



**Building governance into a post-2015 framework:  
Exploring transparency and accountability as an  
entry point**

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## Executive summary

The debate on the post-2015 agenda is becoming more focused on specifics, with the first substantive meeting of the [High Level Panel<sup>1</sup>](#) taking place this week. Early political negotiations between member states are likely to go hand in hand with reflections on policy and practice.

Strong arguments are being made by some actors that there is a need to increase the focus on governance in a post-2015 agreement. This could happen through a dedicated stand-alone goal, quantifiable governance indicators or unequivocal language and references to governance principles, such as human rights, political freedoms or democracy.

While this responds both to people's aspirations for more participation and more political freedoms, and to evidence about the importance of institutions for development outcomes, it remains controversial. It is unlikely that a stand-alone governance goal could be agreed in the current climate.

Another less political but more practical way to approach this would be to examine how domestic politics and local institutions can improve the lives of those living in poverty. This would involve a focus on the outcomes of politics and governance, rather than on the principles.

From this perspective, current thinking on transparency and accountability is an interesting starting point. The dual promise embedded in transparency and accountability – of more enlightened and engaged citizens demanding greater accountability around issues they care about, and the impact this can have on development – has generated tremendous optimism about its transformational potential. This in turn has led to a large number of initiatives, both globally and at country level. It is a movement that has real momentum, which could be built upon for a post-2015 agreement. There remain two central questions: Under what conditions do these initiatives have something to offer in improving service delivery and other development outcomes? How can this be harnessed and built upon in a post-2015 agreement?

The evidence so far offers two key insights:

Firstly, improving accountability does not always involve adversarial relationships. Overcoming accountability problems often requires collaboration between different stakeholders. Social accountability initiatives for service delivery, for example, often focus on empowering citizens to make demands of others or hold to account those who are meant to be responsible for delivering services. But in many settings, what is really needed – and crucially what works – is for different stakeholders to work effectively together. The role of political parties and governments as enablers is critical here, as well as the role of service providers and regulators. Increasingly, findings from [cutting edge research<sup>2</sup>](#) and feedback from practitioners support the view that, in the real world, governance challenges are not necessarily about one set of people getting another set to behave better, but rather about multiple groups finding ways to act collectively in their own best interests.

Secondly, whether information is acted upon will depend on the wider enabling environment. The success of initiatives like the Rapid SMS pilot in Rwanda, and other similar initiatives, is based on harnessing widespread access to mobile phone technology, in Rwanda's case in the health sector. But in addition, the existence of a coherent policy framework, incentives to monitor performance of health workers, and the existence of effective delivery systems are key to success, in allowing the information generated by the new technologies to be acted upon by the relevant institutions. Understanding when these enabling factors are in place is

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sga1364.doc.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.institutions-africa.org/filestream/20121024-appp-synthesis-report-development-as-a-collective-action-problem>

therefore crucial for determining the impact of information flows and the use of ICTs, and for incorporating transparency initiatives into broader plans for improving service delivery.

### **What are the implications of current initiatives for future development goals?**

The call for greater focus on governance in a post-2015 agreement is important in responding to the aspirations of people living in poverty, and in ensuring the achievement of other goals. But the political and practical difficulties should not be underestimated. There may be scope and potential to draw from some new initiatives on transparency and accountability to inform a future post-2015 agreement. In particular, this will require:

- Casting the net wider than what is currently offered, going further than calls for [Open Government](#)<sup>3</sup>, more and better data and greater use of ICTs, to learn from the evidence about how and where to apply particular approaches to maximise their impacts on specific outcomes.
- Including transparency and accountability principles and practice within the parameters or ground rules for performance monitoring of whatever goals and targets are agreed upon. This would help give concrete meaning to the demand for greater citizen voice in processes to set and monitor any post-2015 agreement. To maximise both effectiveness and political legitimacy, new processes should seek to build on existing domestic or regional mechanisms, especially those emerging from the South. These may include forms of local budget monitoring, citizens' scorecards, human rights reporting, regional accountability initiatives like the [African Peer Review Mechanism](#)<sup>4</sup>, and other transnational processes, including those being developed by the [g7+](#).<sup>5</sup>
- Using performance monitoring to address key gaps that MDG reviews have pointed to, such as the tendency to focus on access over quality in relation to different services, or to downplay the effects of inequality on different objectives.

