

Participatory Governance: Laying the Foundation for a Transformative and Accountable Post-2015 Agenda

ORGANIZED BY THE TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY & PARTICIPATION (TAP) NETWORK AND CIVICUS

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INTRODUCTION

On Thursday, 21 May, the Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network and CIVICUS co-hosted a side-event entitled “**Participatory Governance: Laying the Foundation for a Transformative and Accountable Post-2015 Agenda**” with participants and experts present from Member States, civil society and the UN system.

This side-event took a deeper dive into the role of participatory governance as a critical enabler to successful implementation of the post-2015 agenda. The event focused on participatory governance initiatives at a variety of levels and highlighted how they are used to hold decision makers accountable, and for effective policy design and implementation. The event also highlighted the critical role that citizens and civil society can play in filling data gaps, guiding policy implementation and supporting the monitoring of sustainable development progress. It explored how an enabling environment for effective participatory governance can be established at the national, regional and global levels in the context of the SDGs.

Panel of Speakers:

- Ms. Oana Rebedea, Second Secretary, [Permanent Mission of Romania to the UN](#)
- Mr. Chris Murgatroyd, Policy Advisor, [United Nations Development Programme](#)
- Ms. Kathleen Hunt, [CARE International](#)
- Ms. Farah Mesmar, [Major Group for Children and Youth](#)
- Ms. Betty Wamala Mugabi, [East Africa Region for World Vision](#)
- Mr. Jeffery Huffines, UN Representative, [CIVICUS](#)

Moderator: Ms. Neva Frecheville, Lead Analyst on Post-2015, [CAFOD](#)

SUMMARY

Ms. Oana Rebedea, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of Romania to the UN highlighted that her government has been a strong advocate for raising the voice and participation of non-state actors in the formulation and implementation of a transformative, inclusive and people-centered agenda. She emphasized that the national level follow-up framework will require enhanced capacities of Member States in many arenas, particularly in the mechanisms to track, monitor, review and improve policy strategies and planning for sustainable development. She stressed that accountability should be viewed through a multi-lensed perspective:

- It means **responsibility**, which requires all actors to have clearly defined duties, objectives and performance standards.
- It also means **answerability**, the requirement to inform, explain and justify, and which must be accompanied by **transparency**.

Ms. Rebedea stated that at the national level, the involvement of non-state actors in development planning and implementation can potentially improve the monitoring and evaluation of an initiative’s progress for two primary reasons:

- Non-state actors can increase people’s participation and ownership of the development process, thereby increasing transparency and accountability in the system.
- Non-state actors can review policy planning and implementation by directly engaging citizens at different stages of the policy cycle.

In her closing remarks, she emphasized that the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) will play a central role in the follow-up and review of the implementation of the Post–2015 Development Agenda. It can succeed in meeting its responsibilities only by providing the right incentives and a framework for everyone to participate, from governments and the UN system to civil society, business and other stakeholders. The HLPF should bring clarity and coherence to this great endeavor.

Ms. Kathleen Hunt, CARE International underlined that collaboration between communities; local people and governments can help with the collection of usable data. She highlighted her organization’s success in using Community Score Cards (CSC) in places such as Malawi, Tanzania, and others. The CSC is a citizen-driven accountability measure for the assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery. It can be used to gather feedback from service users and improve their communication with communities.

Ms. Hunt stressed that the key to effective use of the CSC is for all stakeholders come together for a face-to-face meeting and discuss the overall score they have come up with. During this process every effort must be made to be collaborative rather than confrontational.

Ms. Hunt stressed that when a place that has a weak, less centralized state, almost everything relies on the interaction between citizens and their service providers. In her closing remarks, she emphasized that we should be fighting very hard for the recognition of the value of qualitative data so we can know who it is in society that is being left behind.

Ms. Farah Mesmar, ActionAid and Major Group for Children and Youth highlighted ActionAid’s Democracy Watchdog program on how youth can monitor and report on the delivery of services and development. She stressed that the Arab region has recently seen the space for civil society shrink. This has driven ActionAid and others forward to work in the region around utilizing public places as platforms for debate and asking people for their inputs, using white papers and other documents. They are also working to help youth-led movements become more empowered and engaged, such as through its program to engage youth at the municipality level, a social auditing process, and helping youth to use surveys to bring attention to unsolved problems, especially when those issues are covered in public budgets.

