



III. Good governance and the MDGs

“Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.”

H. E. Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Introduction

The Millennium Declaration explicitly recognizes good governance as one of the most crucial requirements in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It clearly points out that good governance at all levels is: (i) indispensable for creating a conducive environment for poverty alleviation and development; (ii) a prerequisite in asserting universal values such as human rights, (iii) is the operational link between noble aspirations and effective realization.

The Millennium Declaration makes it clear that creating a conducive environment for poverty alleviation and progress is dependent on good governance and on institutional structural reform at all levels – from the local, to the national, to the global. It declares - “we resolve therefore to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty. Success in meeting these objectives depends *inter alia*, on good governance within each country. It also depends on good governance at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems.” (Millennium Declaration, III. Development and Poverty Eradication)

Furthermore, the Millennium Declaration states that certain fundamental values are indispensable for international relations in the twenty-first century. These include Freedom, which ‘men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice. Democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people best assure these rights’. (Millennium Declaration, I. Value and Principles)

The Declaration also calls for collective commitment to ‘spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedom, including the right to development’. (Millennium Declaration, V. Human Rights, Democracy, and Good Governance.)

The *Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration Report of the Secretary-General (2003)*, highlights that good governance is also the key ingredient in making the difference between noble aspirations and effective realization, together with effective institutions, adequate material resources and international support. Similarly, Technical Cooperation experiences of UN agencies illustrate that it is “...neither money, nor technology, nor even expertise, but good governance that makes the difference.” (UN-HABITAT Global Campaign on Urban Governance).

Good Governance and the Millennium Development Goals

In short, good governance at all levels, from the local, to the national, to the regional, and to the global, is a cross-cutting prerequisite in achieving the ambitious global commitments set out in the Millennium Development Goals.

Goals 8: Developing a Global Partnership for Development calls for an open trading and financial system that is 'rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory'. It also calls for easily understandable structures of various global players for transparent resource transfers between countries. Furthermore, the Goal 8 itself explicitly reaffirms the commitments already made to good governance, development, and poverty reduction. Because of the global and regional nature of its actions, Goal 8 calls for good governance at the Global level.

Goal 6 on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases requires enhanced governance at the global, regional, national and local levels. This is because these diseases spread over national boundaries and combating them requires global and regional partnerships. Moreover, preventive and curative drugs are often made and/or patented in the developed countries, frequently restricting access and availability to those who need it most in the developing countries, where the infections are highest. Thus, enhanced global governance, ensuring an open and equitable trade system will be paramount in the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. In comparison, Goals 1-7 on poverty reduction, education, gender equality, child mortality and maternal health, essentially require better governance within a country – both at the local and national levels. Moreover, as stated earlier Goal 6: Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, in addition to global actions Goal 6 also requires actions at the national and local level.

This paper focuses on good governance at the country level and therefore addresses governance issues related to Goals 1 to 7. Moreover, achievement of the MDGs requires empowerment of the poor women and men. The paper will discuss good governance from the context of poverty alleviation and highlight good governance strategies that focus on empowering the poor.

I. Governance and MDGs

1.1 Defining governance

This section will outline the evolution of the definition of governance. It will take the definitions of various agencies and organizations within and outside the United Nations system, compare them, and deconstruct them to their basic elements and concepts to provide an easier understanding of the definition of governance.

1.2 Norms of good governance

This section will discuss the 5 norms of good governance as follows:

Equity

Including inter-regional, inter-personal equity (including gender equity and protection of the rights of the most vulnerable) and intergenerational equity (sustainability). Inclusiveness as a prime requirement of equity would also be discussed.

Effectiveness

Including importance of achieving results; efficiency in achieving results; responsiveness to the needs and demands of the people: effective public administration and delivery and regulation of services and strategic vision.

Subsidiarity and decentralization as a means of improving effectiveness would also be discussed.

Rule of Law

Including protection of human rights, physical security, security against violence and coercion, easy, timely and equal access to justice.

Accountability

Including transparency and access to information

Participation

Including participation by women and men, advantages and disadvantages of representative and participatory democracy, characteristics of effective participation, the importance of freedom of association, information and expression, inclusiveness in participation of the poor, minorities, the youth, the elderly and other vulnerable groups, particularly in decision-making

1.3 Governance failures and the non-achievement of MDGs

This section will discuss the traditional and modern norms of good governance. It will also outline the dichotomies between the traditional “culture of governance” and the modern “structures of government” and discuss the concept of “ethical ambience” in society. Exclusive decision-making among oligarchic elite would be discussed. Corruption and the role of organized crime in regulating and managing the informal economy will be highlighted. Lack of adequate capacity among government personnel and institutions, as well as the lack of capacity of the civil society to affect change will also be highlighted.

