Discussion Paper

Measuring Democracy and Democratic Governance in a post-2015 Development Framework

August 2012

United Nations Development Programme

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION[1]

This discussion paper aims to outline some of the major factors to consider should it be decided that global goal(s) covering democratic governance[2] are included in a post-2015 framework. In contrast to the existing MDGs, which are focused on socio-economic development indicators, democratic governance is not easy to measure because it means different things to different people, because it is packed with a number of different variables and dimensions and because the quality of democratic governance is a politically, culturally and ideologically charged determination. That being said, the paper makes a case for a global goal on democratic governance and explores four possible approaches for targets and indicators to support a goal. These are (1) global targets with global indicators (2) global targets with national indicators (3) regional targets with national indicators and (4) national targets with national indicators. The paper describes some of the main methodological issues for selecting democratic governance targets and indicators in the post-MDG framework.

The paper also provides an overview of the utility of individual ongoing cross country democracy /democratic governance measurement initiatives for a global goal on democratic governance and reviews some of the weaknesses and concerns with these indices. The paper looks at "democracy" indicators (focus on government by the people), "governance" indicators (focus on institutional effectiveness) and "democratic governance" indicators (focus on participatory, accountable, responsive and inclusive governance) measurement issues. These concepts have different connotations and ideological preconceptions and in the area of measurement there is considerable overlap in the existing measurement initiatives. There are both strategic as well as conceptual advantages in making these distinctions and a global goal will need to reflect the balance of democracy and governance dimensions in its targets and indicators.

This paper looks at UNDP's experience in measuring democratic governance cross-nationally, focusing on the Human Development Reports and nationally through its Global Program on Democratic Governance Assessments.

[1] The purpose of this paper is to stimulate discussion, and views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations, including UNDP, or UN Member States.

[2] UNDP works on 'democratic governance' as described here: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/overview.html
Other organisations cited in this paper work on issues related to 'democracy' or 'democratisation.' This paper uses the term 'democratic governance' unless referring to specific measurement initiatives that have been labelled 'democracy.'

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN THE POST-2015 FRAMEWORK

As international attention is currently focused on the outcomes from Rio +20, and the beginning of a discussion of the post-2015 framework, the question is raised about the place governance will have in new international commitments, and accordingly how advances in governance may be measured and for what purposes. The debate on having a governance or democracy goal is not new. Previous attempts have failed either because of resistance to internationally recommended standards on what was considered a domestic affair, or because of expected difficulties in measuring progress on such goal and targets. Measuring progress on primary school enrolment may be less sensitive than measuring human rights compliance or voice and access to information. Because of these difficulties, the Millennium Development Goals did not contain a goal on democratic governance. The closest agreement was to add a narrative in the Declaration which does not commit to measuring. At that time it was seen as a major step towards international commitment to democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. But the Declaration also reiterated agreement to uphold the sovereign equality of all States, and respect for their territorial integrity and political independence.

Multiple reviews of MDG achievements to date have highlighted governance as one of the missing links in the achievement and sustainability of MDG results.[2] At the MDG Summit in 2010, world leaders reaffirmed the importance of freedom, rule of law, peace and security, respect for all human rights, including the right to development, gender equality and an overall commitment to just and democratic societies for development. It was acknowledged that good governance at the national and international levels is essential for sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger. Moreover, recent events in the Arab region and elsewhere squarely demonstrate that monitoring MDGs is not an adequate framework to measuring peoples' well-being and country progress.[3] While captured in the Millennium Declaration itself, missing from the MDGs is a recognition that governance -particularly institutional quality- is closely related to growth and broader measures of socioeconomic development; a recognition of the universal normative aspect of respect for human rights, the problem of corruption and its effects on development and the problems that are caused by deficits in recognizing human rights as witnessed in North Africa.

Furthermore, democratic governance is at the core of the problem of fragile and failed states. The costs of inter- and intra-state conflict are high: for warring countries there are economic and psychological costs, there are

[2] See, for example, UNDP (2010) *The Path to Achieving the MDGs: a synthesis of evidence from around the world*; UNDP (2010) *Beyond the Mid-point: achieving the MDGs*

[3] On the cusp of the Tunisian Revolution several assessments reported that 'Tunisia was on track to achieving its MDGs' and that 'Tunisia showed remarkable progress on equitable growth, fighting poverty, and achieving good social indicators.' See OHCHR Statement 28 October 2011.

costs for neighbors and for donors/developed countries (e.g. pirates off Somalia - a failed state). Widespread violence delays development and the most affected are Africa (conflict) and Latin America (crime) and of course the recent conflicts in North Africa and Syria. Recent developments certainly underpin the need to include governance and human rights related goals in a possible successor MDG framework. The *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States* at Busan[4] includes a new attempt to define country level targets and indicators covering the capabilities and institutions that states require to deliver for their citizens, and recognizes that conflict and bad governance pose serious problems for development. The indicators will focus on five Peace and State building Goals (PSGs) which include "legitimate politics"; "security"; "justice"; and "economic foundations".

