the long run and what is sustainable. Social and economic structures in many countries continue to limit opportunities for civic participation and, thus, for citizens to enjoy the benefits of development.

## **Responsiveness**

Inclusiveness broadens the space for civic action. Responsiveness enhances the quality of government-citizen interactions. Whenever governments act in a responsive manner, the gain in legitimacy is likely to be great. Many governments are genuinely interested in being responsive to different constituencies, including the poor, but often lack the resources to realize this ambition. What has happened in the education sector in many African countries is a case in point. Willing to implement the MDGs, governments have spent large amounts of their own resources and money received from donors to build schools and health centres. This expansion, which has been accelerated to meet these goals, has benefitted large numbers of poor people, women, and youth, in particular. At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that the recurrent funds needed to sustain these investments and maintain the facilities are not enough. So, because of their country's poverty, many governments cannot fully match the requirements

needed to sustain poverty reduction measures. In that respect, responsiveness in some poor countries, therefore, has a financial limit.

Even within these real limits that apply to low-income countries, especially in Africa, there are valid lessons that have been learned. The first is that responsiveness is a two-way process. It is difficult to enhance responsiveness if there is no demand. Inclusiveness is the first step in the sense of widening the number of people involved in the policy process, but, as suggested above, greater responsiveness comes from strengthening the institutional mechanisms for holding officials accountable.

Wherever there is a form of constitutional democracy, the political set-up includes institutions such as elections, organized parties, and parliament that cater to citizen demands for voice. It also includes an independent judiciary and audit mechanism that provides scope for monitoring and oversight. These are fundamental cornerstones of democratic governance and must be constantly nurtured to keep the regime alive and alert. There have been complaints in Western democracies that the formal model of representative democracy is losing its ability to attract citizen attention other than at election time.<sup>1</sup> Civicness is seen as threatened by what is perceived as a growing apathy.

This may not be what happens in new democracies where there is still excitement about extending the suffrage and other forms of emancipation associated with the introduction of democratic governance. The issue there is not apathy, but rather denied promises and failed expectations. The events in the Arab World in 2010 and 2011 are perhaps the strongest piece of evidence for this scenario, but it is evident also in the chapters included in this volume, albeit less dramatically. For example, the case of Mongolia shows how fragile governance gains may find themselves in a state of political volatility, when government institutions have not yet stabilized and are therefore little prepared for responsive interaction with citizens.

Citizen demand for responsiveness is important, but a second lesson is that formal government institutions in the new democracies are still being formed, and must be nurtured. That is why democratic governance work cannot neglect parliaments, political parties, elections, and other mechanisms that enhance the regime's legitimacy. Failure to sustain the credible functioning of these institutions will create disappointment, if not

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1. A recent example comes from Sweden where, according to the World Values Survey, roughly one in four Swedish men between 18 and 29 years of age think that it would be "good" or "very good" if Sweden was led by a strong leader who does not have to worry about democratic elections, as reported by Staffan I. Lindberg, the WVS Director for Sweden, in *Dagens Nyheter*, the largest Swedish morning daily, on June 3, 2011.

disillusion, among the citizenry and, as Samuel Huntington (1968) argued long ago, in the worst scenario can lead to political instability.

Formal democratic institutions, however, are not the only concern in democratic governance. A third lesson that has been learned is that the conventional models of representative democracy, whether parliamentary or presidential, are not necessarily enough for democratic governance, as John Keane (2009) argues in his historic overview of the 'life and death' of democracy. These formal institutions must be underpinned by a mindset that sustains these structures. That mindset includes pragmatism, anti-authoritarianism, a readiness to accept change, and a willingness to listen to others. In his view, democracy is a humble venture, yet one that must not be meek when being challenged. Keane's account is also relevant to the discussion of responsiveness, because his book confirms a third lesson that has been learned and referred to in this volume: the importance of developing institutions that respond to new challenges, including growing citizen demand for accountability. He says that no less than a hundred or so new power-scrutinizing institutions have been created around the world since 1945. These include public integrity commissions, judicial review mechanisms, public interest litigation, minority parliaments, human rights watches, and citizen assemblies. These power-monitoring and power-controlling mechanisms are penetrating both sideways and downwards in the political system, to which several chapters in this volume bear witness. Examples are evident in Chapter 13, which tells the story of the Metagora project, as well as in the case studies of India and Brazil.

