

**Participatory Accountability Mechanisms for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**  
**UNDG Asia-Pacific Contribution to the Regional Consultation on Accountability**

**31 July 2014**

**Introduction**

This paper captures experience on participatory, rights-based and evidence-based accountability mechanisms at different levels (national, regional and global), which have been supported by the Asia-Pacific UNGD, and which could help inform the post-2015 accountability agenda. The paper describes how lessons from the MDGs can inform the development of regional and national accountability mechanisms, and how civil society participation, catalyzed by innovative Information and Communications Technology (ICT) solutions, can help create integrated and participatory accountability mechanisms to meet the needs and aspirations of people in the Asia-Pacific region.

This paper has been developed for the ‘Regional Consultation on Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda’, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), which will take place in conjunction with the Seventieth Commission’s session, on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of August 2014.

This paper also documents evidence from the United Nations country consultations in Asia-Pacific on the expectations of people (citizens, stateless people and migrant workers) and civil society to be part of the implementation, monitoring and review of a post-2015 agenda. Drawing together the above themes, it then provides recommendations for an integrated participatory accountability mechanism for the post-2015 development agenda.

**I. How can lessons from the MDGs inform a new accountability mechanism for the SDGs**

Accountability in the context of the MDGs can be understood as the dynamic relationship between rights and responsibilities of countries and people, as well as of developed and developing countries. The MDG framework has been underpinned by three different accountability relations:

- i) The first relates to the mutual accountability between developed and developing countries (horizontal accountability relations); whereby developing countries are accountable to their development partners in the context of direct budget support and other forms of development assistance, and developed countries are accountable to developing countries, with regard to their commitments on the global partnership for development.
- ii) The second relates to the accountability of countries towards the people (vertical accountability relations).

- iii) A third distinction is between national and international (regional and global) mechanisms of accountability. The interplay between these two levels determines their effectiveness to drive the implementation of globally accepted development goals.

The universal nature of the future development framework calls for an accountability mechanism that encompasses both levels of accountability as well as all types of accountability relations, with the understanding that, as we move to the universal post-2015 agenda, horizontal accountability will no longer refer to the developed-developing countries type relationship, but will mean accountability between all countries for shared commitments (i.e. to provide global public goods).

### ***Global initiatives***

At the global level several initiatives have been put in place since 2001, to monitor and report on progress towards the MDGs. Since 2002, the United Nations Secretary-General has been reporting annually to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. As of 2005, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has been publishing annual reports on MDG progress. In 2007, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) launched the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), an intergovernmental process mandated to assess country performance in specific areas, based on the submission of national voluntary presentations. As of 2008, the Secretary-General's MDG Gap Task Force has been publishing annual reports to monitor progress towards commitments that developed countries have made to developing countries (i.e. Goal 8). Lastly, the OECD tracks country performance against the commitments of donor countries to increase their aid to support progress on the MDGs.

### ***Regional initiatives***

At the regional level, the United Nations Regional Commissions have been producing regional reports on progress towards the MDGs<sup>1</sup>. In Asia and the Pacific, a partnership between ESCAP, ADB and UNDP has collaborated with the UNDG to prepare 8 regional MDG reports. The reports monitor progress at the regional level, and allow comparisons across countries - highlighting successes and revealing deficits based on comparable data. It also informs policy dialogue around issues and concerns from the region. The report is informed by broad-based consultations with governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders, through sub-regional consultations and other means (surveys, experts' panels, etc.).

In the Pacific, the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (SPC) does data gathering and analysis on the MDGs and provides statistical support for Pacific Island Countries' National Statistics Offices. The Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIFS) brings data and information on MDG progress in the region to the Forum Leaders annual meeting, where progress is collectively discussed. In this Forum, countries that have made progress on particular Goals provide support to countries that are lagging behind.

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<sup>1</sup> The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean has developed a regional mechanism to monitor progress towards the Goals' targets. The League of Arab States produces periodic joint reports with the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia on regional progress on the Goals.

### *National initiatives*

At the national level, countries have been preparing National MDG Reports, tracking progress towards the achievement of the goals using national data. In Asia and the Pacific 36 countries have prepared MDG reports since 2005, including developed countries,<sup>2</sup> with varying frequency (some countries have produced only one report in the past 9 years, some others up to six).

Following is an overview of the existing MDG-related accountability mechanisms.

**Table: MDGs accountability mechanisms**

<b>Accountability relations/ Levels of accountability mechanisms</b>	<b>Mutual accountability (horizontal relations/country-to-country)</b>	<b>Accountability of countries towards people (vertical accountability relations)</b>
<b>Global</b>	<u>Reporting/monitoring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MDG Gap Task Force report</li> <li>▪ OECD tracking of country performance on ODA</li> </ul>	<u>Reporting/monitoring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UN SG report to the GA</li> <li>▪ DESA global MDG report</li> <li>▪ ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review</li> </ul> <u>Treaties and Conventions (thematic)/reviews processes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Human Rights Treaties, including CEDAW</li> <li>▪ UN Convention against Corruption review mechanism</li> <li>▪ Universal Periodic Review (UPR)</li> </ul>
<b>Regional</b>	<u>Reporting/monitoring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional MDG reports – limited data on Goal 8</li> </ul>	<u>Reporting/monitoring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional MDG reports – i.e. ESCAP/ADB/UNDP Asia-Pacific MDG report</li> <li>▪ Africa Peer Review Mechanism</li> <li>▪ ADB-OECD initiative against corruption</li> </ul>
<b>National</b>	<u>Reporting/monitoring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National MDG reports – limited data on Goal 8</li> </ul>	<u>Reporting/monitoring</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National MDG reports</li> </ul> <u>Social accountability mechanisms</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to information and data</li> <li>▪ Consultative processes</li> <li>▪ Participatory processes (e.g. participatory budgeting and planning, etc.)</li> </ul>

A review of over ten years of monitoring and reporting on progress towards the MDGs has highlighted some gaps and lessons to be learned. In 2010, the High-level Plenary Meeting of the

<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kiribati, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Viet Nam.

General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals underlined the limitations of international MDG accountability procedures that focus solely on reporting and monitoring.<sup>3</sup> The main weaknesses that were identified<sup>4</sup> included:

- The voluntary nature of the intergovernmental ministerial review process (only a few countries have presented reports to the annual ministerial review),
- The limited scope for peoples' participation in independent reviews, and
- The absence of recommendations that can be monitored and followed up.

Many systems of reporting including those for the MDGs, human rights treaties, national development plans, and other reporting have often occurred in parallel, without cross-referencing. Moreover, parliamentarians, civil society, minorities and marginalized communities, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and others have, by and large, not been part of national MDG reporting processes, which has hampered the use of the report as an accountability mechanism.<sup>5</sup> Moving forward, improvements upon the MDG review process can be made, by bringing in civil society more strongly and ensuring coherence across different reporting mechanisms.

Lessons for an integrated new accountability mechanism post-2015 can be learned from several experiences of UNDG-supported national, regional and global accountability mechanisms.

*Maternal and Child Health (Goals 4 & 5)* - The Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health is one of the most advanced and innovative sector-specific global MDG accountability mechanisms.<sup>6</sup> It was established in 2010 with the support of WHO, to strengthen reporting, oversight and accountability of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. It proposes a "monitor-review-remedy/act" framework, tracking progress through a limited number of strategic indicators; it monitors both resources and results and identifies the roles and responsibilities of the different partners involved, domestic and international. It addresses the issue of donor accountability, focusing on the reporting of transfers of financial and technical assistance. It also identifies opportunities for leveraging ICTs and innovative technologies to improve access to information and peoples' participation.

*Water and sanitation (Goal 7)* - The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation captures the human rights dimensions of availability, accessibility, affordability, quality and non-discrimination. It explicitly integrates human rights criteria within its comprehensive accountability framework for the global monitoring of water and sanitation targets, which will monitor outcomes, policy efforts and resource allocations to assess whether Government and donor interventions meet the entitlements of rights holders. The Joint Monitoring Programme has developed proxy indicators on sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. It is developing methods for monitoring water quality and evaluating whether resource allocations benefit the poorest populations.