A global goal on democratic governance would serve to draw attention to the critical role of democratic governance for sustainable development. It would also help strengthen countries information systems on governance, with potential benefits of strengthening countries' performance based management systems and the social and political accountability benefits that would bring. The experience of the MDGs has shown that they have been an effective advocacy and communication tool resonating both with political leaders and with the public; that there has been an impact on the policy environment with both developing countries and donors building the MDGs into their strategies and they have acted as a common strategic language, making it easier for a broad range of actors to work with governments in addressing development challenges.[5] These are all benefits that the cause of strengthened democratic governance for sustainable human development across the world certainly needs. In short, the MDGs have been tremendously successful in galvanizing political leaders, civil society organizations, private sector actors, the media and donors in the pursuit of human development – it is hoped that transforming democratic governance into a global goal will do the same for improving governance.

However, it needs to be stated at the outset that while the science of measuring democratic governance has improved considerably since 2000, there are no available cross-country measures of democratic governance/democracy that are internationally accepted and have demonstrated the validity, accuracy, and sensitivity that would make them useful to track changes in democratic conditions across countries. Existing empirical indicators of democracy and democratic governance are flawed. The flaws extend to problems of definition, ideological bias, aggregation rules, imprecision, measurement errors, poor data coverage, etc. With

[4] The "*New Deal for engagement in fragile states"* was endorsed by 17 states and 6 international organizations at the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, Korea, in November 2011. By September 2012, a set of indicators for each goal in the New Deal's Peace building and State-building Goals (PSGs), will have been developed by fragile states and international partners, to track progress at the global and the country level.

[5] Whilst there has been considerable achievements emanating from the MDG framework, there are also some genuine deficits that UNDP has focused on improving including the discord in the Human Rights community about the MDGs de-linking human rights from the Millennium Declaration.

respect to the "democracy" indicators, existing measures are useful to some for identifying whether countries are "fully democratic", "fully autocratic", or somewhere in between but they are not reliable, as a guide for tracking specific (important) gradations in democracy within a country over a period of time.

This needs to be contrasted with the growing number of countries that are developing their own indicators for tracking the quality of democratic governance. These measures are country specific, include a diverse range of national stakeholders in their development and are based on mixed data sources (surveys, official statistics/"hard data" and qualitative research).

UNDP'S EXPERIENCE MEASURING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

UNDP's experience in measuring democratic governance is at two levels. It has experience in cross country measurement primarily through its Human Development Report work and it also has experience in national level measurement through assisting countries establish their own monitoring and assessment system and processes.

UNDP's cross-national measurement experience

UNDP's primary experience in cross-country democratic governance measurement/assessment is through its global and regional Human Development Reports. Back in 1991, UNDP's attempt to produce the *Political Freedom Index* created uproar and was subsequently withdrawn; nevertheless the issue of political freedom has repeatedly surfaced in global, regional and national HDRs.

The annual Human Development Index, which is the key annual measurement of HDRs, is based on three dimensions: health, education and living standards. HDRs also provide additional measurements such as the Gender Inequality Index which includes a data source on women's political participation (representation in parliament). While there are a number of other indicators that one could select to measure the political empowerment of women, parliamentary representation is a pragmatic one as it is one of the few areas in democratic governance in which a database of statistics is kept, in which the number is observable and difficult to refute and in which the indicator is based on hard data and not subjective opinion (i.e. expert opinion or public surveys). The paper focuses on these important criteria in the next section.

Set out below are selected regional and global HDRs that have a focus on democratic governance and some issues arising from this experience in cross country measurement. What is notable about the experiences in measuring democratic governance in these reports is a reliance on expert surveying reflecting the real lack of

official statistics and the importance for the survey tool to uncover the experience of democratic governance (de facto) as opposed to the formal picture (de jure) of democratic governance.

The 2002 Global Human Development Report *Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World* report's central concern is democratic governance and political participation and draws from the full range of indicators and data sources listed in Table 1: *Cross country data sources for measuring democracy/democratic governance* of this paper including Freedom House, Polity and Transparency International. The HDR of course, does not attempt to rank countries according to these indicators but it illustrates UNDP's willingness to draw on them to paint a picture of the state of democratic governance and to use them to underpin its analysis.

The 2004 Arab Human Development Report *Towards Freedom in the Arab World* was pioneering in the measurement of democracy in the Arab countries in which "experts" in selected Arab countries completed surveys on the range of freedoms populations experience in those countries including political freedoms, individual freedoms, and social freedoms. The Arab HDR is based on subjective data i.e. expert and public surveys. This presents significant challenges in terms of the application of this method to a global indicators on democratic governance in that it is impossible to follow accepted methodological criteria - that is, apply a single set of criteria, in the same fashion, to all the countries being analyzed. What these measures tend to produce, broadly speaking, is indicators constructed out of what can be called multiple contextualized subjectivities - i.e. collections of opinions strongly influenced by local context.

The 2008 Regional Human Development Report *Tackling Corruption, Transforming Lives* contains statistics pertaining to corruption and human development in all countries and territories of the Asia-Pacific region. The indicators are grouped into three broad categories: (1) popular measures of corruption, (2) political economy conditions that could be linked to corruption, and (3) socio-economic factors. The Report draws from data produced by international institutions with the resources and expertise to collect them. Data sources include UNSTAT online, the World Bank, UNDP Global HDR (not a data producer), the University of Maryland, Transparency International and International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) ratings by Political Risk Service (PRS) group.

