Governance and the Post-2015 development framework: a civil society proposal

Open, inclusive, accountable and effective governance needs to be at the heart of the United Nations' Post-2015 framework, as a stand-alone goal and an integral part of other goals, if the framework is to win legitimacy from citizens and maximise its effects on poverty and sustainable development.

The UN General Assembly has affirmed that the Post-2015 framework should promote democratic governance and expert inputs have underlined the critical importance of governance, as did the Millennium Declaration in 2000.[1] The UN's MyWorld survey of more than a million people in 194 countries has found "an honest and responsive government" to be one of citizens' top four priorities, a theme which often recurs in consultations with people around the world.[2]

As the UN Secretary-General has noted, governance is both an outcome and an enabler of development.[3] Countries with more bribery make less progress in areas like maternal mortality and child education, for example, while small gains in governance could have big effects on these areas.[4] So the framework needs to promote openness, accountability and effective public institutions, build trust between states and citizens and curb corruption and waste. These issues go hand in hand with promotion of the rule of law and access to justice, the promotion of peaceful societies and the addressing of inequality.

The question is how to integrate governance into the framework in a way which balances national diversity with global comparability, extends from governments to international bodies and private corporations and builds on existing human rights laws and norms. We believe the framework needs to:

1. Enable all people and public bodies to obtain **detailed and reliable information on sustainable development** in a timely and accessible manner: in particular, information about what resources are available, how they are raised and spent and what results they contribute to.
2. Curb **corruption and illicit financial flows**, which drain away huge sums in much-needed funds.
3. Enhance the **effectiveness of public institutions** in curbing poverty and promoting sustainable development and maximise their accountability for the use of public resources.
4. Ensure public backing for efforts to curb poverty and inequality by enabling **participation of all people in the design, delivery and monitoring of policy**, without exclusion or discrimination, and by ensuring rights of free speech, assembly and access to information.
5. Enhance the **accountability and positive impacts of business** by ensuring full disclosure of relationships between corporations and states and requiring corporations to report to a consistent standard on their impacts on the environment, society and human rights.

These five aims should become global targets which are included in a stand-alone Post-2015 goal on "ensuring open, inclusive, accountable and effective governance" and integrated into other goals.[5] There also need to be mechanisms for reporting on, and ensuring accountability for, the attainment of all Post-2015 goals (including a goal on governance) at the global, regional and national levels.

A stand-alone governance goal is needed to address serious obstacles to development which are structural and transnational and so cannot be addressed by sectoral goals (on health or education, for example). One such obstacle is corruption, which is said to cost the European Union as much as 120 billion euros a year.[6] Another is unrecorded illicit financial flows, which are estimated to have drained more than a trillion dollars from Africa since 1980. It has been calculated that retaining this capital within the continent might enable it to meet its MDG targets on child mortality 13 years earlier on average.[7]

The selection, implementation and evaluation of national actions to meet global goals should happen at national level, in ways which actively involve all stakeholders (especially the poor and other marginalised groups) and within global parameters which ensure rigour and comparability between countries. In the table overleaf, we suggest a global minimum for each governance target. As a contribution to debate, we suggest ideas for indicators which might be used to evaluate progress beyond this global minimum.

We look forward to working with the United Nations and its Member States on these vital questions.