Ms. Betty Wamala Mugabi, East Africa Region for World Vision stated that “Participatory Governance” lays the foundation for citizens’ trust of their governments, deepens democracy, strengthens social capital, produces sustainable results, ensures efficiency and sustained economic growth. In order to achieve the SDGs, citizens should be at the center of their implementation, monitoring and follow up. If citizens are not directly included, it is unlikely that we will succeed in translating the global promise of the goals into tangible change at the local level.

Ms. Mugabi recommended seven steps that can be used to link grassroots (community) evidence to global accountability.

1. Start Local: Ensure the people most affected are enabled to engage
2. Work Together: Support collaboration to share and aggregate the right information

3. **Make Space:** Create platforms for citizen-generated information to be heard (conditions that enable citizen participation, including legal frameworks, transparency, access to information and strengthening statistical capacity to provide higher quality data)
4. **Work with Champions:** Strengthen crucial influencers
5. **Open Up:** Nurture a transparent environment
6. **Sharpen the ‘Teeth’:** Strengthen official remedies for accountability
7. **Report Together:** Incorporate people’s voices in all reporting

Mr. Jeffery Huffines, UN Representative, CIVICUS highlighted that his organization is working to help create a people-centred, inclusive, transparent and participatory post-2015 framework. This includes the “DataShift”, a multi-stakeholder, bottom-up initiative that builds the capacity and confidence of civil society organizations to produce and use citizen-generated data to monitor development progress, demand accountability and campaign for transformative change. Citizen-generated data is produced in a number of ways, including surveys, SMS, phone calls, emails, reports, stories, sensors and social media. It is typically collected through a specific initiative that aims to have a positive social impact.

Mr. Huffines stated that in the context of the post-2015 agenda, citizen-generated data can play a critical role in monitoring progress on the SDGs. It can be a direct mechanism for active participation of people in the SDGs, going beyond a government-led approach to monitoring and review to one which empowers all citizens to hold decision makers to account for the commitments they make and the actions they take, as well as take actions to spur progress on sustainable development themselves.

To support these efforts, the DataShift is working with civil society organisations in four countries: Argentina, Kenya, Nepal and Tanzania to:

- Increase the coverage of citizen-generated data initiatives across the world, particularly in the Global South, so that greater amounts of citizen-generated data are available
- Enhance the credibility of citizen-generated data, so that it is widely considered legitimate and reliable
- Enhance the comparability of citizen-generated data, so that it can be aggregated and compared within and across countries
- Deploy citizen-generated data in civil society campaigning, so that the views of citizens inform the demands that civil society makes on decision makers

Mr. Chris Murgatroyd, Policy Advisor, United Nations Development Programme emphasized that “trust” is the critical word for collaboration and creating common ground between different development actors. He stressed that it is important to broker relationships between all stakeholders: government, civil society and the private sector. He highlighted that people in communities think mainly about potential solutions to their problems - where do I go, who do I speak to, and what do I say – and that this is more along the lines of how people approach the issues of governance at the local level.

Mr. Murgatroyd stressed that when talking about different sources of data, it comes down to “trust”. How do we get governments to trust data coming from outside the system? How can we encourage national statisticians, who lack resources, to acknowledge that there is data available to fill some of the gaps that exist? In his closing remarks, he underlined that UNDP has a particular role to play here through its country teams.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

[TAP Network Review & Accountability Position Paper](#): This paper argues that participation and transparency are key principles for robust, effective, and inclusive accountability mechanisms for the Post-2015 framework at all levels – from the local through to the global. If we have meaningful participation and transparency in place, then the Post-2015 ‘follow-up and review’ mechanisms should be able to deliver real accountability for the SDGs.

[Harnessing Citizen-Generated Data for a Transformative Post-2015 Agenda](#): This briefing note produced to inform the May Intergovernmental Negotiations on Post-2015 provides an introduction to the term ‘citizen-generated data’, outlines a number of roles citizen-generated data can play in monitoring and driving progress on the SDGs, and explains what needs to be done to fully harness the power of citizen-generated data.

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