A Users' Guide to

Measuring Local Governance

Communication package

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Why use this communication package?

To help those exploring the possibility of carrying out local governance assessments:

- by providing a common language and framework for discussing their assessment objectives and options
- to reflect on the main challenges, and elements of good local governance in their setting
- to clarify their objectives
- to judge their readiness to undertake an assessment
- to consider the issues around leadership of local governance assessment
- to consider how to ensure inclusiveness
- to select appropriate tools, and to adapt them to the local context
- to consider how to ensure the findings are used

What does it include?

- Presentation slides (PowerPoint) with discussion notes
- Background information on indicators
- Notes for facilitating small group exercises
- Group work- ready case studies
- Participant feedback form

Who is it for?

It is intended to assist UNDP Country Office members in convening structured discussions with country partners who are exploring the possibility of carrying out local governance assessments and who are seeking advice and guidance.

How should it be used?

The Communication Package suggests a particular format of information presentation followed by exercises where "participants" are encouraged to reflect on the relevance and applicability of the information presented to their own settings. However, a minimalist approach can also be used, involving a simple presentation of information (using all or some of the topics), followed by unstructured discussion. The presentation slides are set up as a menu of topics for ease of this purpose.

This collection of discussion notes includes additional background information and discussion points for certain presentation slides.

This Communication Package is based on the Users' Guide to Measuring Local Governance, and a workshop session by Paul van Hoof of Idasa that was commissioned by UNDP.

Session overview

1. Objectives and overview
2. Users' Guide to Measuring Local Governance
3. Democratic local governance
    - Exercise 1: What is good local governance in your context?
4. Measuring local governance
    - Exercise 2: Brainstorming indicators
5. Issues to consider for carrying out LG assessments
6. Practical application
    - Exercise 3: Selecting a local governance assessment tool
    - Exercise 4: Case study

Background on indicators

Indicators
An indicator is a measure of performance that is used to demonstrate change, and which details the extent to which results are being or have been achieved. Generally speaking, this is done in two ways:

1. By counting
   e.g. Number of local corruption scandals in the past year.

2. By giving a numerical value to a qualitative statement
   e.g. In practice, election observers are able to effectively monitor elections.
   [Assign a score: 100 75 50 25 0]

Input and output or outcome indicators
Complex assessments require balanced sets of indicators, which take account of *input-based* indicators (e.g. focusing on the legal and institutional framework), as well as *output/outcome-based* indicators, (e.g. data on the objective experiences and subjective opinions of those accessing the reporting mechanism).

Actionable and action-worthy indicators
An *actionable indicator* is one in which data allows disaggregation to pinpoint bottlenecks and inefficiencies within the public administration and within wider systems of accountability and indicate the need for corrective action. Data needs to be specific and localised, including locally-generated, and regularly collected to be actionable for policymaking and planning. These indicators tend to measure specific things under the control of policymakers, such as the statutory rules governing the business environment, measures of civil service recruitment and turnover practices, and specifics of budget procedures.

However actionable indicators are only useful if the intervention/ mechanism/ policy they are assessing is worthwhile. Otherwise they risk measuring things because they are easily measurable, leading to what Kauffmann and Kraay call "teaching to the test" and "reform illusion". Assessing performance of interventions only makes sense if these are first deemed appropriate for the particular local context. Hence the call for indicators that are actionable but also *action-worthy.*

Poverty and gender sensitive indicators
Four ways of making indicators sensitive to vulnerable groups:

1. Disaggregating by poverty/gender
   - The proportion of poor households using public services who experienced corruption directly in the last 12 months in comparison to non-poor households.
   - The proportion women elected local councillors.
   - Voter turnout by sex.
2. Specific to the poor/women
   - Percentage of reported corruption cases in public agencies serving low-income communities in comparison to those in higher income areas, e.g. education (schools), health (clinics, hospitals), the police.
   - Existence of anti-sex discrimination laws and equal opportunities policies in the local government and evidence of their enforcement and implementation.
3. Implicitly poverty/gender sensitive
   - The percentage of small retail business can afford to bring a legal suit.
   - Transparency of land allocation practices.
4. Chosen by the poor/women
   - Level of satisfaction with public services expressed by women in poor households in comparison to men.
   - Percentage of citizens who have access to a justice mechanism at a reasonable cost.

Facilitation notes

<u>Using small groups</u>

There are a number of advantages of working in small groups, whether or not participants have the same or different professions.

Small groups are ideal for problem-solving, experience sharing and learning from peers. They provide a safe environment where participants can practice new skills, test out new ideas, and give and receive feedback. In addition, some individuals may feel more comfortable speaking in small groups than in plenary, so using small groups also ensures that everybody talks!

Depending on the specific task, the ideal numbers for small groups will vary. In a group that is too large, not everyone will engage, while a group that is too small will bring together fewer perspectives and is likely to generate less creative exchange. Ideal numbers are anywhere from 4 to 8 people.

Getting groups to work together effectively may require some facilitation. This can be the decision by the group to assign a note-taker or time-keeper. It can also mean instituting rules (normally by the trainer), for example, that require each participant to contribute to the discussion, or that limit everyone's time to talk, as a means of managing reticent and dominant personalities.

There are many ways of dividing groups which may be suitable at different times. Here are a few possibilities:

Participant's preference

- *Letting participants choose* which group they want to join, for example when each group has a different assignment focus. In this case the trainer's job is to structure the choice of group by focus areas that are of interest to participants. If a group is oversubscribed, split it. If a group is undersubscribed, it probably isn't a popular topic!