Of special interest is also the story of Rwanda, in Chapter 7, and the effort by its government to build legitimacy by reinventing customary institutions for modern governance. These institutions may not meet the international community's gold standard, but are nonetheless significant institutional innovations. Those innovations are paving the way for a form of governance that citizens in that country can relate to at this juncture, when reconciliation after the genocide in 1994 is viewed as preferable to the more confrontational approach of conventional judicial practices.

Experimenting with new institutions requires courage and commitment, qualities that the Rwandese President, Paul Kagame, has demonstrated in his interaction with the development partner community. These qualities are also present in the stories of the creation of the various social accountability mechanisms created in India and Brazil, and also in the accounts of the innovative monitoring and measuring processes established under the auspices of the Metagora project.

Overall, it may be concluded that enhancing responsiveness is the most challenging and controversial aspect of claiming the state. The politics surrounding such measures tends to be more contested than when widening inclusiveness or strengthening capability. While formal institutions matter, even more important are the processes by which they engage citizens. How transparent are state institutions when interacting with citizens? Do they respect media freedom? Do they take steps to respond to the needs of society's vulnerable and marginalized groups? A measure of state responsiveness comes from answering these and related questions.

### **Capability**

If the practice of inclusiveness involves people's participation, non-discrimination and respect for human rights, and if the practices of responsiveness imply transparency and accountability, the capability dimension of claiming the state refers to how effectively and efficiently the state delivers services. The institutional practices of both inclusiveness and responsiveness contribute to making the state capable. But capability is a separate dimension, because it refers to how well the state applies just and fair rules in implementing policy. Capability, therefore, is more than capacity, which refers more specifically to the human and institutional resource base or endowment associated with delivering services. While individual skills are necessary, they are not sufficient for making the state more inclusive and responsive. It is the capability for collective action at multiple levels that leads to desirable outcomes for society. Individual training programmes do not suffice for societal impact. Only capabilities generated at different levels of society can facilitate outcomes that benefit people and promote sustainable human development.

One of the lessons learned around the global South, and which is confirmed by this volume, is that governments tend to be top-heavy, i.e., the central government controls more resources than local authorities, yet in many countries the former fails to deliver services in a timely and respectable manner. It is not only that it is short of capacity, which may be the case in some instances, but also its lack of commitment to rules that ensure effective and efficient delivery. In many African countries, the general formula of allocating resources for development is based on a 80/20 ratio, with four-fifths going to central government and only one-fifth allocated to local authorities. In bureaucracies where procedures and rules tend to slow down processing funds and internal audit is weak, as the case is in many low-income countries in particular, the opportunities for money being misappropriated and channeled for uses other than those intended are great. Whether they are called 'rent-seeking', 'elite capture', or just 'corruption', these practices clearly limit the extent to which government services are perceived to be delivered equitably.

At the same time, the challenge for many low-income countries is that decentralization has not been effective, and local authorities have a reputation for not only failing to deliver but also for being corrupt. The chapters on assessing governance at sub-national level, focusing on the experiences of Indonesia, South Africa, and Viet Nam, indicate variations both between and inside these countries, but they also confirm the challenges of enhancing good governance at this level. These weaknesses stem in part from truly lacking trained and experienced personnel, because the career ladder points to the centre. Local government servants have their eyes on positions in central government. They are also the result of shortages of funds, over which they have direct control. Because the revenue base, especially in rural districts, is narrow, much of what these local authorities spend is money delegated by central government institutions. This money often includes funds provided by development partners.