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<sup>3</sup> "Who will be accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda", OHCHR

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> In some countries, stakeholders have been consulted quite extensively, such as Colombia, in other not, with North Korea at the other end of the spectrum. In some cases it has also differed for sub-national report (Pakistan as example). The original guidance note for the MDG report, prepared by the UNDG, does mention stakeholder participation, however, stakeholder engagement tends to be done more regularly for (MDG based) national development strategies.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

*HIV/AIDS (Goal 6)* - There are also UN-led initiatives that support regional and global monitoring towards Goal 6. UNAIDS, ADB and UNICEF have partnered to support the Regional Data Hub project – [www.aidsdatahub.org](http://www.aidsdatahub.org), a public domain providing access to data and information on progress towards AIDS related targets in Asia and the Pacific. At the national level, the “AIDS Zero Portal” in **Thailand** is a partnership between Thailand’s National AIDS Committee and UNAIDS. The initiative is a one-stop-shop for HIV and AIDS data in Thailand; it provides decision-makers and development practitioners with high quality, accessible and up-to-date disaggregated data on HIV and AIDS for populations at risk and specific geographical areas. “iMonitor” is a unique partnership between SWING, a Thai NGO working with sex workers, and the Indonesian AIDS Coalition (IAC), a network of people living with HIV. It provides communities, in **Indonesia**, with critical data and information that help them monitor the delivery of critical HIV-related health care services, and advance demands for better access to quality health services.

*Vulnerability/labor migration* - ILO supports the ASEAN Migrant Labour Forum, which brings together governments, laborers, trade unions and CSOs to discuss issues related to migration. The ASEAN community has recognized the importance of labor migration in the region and the need to protect and promote the rights of this vulnerable workforce. In January 2007, the Heads of States of the ASEAN Members States signed the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers (Cebu Declaration, 2007). The annual ASEAN Forum on Migrant Labour (AFML) is a unique regional accountability mechanism, whereby each year the themes of the forum are taken from the obligations of sending and receiving states outlined in the Cebu Declaration. Discussions on the theme result in the adoption of Recommendations that bring life to the Declaration’s provisions. The AFML is the only tripartite labor migration focused forum in ASEAN, with active involvement of the ILO tripartite constituents -government, employers’ and workers’ organizations- as well as the ASEAN Secretariat, civil society organizations and international organizations. AFML Recommendations are consensus, rights, and evidence based; and gender sensitive. Post-AFML meetings with Employers, workers’ and CSOs ensure the implementation of Recommendations. The progress made against these Recommendations in each country is reported on at the following years’ forum and is being tracked bi-annually by the ILO.

*The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)* - Established by the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is an intergovernmental peer review mechanism that holds States accountable for their human rights obligations. Every Member State of the UN is obliged to undergo this review every four and a half years. All stakeholders, including the UN and civil society, can provide inputs to the process at various stages. States are encouraged to prepare their official report through a process of broad national consultations, including with NGOs, academia, researchers, human rights defenders, trade unions, the media and other civil society members. NHRIs and CSOs can provide information independently, which are included in a compilation of stakeholders’ inputs prepared by the OHCHR. To ensure broad-base participation in the process, inputs need to be submitted through an online system.

*UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies*, - The human rights treaties - *including CEDAW, CRC, CMW and others*<sup>7</sup> - are underpinned by robust accountability mechanisms, which include specific

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- <sup>7</sup> The Human Rights Committee ([CCPR](#)),
  - the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ([CESCR](#)),

mechanisms that promote peoples' participation. States are held accountable by human rights treaty bodies (committees), which monitor the implementation by State Parties of the core human rights treaties. State Parties submit periodic reports concerning their implementation of the treaty in question to the body monitoring it.<sup>8</sup> Civil society actors can inform the treaty bodies about the progress made by the State in implementing both the respective treaty and the committee's recommendations. They are encouraged to provide information, for example via the submission of written reports. If a State Party does not submit a report for a period of time, the committee may issue its observations based on information provided by civil society, UN entities and other stakeholders. Some treaty bodies<sup>9</sup> may, under certain conditions, receive and consider individual complaints or communications, which increases accountability relating to specific cases of alleged human rights violations. They<sup>10</sup> can also consider and act upon individual complaints, by conducting country visits, based on reliable information of serious, grave or systematic violations of the respective treaty in a State Party.

*The Special Human Rights Rapporteurs and other Experts* – The Special Human Rights Rapporteurs and other Experts are the most accessible international mechanisms. Any member of civil society may, individually or collectively, access and work with special rapporteurs, through their secretariat, hosted by OHCHR, and selectively through direct contacts. A central avenue for engagement is the submission of information on individual cases or situations and systematic patterns and trends (e.g. legislation, policies) of human rights violations. These form the basis for communications by the special rapporteurs to the Government, which are requested to respond with information in a set time frame. Information can be submitted by anyone and must identify the alleged victim(s), perpetrator(s), person(s) or organization(s) submitting the information, and provide a detailed description of the circumstances of the alleged violation.

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- the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination ([CERD](#)),
  - the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#)),
  - the Committee against Torture ([CAT](#)),
  - the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ([SPT](#)),
  - the Committee on the Rights of the Child ([CRC](#)),
  - the Committee on Migrant Workers ([CMW](#)),
  - the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](#)), and
  - the Committee on Enforced Disappearances ([CED](#)).

<sup>8</sup> Except to the Sub-Committee on the Prevention of Torture, which conducts direct monitoring visits to places of detention rather than meetings and dialogues with States parties.

<sup>9</sup> Treaty bodies monitoring ICCPR, CERD, CAT, CEDAW, CRPD, CED and CESC.

<sup>10</sup> CMD and CRC.

## ***Regional Accountability Mechanisms- experiences from other regions***

*The African Peer Review Mechanism* - While not directly linked to the MDGs, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is considered the first of its kind. It was launched in 2003 by the African Union to promote political stability, sustainable development and economic integration in Africa. Voluntarily adopted by African states, the APRM helps assess progress towards mutually agreed objectives in the areas of: (i) democracy and political governance, (ii) economic governance and management, (iii) corporate governance and (iv) socio-economic development. It promotes the sharing of experiences amongst participating countries, the adoption of successful practices, and the identification of capacity gaps and strategies to address them. The APRM is supported by UNECA, UNDP and the African Development Bank (ADB).

Following the base review, within 18 months after a country becomes and member, reviews are undertaken regularly, every two to four years. The process comprises a governance self-assessment by the participating countries and an external evaluation by the APR Panel, leading to a peer-review by the leaders of member countries, through the ARP Forum.<sup>11</sup>

The process is comprehensive, participatory and inclusive. The assessment is not limited to the executive, but extends to the parliament, branches of the judiciary, the private sector, civil society and the media, all contributing to shared development objectives. Consultations are also inclusive, and comprise government agencies, the parliament, the judiciary, civil society, religious organisations, ethnic minorities, women and youth groups, the private sector, and other stakeholders.

One critical feature of the APRM is the National Programme of Action (NPoA). Going beyond self-assessment, evaluation and review, the APRM culminates in the NPoA, collectively prepared by all stakeholders. Monitored, in turn, through a representative body of state and non-state actors, the NPoA provides a space for dialogue on governance and socio-economic issues in the participating countries, and the opportunity to build a national consensus and a shared commitment on the way forward. It also provides an effective mechanism for countries to follow-up on findings and recommendations, and take action on slow progress or reversals.<sup>12</sup>

## ***Lessons for a post-2015 accountability mechanism***

### *National level*

- *Enhance Parliamentary oversight of SDG progress* – The experiences reviewed here show that the engagement of parliaments in review and reporting on the MDGs has been weak. Given the critical oversight function of parliaments in democratic societies, these should form part and parcel of an accountability mechanism post-2015. Cross-parliamentary committees can track progress towards the SDGs, stimulate parliamentary debates, address (parliamentary) questions to government ministries on progress (or lack thereof) towards targets, and even open inquiries. Their oversight function would also be strengthened by a closer collaboration with civil society, youth, business, marginalized groups, and other stakeholders.
- *Establishing mechanisms for the private sector to engage* – From the review it has also emerged that private sector actors have had little space to engage in accountability mechanisms

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<sup>11</sup> The APR Forum is a Committee of Participating Heads of States and Government of the Member States of the African Union that have voluntarily acceded to the APRM.

<sup>12</sup> <http://aprm-au.org/about-aprm>

for the MDGs. The private sector plays a critical role in supporting sustainable development in the region, by generating employment, supporting sustainability and sustainable production, investing in new technologies and innovative solutions to development needs, etc. Given this critical role, businesses need platforms to provide feedback to government institutions and express preferences and needs with regard to development policies and their implementation.