This more realistic approach to transparency and accountability would represent an important step forward and a corrective to current debates that tend to exaggerate the potential of data, information and ICTs as a magic bullet to improve accountability relationships, and, ultimately, development outcomes. It would embed a governance focus in a post-2015 agreement that might be able to offer real benefits to people, without creating unrealistic expectations or being held hostage to the global politics of governance and sovereignty issues.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://aprm-au.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.g7plus.org/>

## Introduction

As the deadline to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approaches, debates on what to prioritise in a future development framework have intensified. Among other things, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed a High-Level Panel of eminent persons to provide advice and recommendations, and the UN has begun wide country, regional and thematic consultations with a variety of stakeholders to gather views of what future development priorities should be. There are also plans to launch a web-based platform to solicit input from the general public.<sup>6</sup>

Attention has increasingly focused on some of the gaps in the current MDG framework, which range from inequality (Melamed, 2012) and state capacity (Fritz and Rocha Menocal, 2007) to employment generation and conflict and security (Denney, 2012).<sup>7</sup>

There is much discussion about bringing politics back on the agenda, based on the view that the MDGs are too technical and narrow, and fail to capture what really drives development. Looking back, a big part of the MDG success story seems to be the role played by domestic politics and the strength of domestic institutions (arguably much more so than financial resources, including aid).

But there are no one-size-fits-all models. The question of how to translate the evidence on the importance of politics in development into any new framework is crucial, and as yet unresolved. Discussions within the various post-2015 processes and consultations remain quite open, and governments and other actors have a range of very different views on the issue of whether and how governance should be incorporated in a future development framework.

## Lessons from the MDGs: why governance matters

The MDGs have been an influential framework for global development cooperation, shaping the international discourse and driving the allocation of resources towards key global development priorities. They have received unprecedented political commitment and reflect a strong consensus for tackling poverty and other development problems (Melamed, 2012).

Over the past decade, the world has made significant strides in tackling different dimensions of poverty and reducing human suffering. Progress in areas like primary school enrolment for boys and girls and reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates offers a powerful validation of the MDG approach, focused on clear and concrete objectives with measurable targets and indicators on key social sectors (UNDESA, 2012). Nevertheless, progress has been uneven. It has become clear that many countries across the developing world (especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, but also in Asia and Latin America) will struggle to meet several if not all of the MDGs if current trends persist (ibid).

In seeking to understand why, domestic governance has emerged as a critical element that is missing from the MDG framework.<sup>8</sup> While governance concerns were debated in the formulation of the MDGs – and are mentioned in the preamble – they were not included in specific targets. This is in part because governance issues can be harder to quantify and measure (Williams et al., 2009). Perhaps more fundamentally, these are inherently political issues that can be very sensitive.

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<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/>

<sup>7</sup>It is against this backdrop, for example, that a growing group of fragile states known as the g7+ has argued that peaceful, effective, and legitimate states are essential preconditions for development.

<sup>8</sup> Some international governance dimensions were represented by MDG 8 on a global partnership for development, but these do not address domestic governance processes, which is the focus here.

As a growing body of research suggests, governance processes and institutional dynamics are essential in explaining differences in development progress between countries. Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson's (2012) sweeping historical analysis of *Why Nations Fail* finds that institutions and the quality of governance are the critical hinge separating prosperous states like South Korea from stagnating ones like its neighbour to the north. But there are no blueprints. A review of 24 countries which have made significant development progress points to the role played by political leadership and what the authors refer to as "smart" institutions (ODI, 2011) – with examples of success ranging from countries as different as China and Rwanda, and Brazil and Ghana.

More specific examples focused on MDG targets also highlight the central role of governance in shaping outcomes. In Nepal, for instance, significant progress has been made in improving maternal health care through the devolution of decision-making to local bodies – to ensure greater equity of services across the country – as well as through processes to strengthen oversight and accountability between different stakeholders, including the government, service providers, and local communities (CARE, 2011). Women's empowerment has also been a key factor to Nepal's maternal health gains, and recent research links maternal health improvements with a better gender balance in primary and secondary schools<sup>9</sup>, substantial gains in women's political participation<sup>10</sup>, and improved sexual and reproductive health due to increased contraceptives use among both men and women<sup>11</sup> (Engel and Glennie, forthcoming).