Institutional barriers in the public sector, including lack of horizontal and vertical coordination among government institutions, overlapping authorities and responsibilities and lack of capacities in the civil service will be discussed as well.

II. Operationalizing Good Governance*

2.1 People as citizens and customers

The dual role of people as citizens and customers will be discussed. As citizens they have the right to participate in decision-making and oversee government performance and as customers they expect government to deliver services, enforce laws and regulations.

2.2 Participation in decision-making and oversight by people as essential to achieving the MDGs

This section will discuss the importance of access to right information and organization as preconditions for effective participation and oversight. Attitudinal changes required on the part of the Government to provide access to right info to their constituents will also be highlighted. It will also discuss participatory mechanisms necessary for an informed and organized citizenry to influence decision-making. It will include a discussion of representative and participatory democracy. This section will also discuss the roles of “strategic legislative interventions” to hasten cultural and attitudinal changes in society necessary for good governance. Finally the section will discuss participation and oversight strategies to improve responsiveness of government institutions and to minimize corruption.

2.3 Increasing the effectiveness of government (institutional change)

This section will discuss strategies for achieving results and efficiency in the public sector; through among others total performance management, strategic visioning, and implementation of ISO 9000 standards in public sector institutions. It will also discuss the changing role of government from a provider of public goods and services to a regulator and enabler as well as the role of the for-profit and non-profit private sector in delivery of public goods and services.

It will discuss the importance of decentralization in implementing MDGs, particularly goals 1 to 7. Strategies for localization of MDGs and increasing their ownership among the people will also be discussed, including the concept of “MDGs Plus”. It will also outline the principle of subsidiarity and the conditions necessary for decentralization to bear the desired results.

2.4 Sharing the benefits of development: Increasing equity

This section will discuss various strategies and programmes for pro-poor development, particularly focusing on MDG 1 to 7.

2.5 The importance of the rule of law and the administration of justice for achieving the MDGs

This section will address issues related to administration of justice, particularly easy, equal and timely access to justice as well as administrative reforms needed in the

* Boxes containing brief case studies of good and bad practices/policies will illustrate each section of this chapter. Lessons at the end of each box would highlight points being made in the main text. Gender mainstreaming will be discussed through out the TBP as a cross cutting issue.

enforcement of the rule of law and the need for reforming the administration of justice. It will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing traditional systems of government. Finally it will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of judicial activism as a means for achieving the MDGs.

III. Measuring Good Governance and MDGs*

3.1 Good governance and MDG indicators

This section will discuss the purposes of longitudinal and comparative, quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure both the processes and the results. It will discuss various initiatives at the global and regional levels to develop indicators. It will also discuss data reliability and costs involved and the importance of collecting indicators as part of the total performance management cycle. Finally it will discuss the importance and strategies for development of indicators to measure localized MDGs.

3.2 Benchmarking to improve governance systems

This section will discuss benchmarking of administrative structures and management processes and the development of “learning organizations.” It will also discuss advantages and disadvantages of using global quality standards such as ISO 9000 in the public sector.

IV. Capacity Building for Good Governance*

4.1 Policy research and advocacy

This Section will highlight the importance of continuing research and advocacy for good governance. It will identify areas of further research and discuss advocacy strategies.

4.2 Knowledge networking

This Section will pinpoint the importance of acquiring and transferring good practices and policies and discuss strategies for setting up knowledge management networks for promoting good governance in Asia and the Pacific.

4.3 Training, advisory services and other technical assistance

This Section will outline the training and technical assistance needs among public and civil society sectors in Asia and the Pacific and how international and regional organizations and agencies, within and outside the United Nations System can meet these needs.

* Boxes containing brief case studies of good and bad practices/policies will illustrate each section of this chapter. Lessons at the end of each box would highlight points being made in the main text.

* Gender mainstreaming will be discussed through out the TBP as a cross cutting issue.

* Boxes containing brief case studies of good and bad practices/policies will illustrate each section of this chapter. Lessons at the end of each box would highlight points being made in the main text.

* Gender mainstreaming will be discussed through out the TBP as a cross cutting issue.

V. Conclusions

5.1 Policy recommendations

This Section will discuss key messages and conclusions of the technical background paper and will compile key policy recommendations.