- Civil society and other stakeholders' engagement in National MDG/SDG Reports - While in some cases national MDG reports have been prepared with some degree of civil society engagement, by and large, they do not emerge from an inclusive process of government, civil society and UN collaboration.<sup>13</sup> Moving forward, more space should be opened for civil society and other stakeholders' engagement in the preparation of SDGs reports, throughout the process, which is not limited to a one-time consultation workshop, but is sustained over time. The engagement of civil society, businesses and other stakeholders, should be genuine and substantive participation of all strata of society in the review process, including the formulation of recommendations for addressing development gaps, lack or slow progress. Civil society's participation should be inclusive of all members of society, including ethnic groups, women, youth, migrant workers, PLHIV, vulnerable and marginalized populations, businesses and others.

#### *Regional level*

- Building blocks of a regional accountability mechanism - Building on the lessons emerging from the Africa Peer Mechanism, the building blocks of a regional accountability mechanism might comprise: (i) participatory national SDGs reports, providing countries' self-assessments on progress (or lack thereof) towards sustainable development goals. The national SDGs report should be participatory and inclusive of all members of society and could be supported by UN Country Teams. (ii) Independent and participatory review of progress and issues faced by countries in the region, in the fashion of the APR Panel evaluations. These review could be done leveraging on the ESCAP/ADB/UNDP collaboration for the preparation and publication of the regional MDG report. The report could serve as an instrument to support findings of country self-assessments, offer cross-country comparisons, and identify emerging issues or potential for synergies and collective actions, for example for promoting regional integration, to address cross border development challenges. (iii) Voluntary peer review process, led by the regional economic commission, and supported by the UNDG through a regional multi-stakeholder platform.

- Regional MDG/SDG Reports part of the post-2015 regional accountability architecture - Regional MDG Reports are an already existing tool that monitors MDG progress regionally on a regular basis and allows for comparisons across countries, highlighting successes and revealing deficits based on comparable data. In Asia-Pacific, the ESCAP/ADB/UNDP regional MDG report is prepared on the basis of broad-base consultations with civil society organizations, the private sector, other stakeholders and governments from the region. These are good practices already and can become part of the regional accountability architecture, providing independent

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<sup>13</sup> In some countries, stakeholders have been consulted quite extensively, such as Colombia, in other not, with North Korea at the other end of the spectrum. In some cases it has also differed for sub-national report (Pakistan as example). The original guidance note for the MDG report, prepared by the UNDG, does mention stakeholder participation, however, stakeholder engagement tends to be done more regularly for (MDG based) national development strategies.

information on progress (or lack thereof) and serving as channels to express peoples' preferences and feedback.

- Stronger role to be played by regional cooperation institutions, such as ASEAN, SAARC, PIFS & PCS in a regional accountability mechanism – Building on regional experiences such as the ILO-supported ASEAN Migrant Labour Forum, the UNDG could play a critical role in supporting regional cooperation institutions, such as ASEAN, SAARC, PIFS and PCS to establish platforms for consultation and engagement around specific development issues relevant to their sub-region, between member states and civil society, the private sector, marginalized groups, and other stakeholders.

#### *Regional & Global level*

- Greater access to disaggregated data and information, and monitoring - Several sector-specific MDG accountability mechanisms supported by the UNDG have strived to improve access to information and peoples' participation in monitoring and review processes, including by leveraging ICT and innovative technologies. Experiences such as the WHO-supported Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health should continue supporting monitoring of health-related outcomes post-2015 and provide data at the disaggregated level by gender, ethnicity, geographic area, quintile, and other, to inform people, policies and programmatic responses, and catalyze advocacy action from civil society. The potentials of big data (analysis of social media and digital data) can be leveraged to provide real time disaggregated data on specific issues.

- Peoples' participation in intergovernmental review processes - Several intergovernmental review processes, such as the UPR, CEDAW, and other human rights treaties, have institutional mechanisms and platforms that ensure peoples' participation. Such good practices can inform the design of a regional (and global) accountability mechanism post-2015. To this end, more efforts could be made to ensure and facilitate peoples' engagement in these processes, by leveraging the potentials offered by ICTs, for example, establishing user-friendly platforms where people can engage, access information, interact, share expectations or file reports and complaints.

## **II. Peoples' participation in national and regional accountability mechanisms in Asia-Pacific**

The clarity, conciseness, and measurability of the MDGs framework has opened an unprecedented space for civil society organizations and peoples' engagement in accountability mechanisms, particularly at the subnational levels. The post-2015 development framework will hopefully see an even higher level of people's participation in development planning, policy-making, implementation and monitoring. A testimony of this higher level of peoples' inclusion is the UN Global Conversation on post-2015, which has already seen over 3 million people participating in the debate around the new development agenda, expressing priorities and ideas.

Why is it important, post-2015, that people continue being a part of accountability mechanisms, at all levels, for monitoring progress towards the SDGs? Firstly, to respond to a normative proposition: Participatory accountability mechanisms respond to the need to operationalize key principles that are at the heart of the governance and human rights-based approach to

development.<sup>14</sup> Such an approach demands that all people, including the most vulnerable and marginalized, are given access to, meaningfully contribute and engage with decision-makers to develop and monitor the policies and programs that have an impact on their lives.

Secondly, achieving sustainable development hinges on the capacity of countries to effectively provide basic services to their people, protect societies from the threats of conflicts and natural disasters, administer justice fairly, and safeguard human rights for all people. However, the capacity of states to perform such fundamental functions is dependent, amongst other factors, on the type and strength of accountability relations between the institutions of the state and the people. Holding political leaders to account for their promises, and institutions for their actions and results, accountability mechanisms makes them more responsive and relevant to the needs and demands of society.

Thirdly, the increased emphasis on decentralization has opened up the space for new actors to engage in governance processes<sup>15</sup>. Fourthly, the limited impact of formal democratic systems coupled with the increasing recognition that citizens and communities have an important role in driving government performance.<sup>16</sup>

While there is no hard evidence of a positive correlation between social accountability and effective governance, good practices of social accountability mechanisms, including in Asia and the Pacific, show that social accountability initiatives have driven development outcomes, by strengthening links between governments and the people.<sup>17</sup>

The following framework helps to review social accountability mechanisms and explore how these can be leveraged for an integrated accountability mechanism post-2015. Access to information, consultation and participation in governance processes are the building blocks of participatory accountability. Social accountability mechanisms are designed along an *information-consultation-participation continuum*, and often include a combination of these three elements. Information, consultation and participation are critical means for people to exercise voice and scrutinize the work of public institutions and political leaders, to ensure they deliver on their promises, and are responsible for their decisions, actions and results. From a review of experiences in Asia and the Pacific it emerges that, while all means of accountabilities are effective in driving public institutions' results and holding them accountable, the more we

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<sup>14</sup> UNDP (2010), *Fostering Social Accountability: from Principle to Practice*, Guidance Note

<sup>15</sup> The UNDP report 'Reflections on Social Accountability' (2013)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

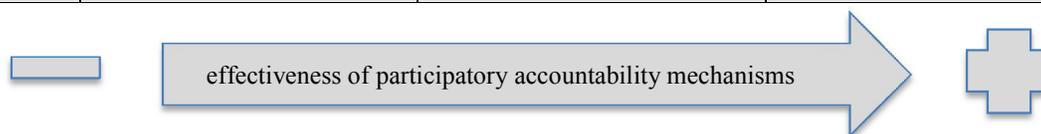
<sup>17</sup> The UNDP report 'Reflections on Social Accountability' (2013), highlights the following as areas in which social accountability has

- Improve the efficiency of public service delivery and increase the responsiveness of services to a range of users;
- Improve budget utilization;
- emphasize the needs of vulnerable, marginalized and traditionally excluded groups in policy formulation and implementation;
- Tackle gender-based imbalances;
- Demand transparency and expose government failure and corruption;
- Facilitate links between citizens and local governments in the context of de-centralization;
- Construct new democratic spaces for political engagement and ensure that existing spaces are used to the best possible effect.

move along the *information-consultation-participation continuum* towards greater level of participation, the higher the effectiveness of social accountability mechanisms.