The 2010 Global Human Development Report *The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development* broadens the human development concept by introducing statistics on empowerment, inequality and sustainability. It should be noted that the idea of adjusting the HDI itself to include empowerment did not gain great support. However, the idea prevailed and empowerment became a new component for measurement in the statistical tables. Empowerment is defined as "the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and groups to make purposive choices and transform these into desired actions and outcomes, to participate and negotiate with influence. There are four dimensions to empowerment including agency (satisfaction with freedom of choice), political freedom (democracy), civil liberties (human rights violations, press freedom, journalists imprisoned) and accountability (corruption victims, democratic decentralization and political

engagement). Some of the data sources include the academic democracy datasets produced and maintained by Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010) and by Gibney, Cornett, and Woods (2010). It also draws on data collated by Reporters Without Borders/Committee to Protect Journalists (2009). The Report illustrates interest in experimenting with new measurement frameworks that broaden our understanding of human developments and its dimensions.

UNDP's national measurement experience

The UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, through its ***Global Program on Democratic Governance Assessments*** has amassed a wealth of experience and knowledge on how to measure and assess democratic governance focused on country led and country specific assessments. Countries like Mongolia and Albania have utilized this experience in adopting a ninth MDG on democratic governance. The emphasis on country specific and country led assessment has come about not only because the Program considers it more useful for informing that country's democratic reform and policies but also because of the huge methodological and political complexities that come with developing a global tool in which the same measures are applied to all countries.[6] Key activities of the Global Program include support to strengthening national ownership through multi-stakeholder engagement; supporting countries in defining and selecting indicators that are country-contextualized, pro-poor and gender sensitive; assisting in the development of national databases on democratic governance and promoting the uptake and use of governance indicators in policy making.

The country projects the program has supported have had various positive impacts ranging from improving government and other stake-holders' ability to use evidence in policy making processes, catalysing multi-stakeholder dialogue on democratic governance challenges and improving the capacities of a diverse range of national level partners in data collection. Moreover, some of the key lessons coming from the Global Program initiatives that determine the success in achieving these positive outcomes is the importance of the process of the assessment itself which involves taking into account the national political and social contexts when setting expectations for governance assessment initiatives and the need for broad participation in the design of the assessment framework for establishing strong national ownership that provides the basis for sustainability.

[6] See http://gaportal.org/about-governance-assessment-portal

GLOBAL TRENDS IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS

When the MDGs were adopted, the time was not conducive to reach agreement on democratic governance targets. But that was the turn of the century. Over the past decade and particularly during the last few years important events and economic, political and environmental developments have taken place around the world that will likely influence the debate on a possible governance goal for the future.

There is also considerable experience accumulated through various international/regional institutions and bodies which review how their member states are implementing agreed upon principles and standards in the areas of democracy, corruption and human rights. Although not all of them apply standardised indicator systems, the Group of States against Corruption (Council of Europe), UN Convention against Corruption, Africa Peer Review Mechanism (African Union), OECD (various peer reviews on economic, social and democratic issues) and Universal Periodic Review (UN Council on Human Rights) are all examples of peer review systems that qualitatively assess a country's adherence to aspects of democratic governance.

The past 20 years have also witnessed a mushrooming of governance data initiatives that could be used to assess country compliance with specific normative frameworks. The Index of Social and Economic Rights Fulfilment (SERF Index), which could be used as a proxy to measure country compliance with the Covenant and optional protocol on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, is a good example of this.

The recently established "Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress" (CMEPSP) has given new salience to the issue of official statistics in the governance area.[7] It identifies "political voice and governance" alongside other dimensions of well-being to be measured by official statistical offices, through the development of reliable and robust indicators. Regional initiatives of this kind are already commencing: for example, a governance module has been included for development under the Strategy for the Harmonization of Statistics in Africa (SHaSA) – supported by the UN StatCom for Africa, UNECA, the African Development Bank, and the Symposium of African National Statisticians. Similar discussions are at an early stage in Latin America.

Other important developments in the field of democratic governance measurement/assessment include:

- Measuring democratic governance can be done in a concrete manner that is non-prescriptive of its underlying institutions. Governance can be measured at the impact level, as is the case with the MDGs,

[7] The aim of the Commission is to identify the limits of GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including the problems with its measurement; to consider what additional information might be required for the production of more relevant indicators of social progress; to assess the feasibility of alternative measurement tools, and to discuss how to present the statistical information in an appropriate way.

for example by measuring "empowerment", which means that different democratic governance models can produce same level of "empowerment", as different poverty reductions policies and institutions can produce the same levels of poverty reductions.

- Measurements are more diverse and sophisticated. The Freedom House index is by no means the "only game in town" and there are now many alternatives including the EIU Democracy Index, the Ibrahim Index, a number of datasets produced by academia (Polity, ACLP), the ECA African Governance Report etc.

- National ownership and mutual adherence is key in assessment initiatives for the sustainability of data collection and for policy uptake. For example, the African Peer Review Mechanism is built on mutual adherence and includes multi-stakeholder dialogue at different phases of the assessment process. Similarly, the Open Government Partnership is a significant new multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments who 'opt-in' to promote (and measure progress in) transparency, empower people, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance.