And while it is a more controversial case, Rwanda has also made considerable strides in maternal health, linked to forms of governance that allow for both top-down and bottom-up monitoring, which build on existing local mechanisms for user feedback and redress (Chambers and Booth, 2012). Conversely, governance gaps such as lack of policy coherence and accountability for performance have contributed to an under-provision of maternal health services in Malawi, Uganda and Niger (ibid). Similar findings have emerged from the education sector (Wilhelm and Fiestas, 2005).

It is also important to remember that improved governance is a fundamental aspiration of many people, including those living in poverty. The World Bank's *Moving out of Poverty* study found that empowerment, including participation in decision-making processes, especially at the local level, was a key element of successful strategies for escaping poverty. The recent experience of the 'Arab Spring' is a stark reminder of the extent to which political participation and freedoms are an objective in their own right. This paper does not consider the extent to which lack of political power is a defining characteristic, as well as a cause, of poverty, but it remains an important element in this debate.

## Lessons from the MDGs: why governance is challenging

The lack of concrete governance targets in the MDG framework is not accidental. This is a very politically charged arena. A measurable goal on governance was negotiated out of the MDGs because of reservations about including areas which are considered to be the domain of national governments and therefore not to be addressed at a global level (UNDP, 2012).

This is not to suggest that there aren't voices in different countries committed to strengthening governance processes, including in terms of transparency and accountability (as evidenced by the range of examples provided in this paper). Yet, as is well known, there are deep sensitivities involved when certain countries (mostly in the developed world) are perceived in international fora as telling other countries (mostly in the developing world) what they should

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<sup>9</sup> Gender equity in education has improved substantially in Nepal: while the ratio of girls to boys in primary/secondary education was 56%/43% in 1990; it rose to 100%/93% in 2010. In 1990, young women were half as likely as men to be literate; in 2010 the ratio is 83:100.

<sup>10</sup> Women in Nepal now hold 33% of seats in parliament (a rise from only 3.4% in 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Male use of condoms increased from 13% to 24% between 2001 and 2006, and 48% of women now use contraception, up from 37% in 2000, 24% in 1990 and 7% in 1980.

be doing, especially with respect to their internal politics. As a result, concerns about sovereignty are often invoked in discussions and negotiations at this level.

Political sensitivities remain as relevant now as they were in 2000, and this has important implications for the prospects of incorporating governance in a post-2015 framework. How any governance objectives are framed, and where they are perceived to come from, is likely to play a key role in determining the outcome of the process. A crucial challenge that needs to be addressed is that the policy push for building governance into a future development framework is sometimes perceived across the developing world as driven by OECD DAC donors and other influential Northern actors. It is also associated with the “good governance” agenda that came to define much international development thinking and practice in the 1990s. This agenda can be rather normative and prescriptive, based on idealised models of governance that do not adequately reflect contextual realities, while it can also impose standards of governance that are too high or inappropriate for countries in the developing world - particularly those that are fragile or conflict-afflicted (See Rocha Menocal, 2011; Booth, 2011; Unsworth, 2010; and Pritchett and Woolcock, 2004, among others).

Thus, the scope to balance historically Northern-led agendas with the political perspectives of other country groupings, such as the G77 or emerging powers, and the aspirations of individuals and groups within many countries, will be a strong determinant of whether any proposals to address governance factors will be seen as legitimate among the range of stakeholders.

The g7+ could play a very interesting – and possibly even pivotal – role in this respect. The g7+ has gained considerable recognition because it is the first forum that brings together the world’s most fragile and conflict-afflicted states around a common purpose, whilst giving them a voice to put forward an agenda for change in international development practice. The g7+ countries have declared their intention to work together and develop national strategies to address crucial governance challenges on the basis of the different Peace- and State-building Goals (PSGs) they have articulated (Rocha Menocal, forthcoming).<sup>12</sup> These goals include a commitment to work towards inclusive politics, access to justice, and accountable service delivery – all key parts of the broader governance agenda.

If they were to embrace the need to incorporate governance issues in a future development consensus, it could provide this agenda with increased legitimacy. However, while Liberia is an active member of the g7+ and Liberia’s President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, co-chairs the High-Level Panel on the post-2015 agenda, very little seems to be known to date about where the different g7+ countries and the group as a whole stand on the issue of governance in a post-MDGs framework.