**Table: Means and objectives of social accountability**

	<b>Information</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>Participation</b>
<b>Voice</b>	Access to information and data on progress towards the MDGs, the use of public funds, the availability, accessibility and quality of services, and others, is critical for people to understand their rights, ways and channels through which they can express grievances and demands, gaps in policies and service provision for which there is a need to advocate.	Consultation mechanisms open spaces to civil society organisations, marginalized and vulnerable groups (e.g. women, ethnic groups, PLHIV) to express needs and demands to inform policies, budgets and plans.	Participatory mechanisms ensure that people are a part of policy, planning, budgetary and monitoring processes and can ensure that their demands are taken into account by policy makers and administrators and reflected in policies, plans and budgets.
<b>Scrutiny</b>	Access to information and data helps people to assess performance of service providers and political leaders.	Consultation mechanisms, such as web-based platforms, workshops, town hall meetings, and others, allow people to provide direct feedback on the performance of service providers and political leaders and demand action.	Participation mechanisms allow people to assess the quality of service providers and political leaders, provide feedback, demand and exercise pressure for action to address gaps and demands.



Asia and the Pacific has a wealth of examples of national and sub-national social accountability mechanisms, including some supported by the UN System, which can be built on, to support an inclusive and participatory regional accountability mechanisms for the post-2015 development agenda.

**Information**

*Mitigating governance risks in the water sector in the Philippines* - In the Philippines, UNDP is working with Integrity Watch Group (IWAG), a local CSO, to mitigate governance risks and build integrity in local water governance. Local communities monitor the integrity of water governance using public finance systems. The IWAG is working on the registration with the Securities and Exchange Commission to legalize its existence as independent body, recognized and authorized to monitor public finance processes at local level. The initiative has shown evidence that local community engagement can be instrumental in addressing governance risks at the local level, improving service delivery. It is currently being brought to scale and implemented in other communities and districts.

**Consultation**

*Phones against corruption in Papua New Guinea* - Corruption is pervasive across all sectors in Papua New Guinea (PNG), affecting service delivery, in particular at the provincial, district and ward level. The Department of Finance and UNDP have launched an initiative, which allows

citizens to report corruption cases, share concerns or ask questions via free text messages. To ensure that people feel comfortable raising corruption issues, the system protects the identity of each account holder.

Meeting the Client Programme in Malaysia - To bring the citizens closer to the administration and to increase their participation in public life, the government of Malaysia has institutionalized the Mesra Rakyat, or Meeting the Client Programme, which requires heads of departments and senior officers of government agencies at all levels to make themselves available once a month to meet their clients and receive complaints and feedback from them directly.

### ***Participation***

Citizen Action for Local Leadership to Achieve MDGs by 2015 - In the Philippines, the Citizen Action for Local Leadership to Achieve MDGs by 2015 project (or Call 2015) is a partnership between UNDP, UN-Habitat and five municipal governments, which promotes citizen engagement in urban governance. It has institutionalized face-to-face dialogue and voice mechanisms between citizens and local governments, to address issues of corruption and strengthen service delivery. Partnerships between research and academic institutions, civil society organizations and local governments have developed systems of knowledge exchange and management, as well as user-friendly applications to measure results and track progress towards the MDGs. “Integrity Circles” (ICs) function as the cities’ advisory bodies; they comprise respected men and women from local communities, selected through a community consultation process. A Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS) provides baseline indicators for eight poverty dimensions. Local government officials and IC members use the CBMS to monitor service delivery against the baseline. The baseline data has also been translated into household-level maps indicating problem areas. In Tuguegarao, the city government established the Call 2015 Information Corner and invited the IC to monitor and evaluate the performance of the city government. An official resolution opened the participation of IC members in city council proceedings. Given its success, this initiative has been brought to scale and implemented in all cities in the Philippines.

### ***Information and consultation***

Promoting integrity in the education sector in China - China’s higher education system is a sector prone to corruption. Twenty five per cent of corruption in China’s education system occurs in universities, leading to a low enrollment rate from youth coming from poor and marginalized communities, who cannot afford to pay illegal charges. The School of Political Sciences and Law of Northwest Normal University piloted a risk reduction plan, in cooperation with UNDP and the China Integrity Education Network. The plan comprised the mapping of corruption risks in the overall process – i.e. key decision-making points, procurement, student enrolment, asset management – as well as the development of a corruption prevention strategy. The risk assessment process was done through consultations (surveys) with stakeholders, including students and their parents, civil society organizations and the general public, teachers, education staff, disciplinary committees of the Party and law enforcement organs. The findings from the risk assessment have been widely publicized and shared with party officials at the county level and higher levels, the Ministry of Education, and the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. This initiative is being brought to scale in 2014, reaching out to 10 additional universities. A key challenge remains the implementation of the recommendations that are put forward as a result of the assessments.

*Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment in Pakistan: Police–Community Relations Programme* - The absence of police presence and the low trust between communities and the police are behind the level of mistrust between the society and the State in areas of Pakistan. In 2003, UNDP supported the establishment of the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment programme. Citizen Community Boards and Local Monitoring Committees are the bedrock of a Police–Community Relations Programme (PCRP). These community groups monitor police performance, share information with other community members, promote dialogue between communities and the police, and take part in public safety delivery activities. Many of them are located in the Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces, along the borders with Iran and Afghanistan, where a weak rule of law and poor relations between communities and the police have hindered social cohesion and contributed to conflict. These committees produce monthly monitoring reports and award points for cases solved by the police. Through the police station monitoring system, the scores are publicly displayed in police stations and progress towards the resolution of cases are recorded and presented.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Information and Participation***

A review of such examples shows that effective social accountability mechanisms are those where the level of participation is high and vertical accountability mechanism are combined with horizontal ones, thorough alliances or partnerships. In these cases vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms reinforce each other, creating a virtuous cycle of monitoring-review-enforcement/action. A case in point is the partnership between the National Commission on Audit (NCA) and Concerns Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG) in **the Philippines**. NCA has partnered with CCAGG to conduct a joint audit, for monitoring infrastructure projects, applying CCAGG methodology. The NCA has also partnered with Procurement Watch Inc. to pilot a new monitoring tool to measure corruption and inefficiencies in public procurement. In **India**, the public auditor’s office of Rajasthan has shared with Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) the reports of audits conducted on state’s institutions, and invited the advocacy grass-roots organization to launch an advocacy campaign for the implementation of their recommendations, which had previously been ignored. The State of **Andra Pradesh** has led a campaign on social audit in collaboration with a consortium of non-governmental organizations to monitor the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.<sup>19</sup> In Jharkhand in **India**, Water Aid Citizens’ Action trained community members to use access-to-information legislation to track expenditure on water and sanitation. The findings were presented to local officials and service providers agreed to a collaborative plan of action with the local community.<sup>20</sup>

Another example of partnership between civil society and of horizontal accountability mechanisms is **Nepal’s** NHRI’s committee on economic and social rights, which, in 2009, launched a consultative process to identify complementary rights-based indicators for the MDGs. This work led to the development of a user’s guide on indicators for monitoring economic, social and cultural rights in Nepal, jointly published by the Government of Nepal, the NHRI and OHCHR.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> UNDP 2011

<sup>19</sup> The International Budget Project (IBP)

<sup>20</sup> “Who will be accountable? Human Rights and the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, OHCHR

<sup>21</sup> “Indicators for Monitoring Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Nepal, A User’s Guide” (September 2011)

“Guarding the guardians” in Hong Kong - “Guarding the guardians”, in Hong Kong, is another example of the mutually reinforcing impact of vertical and horizontal accountability mechanism. Since its inception in 1974, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) has put in place institutional mechanisms for community engagement, as a core element of its three-pronged strategy, along with law enforcement and prevention. To enhance public accountability and prevent political interference in its operations, ICAC is scrutinized by 4 independent advisory committees, comprising community leaders or citizens appointed by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Social Administrative Region. For example the Operations Committee reviews any investigation not completed within twelve months. The ICAC has also invested in aligning the public's aspiration for a clean society with its statutory mandate to eradicate corruption. A vast variety of community education and engagement programmes help rally people from all walks of life behind the anti-corruption banner and to spread probity messages to different social strata. The partnership between the anti-corruption agency and local communities has been the critical success factor that helped ICAC build public confidence in its operations and lower tolerance for corruption in society. Hong Kong is now rated as one of the least corrupt country in the world according to Transparency International Corruption Perception Index.

