

## ***Post-2015: Bypassing public governance is not an option anymore!***

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The Millennium declaration set an ambitious, unique and unprecedented framework for human development. So far, 3 out of the 8 MDGs set in the year 2000 seem to be already reached. However, the remaining objectives and specially the main one which is halving poverty seems to be out of reach by the target year 2015. This is not to be pessimistic, but a thorough analysis of the Millennium Development agenda may reveal that the UN development framework had underestimated critical success factors to reach the MDGs such as public governance. Governance as defined by the European Commission concerns ‘*the State’s ability to serve citizens and other actors, as well as the manner in which public functions are carried out, public resources are managed and public regulatory powers are exercised*’ (2003). Governance is not a goal in itself; it is a means to an end, a means that requires more attention for the future development agenda. In this paper, we focus on accountability and responsiveness as conditions for good governance and hence for better achievements in the future in terms of human development.

### ***Why G is that important for the post 2015 Agenda?***

Public Governance is an elusive concept; hard to measure and to model, and beyond all this has different perspectives. The World Bank for example views governance from an economic perspective; Freedom House focuses only on civil liberties and political rights; Transparency International focuses on corrupt issues, etc. The concept, it is argued, is necessary for all aspects of human development (Not to confuse with growth). For some other scholars, it is development that should lead to good Governance and not the opposite.

In 2000, when the UN’s country members set the millennium development agenda, there was an agreement that success in meeting the MDGs will depend, *inter alia*, on good governance within each country (UNGAR, 2000). In some ways, although good governance was considered as an essential component to reach the Millennium Development Goals (UNDESA, 2007), it was neither deeply approached, nor clearly announced as a conditionality to receive UN funds and assistance. Rather, it was timidly regarded as a facilitator factor for development.

In the absence of empirical investigations, we cannot confidently affirm that such negligence is behind delays and failure to reach number of the MDGs three years before the target date. However, there are reasons to believe that Governance deficit is positively correlated with poor achievement in terms of human development. National Consultations conducted so far in more than 60 countries by the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda confirm this hypothesis. Indeed, Governance was mentioned as one of the main and recurrent themes for the post-2015 development agenda. The global public awareness of Governance criticality and importance should then be endorsed by the UN system; Governance as a determinant for effective development policies and not as a simple catalyst. It follows that UN resources and assistances should benefit to those nations that express more willingness to adopt good governance mechanisms and ideas.

Public Governance is not a political fashionable slogan. Countries that are determined to improve their governance should make substantial steps in implementing standard of good public governance. Responsiveness and accountability are key principles to build a state of law where civil service is neutral and competent and people trust government. These mechanisms are meant to strengthen democracy and to improve economic performance (OECD, 2009). Indeed, Government interaction with people and civil society control leads to expose abuse of power and to a better regulatory quality, budgetary management, and public expenditure processes (OECD). As was empirically proven in a World Bank Institute's study, effective parliamentary oversight is related to a higher rate of GDP growth.

#### ***How Responsiveness and Accountability improves Governance?***

Scholars distinguish between three categories of accountability; the legal, professional and political accountability. Professional accountability basically consists in professionalizing public employment and strengthening ethics within the workplace. It is different from political accountability that essentially consists in submitting parliament to public scrutiny. In Tunisia, beyond the administrative institutions that had been created for this matter, a lot of non-governmental organizations are interested in inspecting parliamentary agendas and reporting on different issues ranging from tracking deputy attendance to following progress in revising the country's constitution.

Legal accountability requires the establishment of free, independent and competent institutions of justice. The juridical power should be supported by Audit and control authorities. Although they are supposed to be part of the executive branch, these authorities should exercise a control over public institutions such as public funds usage, and then disclose their reports to the public and its representatives. In Tunisia post revolution<sup>1</sup>, a Ministry in charge of Governance and corruption fight was created within the Presidency of the Government. Although, the ministry has no full authority over the control institutions, its strategic role in proving guidelines and coordinating corruption fighting efforts seems to be crucial. Indeed, a web portal to denounce corruption was created since April 2012, and a decree-law to access administrative documents was enacted in May 2011 to facilitate public access to administrative documents. Tunisia is also intending to officially take part in the Open Government Partnership Initiative.

Besides, Public governance can be harnessed by increasing responsiveness and promoting citizen engagement mechanisms. Indeed, governments should consider citizen's needs and interests when designing and implementing public policies. Engaging citizens can be made through public consultations that allow officials to get people feed backs before adopting decisions. Besides, citizens can initiate or cancel a political decision by signing petitions and exercising pressure on their elected representatives. Regulatory Impact Analysis is another tool that democratic government can use to study laws' feasibility and effects on citizens and businesses before they are enacted. These techniques to enhance responsiveness and accountability have particularly been developed thanks to information and communication technologies.

#### ***ICT as an enabler for Better Governance***

ICTs has been increasingly empowering people and extending the spectrum of possibilities to citizens to be in touch with their representatives and elected. Indeed, thanks to these technologies, disclosure of information, consultations, petitions, discussion and

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<sup>1</sup> In January 2011, Tunisia witnessed an intensive campaign of protests and civil resistance as a reaction to the spread of poverty, unemployment and lack of political freedoms. The events led to the ousting of the political regime in rule since 23 years and inspired similar social movements throughout the Arab world (the so-called Arab Spring). Democratic elections were organized for the first time in the country in October 2011.

interaction with government officials had become easier and more effective. Citizens, especially in remote areas, had become more able to get in touch with administrative institutions or members of parliament. Through access to information, civil society representatives have become more powerful and influential. They can have easier access to information and communicate better with people. Similarly, government is more informed about citizen's will and can make better policy choices. With this trend of development, it is then expected that ICTs and especially internet will emerge as a new crossroads between policy-makers and citizens. Therefore, responsiveness and accountability are expected to be more effective and countries better governed.

Overall, there is no doubt that good governance should appear as a component of the post-2015 development framework; not as a goal in itself but as a fundamental enabler. Countries that will succeed to reach the next stage's development goal are more likely to be among these that have better governance indicators. Hence, the UN system should put more emphasis on this factor by inciting government to be more responsive and accountable. In the future, UN agencies' assistance and support to countries should be more based on advance towards good governance.

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