*Box 1: Perspectives from the African Regional Consultation on Governance and the Post-2015 Development Agenda*

Government and civil society representatives at the African Regional Dialogue on Governance, held in Johannesburg on 11-12 October 2012, agreed that some of the main problems a future development agenda should tackle include youth unemployment and growing inequalities. Participants discussed how governance could help to address these and other development challenges, for instance by ensuring that development gains are more evenly distributed and reach the poorest. This led to an exchange of ideas on a role for accountability, social and economic rights, greater civil society engagement, and the strengthening of institutions at the global, national and sub-national levels. Some participants also highlighted the need for greater political space. In addition, they emphasised the importance of defining African solutions to governance challenges, which would mean building on existing agreements such as the African Peer Review Mechanism for improved governance.

<sup>12</sup> These goals include: Legitimate Politics; Security; Justice; Economic Foundations; and Revenues and Services. The g7+ countries are currently engaged in a process to develop locally grounded indicators to monitor progress on the PSGs.

## Transparency and accountability as an entry point for governance?

There are some voices arguing that this time around there is a need to focus efforts to ensure that governance issues are centre stage in the formulation of a global agenda on development (UNDP, 2012). This could be done through a dedicated stand-alone goal, clearly measurable governance indicators, or, at the very least, unequivocal language and references to governance principles such as human rights, political freedoms or democracy.

Another way to look at the governance issue is to start with how domestic politics and institutions can improve the lives of poor people, rather than attempting to find agreement on blanket prescriptions of the forms that institutions or political systems should take. In other words, the focus here is on the outcomes, not just on the principles. Some will find this a problematic proposition, as it implies an instrumental approach to governance rather than considering it as a development objective in its own rights. An alternative view would be that putting governance to the test of what it can deliver for people can only help to make an even stronger case in the post-2015 debate.

From this perspective, current thinking on transparency and accountability (T&A) is an interesting entry point for this debate. The dual promise embedded in T&A – of more enlightened and engaged citizens demanding greater accountability around issues they care about, and the impact this can have on development – has generated tremendous optimism about its transformational potential, not least among civil society and other organisations within developing countries. There is a great deal of political traction around a number of global initiatives to improve T&A in specific areas (Box 2).

*Box 2: Examples of some prominent Transparency and Accountability Initiatives at the national and global levels*

- The **Transparency and Accountability (T/A) Initiative** is a donor (both governmental and non-governmental) collaborative working to expand the impact and scale of T&A interventions across different sectors, with the ultimate aim to strengthen democracy and development through empowering citizens to hold their governing institutions to account. Its focus is on the production of research, policy guidelines, and capacity building (TAI, 2012).
- The **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)** is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative (including donors, partner countries and CSOs) that is intended to help implement the transparency commitments set at the various High Level Forums on aid effectiveness. It has developed a common, open, international standard for publishing data on aid spending, and it is the most comprehensive and visible initiative for transparency in the aid sector (Martini, et al, 2012).
- Established in 1997, the **International Budget Partnership (IBP)** seeks to improve governance and reduce poverty by strengthening civil society participation in and capacity to engage with government budget processes and related evidence-based advocacy. The IBP's Open Budget Initiative measures budget transparency in close to 100 countries through its biennial survey of government budget transparency, the Open Budget Index (IBP, 2012).
- The **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)** is a multi-stakeholder initiative comprised of governments, companies, civil society groups, investors and international organizations to support international standards promoting natural resource (oil, gas and mining) revenue transparency in resource-rich countries. It is a voluntary initiative that is implemented by countries whose governments sign-up to do so. Before being accepted as an EITI 'candidate country', governments must meet five sign-up criteria. Implementing the EITI involves the verification and full publication of company payments and government revenues from these natural resources (Revenue Watch, 2012).

At a national level, the assumed link between greater transparency and improved outcomes is twofold. Greater transparency can, the argument goes, improve service provision by increasing the accountability of service providers to service users. Improved transparency can also



improve the functioning of governments as a whole, by increasing citizen voice and enhancing peoples' ability to hold their government to account – which should, in turn, lead to more effective decision-making processes (McGee and Gaventa, 2011). As a result, in recent years there has been a proliferation of bottom-up or “demand-side” mechanisms, many initiated by organisations within developing countries, to hold decision-makers to account, alongside more traditional forms of accountability such as elections.