- There is a growing interest in human rights and democratic governance measurement to measure proactive measures rather than violations i.e. measuring integrity rather than corruption, human rights protection and fulfilment rather than violations

- While data is always a challenge, there is increasingly more of it in terms of scope (data coverage), issues measured and the periodicity of data collection. Initiatives and networks including the "barometer groups" such as Afrobarometer, Latinobarometer and the recent Arabarometer, are making important contributions to the availability of democracy related data. Ten years ago, a report from the UN Statistical Commission[8] "recommended that the Commission establish a mechanism (perhaps a city group involving statisticians and others, including policy officials) to develop statistical indicators of human rights and good governance Although we recognise the importance of this area, we take the view that it would be better to "get it right" rather than "get it quick", if widespread ownership of the indicators is to be established around the world." This time around there is arguably both enough experience and momentum to get it right.

[8] UN Economic and Social Council, Statistical Commission (2001) " Report of the Friends of the Chair of the Statistical Commission on an assessment of the statistical indicators derived from United Nations summit meetings" E/CN.3/2002/26 para 65.

- An acknowledgement of the importance of creating consensus on the process of assessing governance in terms of upholding certain principles of participation, transparency, inclusiveness in the course of the assessment to guarantee legitimacy and uptake of the results. Some important principles for strengthening the legitimacy of the indicators and for making a measurable goal possible include "universal", "voluntary adherence", and "proper validation process". These principles are codified in the Oslo Principles on Democratic Governance Assessments (October 2011).[9]

CROSS-COUNTRY INDICES DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The following section provides a snapshot of the most often cited cross-national indices and indicators on "governance", "democracy", "democratic governance" and human rights. When looking at these cross-national measurement initiatives, there is no consensus about what should be measured nor is there consensus on whether to focus on only one dimension of governance ("parsimonious" indices) or to be more substantive and try to measure the many dimensions of democratic governance. Because of the lack of reliable and comparable data, such measures are often constructed with proxies. For example, among those that the Global HDR 2002 lists are voter turn-out, year women won the franchise, union members, and number of NGOs – indicators that certainly do not give an accurate picture of the political participation of women or the vibrancy and effectiveness of civil society.

Many also share a reliance on expert opinion, in which "experts" on a particular country answer questions related to the different indicators. These judgments can be those of observers (experts) or those of people living in the country whose country is being assessed. Freedom House, for example, uses the judgment of expert observers; WBGI uses the judgment of both expert observers and individuals in the country (both elites and the mass public). Several are indices which use aggregation rules and weighting to assign more importance to different components of democratic governance than others.

Comprehensive governance measurement initiatives

The most comprehensive and often referred to database on global governance is the World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicators. The *Worldwide Governance Indicators* capture six key dimensions of governance (voice and accountability, political stability and lack of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption). They measure the quality of governance in 200 countries, based on 40 data sources produced by 30 different organizations. Most of the data is a compilation of

[9] In October 2011, the Oslo Governance Forum gathered 270 policy makers, experts and practitioners from 75 countries to engage in a rigorous investigation of the principles and pragmatics underpinning democratic governance assessments which resulted in the Oslo Principles of Democratic Governance Assessments.

the perceptions of a very diverse group of respondents (firms, individuals, NGOs, and aid donors, "country experts and public officials), collected in a large number of surveys and other cross-country assessments of governance. Most relevant to democratic governance is the dimension "voice and accountability" which is a measure of perceptions on political participation, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media using the Freedom House index, the EIU index, and the Cingranelli Richards Human Rights Database, among others.

The *Corruption Perceptions Index* and the *Global Integrity Index* both focus on **corruption**. The former relies on expert opinions on the extent of corruption whereas the latter, the Global Integrity Index, quantitatively assesses the opposite of corruption, that is, the access that citizens and businesses have to a country's government, their ability to monitor its behaviour, and their ability to seek redress and advocate for improved governance. The Integrity Indicators break down that "access" into a number of categories and questions, ranging from inquiries into electoral practices and media freedom to budget transparency and conflicts of interests regulations.

There are also more standardised frameworks and indicator sets for '**good governance**' areas such as the PEFA assessment tool which assesses the condition of country public financial management systems and develops a practical sequence for reform and capacity-building actions. The recent World Bank initiative on Indicators of the Strength of Public Management Systems (ISPMS) is another example of expanding the standardisation process.

Democracy measurement initiatives

There are several indices that aim to measure how "democratic" a country might be.[10] These include:

- Freedom House - Freedom House provides two indices: "Political Rights" (which conflates rule of law, elections, and aspects of good governance) and "Civil Liberties" (which conflates rule of law, civil society, and aspects of good governance) - sometimes employed in tandem, sometimes singly. Coverage extends back to 1800 for sovereign countries with populations greater than 500,000. Data is derived from expert opinions.

- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)'s Democracy Index - The EIU recently developed a highly disaggregated index of democracy (the "democracy index") with 5 core dimensions (electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of government, political participation and political culture) and 60 subcomponents, which are combined into a single index of democracy. The Index was first produced in 2006, with updates produced in 2008, 2010 and 2011. The countries are categorized into *full democracies*, *flawed democracies*, *hybrid regimes* and *authoritarian regimes*. The Index is a kind of

[10] For more on the limitations of these and related sources see UNDP Governance Indicators: A Users' Guide (2nd Edition 2008).

weighted average based on the answers of 60 questions, each one with either two or three permitted alternative answers. Most answers are "experts' assessments". Some answers are provided by public-opinion surveys from the respective countries. In the case of countries for which survey results are missing, survey results for similar countries and expert assessments are used in order to fill in gaps.

- A frequently cited index is the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index* which measures the effectiveness of a countries' transformation to democracy and an equitable market economy of non-liberal countries. It is made of three –sub-indices: political transformation ("stateness", political participation, rule of law, stability of democratic institutions, political and social integration, economic transformation); the level of socioeconomic development (organization of the market and competition, currency and price stability, private property, welfare regime, economic performance, and sustainability); and the management index (management performance; steering capability; resource efficiency; and consensus building).

- There are several academic democracy datasets – *Polity* is a dataset on democracy that is popularly used by political scientists. Polity breaks down its measures of democracy into three components: executive recruitment, executive constraints, and political competition, measured by six underlying variables. While some of these could be combined to provide indicators of elections, civil society, and aspects of rule of law, Polity does not address "good governance." ACLP ("ACLP" stands for the names of the creators—Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi, and Przeworski) is also a dataset compiled and used by political scientists. It codes countries dichotomously (autocracy/democracy) and includes most sovereign countries from 1950 to 1990. Finally, another commonly used dataset is the Vanhanen Democratization Index ("Polyarchy" dataset) which has been used by Vanhanen (an academic) in several studies that seek to provide a theoretical explanation for the emergence of democratic regimes. The dataset contains seven variables, including a democracy index. The index takes Dahl's (1971) discussion of democracy (or polyarchy, hence the Index's name) as its point of departure, and attempts to measure democracy with two variables: competition and participation. Both variables are calculated using election data, and the democracy index is estimated by combining the two.

Thematically specific democratic governance measurement initiatives

There are also a number of datasets for specific sectors such as data on **parliamentary representation** maintained by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network among others. With respect to the **justice sector**, the *World Justice Project Rule of Law Index* is a new quantitative assessment tool designed by the World Justice Project that gives a comprehensive picture of the extent to which countries adhere to the rule of law in practice. It has nine components: limited government powers; absence of corruption;

order and security; fundamental rights; open government; effective regulatory enforcement; effective civil justice; and effective criminal justice and informal justice. The Index's rankings and scores are built from 400 variables drawn from two data sources: a general population poll conducted by local polling companies using a probability sample of 1,000 respondents in the three largest cities of each country and a questionnaire completed by in-country experts in civil and commercial law, criminal justice, labor law, and public health.

Human rights indicators for civil and political rights, generally measure a countries' performance in terms of its formal commitments to international instruments i.e. ratification, reservations and implementation of human rights instruments as well as human rights violations such as extra-judicial killings, torture, participation and discrimination. General data sources for human rights indicators include administrative data (UN databases on human rights treaty ratification and UNDP Human Development Reports), primary sources (e.g. Human rights reports by United States State Department, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch) and expert opinion sources (e.g. Freedom House and Transparency International). The *Cingranelli-Richards (CIRI) Human Rights Dataset* and *Political Terror Scale* are one two of the most comprehensive cross-country measurement initiatives for human rights and contains standards-based quantitative information on government respect for 15 internationally recognized human rights for 195 countries. There is also the *Index of Social and Economic Rights Fulfilment* (SERF Index), which us a composite index that uses survey-based data published by national and international bodies to measure the performance of countries and sub-national units on the fulfillment of economic and social rights obligations and is comprised of separate scores for each core economic and social right, and estimates obligations for progressive realization by using an innovative approach that maps an 'achievement possibilities frontier'.

Regional democratic governance measurement initiatives

There are two important examples, notably in Africa, of regional democratic governance measurement initiatives that can be drawn on for elaborating a measurement framework for a global goal on democratic governance:

- The Ibrahim Index of African Governance - is an attempt to statistically monitor African governance levels throughout all the countries of Africa. The Index assesses national governance against 57 criteria. The criteria capture the quality of services provided to its population by governments. The focus is on the results that the people of a country experience, rather than stated policies and intentions. Each criterion is weighted and scaled to provide standardisation and proportional influence on the overall results of the Index. The criteria are divided into four over-arching categories which the Index defines as the cornerstone of a government's obligations to its citizens: safety and rule of law; participation and human rights; sustainable economic opportunity and human development.

- The UNECA African Governance Report – measures and monitors the state of governance, in 35 countries. The indicators cover political representation, institutional effectiveness, service delivery, and taxes and corruption. The methodology for the study consists of a research instrument with three components: a national expert opinion survey, a national household sample survey and desk research. The Africa Governance Indicators are derived from the data collected in the expert panel study, which contains 83 measures of the perceptions of the nation's elite in each of 35 countries covered in the study, clustered in 23 groups.