Random seating

- For example, by *numbering* participants. Here the trainer would count out participants according to the number of desired groups, assigning each one a number/letter: "1-2-3-4" or "A-B-C-D". Make sure to specify where each group should convene.
- For fun, you can even organize participants on the basis of what *colour* they are wearing. Be creative!

Ordered seating

- Participants are seated by *table cards* listing the names in each group. Ideally these should provide a new mix of participants who have not yet worked together. This requires advance preparation.

Setting *criteria*, for example: groups should include participants from different/the same countries/institutions/municipalities, or that groups should be gender balanced.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a technique used in groups to generate a large number of ideas on a given problem or topic. Creativity can be stifled when the brainstorming process is cut short, and individuals can become inhibited in groups when their ideas are rejected or seen as being off topic.

Here are a few recommended tips for brainstorming effectively:

- start by clearly defining the problem or question
- focus on quantity, generating as many ideas as possible
- encourage people to develop their ideas
- welcome unusual ideas
- withhold judgment and criticism - asking for clarification is ok, but not passing judgement
- combine ideas to create new ones

Options for reporting back

The traditional reporting back format (within the UN anyway!) is the plenary presentation of small group work. However, this should not necessarily be the default method, as it can become repetitive and boring. In order to decide the most appropriate reporting back format, consider the following questions:

- Are the topics and findings of groups of interest to each other?
- Have small groups worked on the same or different topics?
- Will there be repetition between what groups have to report?
- What will participants gain from listening to the presentations of other groups?

Consider the following reporting back options:

Focusing feedback

Ask groups to focus on the most interesting aspects of their findings, by providing a reporting back structure. For instance, asking them to present the three most important points, and allow for questions after to fill in gaps.

Opt to have no plenary

The objective of exercises is for participants to leave with information they can apply when they return to work. Sometimes reporting back is completely redundant. In these cases, it is completely fine for the person facilitating the session to skip this part, and instead to deliver a short debrief. Note that it is important to wrap up activities, by focusing on a few key points that were raised by groups, though it is not always necessary to summarize comprehensively the activity.

Have groups brief each other

The advantage of this reporting back format is that it requires minimal facilitation, once it is set up, allowing participants the freedom to discuss and exchange information.

Begin by assigning a label to each table (e.g. Table A,B,C,D) before groups begin an exercise. Ask groups to write their answers on flip-chart, and to post their poster on a wall by their table when they have finished.

After the exercise, explain the reporting format. Members from each table should go sit at different tables, so that at each of the 4 tables, there should now be a person from table A,B,C,D.

These new table groups then rotate from table to table to review the flipchart notes. At each new table, the member from the original group who knows the flipchart can present it to his/her new group members.

<u>Continue learning through the GAP</u>

Participants can seek out more information on other country initiatives, tools for assessing local governance, a library of resources and speak with other practitioners through the forum on the Governance Assessments Portal (www.gaportal.org)

Using the case studies

The following four fictional case studies demonstrate key concepts and themes raised in earlier chapters of this Guide and cover such issues as:

- Facilitating commitment and involvement - the role of a local government official
- Moving from government to the concept of governance – the role of a civil society activist
- Balancing comparability with local relevance – the role of a representative from a local government association
- Ensuring uptake of assessment findings in local policy-making – the role of a local elected government official

Although the names are fictitious, examples have been drawn to approximate real-life scenarios based on actual country experiences.

Suggested use of the case studies:

Form small groups on the basis of interest – some cases may be popular, requiring several groups, while others may not be of interest. Each case is given to the individuals of the groups in instalments. Individuals read about a problem, then come to a question which they should discuss with their group members before moving on to the next instalment.

Reporting back is optional, though the person facilitating this session may wish to debrief drawing attention to themes that were of interest or that link the cases.

Case study 1
Facilitating commitment and involvement: The role of a local government official

Svetlana has recently been appointed as the head of the policy unit in her municipality. She has a university degree in social sciences and has been working for an international development agency for a couple years. However, Svetlana has never been a local government official and her insight into the everyday practices and the specific organizational culture in the municipal administration was limited.

The major strategic responsibilities of Svetlana were to steer the development agenda, coordinate most critical policies and mobilize external resources. In her unit, there were only three persons and none of them had considerable experience in development cooperation.

After spending a couple of months trying to find her way though the rigid, poorly organized, and highly inefficient municipal administration, Svetlana decided to initiate an assessment of local governance for her municipality. The main purpose of the assessment was to identify development needs, mobilize support from civil society organizations, and set a factual foundation for more strategic organizational change. She prepared a brief for the president of the municipality and managed to secure the participation of all key local officials at the initial meeting.

The meeting ended up quite differently from Svetlana’s original expectations. First, few officials understood the notion of governance. She spent most of the time trying to explain to them that local governance is not only about how much money central level transfers, the cost of particular local public services, division of post in the local assembly, etc. *but also includes* capacity development and empowerment of local communities, and facilitating the participation of citizens and groups in decision making.

Second, she faced great resistance from those that became concerned that conducting an assessment would produce a bad image of local officials. They argued that providing the local community a chance to express their concerns would publicly expose “dirty laundry” as well as weakness and failures of the local administration. Finally, Svetlana was strongly criticized for not being able to say “how much money this would bring us” and what other concrete benefits would come from conducting such an assessment.

How would you go about convincing colleagues of the value and the scope of the exercise?