Whatever the specific approach taken, the argument informing many of these initiatives is that a well-informed and aware citizenry is better able to hold decision-makers to account, be they service providers, government officials, or elected representatives. Greater transparency — leading to more complete and symmetric information — provides a framework for the population to become informed about their rights, service standards, and performance in service delivery. Citizens are thus empowered to hold decision-makers responsible and answerable for their actions, which in turn should help to tackle corruption, promote more effective service delivery, and ensure resources are being used efficiently. Ultimately, such improvements in accountability and governance dynamics should also contribute to more effective poverty alleviation.

This thinking on T&A is also central to UK Prime Minister David Cameron's 'golden thread' policy narrative. A cornerstone of this narrative, which he brings to his role as co-chair of the post-2015 UN High Level Panel, is that more open and transparent societies (alongside more open economies) will lead to greater development (DFID, 2012). As he has put it, *'you only get real long-term development ... if there is also a golden thread of stable government, lack of corruption, human rights, the rule of law, transparent information'* (HM Government, 2012). Other world leaders have echoed similar ideas, including US President Barack Obama, whose administration has given strong support to the Open Government Partnership (see Box 3) (Barder, 2012).

*Box 3: Raising the global profile of transparency and accountability - the Open Government Partnership*

The OGP has already achieved early and impressive results from a wide range of countries through its multilateral peer-to-peer approach. The political traction this has generated has been crucial to high level and fast results. For many countries, these have included landmark new legislation in support of transparency and accountability, or other aspects of 'open government'. Since its launch only a year ago, 57 countries have signed up to the OGP, of which 45 countries have delivered national commitments to improve transparency and accountability. One of the OGPs early successes has been in its power to rally high level support for a range of other linked international TAIs focused on specific areas like budget transparency, aid and resource extraction. For example, through their respective 'National Actions Plans' (required of OGP joining countries), Indonesia has committed to publish sectoral expenditure data and information on revenues earned from extractive industries; the Philippines is bringing in measures for participatory budgeting and social audits; South Africa is progressing in budget transparency by implementing the Open Budget Initiative (OBI); the UK has committed to publish data on the expenditure of aid funds by all government departments in line with International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standards; and Norway became the first country to implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) (ONE, 2012).

However, as appealing as these assumptions about the centrality of T&A to both improved governance and development outcomes are from a normative perspective, it is essential to emphasise that whether and how TAIs work in practice is a different matter – and their impact in any given circumstance will depend on broader contextual factors.

Certainly, there are a number of positive examples of greater transparency leading to improved accountability and improved outcomes. For example, in a survey of 100 case studies assessing the effects of TAIs focused on citizen engagement and participation, Gaventa and Barrett (2010) find significant positive impacts in 75 per cent of the cases. Within this they find that over 70 per cent of the initiatives produced positive outcomes in terms of the impact of

citizen engagement activities on the responsiveness and accountability of states. Citizen mobilisation and engagement were found to have led to national level policy changes across several countries (Brazil, Mexico, Chile, South Africa and the Philippines), and in others these TAIs made concrete contributions to improved development outcomes and service delivery in the areas of health and education, food and livelihoods, and the provision of water and housing.

Moreover, there is also potential for international agreements and networks, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (in the natural resources management sector), the International Aid Transparency Initiative (in the aid sector), and the cross-sector Open Government Partnership to galvanise change (see Boxes 2 and 3). These initiatives are all very new, so it is not possible to assess their actual impact to date. However, there are early indications of the power of some global TAIs in garnering considerable support and helping to exert peer pressure on participating governments to become more forthcoming in the provision of information. Such initiatives have also proven important in terms of providing tools and standards for international cooperation on some key areas of T&A.

Yet, as other studies have suggested, while there has often been impressive progress on making more information available (especially in the case of budget transparency), how that information can be used effectively to bring about change remains a lot less clear (Devarajan et al., 2011). Overall, after a decade of research on TAIs, the evidence base is still insufficient and it is at best mixed. There is no consensus on whether these interventions generally achieve their intended impacts, and even less on the actual extent of their impacts.