- Global barometer surveys: The Afro-, Latino-, Euro, Arab and Asian Barometers are making a really valuable contribution to producing data on democracy in the regions and countries in which they operate. They develop and undertake multi-country regional attitude surveys each sustained and cumulated over several years. Some core items of governance and political voice are included in their questionnaire - others are included in more detail in specific countries.

Table 1 shows some of the most commonly used data sources for monitoring democracy and democratic governance around the world.

Table 1: Cross-country data sources for measuring democracy / democratic governance

Variable Category	*Source*	*Origin*	*Type*	*Country Coverage*
Democracy/political participation/political institutions	Afrobarometer	NGO	Public surveys	30
Democracy/political participation/political institutions	Latinobarometer	NGO	Public surveys	18
Democracy/political participation/political institutions/civil and political rights	Freedom House	NGO	Expert surveys	197
Corruption	Transparency International Global Corruption Barometer survey	NGO	Public surveys	80
Political institutions/corruption	Global Integrity Index	NGO	Expert	79
Human rights/rule of law	Cingranelli Richards Human Rights Database and Political Terror Scale	NGO	Expert	192
Freedom and fairness of national elections/political participation *Freedom of expression/media independence*	IREEP African Electoral Index	NGO	Expert	53
	International Research and Exchanges Board Media Sustainability Index	NGO	Expert	76
	International Budget Project Open Budget Index	NGO	Expert	85
Freedom of expression/media independence *Human rights* *Electoral systems, laws and processes*	Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index	NGO	Expert	170
	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) - Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary General (MTDSG) and Treaty Body Document databases	IGO	Expert Assessment based on Official Data	All
	ACE Electoral Knowledge Network - Comparative Data	IGO/NGO	Collation of national statistics	200+

DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Variable Category	*Source*	*Origin*	*Type*	*Country Coverage*
Political participation/rule of law/democratic institutions/political & social integration	Bertelsmann Transformation Index	NGO	Expert	128
Public sector corruption	Transparency International – Corruption Perceptions Index	NGO	Composite of expert/public /business surveys	178
Political participation/accountability/rule of law/stability/regulatory quality/corruption	Worldwide Governance Indicators	IGO	Surveys of respondents from public, private, and NGO sector and international experts	213
Legislature	Inter-parliamentary Union PARLINE database on national parliaments	IGO	IPU secretariat collates submissions from the parliaments	190
Political systems/political regimes	Democracy-Dictatorship (DD) Data	NGO	Academic database of events	202
Political systems/elections/political parties	World Bank, Database of Political Institutions	IGO		177
Political systems/elections/political parties	Vanhanen Democratization Index	Academic	Voter turnout and votes for smallest parties	All countries 1970s to the present
Rule of law/corruption/order and security/open government/regulatory regime	World Justice Project Rule of Law Index	NGO	Public survey and expert questionnaire	35

FOUR APPROACHES FOR THE SELECTION OF TARGETS AND INDICATORS FOR A GLOBAL GOAL

The global goals for the existing eight MDGs are worded very generally such as "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger", "promote gender equality and empower women", "ensure environmental sustainability" and so a global goal for democratic governance need also not to be so specific and could be as broadly stated as "*strengthen democratic governance*". It is the targets and indicators that flow from the goal that elaborate and delineate what areas of democratic governance are to be measured. It is critical that the goal is simple and clear, and the measurements equally so, providing a small window into a complex reality. The aim of putting together a goal and corresponding measurements is to direct the focus of global attention and the agenda, rather than to cover every democratic governance aspect that is important in every country.

If there is a global goal on democratic governance, this discussion paper explores four possible approaches for the selection of targets and indicators on democratic governance.

1. **Global targets with global indicators**
2. **Global targets with national indicators**
3. **Regional targets with national indicators**
4. **National targets with national indicators**

These approaches are not contradictory in that the first approach of global targets with global indicators does not reduce the need and demand for country-led information systems and contextualized data - this is certainly the case with the localization of the MDGs. The MDGs have done wonders for strengthening country-based systems of collecting poverty data, enhancing performance based management of poverty reduction policies and making data and results available to the public. A governance goal, using a similar global mechanism for strengthening country-led data systems, may provide similar benefits to governments and society in the area of governance.

1. GLOBAL TARGETS WITH GLOBAL INDICATORS

The advantage of global targets is that it would reflect a joining of all countries in a shared view and determination of what "good democratic governance" looks like, provide a basis for understanding the deficits of democratic governance on an international scale and provide a platform for building an international statistics system that is on par with the international statistic systems for the collection and analysis of global socio-economic development and all the advocacy and global policy benefits that those existing international systems bring.

The most pragmatic approach for elaborating global targets and indicators is to base it on established human rights and democracy principles that have been set out in the UN declarations and conventions including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Convention on the

Elimination of Discrimination Against Women; Millennium Declaration; UN World Summit Outcome Resolution(2005); UN General Assembly Resolution on "Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization" (2010); among others.

The principles might include the following:

- Participation and inclusion: mechanisms exist for all people to take part in and influence decisions made by the government and state that affect their lives (i.e. through elections, open government at local and national levels, parliamentary processes, access to independent media etc.)

