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Date: 2013/04/03
Subject: Creating an Enabling Environment for the Post-2015 Development Agenda

Since its adoption, countries have made good progress in achieving the targets of MDGs. However, challenges remain.

Among many challenges that confront the post 2015 governance relating to Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), public accountability (broadly defined as a process in which power or office holders are required to take responsibility for the results of decisions they take and plans they implement either towards other higher authority or to the public) stands out as key.

Most initiatives in public accountability focus on capacity building of government institutions. While these are important absence of a more robust approach in public accountability capacity building that would include both government as well as non-government institutions including media also myriad other institutions that strengthen democracy and enhance citizen rights etc. is likely to produce only limited results.

A recent UNDESA study (Khan and Chowdhury, 2007) reveals that capacity building of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) without strengthening of democratic institutions made little or no difference in public accountability including corruption control. The same study also demonstrates that countries that are democratic and most importantly, allow full spectrum of political rights and civil liberties and also engage civil societies in service delivery enhance accountability, reduce corruption and deliver services better and more equitably than those who do not. In fact countries that focus on election-only democracy without due regard to civil liberty and political rights experience, what Farid Zakaria believes, "Rotating plundering governments". Democracy by itself will not produce accountability; institutions that empower citizens and provide them with unhindered opportunities of engagement in public governance enhance public accountability. For example, a close look at countries that have successfully enhanced public accountability reveals that capacity building for reform was embedded within the agenda of reform of malfunctioning governance.

Accountability for MDGs, a global manifesto for equity and social justice must therefore consider a reform and capacity building framework that is much wider than government and include citizens in the process so that its targets become properties of citizens and not just of government's and that implementation of these targets also become as much a concern of the government as of citizens and that institutions of monitoring and evaluation and audit tasked to track progress and assess results must include citizens so that the practice of accountability becomes a norm and a culture. Once citizens become more aware of their developmental claims (namely, MDGs) and are given opportunities to exercise their rights to monitor implementation these goals, governments commit themselves more seriously to these goals

and become more amenable to account, it is then that a culture of public accountability starts to emerge from within.

There are arguments that mere improvement of institutions will not guarantee improved accountability and better implementation of MDGs, additional resources are needed. This is true to some extent but not the whole truth. A UNDP survey in 1978 showed that there is not a single country in this world that does possess enough resources to feed, educate, provide basic health and education – problem is not resource, problem is how and where one allocates these resources and how are these spent. There is now enough evidence to suggest if countries succeed in controlling corruption, avoid wasteful expenditure and orient development strategies to pro-poor growth poverty falls rapidly and more consistently. For example, a recent study has shown that due to corruption Bangladesh lost two percentage point growth over a period of two decades – in poverty terms this means that due to corruption Bangladesh missed the opportunity to lift 30-40 million people out of poverty during this period.

In order to enhance accountability environment for post 2015 MDGs following specific measures are recommended:

- Mainstream MDG targets within the national medium development plans and get these targets ratified by the parliament – this will help making MDGs property of people and not just government's
- Ensure that public policies that promote/facilitate private sector and other non-government initiatives in economic and social development complement and not contradict MDGs
- Ensure that annual budget caters to MDGs
- Ensure participation of civil society and NGOs in the accountability processes (monitoring and evaluation, audit etc.) of the government
- Establish a MDGs subcommittee within one of the relevant public accounts committees of the parliament with participation of NGO/CSO as invited members – this will ensure participation of citizens at the highest level of the state
- Encourage an independent non-government reporting on progress of MDGs on an annual basis, preferably with donor support
- Ensure that a country's overall governance arrangements protect human rights including minority rights and are geared towards principles of freedom, equity and social justice and that monitoring of progress of MDGs accompanies regular monitoring of progress of human rights indicators
- Donors to provide support to capacity building in public accountability initiatives and most importantly, assist in orienting development assistance towards growth of an MDG-based governance framework relevant to enhancing citizen participation in public governance and strengthening social justice capabilities of the government

In summary, an MDG based public accountability arrangement must adopt a holistic approach, and, most importantly, pursue incrementally. Furthermore, reforms in public accountability must also go hand in hand with reforms that accelerate sustainable economic

growth, provide incentives to businesses, and at the end produce pro-poor outcomes. Over-emphasis accountability at the neglect of development has the risk of jeopardising both.