#### ***Lessons for a post-2015 accountability mechanism***

- Answerability and enforcement - A common challenge of the social accountability mechanisms reviewed here is the capacity of people and civil society organizations to demand answers from institutions of the state and enforce corrective measures. Effective social accountability mechanisms are those that are supported by *answerability* and enforcement mechanisms,<sup>22</sup> or incentive systems, to ensure responsible institutions account for their decisions and actions, and take corrective measures when accountability fails. The post-2015 accountability agenda should promote and support answerability of countries towards their people and of countries towards each other, through a normative element and dedicated mechanisms.
- Vertical and horizontal accountability - Social accountability is most effective when they complement horizontal ones, whereby civil society organizations strengthen alliances with institutions of the state with oversight and review functions (NHRIs, Ombudsman Offices, Audit Offices, Anti-Corruption Agencies, and others). In these cases vertical and horizontal accountability mechanisms reinforce each other, creating a virtuous cycle of monitoring-review-enforcement/action. A post-2015 accountability agenda should promote partnerships and alliances between, for example, independent review mechanisms (horizontal accountability mechanisms) and civil society organizations. For example, specific mechanisms could be established for the systematic engagement of civil society organizations, parliaments and other stakeholders in ministerial review processes, national and regional MDG reports, whereby the level of engagement of people is not limited to information sharing and consultation, but participation in the review process, drafting of recommendations and assessment of progress, and others.
- Addressing exclusion and marginalization - Most accountability initiatives are designed and put in place to improve access to services for the poor as a generic target group, failing to

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<sup>22</sup> “answerability” - the obligation to provide an account and the right to have a response; and “enforceability”—ensuring that action is taken or redress provided when accountability fails

address issues of marginalization and exclusion. In most cases, participatory mechanisms do not necessarily include systematically disadvantaged or marginalized groups. In the Post-2015 framework there will be a need to better link accountability and social inclusion. Considering the widening inequality and high levels of exclusion in many Asia-Pacific countries, the accountability agenda post-2015 should be more nuanced, designed to address the underlying social and political factors driving inequality and exclusion. Mechanisms to promote accountability for the implementation of the new agenda should, by design, explicitly target the excluded and most marginalized.

### **III. Strengthening Civil Society Participation in Mechanisms of Accountability Post-2015: Perspectives from Asia-Pacific Country Consultations**

#### ***The UN Global Conversation***

In 2010, Member States requested the UN Secretary-General to make recommendations in his annual report on the MDGs for further steps to advance the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. In his report the year after, the Secretary-General stated that the consideration of a new development agenda should start with a thorough review of the MDGs, should revisit the values and principles of the Millennium Declaration and address emerging issues. In addition, the report states that the post-2015 development framework is likely to have the best development impact if it emerges from an inclusive, open and transparent process with multi-stakeholder participation.<sup>23</sup>

In response to this directive, the UN Development Group umbrella started a far-reaching consultation process to inform the global debate on post-2015. It has facilitated the biggest outreach in the UN's history: nearly 3 million people have expressed their priorities and ideas through 88 national consultations, 11 thematic consultations, via the on-line platform the World We Want 2015 and the global MY World survey. This process signals a new era of global decision-making where one can truly speak of "we the peoples". The number of participants is particularly encouraging as it includes people that are not usually part of international (or national) decision making processes. The efforts have been successful in reaching out to people in developing countries and in excluded groups.

One of the main messages coming forth out of the consultations is for an honest and responsive government. In Asia, half of the 1.67 million people who have participated in the MY World survey selected the option of an 'honest and responsive government'. People want their governments to do a better job in representing them – delivering key services, encouraging growth while regulating markets, and preventing insecurities linked with compromising the planet and the wellbeing of future generations. They want to improve their lives and those of their families and ask that governments create opportunities for their full and equal participation in decisions that affect them.<sup>24</sup> They demand accountability.

Many of the messages coming from the consultations have found resonance in other contributions to the post-2015 process, such as the reports of the High Level Panel on post-2015

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<sup>23</sup> UNSG Report to the GA, A/66/126, "Accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals: options for sustained and inclusive growth and issues for advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015"

<sup>24</sup> A Million voices

and that of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. Most importantly, many of the messages are echoed in the report of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals, including a target to “develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”.

Such convergence is encouraging and an important stepping-stone for the last leg of the intergovernmental negotiation process. Arriving at a consensus and with broad ownership will also be crucial for the effectiveness of any post-2015 development framework. In fact, as we have learnt from the MDGs, it is a precondition for successful implementation. Valuable time for implementation was lost with mobilizing people and governments around the MDGs. In addition, critics have argued that a number of the shortcomings of the MDGs could have been avoided if a more inclusive consultation process had taken place in formulating the MDGs.

The UN Global Conversation has thereby already provided the post-2015 framework with a head start: it is not only governments and civil society in the developed countries but also in developing countries that are tuned into the agenda setting process. It has also drawn in different stakeholder groups.

With the support of modern technology and social media the Global Conversation has reached out to more people than ever before. It has reached out to people from all walks of life and to people who ordinarily are not asked about their priorities. Their perspectives have been presented at the global stage, by the UN. While participatory processes have become more widely recognized as a fundamental prerequisite to creating successful policies, this broad stakeholder engagement has set the bar even higher for future milestones in global decision-making. The way the voice of people have been collected and brought to the global decision making process is challenging the existing notion of multilateralism.

More than anything else, the consultations have revealed a huge appetite and demand for involvement not only in the design of the development agenda, but also in its future implementation. People are asking for transformation - not just of the “what”, but also “how” we do development. They are asking not just for a one-off consultation, but an ongoing conversation. They want not only to articulate the problems, but also to help find solutions, and be involved in implementing them.<sup>25</sup>

As such, the UNDG already started working with over 50 countries to explore issues around implementation, such as partnerships, localization, capacities and participatory monitoring and accountability. It is hoped that these dialogues will kick-start partnerships and implementation mechanisms to form the foundation of the new development agenda, so that come September 2015 people the world over are mobilized to begin implementation.

Looking forward, the consultations have opened doors for continued participation – not just in this process to determine the world’s priorities, but also to hold governments, business, international organizations and civil society to account for achieving them.

The demand of increased accountability came forth through the UN Global Conversation as well as through consultations organized by Beyond 2015, a consortium of civil society organizations focusing on the post-2015 agenda. Their consultations highlighted the concern about the threat of poor accountability to achieving future goals. Their report states that, therefore, a post-2015

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

framework should be underpinned by a comprehensive and inclusive accountability mechanism that should empower existing human rights structures.<sup>26</sup>

### *Voices from Asia-Pacific: National Consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

From Asia-Pacific, 16 countries participated<sup>27</sup> in the UN Global Conversation. In these consultations, people<sup>28</sup> expressed a strong demand to be part of the implementation of a post-2015 agenda, as well as its monitoring and review.

For example, one of the main recommendations coming from the national consultations in **Thailand** is to promote bottom-up policy-making through the participation of beneficiaries in policy-making processes; national development agendas need to be contextualized through local engagement, nurturing local associations and setting up open ‘policy platforms’.<sup>29</sup>

People participating in the consultations in **Indonesia** recommended that: “the government must adhere to the principles of transparency, accountability and communication, with a zero-tolerance policy for corruption, particularly in the context of managing an urban environment.” In addition, they stated that: “communities should actively participate in policy-making, monitoring the development process and human rights violations.”<sup>30</sup>

The consultations in the Philippines specifically brought up the importance of strengthening and expanding effective government programs, enforcing good governance, accountability and transparency at all levels and establishing feedback mechanisms from stakeholders.

People from the Philippines recognized that the progress against the MDGs was largely dependent on the effective provision of basic social services. The delivery of most of these services is devolved to local government units (LGUs), highlighting the importance of MDG localization. It was recognized, however, that implementation and monitoring at the local level was weak due to a lack of capacities and resources of the LGUs, as well as a low level of compliance with the national monitoring and evaluation system. A lack of available (and disaggregated) data is considered a problem in general for proper monitoring and evaluation.

*“The public accountability system needs to be strengthened and made transparent. Citizens should be provided opportunities to raise their voices and to hold accountable the public office bearers for results. The social accountability systems should also be strengthened.”* Participant in the national consultation in **Pakistan**<sup>31</sup>.