- Accountability and Responsiveness: Law makers, government officials, and institutions should be held accountable for what they do, and for how they do it.

- Rules-based: All persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated. It requires measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.

- Transparency: The right of the public to know what public institutions are doing and how public policies and programs are being implemented through access to official information and an independent and effective media.

- Equity, Non-Discrimination and Inclusiveness: government policies and laws should take account of the needs, views and aspirations of all people in society, with particular efforts being made not to discriminate against minority, marginalized and indigenous groups. Since all people are of equal value, they are entitled to equal treatment under the law, as well as equitable access to opportunities, services and resources.

- Gender Equality: Policies, systems, laws and institutions should deal equitably with both women and men.

However, given the vast disparity of starting points and diversity of political contexts/country capabilities, using a universal measuring stick with global targets and goals indicators could be too simplistic and unworkable

2. GLOBAL TARGETS WITH NATIONAL INDICATORS

Global targets with national indicators may be a more workable approach enabling countries to define the indicators themselves based on their own national circumstances. A possible target and indicator framework might look like the table below.

Table 2: Example of global targets with national indicators

GOAL: STRENGTHEN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

3 Targets:

1. *Participation is inclusive*
   Indicators: (Nationally defined)
2. *Governing institutions are responsive*
   Indicators: (Nationally defined)
3. *Democratic governance practices are grounded in human rights, gender equality and anti-corruption*

Indicators: (Nationally defined)

Taking stock of the lessons from the MDGs experience Jan Vandemoortele (2009) notes that global targets should only apply at the global level and that the MDG framework has turned them into yardsticks for measuring and judging performance at the national level. In doing so, their interpretation as one-size-fits-all targets abstracts away the specific and historical background of each country, its political system, its geography, its internal divisions, and other challenges it may face. Nationally determined indicators may reduce this problem.

International ***IDEA's democracy assessment*** tool could provide a functional and tested framework for selecting global targets. Although this assessment instrument relies on country specific indicators (and thus it cannot be used to compare countries), their method is based on a normative construct with explicit and clear democratic principles and norms rather than offering an arbitrary check-list of items.

3. REGIONAL TARGETS WITH NATIONAL INDICATORS

From the point of view of political palatability, having regional targets selected by regional organizations such as the African Union, the European Commission or ASEAN, etc. might make it easier for countries to agree to as it will give them room to contextualize the democratic governance targets to the specific challenges of their region, while preventing the other 'extreme option' of allowing for 200+ versions of targets for the more than 200 countries globally. Practically speaking, the selection of such regional targets could be eased by the fact that regional charters/commitments on democratic governance already exist in every region.

Giving each country the flexibility to select its own indicators for each (regionally-agreed) target increases the national policy relevance of data collection and country level accountability. For example in Africa, there is an extensive framework of AU and other regional instruments relating to democracy, human rights and governance including the African Charter on Democracy and Elections (ACDEG) (2007); the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003); African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (CPCC) (2003); Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004); Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa (2002); Charter for the Public Service in Africa (2001) and African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) (1981) among many others. In addition to these instruments there are several multi-country, time series initiatives that assess and/or monitor governance and democracy in Africa including the African Governance Report, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the Ibrahim Index on Governance, Afrobarometer, AfriMap and the newly established State of the Union in Africa Consortium, a consortium of African and International NGOs that monitor country compliance with continental standards and commitments.

A regional approach could also include a peer review element to it enabling other countries in the region to be involved in the governance assessment similar to the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).

4. NATIONAL TARGETS WITH NATIONAL INDICATORS

This approach has the advantage of making the targets and indicators sensitive to and reflective of the specific democratic governance deficits of that country. An additional advantage is that it is better suited for drawing on locally specific data including public surveys (that need not be produced with cross-country comparison considerations in mind) while at the same time strengthening the capacities of the government agencies and civil society that might be formally assigned for collecting, maintaining and analyzing governance related data. A country specific process is also better suited for engaging a more diverse selection of national stakeholders in the measurement and assessment process as they come together to dialogue on what to assess and how to go about measuring it.

UNDP has some experience with this option through its support and engagement in Mongolia's[11] process of adopting an MDG 9 (a ninth MDG) on democratic governance (see Table 3 below) which shows the targets, indicators and the responsible agency for collecting the data. The targets are country specific in that they were derived from a multi stakeholder national dialogue on what are the most important challenges for democratic governance in Mongolia. A group of national experts then worked on elaborating the specific indicators. The data has several sources including surveys and official statistics.

[11] Other countries that have also adopted a ninth MDG on democratic governance include Albania and Iraq.