Thus, from a development perspective, the real challenge is to ask under which conditions TAIs can make a difference and why. There is no linear or monocausal relationship between transparency and accountability, and ultimately between these and improved outcomes. Much of this recent work points to the role of the wider context, and suggests that TAIs are likely to work when certain other enabling factors are present. Institutional and governance issues related to state capacity; relations between different actors and organisations in state and society; the linkages between formal and informal institutions (including accountability and checks and balances mechanisms); the ways communities are organised; the strength of civil society groupings; the capacity of coalitions to advocate for reform; and the legal and media environments; are all crucial in enabling or undermining the effectiveness of TAIs, and ultimately the quality of service provision (Joshi, 2010).

One important insight from recent research is that wider accountability relationships need not always be adversarial and overcoming accountability problems often requires collaboration between different stakeholders. While social accountability initiatives for service delivery, for example, often focus on empowering citizens to make demands of others or hold to account those who are meant to be responsible for delivering services, in many settings, what is really needed – and crucially what works – is for different stakeholders to work together.

In Malawi, a local scorecards programme was designed to empower citizens to make demands and improve accountability of government, but in reality it proved most effective where it helped broker cooperation and collaboration between different interest groups, including service users, providers and other local stakeholders (Wild and Harris, 2012).

In the real world governance challenges are not necessarily about one set of people getting another set to behave better, but rather about multiple groups finding ways to act collectively in their own best interests. For this to work effectively, political drivers and changes from the top are often key. In the well-known case of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, improved outcomes have not been only (or even principally) the result of greater information on government spending, but rather reflect a long history of civic engagement, as well as a very strong and well organised political party – the PT – with political leadership committed to its success (McGee and Gaventa, 2011).

Much has also been made of another example, this time in Uganda, where purportedly corruption was dramatically reduced simply by making the amount of monthly grants going to different schools public (Reinikka and Svensson, 2007). However, more in-depth research has revealed that, while information did play an important role, the reduction on corruption cannot be understood without taking into account the context of on-going policies and reforms in the education and fiscal systems in the country in the 1990s – and the broader governance processes and institutional framework (e.g. considerable state capacity, coherent leadership from the centre, etc.) that enabled such reforms in the first place (Hubbard, 2007).

Beyond this, there is much excitement around the potential for Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) to support greater T&A by strengthening information flows between actors, and thereby ensuring more responsive service provision (e.g. see Box 4). Some of these 'tech-enabled' initiatives have already delivered promising results.

*Box 4: 'Tech-enabled' East African Transparency and Accountability Initiatives*

- **Twaweza**, which means 'we can make it happen' in Swahili, is a newly established ten-year initiative for citizen-led public accountability in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It focuses on supporting outcomes in service delivery by helping citizens hold their governments to account. The organisation aims to identify partners that have large membership on a subscription basis and with whom incentive compatibility can be explored, so that their structures or capacities can be used to enable citizen agency directly. One pilot initiative which partners with a mobile phone company in Uganda already has millions of subscribers. The project is piloting an SMS-based application that generates frequent and detailed overviews of teacher and pupil attendance in 100 primary schools, selected in two districts. The information is intended to make the dynamics around teacher absenteeism more transparent, to stimulate citizen action and engagement, and to hold district and subdistrict government officials accountable for their actions (Source: Twaweza)
- The **Childcount+** programme in Kenya, funded by the Millennium Villages project, seeks to reduce treatment gaps in health by raising the number of mothers and children registering for antenatal care and immunisation. Community health workers use text messages to register patients and send health data to a 'web dashboard', allowing a health team to monitor and respond to treatment gaps. Its main strength is the speed of information introduced by the text messaging system, which allows fast tracking and attention to children in need of nutritional or medical intervention. This project already reaches 500 000 people in Kenya and is due to be replicated in Senegal (Lemaire, 2011).
- A clinical trial focused on the impact of SMS messaging on HIV-infected adults starting antiretroviral therapy (ART) in three clinics in Kenya, **WelTel Kenya1** showed that patients who received SMS support had significantly higher adherence to ART and higher rates of viral suppression when compared with patients in the control group. The trial found that scale up of such a mobile phone support system in Kenya could suppress viral loads in 26,000 extra people at the cost of less than USD 8 per person per year (Lemaire, 2011).
- In a pilot public-private project in Tanzania, **SMS for Life**, progress has been made in malaria prevention through the provision of insecticide-treated bed-nets and ACTs (artemisinin-based combination therapies). In order to prevent the spread of malaria in rural areas it is crucial to ensure that ACTs are available in local health facilities. SMS for Life enabled rural health workers to send weekly reports by text message to district supply teams on ACT stock levels. This resulted in more efficient stock management and supply to patients. At the start of the pilot 26 per cent of health facilities in the three participating districts had no ACTs in stock, and by the end of the pilot three years later 99 per cent had at least one ACT in stock. The number of people with access to ACTs in three districts also increased from 264,000 to 888,000. Due to its success, the project was scaled up to national level across Tanzania in 2011, alongside new pilots in Kenya and Ghana (Pfeifer, 2012).