Experience has shown that moving the money to local authorities in a timely and adequate manner often fails, leaving these authorities without resources to implement policies agreed upon by elected councillors. There is a mismatch between what they decide at their council meetings and what government ministries provide, leading local government institutions to lose their credibility among citizens. Efforts to track public expenditures have been made by the development partners in collaboration with national treasury institutions, but these tools have neither been very effective in tracing the flow of money, nor have they helped to improve relations between national governments and the development partner community. The failure over the years in many low-income countries to decentralize and build stronger local government institutions is one of the trickier challenges that remain in improving the interactions between government institutions and citizens.

A second lesson is that strengthening capability relies less on formal training, and more on practical and experiential learning. Much money and time have been spent on sending people to seminars and formal training institutions on the assumption that what is lacking is technical or managerial capacity. For sure, these investments in capacity-building have not been a waste, but they have not always really provided enough impetus for institutional development. The individual officer sent on training might have benefitted, but it is less clear that his or her institution has changed much as a result of the training.

One reason for this shortcoming is that public institutions are not autonomous, but rather are embedded in social relations and structures that shape their behaviour and performance. Societal practices, such as chatting and informal institutions, are typically present also in the formal office

context, making it difficult for individuals, even managers, to change the culture of their institution. Public institutions, therefore, reflect norms and values embraced by the host society. Many of these norms may be detrimental to equitable and fair service delivery, but they are part of the organizational reality and thus the starting-point, in many cases, for reform. Democratic governance will only succeed if it comes in the shape of reforms from within, rather than transfers of institutional models from outside.

The attempts to curb corruption are a case in point. Institutional innovations have typically come from external sources in the form of transfers from societies in which these institutions have evolved over long time. The Ombudsman institution found in the Nordic countries is one of these exports. It has been adopted quite successfully in countries that already have a tradition of rule of law, and where independent scrutiny of those in power is taken for granted. It has been much less successful in countries where particularistic values still prevail and the notion of universal norms is only weakly institutionalized. Transfers to these countries have typically ended as half-measures, for example when the ombudsman institution reports to the Presidency rather than the Parliament, rendering checks on the executive ineffective. The establishment of these institutions may not have been wholly unsuccessful, as the possibility exists in the future that groups of citizens will demand their independence and accountability from the legislature rather than the executive, but it is questionable whether these half-measures qualify as 'good enough' governance.

There is evidence in this volume from a number of countries – Brazil, India, Mongolia, and South Africa – that institutional innovations spring out of hardship. Learning how to achieve something comes with the urge to change the status quo. Claiming the state, therefore, is very much a matter of challenging public institutions, whether national or sub-national, from below or within, to ensure adherence to norms and principles of equity in service delivering. Institutional innovations that help citizens to better monitor and measure government performance are important, but there are no shortcuts. Evolving such institutions, as the case study on India convincingly shows, are associated with political battles. Not all are won.

### **Implications for development partners**

As suggested in Chapter 1, the international donor community has been a dominant actor in the governance field. They have been instrumental in setting the global agenda for governance and development. They have provided extensive funding for specific measures to improve governance. And they have often used 'good governance' criteria as conditions for their aid. With only a few exceptions, governments in the South have typically

followed the donor agenda, rather than setting their own. More recently, however, their development partners have tried to take a lower-key position, arguing that recipient governments need to have a greater sense of ownership of the foreign aid they receive. Through various preparatory steps, this approach was confirmed in the 2005 Paris Declaration. It was later elaborated and confirmed in the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action. A review of progress to date is scheduled for December 2011 in the South Korean city of Busan.

There are already indications that there is a ‘Paris Declaration fatigue’ among donors as well as recipients. That stems from frustrations with the implementation of some of the Declaration’s core principles. The donors are caught between wanting to see results, often within unrealistic time frames, and the political realities on the ground in many countries of the South, where the state is weak and results from development policies supported by foreign aid are bound to take time to materialize. Wherever a strong results orientation exists, there is a risk of less attention being paid to governance issues, because they are more complex and address issues of how to do things, not just what to do.