Several countries also outlined specific mechanisms for participatory implementation and accountability:

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<sup>26</sup> Beyond 2015, Civil society demands post-2015 agenda, <http://www.beyond2015.org/civil-society-demands-post-2015-agenda>.

<sup>27</sup> Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mongolia, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

<sup>28</sup> The term people refers to all members of civil society, including members of marginalised communities, ethnic/indigenous people, private sector representatives, trade unions, the academia, Think Tanks, youth representatives, women, and others.

<sup>29</sup> National report of the post-2015 consultation in Thailand (p.45)

<sup>30</sup> National report of the UNDG post-2015 consultations in Indonesia (p.25)

<sup>31</sup> National report of the post-2015 consultation in Pakistan (p.10-11)

In **India**, people called for stronger accountability mechanisms for better implementation and monitoring of basic services to all. Public provisioning for basic services, decentralizing decision-making, people-centered planning and citizen-led monitoring were seen as crucial. The call is for the implementation of the new agenda to be done in a way that recognizes civil society as a key partner, through inclusive decision-making, people-centered planning and citizen-led monitoring. India also has a wealth of experience on people-centered accountability and monitoring mechanisms. For example, networks across India have campaigned in favor of the country's pioneering Right to Information Act and supported social audits, which have improved accountability in many districts. Reforms to further decentralization were also seen as concrete ways to improve accountability and increase citizen participation<sup>32</sup>.

*“The people alone cannot make much impact with the government. The United Nations must ensure that every government respects the needs of its own people.”* Participant in the national consultation in **Thailand**.

**Vietnam**, which is taking a particular look at strengthening participatory monitoring and accountability in the context of the post-2015 agenda, has a number of good examples to build on.

A first example is the Social Audits that are used for the monitoring and evaluation of Viet Nam's Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP) 2011-2015. The social audit approach is an umbrella concept that encompasses a variety of participatory tools – the Child Rights Based Social Audit, Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, Citizen Report Cards, Community Score Cards, and Gender Audits. These tools involve both qualitative and quantitative methods in the forms of household surveys, key-informant interviews, focus group discussions and desk reviews. Using participatory approaches, these tools are meant to generate complementary information for the SEDP.

Another example is the “Justice Index”. As Viet Nam advances its judiciary agenda towards an ethical and fair system that protects its citizens, more evidence is needed to drive these reforms and shape Government policy decisions. The index is a quantitative tool that captures people's opinion and assessment of five dimensions of the administration of justice and rule of law, in particular accessibility, equity, integrity, reliability and efficiency

A third example is Viet Nam's Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI). Over the years, the Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) has captured and reflected the experiences of nearly 50,000 citizens across the country with state governance and public administration performance, from provincial to village levels. The annual nationwide PAPI reports provide extensive data and information on the implementation of complex, yet key governance and public administration processes exactly as Vietnamese citizens' experience them. It has become a vital tool to hold provincial governments to account for their performance in providing public services, interacting with citizens, and ensuring just and democratic access to citizens from every walk of life.

### ***Lessons for a post-2015 accountability mechanism***

From the various post-2015 consultations the following recommendations have come forth:

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<sup>32</sup> National report of the UNDG post-2015 consultations in India

- Continued consultations with civil society and other stakeholders - Rather than a one-off event, governments should set up mechanisms for continued dialogue with civil society and other stakeholders. Such mechanisms should be set up in an early stage of implementation (preferably even in design) and provide participants with a real say in the process, methods and analysis to conduct reviews and assessments.
- Circular feedback - Governments should establish participatory methodologies for the monitoring of progress towards international development goals, and at the same time specifically report on the participation of civil society during the review process. In order to check the quality and diversity of stakeholder participation, review criteria could be decided upon jointly beforehand. Mechanisms for participatory monitoring could include peer review and citizen score cards, whereby citizens grade the services provided by their governments, followed by social hearing where service providers and members of civil society directly engage one another.

#### **IV. Harnessing the potential of ICTs for accountability**

Whatever the content of the new framework, the post-2015 development world is likely to see an evolving approach to measuring results. The post-2015 development agenda calls for a ‘data revolution’. The data revolution is already taking place, with big data and information and communications technology (ICTs) offering - still not fully explored - opportunities for supporting people-centered accountability mechanisms. Public perceptions and new forms of data will likely come into play in measuring progress in human rights, good governance, inequalities and environmental protection.<sup>33</sup> Examples of participatory monitoring methods, including innovative use of technologies, provide many opportunities for strengthened accountability mechanisms that involve citizens in varying capacities. Examples of social accountability mechanisms, supported by ICTs and new technologies include community mapping through crowd-sourcing, use of global positioning systems to display and analyze information about service delivery, open data and citizen engagement mechanisms.

##### *Citizen engagement mechanisms*

Lapor! - **Indonesia** leads the way, with the President’s Delivery Unit for Development Monitoring and Oversight (UKP4). Lapor! (Report! In bahasa) uses a variety of media such as the LAPOR! website, text messaging and other mobile applications through which, citizens can report on anything from bribe requesting public officials to damaged bridges and teacher absenteeism. Users can also directly upload pictures or videos as evidence of the reported misconduct directly on the LAPOR! The UKP4 does a validity check within 3 to 4 days of receiving the complaint after which it is transferred to the relevant Ministry of Government Agency for responsive action. The turn around time for the responsive action is five working days which is reported back through the website, which generates an SMS or email notification to the complainant informing them of the action taken. How does the validation work? The LAPOR! team screens reports for the ‘five w’s and one h’ (who, what, when, where, why and how) to validate the complaints. The ones that don’t pass the screening are archived into a collective sentiment report. While effective, LAPOR! Is not without its fair share of challenges.

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<sup>33</sup> UNDP, “Reflections on Social Accountability; catalyzing democratic governance to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals”, July 2013

Some of them are: handling the high number and frequency of complaints (6,000 a day), and integrating all ministerial offices and local government units to cooperate with LAPOR!, (64 ministries and government agencies and one provincial government). A critical contributing factor to the effectiveness of LAPOR! is incentives. Lapor! conducts tri-monthly progress reports which is presented to the heads of each ministry and agency. These progress reports are comparable across different ministries, which provides room for healthy competition as a great incentive to perform. Further, if a validated report is not responded to within one month, the LAPOR! team reports this to the President's office, again creating a disincentive for non-compliance. Other contributing factors for the success of Lapor! is the ease of access for citizens from urban and rural areas to report their complaints, its virtual and precludes the need to physically register a complain at any local institution and it gains the trust of citizens as they can monitor the validation of their complaint and track the progress of responsive action taken.

*Check my School* - From the **Philippines**, the World Bank Institute and Open Society Institute kicked off a participatory monitoring initiative with the aim to improve service delivery in public education by promoting social accountability and transparency. Check My School, now established as a joint initiative of the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA—EAP) Foundation Inc. and the Department of Education (DepEd) uses mobile and web technology to help the community monitor the system of basic education in the Philippines.

How does this work? CMS makes use of the ANSA—EAP formula to exact social accountability through constructive engagement and citizen monitoring. Working closely with DepEd and other relevant government offices, CMS resolves school issues by empowering citizens to engage in dialogues with the government offices and also explore collaborative problem-solving. By collecting and providing data, and sharing feedback and solutions, school communities are engaged in monitoring the services of the DepEd. CMS also combines this community engagement with digital media such as websites, social media, and mobile technology, enabling people to share information and send feedback. Its community mobilization approach through partnership building with different groups such as the school stakeholders, local school board, the private sector, academe and government agencies is also instrumental in meeting CMS's vision of ensuring public schools deliver quality services and better education performance, enabled by involving citizens, empowering communities, and ensuring a responsive government.