However, once again, in order to realise the potential of new technologies to support development, it is essential to recognise the role of context. Crucially, whether the information collected is acted upon will depend on the wider enabling environment. The availability of interventions and the systems to deliver them in response to the new information provided through mobile phones was crucial to the success of the examples in Box 4 above. Similarly, in

Rwanda, the Rapid SMS pilot enables health workers to register pregnant women via free SMS text messages, sends regular updates to a central server in Kigali, and monitors women during pregnancy (UNFPA, undated). Part of the success of this programme lies in harnessing widespread access to mobile phone technology. But crucially, as noted above, broader analysis of maternal health in Rwanda points to the existence of a coherent policy framework and incentives to monitor the performance of health workers, so these factors are likely to have played an essential role (Chambers and Booth, 2012).

## Considerations for potential goals and targets

There are two possible ways in which governance might be integrated into a new post-2015 consensus. The first would be to have governance specific goals, or the second, to integrate governance as a cross-cutting factor that is essential to achieve (other) development goals.

**The first option**, of a stand-alone goal on governance, is the most ambitious but also the most politically challenging. A new goal could be based around political rights and freedoms – such as freedom of speech, the right to free assembly, or elections – or on the practices and competence of institutions, involving goals on issues like domestic resource mobilisation, anti-corruption laws and practices, and more open and meritocratic recruitment practices. Transparency or access to information could potentially provide a more quantifiable and measurable goal for governance, which might contribute to the appeal of a target framed along these lines. Yet, the politics around any of these governance issues are likely to be formidably difficult. There may be value in investing some political capital to ensure that governance issues are on the table, but governments and organisations committed to this agenda may find that it does not get much more traction in this form.

**The second option**, focusing on where governance can deliver on other outcomes for people, might be a more productive way to move this agenda forward. This would mean addressing aspects of governance (and T&A in particular) as a cross-cutting objective. As this paper has shown, there may be scope and potential to draw from some new initiatives on transparency and accountability to inform a future post-2015 agreement. In particular, this will require:

- Casting the net wider than what is currently offered, going further than calls for Open Government<sup>13</sup>, more and better data and greater use of ICTs, to learn from the evidence about how and where to apply particular approaches to maximise their impacts on specific outcomes.
- Including transparency and accountability principles and practice within the parameters or ground rules for performance monitoring of whatever goals and targets are agreed upon. This would help give concrete meaning to the demand for greater citizen voice in processes to set and monitor any post-2015 agreement. To maximise both effectiveness and political legitimacy, new processes should seek to build on existing domestic or regional mechanisms, especially those emerging from the South. These may include forms of local budget monitoring, citizens' scorecards, human rights reporting, regional accountability initiatives like the African Peer Review Mechanism<sup>14</sup>, and other transnational processes, including those being developed by the g7+.<sup>15</sup>
- Using performance monitoring to address key gaps that MDG reviews have pointed to, such as the tendency to focus on access over quality in relation to different services, or to downplay the effects of inequality on different objectives.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://aprm-au.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.g7plus.org/>

This more realistic approach to transparency and accountability would represent an important step forward and a corrective to current debates that tend to exaggerate the potential of data, information and ICTs as a magic bullet to improve accountability relationships, and, ultimately, development outcomes. It would embed a governance focus in a post-2015 agreement that might be able to offer real benefits to people, without creating unrealistic expectations or being held hostage to the global politics of governance and sovereignty issues.

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