Table 3:
Mongolia MDG 9 Goal – targets, indicators & responsible agencies

Target	*Indicators*	*Responsible Agency*
Target 22: Fully respect and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ensure the freedom	1. Human Development Index	UNDP
	2. Expert evaluation of conformity of Mongolian laws and regulations with international human rights treaties and conventions	National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (NHRCM)
	3. Percentage of implementation/enforcement of judicial decisions	Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs (MOJHA)
	4. Number of attorneys that provide services to poor citizens	MOJHA
	5. Public perception of political, economic, and financial independence of mass media	National Statistics Office (NSO)
	6. Number of state organizations that regularly place reports of their budgets and expenditures on their websites	Ministry of Finance (MOF)
Target 23: Mainstream democratic principles and practices into life	1. Public perception of activities of state organizations	NSO
	2. Number of civil society organizations that have officially participated and expressed their views in the process of developing and approving the state budget	MOF
	3. Percentage of voters that have participated in nominating governors of “soums” and “baghs”	Cabinet Secretariat
Target 24: Develop a zero-tolerance environment to corruption in all spheres of society	1. Index of corruption	Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC)
	2. Perception of corruption in political organizations, judicial and law enforcement institutions	IAAC
	3. Public perception of corruption in public administration	NSO

Albania also adopted an additional MDG to reflect its commitment to democratic governance. Its MDG9 seeks to "Establish and Strengthen a Good Governance Process" and has one target with a set of six indicators (Political Voice and Accountability; Political Stability; Government Effectiveness; Regulatory Quality; Rule of Law and Control of Corruption). The target is to "Reform Overall State Systems of Public Administration, Legislation and Policies in Accordance with EU Standards of Justice, Rule of Law and Market Economies by 2015".

Indonesia through its National Development Planning Agency produces the *Indonesian Democracy Index (IDI)* which is based on a nationally owned process for assessing and monitoring democratic governance within Indonesia.[12] The Democracy Index measures democratic progress and setbacks within Indonesia's 33 provinces, and provides a policy planning tool for government agencies. It has three main components: civil liberties, political rights and democratic institutions. The underlying principle of the IDI is to move the focus from international ranking-based indices towards nationally owned indicators.

The experience of these three countries and other countries that are assessing and measuring democratic governance outside of an MDG framework is that there is a real scarcity of good country level democratic governance data. This lack of accurate, timely and relevant governance data particularly affects the ability of people to hold their governments to account for their performance and the failure in the supply of governance statistics as a public good is having significant repercussions for national development and governance processes, as well as for donors and other development partners. This is why these country-specific assessment initiatives are extremely important for strengthening democratic governance and while statistical agencies and other entities in many countries are ready to strengthen the supply of governance data, they often lack the support and technical assistance to embark on this endeavour.

.

[12] http://gaportal.org/undp-supported/indonesia

CONCLUSION

If the post-2015 framework gives space for an explicit goal on democratic governance many choices need to be made and many of those choices will be driven not only by political expediency and palatability but also by pragmatism. A global goal on democratic governancewith targets that are applied universally as is the case with the present MDGs will require the careful selection of targets and indicators. Given that most of the indicators are produced by NGOs and INGOs they will face issues of legitimacy and acceptability. There are governance sector statistics related to parliaments and elections and possibly the selection of indicators will be driven not by agreed priority areas but by whether the data exists or not.

A regional approach would be a creative and effective means for monitoring a global goal on governance especially in Europe, Latin America and Africa (and to some extent Asia) where there is a strong and capable regional institutional structure and processes focused on promoting and protecting democratic governance. The use of country specific targets and indicators might be a better approach given that it would best respond to the specific challenges of the country but there is a risk of losing the force of international and regional pressure to improve performance and it would result in hundreds of different targets and indicators for each country.

Acknowledgements: This discussion paper was written by Joachim Nahem, UNDP, and Alexandra Wilde, Consultant, and its preparation was coordinated by the Oslo Governance Centre, under the guidance of Sarah Lister, Democratic Governance Adviser. The authors are grateful to the Africa Governance Institute (Dakar, Senegal) and Dr. Todd Landman (University of Essex) for their comments. Feedback was also received from UNDP colleagues at the Oslo Governance Centre, Democratic Governance Group, Poverty Practice and Human Development Report Office.

Contact Information: Joachim Nahem, Manager, Global Programme on Governance Assessments, joachim.nahem@undp.org

CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

- Gareth Williams. “What Makes a Good Governance Indicator”. Policy Practice Brief 6. January 2011.
- Jan Vandemoortele. “Taking the MDGs Beyond 2015: Hasten Slowly”. May 2009
- Jan Vandemoortele. “The MDG Conundrum: Meeting the Targets Without Missing the Point” Development Policy Review, 2009, 27 (4): 355-371
- Tatu Vanhanen. 2003. *Democratization: A Comparative Analysis of 170 Countries*. London: Routledge
- Robert A. Dahl, 1971. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Development, Security, and Cooperation (DSC) “Improving Democracy Assistance: Building Knowledge Through Evaluations and Research”. 2008
- Brookings. “Beyond the MDGs: Agreeing to a Post-2015 Development Framework”. 2012
- Vermillion, J. ”Problems in the Measurement of Democracy”. *Democracy at Large.* 2006
- Selim Jahan, “Building Capacity for Democracy, Peace and Social Progress”, paper presented at 6th International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (Doha, Qatar 2006)
- Cheibub, José Antonio. “How to Include Political Capabilities in the HDI? An Evaluation of Alternatives”. Human Development Report Research Paper (2010/41)
- UNDP. Governance Indicators: A User’s Guide (2nd Edition), 2006
- Mongolia MDG9 project and evaluation documents
- UNDP Human Development Reports, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2010