*Ipaidabrike* - In an effort to address one of the most persistent development challenges plaguing the sub-continent's economy, a small non-profit organization launched Ipaidabrike, a platform for monitoring corruption across **India**. How it works: With the aim of heightening citizen's awareness about the nature and spread of bribe-related exchanges and consequently promoting a purposeful public debate that pressurizes public officials to reduce and eventually eliminate corruption, the website allows Indians to post their bribe experiences under four distinct categories — I Paid a Bribe (captures incidences of bribery), I Am a Bribe Fighter (experiences where people resisted bribery), I Met an Honest Officer (recognising honest officers) and I Do Not Want to Pay a Bribe (educating Indians how to avoid paying a bribe). While the website does not allow the naming and shaming of government departments it has had some preliminary successes. For example, the transport commissioner in Bangalore city used the website's feedback to reform its procedures and minimize bribery cases with a thrust on automation. In a global first, licenses can now be applied online and Bangalore city now gives automated driving test tracks to applicants to bring down the discretionary powers of its officials. What is

interesting is the new category of Ipaidabribe that recognizes honest officers and not simply those engaged in corruption. Ipaidabribe has created a significant size of knowledgebase of close to 16000 bribe reports and has been visited by more than 7.5 Lakh users. By raising awareness and providing citizens a ‘safe space’ to participate in public accountability, Ipaidabribe is filling a critical gap in the citizen charter for a very complex, deeply routed and contemporary social issue.

#### *Open data*

*Open Content in Kalimantan, Indonesia* - Building upon OpenStreetMap and Wikipedia’s tools to provide open geospatial data online, Making All Voices Count has partnered with Perkumpulan Wikimedia **Indonesia** to create an open toolkit to assist and train both local communities and the government in Indonesia to produce information, document their knowledge and map capacity in their localities, in this case, Kalimantan. Committed to the growth of open content in Indonesia, the project builds on existing tools and uses them to create local content with commitment to the growth of open content in Indonesia. The accessibility of this form of contribution, paired with the openness of a common data repository, holds a powerful promise of commoditized geographic data in Indonesia.

*Open Government Data Platform V2.0* - Launched by India’s National Informatics Centre (NIC), the platform aims to create awareness on the potential of open data and drive data-fuelled innovation to provide a better experience to data providers and strengthen community engagement. It brings together various stakeholders, including senior leaders and data controllers of ministries and departments, entrepreneurs and innovators, IT industry, academia and civil society to build an ecosystem around Open Government data. The platform currently has more than 6000 open government datasets and also conducted a #OpenDataApps Challenge across various sectors like agriculture, postal, governance and health in an effort to improve community engagement and explore the opportunity for new partnerships and co-creation of solutions.

*Open Education* - As one of the eight founding states of the Open Government Partnership, the Philippine government in its commitment to open governance initiated Data.gov.ph with the aim of making national government data searchable, accessible, and useful, with the help of the different agencies of government, and with the participation of the public. The website consolidates the datasets of different government agencies, allowing users to find specific information from a rich and continuously growing collection of public datasets. It also provides information on how to access these datasets and tools, such as infographics and other applications, to make the information easy to understand. Users may not only view the datasets, but also share and download them as spreadsheets and other formats, for their own use. Further, the Government of Philippines seeks to encourage the public to request for the data they want, participate, and even share stories of how they use open data. Likewise, it also encourages the public to participate by submitting applications and visualizations based on the public data. This engagement of ideas between the public and the government is a primary goal of data.gov.ph to foster and empower citizens to make informed decisions, and to promote efficiency and transparency in government. Open Education is an example of how the Department of Education through open data, stakeholders are given the opportunity to study and understand the education situation in the country and their respective localities, and contribute to its growth. Enrolments by region and by specific school can be found by name of the region, province, or municipality in the table.

### ***Lesson for a post-2015 accountability mechanism***

▪ *Open data and citizens engagement mechanisms have immense potential for accountability, however, more efforts are needed to ensure meaningful participation of citizens -* The examples from Asia Pacific illustrate that data revolution is fast gaining ground among countries in the region. That there is immense potential to change the way governments and citizens interact with each other is evident, however there are significant improvements still needed to ensure the effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of these efforts. What is perhaps most pressing is to ensure that not only is data and citizen engagement mechanisms made available and easily accessible but also sufficient investments are made to incentivize the meaningful engagement of citizens and the delivery of prompt responsive action by governments.

### **V. Recommendations for an integrated and participatory Accountability Mechanisms for the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

As emphasized by the DESA concept note guiding the regional consultations, “the architecture for accountability will have to be built from the grassroots level, where most of the impacts of development will be felt; through the regions to the global level where commitments are made and overseen. There needs to be a review and feedback loop from bottom to top, and vice versa”. A key pillar of the overall system will, naturally, be national accountability mechanisms. National post-2015/SDG reports, prepared by governments, with the participation of civil society and supported by the UN Country Teams and the UNDG agencies as appropriate, will likely play a key role in the review process and provide important inputs to the regional review, and subsequent global review under the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF)<sup>34</sup>.

A particular element of the post-2015 agenda that requires a renewed look at existing mechanisms is that of universality. The new agenda is to be applicable to all countries, moving far beyond the issues that are part of the Global Partnership and Means of Implementation discussion. Respecting the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR), countries will have to adapt the post-2015 agenda to their national context and establish baselines and targets appropriate for them, while at the same time be ambitious enough to contribute to the global agenda.

At the global level, the UN High Level Political Forum has been established as the main body mandated to review progress against sustainable development commitments in the context of post-2015. In the set-up of the Forum, governments have specifically stressed: “the need for the forum to promote transparency and implementation by further enhancing the consultative role and participation of the major groups and other relevant stakeholders”. They have also provided civil society and stakeholders with considerable room for engagement, i.e. (a) to attend all official meetings of the forum; (b) to have access to all official information and documents; (c) to

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<sup>34</sup> The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on sustainable development replaces the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). It is the apex United Nations body on sustainable development. It has been established to provide political leadership and guidance; it follows-up and review progress towards sustainable development commitments and addresses new and emerging sustainable development challenges; enhances the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The HLPF meets every four years at the level of Heads of State and Government under the auspices of the General Assembly, and every year under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. It adopts negotiated declarations. <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?menu=1556>

intervene in official meetings; (d) to submit documents and present written and oral contributions; (e) to make recommendations; (f) to organize side events and round tables.

At the regional level, while acknowledging the importance of the regional dimensions of sustainable development, governments have invited the “UN regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through annual regional meetings, with the involvement of other relevant regional entities, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate”.<sup>35</sup> To respond to this call, in April 2014 ESCAP convened the first meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, to discuss regional development priorities for the post-2015 development agenda and the regional political process for sustainable development, including organizational modalities of the APFSD, the feasibility of a regional road map for implementing the post-2015 development agenda, and key substantive functions of the APFSD to best promote the integration of the three dimensions and the means of assessing progress at the regional level.

While the future architecture of APFSD, including its mandate, scope of work and other procedural aspects of the Forum will be determined by an intergovernmental consultative process in the future, key recommendations outlined in the Chair’s Summary include: i) ESCAP has been encouraged by Member States to collate the annual national reporting on sustainable development progress, to feed into future APFSD meetings; ii) stakeholders have been invited to contribute to the work of APFSD, while the Forum should keep its intergovernmental character, as in the high-level political forum.<sup>36</sup>

Civil society has also made specific recommendations with regard to monitoring and assessment, which are captured in the Chair’s Summary of the APFSD meeting: (i) “On monitoring and assessment, proposals included: multi-stakeholder regional and sub-regional level peer review mechanisms to evaluate performance on sustainable development goals; special rapporteurs on key sustainable development issues; and accountability and reporting mechanisms for all stakeholders involved in financing sustainable development, including United Nations agencies, international financial and trade institutions, transnational corporations and the private sector”; (ii) “To facilitate and institutionalize civil society participation in development processes, members of the high-level political forum and the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism, and Governments should: recognize civil society’s capacity to contribute to constructive development; ensure that civil society engaged as partners with equal rights in policy development, implementation, monitoring and accountability in all regional and global mechanisms, including APFSD and the high-level political forum on sustainable development; and institutionalize civil society participation in sustainable development processes through a regional civil society engagement mechanism designed by civil society”.

Building on the lessons from the MDGs, the review of national and regional participatory accountability mechanisms, and the potentials that ICTs provide for building accountability mechanisms that have peoples’ participation at their core, following are the UNDG recommendations for an integrated (national-regional-global) accountability mechanism/system that could accompany the post-2015 commitments.