A Post-2015 goal: Ensure open, inclusive, accountable and effective governance

Suggested global target	Target needs to ensure	Suggested global minimum	Possible indicators
1. Enable all people and public bodies to obtain timely and reliable information on sustainable development: in particular, about what resources are available, how they are raised and spent and what results they contribute to.	The law empowers people to obtain information in a timely fashion, in forms they can access and use.	Right to information is embodied in a law based on international standards.	Reduction in time taken for people to obtain data under such laws. Improved Right to Information rating. Ratification of Open Data Charter.[8]
	Full and timely reporting of all government budgets and other financial flows at the national and subnational levels, including corporate and income taxes, aid flows, commercial and concessional lending.	Government proactively publishes budget documents[9], has a well-resourced and independent statistics office and reports on the value, terms and use of all external financing. Corporations required to disclose all tax payments to states (see also 5. below). Bilateral, multilateral donors and lenders report to minimum IATI standards.[10]	Compliance with access to information clauses of UN Convention Against Corruption.[11] Improved score on Open Budget Index and Financial Secrecy Index.[12] Improved IATI score for donor aid. Improved score on Resource Governance Index (where relevant).[13]
	Regular and timely reporting, in formats accessible to all citizens, on progress towards Post-2015 goals, broken down by region, gender, age and other key markers, as well as by resources invested and their results.	Government reports annually to its citizens, with input from national stakeholders, on its implementation of the Post-2015 agenda. International institutions also report annually to the public on these issues.	Progressive improvements in the scope and quality of such reports. Information is increasingly accessible to, and useable by, marginalised groups. Reporting leads to progressive improvement in the effectiveness of policy.
2. Curb corruption and illicit financial flows.	Governments take effective action against corruption and illicit financial flows.	Country has signed and ratified UNCAC and implemented an up-to-date legal framework against bribery, corruption and tax abuses, which facilitates stolen asset recovery. Country clamps down on tax avoidance, bribery and corruption by all companies under its jurisdiction. Transparent public procurement and public disclosure of all companies' ultimate beneficial ownership (see 5. below). Public officials' assets are fully disclosed and audited. Independent experts take part in drafting and review of anti-corruption laws.	Fall in Global Financial Integrity's estimate of illicit flows. Improved score on Basel Institute's Anti-Money Laundering Index.[14] Improved scores relative to peers on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Global Corruption Barometer and Bribe-Payers' Index.[15] Faster recovery and return of stolen assets to their rightful owners. Surveys report that citizens have fewer personal experiences of corruption.[16]

Suggested global target	Target needs to ensure	Suggested global minimum	Possible indicators
3. Enhance the capacity of public institutions to make effective use of resources and maximise their accountability to the public.	The effectiveness of policy and public spending is regularly, independently and transparently reviewed.	Country has a independent audit agency or other oversight body which carries out regular audits that are published in full.	Supreme audit body reports improved take-up of its recommendations by government bodies.
	Steady improvement in the capacity of states to raise, manage and spend revenues for development, to provide effective and equitable public services, and to evaluate the results.	Aid donors enhance support for building the capacity of public institutions in countries which lack the means to do so themselves.	Improvements in World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicators on Effectiveness and Regulatory Quality.[17] Tax/GDP ratio moves closer to global averages and tax due but uncollected falls. Fall in gap between allocated and executed budget, delays to service delivery and state payments of debts, bills and salaries.
4. Increase the active participation of all people in sustainable development and ensure that people enjoy freedoms of speech, association, peaceful protest and access to information.	Legal framework protects basic rights and forbids discrimination.	The legal framework enshrines rights of free speech, assembly and access to information.	Improvements in Freedom of Assembly and Freedom of Association on the CIRI Human Rights Dataset.[18]
	The media is free to operate independently without fear of violence or repression.	The legal framework protects the right of journalists to report in the public interest without harassment or censorship.	Elimination of violence against and sanctioning of journalists, as recorded by Committee to Protect Journalists.[19]
	Human rights defenders and civil society groups are able to work without harassment or undue restriction.	The law enables civil society groups to operate freely.	Higher score on Civicus' Civil Society Enabling Environment Index.[20]
	All citizens, without exclusion or discrimination, can play an active part in creation, implementation and monitoring of policy (e.g in setting budgets and provision of public services).	Formal mechanisms exist which enable all citizens, especially the poor and marginalised, women and youth, to contribute to the creation, implementation and oversight of policy.	Higher participation scores on Rule of Law Index and Open Budget Survey (for participation in budgeting).[21] More citizens tell opinion surveys they feel able to participate in development.[22]
5. Ensure full disclosure of relationships between corporations and states and reporting on corporate impacts on the environment and society.	Full transparency in public procurement (including full disclosure of all contracts between the state and private companies), tax payments, corporate political donations and lobbying activities; companies report all social, human rights and environmental impacts.	Law requires corporations to report on tax payments, political donations, lobbying and social, environmental and human rights impacts, in a rigorous, timely fashion. Law requires transparent public procurement and disclosure of companies' ultimate ownership and contracts with the state.	Increases in scope, quality and timeliness of reporting. Citizens express increased trust in state-private sector relationships (for example, through opinion surveys.) Fall in investment's negative social, environmental and human rights impacts.[23]
Overarching target: create global and national accountability mechanisms for Post-2015 which ensure that institutions at all levels are working to support the aims of the framework.	All institutions, including international bodies and private corporations as well as governments, are under an obligation to contribute to the aims of Post-2015.	The framework makes clear respective responsibilities of each kind of institution. Inclusive reporting and accountability mechanisms are created at global level, and in each country.	Institutions meet their responsibilities under the Post-2015 framework in a fashion that is increasingly timely, comprehensive and inclusive of all stakeholders.