This volume suggests that such an approach may be shortsighted. Shying away from the challenges implicit in taking governance seriously, especially at the present time when there is a growing interest not only in representative but also monitory democracy, could have detrimental effects on the sustainability of the achievements made to date under the MDGs. A recent study of the use of governance indicators in three African countries indicated that their use is principally confined to donors and governments, and to the interaction between the two. There is little participation by local stakeholders, and the distance to more socially accountable mechanisms for holding public officials accountable seems long (UNDP, 2010). It is important, therefore, to alert donors to the policy value of adjusting their approach to governance in ways that acknowledge the role of citizen-led initiatives.

As this volume shows, there has been a proliferation of approaches to assessing governance that involves not only donors and governments, but above all non-state stakeholders. Their involvement and growing influence on how government agencies perform their duties to the public indicate that, for donors to be relevant, they must be bolder in their thinking on their role as development partners. Whether the model they wish to support is self-evaluation, joint assessment, citizen-led initiatives, or local assessment tools, they must commit to taking governance assessment seriously as instruments for democratic governance.

The often uncritical approach to the role of the state that has been easily fostered in the context of Official Development Assistance is not particularly

helpful in a context of making official government agencies more responsive to the citizenry. Many low-income countries in both Africa and Asia are still building functioning state institutions. Governance assessments indicate that the success of these efforts requires an active citizenry that can hold public officials accountable for their words and deeds. Monitoring this process of institution-building is an integral part of strengthening national ownership and allowing these countries to move away from an often undue dependence on a donor agenda and its associated funding.

Governance assessments, therefore, should first and foremost be used to encourage local capacity to take charge not just of specific policies, but also the rules under which they are being implemented. They should no longer be applied by donors as whips to scourge under-performing governments, but rather be directed to helping citizens take a greater role in monitoring government performance. Such a change in outlook may take time to materialize in some countries, but it is no excuse for not trying to build such capacity with a view to improving the prospects for sustainable human development. As this volume has tried to demonstrate, there are many examples to show that such an approach pays off.

### **Implications for UNDP**

Because UNDP is a multilateral agency that operates under conditions different from those of bilateral donors, it faces its own implications that go beyond what has been discussed above. Through the work of its Oslo Governance Centre in support of social accountability mechanisms, and its focus on building an inclusive, responsive, and capable state by strengthening citizen initiatives, UNDP is well placed to continue playing a lead role as a catalyst for new approaches in this field.

At the same time, there are a number of things that UNDP can do more of, or do better. Among the lessons learned and documented in this volume, several points stand out as particularly important to incorporate into its future programming:

- Support genuine citizen demand for good governance.
- Learn from civil society actors and activists.
- Involve more practitioners from the South.
- Encourage exchanges of knowledge, methods, and tools.
- Improve its own political analysis of governance assessments.
- Create more ‘mediating spaces’ between stakeholders.
- Continue strengthening its virtual resource centre for governance assessments.

## **Building the third generation of assessments**

This volume has argued that the theory of governance and the practice of assessing governance have developed in three waves. The latest of these is relatively fresh and its contours have only become evident thanks to the analysis that the authors of this book have embarked upon. We want to conclude, therefore, with an attempt to characterize what we see as the third generation of governance assessment, and how that can be built upon and further promoted. We realize that not everyone necessarily agrees with this portrayal, but we believe it is important to present it, if for no other reason than to stimulate further debate on where the discourse that shapes governance assessment may be heading. We do this again in the form of bullet points that serve as shorthand for what are more complex and sometimes controversial issues.

The third generation of governance assessment appears to be characterized by:

- Multiple stakeholder ventures, sometimes initiated by responsive governments, other times by citizen groups.
- Exercises that aim to involve stakeholders in practical learning of how to govern better.
- Involvement with the objective of making the state more responsive to citizen demands.
- Focus on citizen monitoring to strengthen democratic governance.
- Linking knowledge generation to local civic action.
- Giving as much attention to the legitimacy of policy action as to its effectiveness.
- Prioritizing a rights-based approach over one focused exclusively on results.
- Transcending a narrow, institutional emphasis by including political economy analysis.

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