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<sup>35</sup> A/RES/67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

<sup>36</sup> APFSD Chair’s Summary <http://www.unescap.org/events/apfsd/>

### ***A UNDG proposal for an integrated accountability mechanism for the post-2015 development agenda***

An integrated (national – regional – global) accountability system/mechanism post-2015 should address three kinds of accountability relations:

- *Vertical relations*: countries towards their people, including vulnerable and marginalized groups, stateless people, etc. These relations should be framed as far along the *information-consultation-participation continuum* as possible, with the focus being on effective participation by affected people.
- *Horizontal relations*: accountability between all countries for shared commitments (i.e. to provide global public goods), in line with the CBDR principle.
- *Diagonal relations*: these types of relations capture the accountability of development partners towards countries and people, multilateral development banks (MDBs), and other international development partners (non-countries). For Asia and the Pacific this group includes the WB, ADB, the IMF, the BRICS development bank, the Asia Infrastructure Development Bank, the private sector, Foundations, and other partners<sup>37</sup>. While this group of development partners can only be held accountable in the context of their own mandate, all have the responsibility of ensuring that their respective development policies and initiatives contribute to sustainable development in a meaningful way and are mutually aligned and harmonized for achieving maximum results.

The new accountability mechanism post-2015 should also clearly define responsibilities and include the principle of answerability to stakeholders. The OWG-proposed seventeen SDGs have in-built implementation (inputs) targets. MDG Goal 8 was ill formulated, hard to track, rarely monitored, and its potential for strengthening regional and global cooperation was underutilized. Learning from Goal 8, an accountability mechanism post-2015 should be underpinned by clarity around responsibilities for each of the targets: to delineate the respective responsibilities of different actors in the development process.

An effective accountability mechanism should also include some normative elements around “answerability” of responsible actors. Such clarity in responsibility around means of implementation and the global partnership would not take away the responsibility of all countries, including developed countries, to work towards the achievement of sustainable development and report progress against the full post-2015 agenda. A new integrated accountability mechanism post-2015 should be ‘circular’ and comprise feedback loops to ensure answerability.

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<sup>37</sup> The UN System will have to report to the HLPF

**Table: A proposal for an integrated accountability mechanism:**

Levels	Main Platform	Country-People (vertical accountability relations)	Country-Country (horizontal accountability relations)	Development Partners and Private Sector (diagonal accountability relations)
<b>Global</b>	HLPF reviews progress			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UN System reports to the UNLPF</li> </ul>
<b>Regional</b>	APFSD mandate, scope of work to be determined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNDG-supported platform for civil society, parliaments, private sector and other stakeholders' engagement in regional review process</li> </ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer review process, led by the regional commission, with participation of civil society, parliaments, businesses and other stakeholders, supported by the UNDG through a regional platform (as above)</li> </ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional MDG report with CSOs participation (collaboration between ESCAP, ADB, UNDP and the UNDG), also covering MoI and GPfD extensively.</li> </ul>		
<b>National</b>	National Governments UNCTs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDG reports with participation of civil society, business, parliaments, and other stakeholders, and facilitated by UNCTs</li> <li>Private sector forums/engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MoI and GPfD reports, including participation from civil society, parliaments, private sector, and other stakeholders, and facilitated by UNCTs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voluntary and participatory reporting</li> <li>Voluntary alignment to SD agenda, harmonization and coordination peer review processes, including civil society/stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Sub-national</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDG prepared with engagement of civil society, businesses and other stakeholders, supported by UNCTs, to feed into National SDGs</li> </ul>		



***Summary of lessons and recommendations at the National and Regional levels***

*National and sub-national level*

- Enhance Parliamentary oversight of SDG progress – The experiences reviewed here show that the engagement of parliaments in review and reporting on the MDGs has been weak. Given the critical oversight function of parliaments in democratic societies, these should form part and parcel of an accountability mechanism post-2015. Cross-parliamentary committees can track progress towards the SDGs, stimulate parliamentary debates, address (parliamentary) questions to government ministries on progress (or lack thereof) towards targets, and even open inquiries. Their oversight function would also be strengthened by a closer collaboration with civil society, youth, business, marginalized groups, and other stakeholders.
- Establishing mechanisms for the private sector to engage – From the review it has also emerged that private sector actors have had little space to engage in accountability mechanisms for the MDGs. The private sector plays a critical role in supporting sustainable development in the region, by generating employment, supporting sustainability and sustainable production, investing in new technologies and innovative solutions to development needs, etc. Given this critical role, businesses need platforms to provide feedback to government institutions and express preferences and needs with regard to development policies and their implementation.
- SDGs mainstreamed in national development planning, monitoring and reporting – SDGs will need to be mainstreamed into national development plans and strategies, and national SDGs reports should be prepared in conjunction, or in alignment with national development plans reports, development strategies. SDGs report would ideally also to be prepared in conjunction/alignment with other type of reports, including on human rights.
- Encouraging Civil society participation in national monitoring and reporting on the SDGs - National SDGs reports would ideally prepared with the participation of civil society, including private sector, youth, marginalized groups, etc. UNCTs can provide support to civil society to monitor sector-specific SDGs, providing data at the disaggregated level and to prepare sub-national level reports on progress/gaps.
- Promoting continued consultations with civil society and other stakeholders - Rather than a one off event, governments should set up mechanisms for continued dialogue with civil society and other stakeholders. Such mechanisms should be set up in an early stage of implementation (preferably even in design) and provide participants with a real say in the process, methods and analysis to conduct reviews and assessments.
- Establishing circular feedback mechanisms - Governments should establish participatory methodologies for the monitoring of progress towards international development goals, and at the same time specifically report on the participation of civil society during the review process. In order to check the quality and diversity of stakeholder participation, review criteria could be decided upon jointly beforehand. Such mechanisms could include peer review and/or citizen scorecards, whereby citizens grade the services provided by their governments, followed by social hearing where service providers and members of civil society directly engage one another.
- Encouraging voluntary reporting and peer review processes of non-state actors/other development partners - Voluntary reporting of development organizations, the private sector, MDBs and other partners, including better alignment of corporate strategies, policies, and results reporting with some or all of the new goals, and evidence of coordination and harmonization amongst partners would support national accountability mechanisms.

- Give specific focus to the Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Development – National monitoring system on the means of implementation and regular reporting at the national level, with participation of civil society will be key to feed in to regional and global accountability mechanisms for the post-2015 agenda.
- Leveraging big data for disaggregated data - National / sub-national SDGs can adapt the goals, targets and indicators for comparisons across provinces within countries. A greater level of disaggregation of data and information will allow to monitor progress in lagging behind geographic areas/regions, amongst vulnerable and marginalized populations, lowest quintile, etc. to inform policy and action and reverse trends. To this end, the potentials offered by big data - analysis of social media and other digital data - should be further explored and leveraged.
- Encourage and promote the use of open data and citizens engagement mechanisms - Open data and citizens engagement mechanisms have immense potential to change the way governments and citizens interact with each other. However there are significant improvements still needed to ensure the effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of these efforts. While the use of open data and citizen engagement mechanisms should be encouraged and supported, investments should be made to incentivize the meaningful engagement of citizens and the delivery of prompt responsive action by governments.

#### *Regional Level*

- Building blocks of a regional accountability mechanism - Building on the lessons emerging from the Africa Peer Mechanism, the building blocks of a regional accountability mechanism might comprise: (i) participatory national SDGs reports, providing countries' self-assessments on progress (or lack thereof) towards sustainable development goals. The national SDGs report should be participatory and inclusive of all members of society and could be supported by UN Country Teams. (ii) Independent and participatory review of progress and issues faced by countries in the region, in the fashion of the APR Panel evaluations. These review could be done leveraging on the ESCAP/ADB/UNDP collaboration for the preparation and publication of the regional MDG report. The report could serve as an instrument to support findings of country self-assessments, offer cross-country comparisons, and identify emerging issues or potential for synergies and collective actions, for example for promoting regional integration, to address cross border development challenges. (iii) Voluntary peer review process, led by the regional economic commission, and supported by the UNDG through a regional multi-stakeholder platform.
- Strengthening the Civil Society platform for substantive engagement with the APFSD – The UNDG could establish and support a platform for civil society - and other stakeholders, including parliaments, businesses, etc. to more effectively engage in the regional review process led by the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, going over and beyond the existing engagement of accredited civil society organizations/major groups in intergovernmental processes.
- Continuing the regional SDG report – A collaboration between ESCAP, ADB, UNDP, and the UNDG, the regional (MDG)/SDG report can continue serving as the main monitoring tool at the regional level, allowing comparisons across countries based on comparable data, and informing policy dialogue around emerging or longstanding development issues from the region. The regional report should broaden civil society participation and cover the Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Development extensively.