This statement is published in January 2014 and endorsed by:

Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (Uganda)
AfroLeadership (Cameroon)
Alliance for Budget Transparency (Kyrgyzstan)
Cahurast (Nepal)
Caritas Zambia
Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (India)
Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia
Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding
Community Health and Research (Nigeria)
Community Initiative Action Group (Kenya)
Fitra (Indonesia)
Fondation Chirezi (Democratic Republic of Congo)
Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo (El Salvador)
Fundación Solidaridad (Dominican Republic)
Fundar (Mexico)
Global Integrity (United States)
Global Movement for Budget Transparency, Accountability and Participation (BTAP)
Global Witness (United Kingdom)
Groupe D´Etude, De Recherche et D`Action Pour Le Developpement (Senegal)
Grupo de Ciudadanía y Finanzas Públicas de la ESAP Escuela Superior de Administración Pública (Colombia)
Human Rights First Rwanda
Institute of Public Finance (Croatia)
Instituto de Estudios Estratégicos y Políticas Públicas (Nicaragua)
Instituto de Estudos Socioeconômicos (Brazil)
Integrity Action
Integrity Watch Afghanistan
International Alert (United Kingdom)
International Budget Partnership
Kemitraan (Indonesia)
Luta Hamutuk (Timor Leste)
National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (India)
Obeng Denis Udo-Inyang Foundation (Nigeria)
Perkumpulan IDEA (Indonesia)
Policy Forum (Tanzania)
Public Service Accountability Monitor (South Africa)
Publish What You Pay Indonesia
Restless Development
Saferworld
Samarthan Center for Development and Support (India)
Save the Children
Society for Civic Development (South Sudan)
Soros Foundation Kazakhstan
Stakeholder Forum
Tearfund
Transparencia Mexicana
Transparency International
Transparency International Indonesia
Trocaire (Ireland)
Youth for Social Development (India)

Endnotes

1 See United Nations General Assembly. Outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. A/68/L.4. 1st October 2013. Page 4. See Report of the Secretary General. A Life of Dignity for All. A/68/202. Page 13. Millennium Declaration, Article 13.

2 See http://www.myworld2015.org/?page=results. See also the final report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Governance and the Post-2015 Development Framework at http://www.worldwewant2015.org/governance/finalreport. See also Howard, J and Leavy, J. What Matters Most? Evidence from 84 participatory studies with those living with extreme poverty and marginalisation. Institute for Development Studies. 2013.

3 See Report of the Secretary General. A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. A/68/202. 26th July 2013. Paragraph 81.

4 See http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/ending_corruption_to_end_poverty and https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/Getting_to_Zero.pdf

5 For example, a Post-2015 education goal should include targets on use of public funds for education (our Target One), curbing corruption in the education system (Target Two), citizen participation in design of policy and the running of schools (Target Three) and the financial dealings of private providers and suppliers with the public education system (Target Four).

6 See EU Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmström. Fighting Corruption. From Intention to Results. Speech, 5th March 2013. Accessible at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-187_en.htm?locale=en

7 African Development Bank. New AfDB-GFI Joint Report: Africa a Net Creditor to the Rest of the World. Media release. 29th May 2013. The definition of illicit financial flows includes financial flows from illegal activities and legal activities which become illegal because they infringe exchange control regulations. See also http://international.cgdev.org/blog/oecd-financial-secrecy-african-child-mortality

8 See http://rti-rating.org/ and http://odta.net/post/open-data-charter

9 We recommend that all countries should be expected to publish four basic budget documents: the Executive's Budget Proposal, Enacted Budget, Citizens Budget and Audit Report.

10 See www.aidtransparency.net

11 See, for example, United Nations Convention Against Corruption. Articles 10 and 13.

12 See http://internationalbudget.org/what-we-do/open-budget-survey/ and http://www.financialsecrecyindex.com

13 See http://www.revenuewatch.org/rgi/. This index covers natural resource-producing countries.

14 See http://www.gfintegrity.org/ and http://index.baselgovernance.org/

15 See http://www.transparency.org/research

16 See, for example, http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp, http://www.afrobarometer.org/ and http://www.asianbarometer.org/

17 See www.govindicators.org

18 See http://www.humanrightsdata.org/

19 See http://www.cpj.org

20 See http://socs.civicus.org/?p=4297

21 See http://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index

22 As per footnote xix.

23 For example, the UN Human Rights Council's Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights could be relevant for an indicator on the human rights impacts of business.