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Background note on challenges for institutions in ensuring that no one is left behind: Draft contribution by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration to the 2016 thematic review of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

This paper aims to support the Committee of Experts on Public Administration in formulating its input to the 2016 thematic review of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) on the theme of "Leaving no one behind". The paper begins with a shorter text which, revised as appropriate, would constitute the Committee's contribution to the Forum. The draft contribution is followed by a longer analysis supporting the Committee's observations.

Draft CEPA contribution to the 2016 HLPF

1. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration welcomes the adoption of "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development". The 17 goals and 169 targets will provide critical reference points for Governments in designing or revamping institutional arrangements, policies, strategies and plans to eradicate poverty and achieve a better, more sustainable world.

2. Public institutions have a critical role in ensuring the successful implementation of all SDGs and targets. Not only do governments have the responsibility to deliver basic services for all, but they also often pioneer research and technology of critical importance for improving people's lives while mitigating risks such as climate change and responding to shocks.

3. "Leaving no one behind" is a core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It should guide public administrations in delivering on all their functions, along with the need for effectiveness, inclusiveness and accountability.

4. Various barriers continue to hinder access to public services by the poorest and most vulnerable, including discrimination, financial costs, geographical location, environmental factors, language, cultural or institutional lack of access to digital technologies. Constraints and solutions vary greatly depending on the population groups concerned, be it children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons, migrants, slum dwellers and other people living in extreme poverty. Women often face particular difficulties in accessing public services and interacting with public institutions.

5. People from all segments of the population have equal rights to benefit from public policies and public services.

6. It is important that the highest levels of Government express their strong commitment and determination to ensuring that no one is left behind and undertakes sustained efforts to ensure that this principle pervades the work of all public institutions at all levels.

7. Leaving no one behind should be enshrined in efforts to implement the Agenda 2030 from the outset. Countries should identify through consultation with all levels of government and the civil society, including those who are at risk of being left behind. They need to engage these groups to identify their needs and ways to address them.

8. Member States are in the process of creating or identifying various kinds of institutional arrangements to guide and coordinate the implementation of the Agenda 2030. It would be important that the responsibility to steer implementation be entrusted to a ministry or office with sufficient authority and resources, such as the Office of the Head of Government, an independent authority or the Ministry of Finance for example, depending on the national context, working coherently with the legislative branch. This will help keep the focus on implementing the SDGs and leaving no one behind, supporting a more integrated policy-making approach.

9. Legislation, public policies and public services should place a specific focus on improving the situations of the poorest and most vulnerable.

10. Member States could be encouraged to ensure that their national and sustainable development strategies, as appropriate, support the realization of the national targets they identified based on the

global goals[1]. Not only national strategies and plans but also sectoral policies need to proactively address the situations of the poorest and most vulnerable. Public service should be easily accessible and of equal quality for all people.

11. Ensuring that no one is left behind requires not only social policies and access to public services, but also various policies to advance on all SDGs. This includes efforts to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; ensure full and productive employment and decent work for all; make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; reduce inequality within and between countries and combat climate change.

12. Local authorities, where they exist, are well placed to understand and respond to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. They thus have a particular role in ensuring that no one is left behind. But responsibilities should be matched by adequate resources, capacities and level of authority. They may thus need to be devolved incrementally so that lack of capacities does not stall implementation. The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) could call on local authorities to develop 'local Agendas 2030' that place a special focus on ensuring that no one is left behind, and are supported by commensurate means of implementation, including capacity building and enhanced ability to mobilise resources.

13. Working with non-governmental organizations is a way to provide assistance and services to those furthest behind. It should be accompanied by mechanisms to ensure adequate standards for public services and shared accountability of State and non-State actors in delivering quality services to all with special emphasis on the poorest and most vulnerable.

14. A major initiative is needed to raise awareness and understanding about the vision of Agenda 2030 and the commitment to leave no one behind within public administrations and societies at large.

15. All people have the right to be informed in easily understandable terms and to express their views about public policy and public service delivery towards the SDGs.

16. Institutions should proactively reach out to the poorest and most vulnerable to engage them in shaping policies and designing programmes that respond to their needs. Innovative approaches are needed to this end. For the voice of the poorest and most vulnerable to be truly heard, public institutions at the local and national levels need to be fully representative of different segments of the population. This may require anti-discrimination laws and regulations, and in some cases, removing the structural barriers that make it more difficult for members of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups to hold offices, which some countries achieve, for example, through affirmative action policies.

17. Public servants in national and sub-national administrations have a responsibility for ensuring that no one is left behind. Respecting long established principles such as non-discriminating or merit-based recruitment will be critical.

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[1] Para 78 of Agenda 2030 encourages "… all member states to develop as soon as practicable ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda. These can support the transition to the SDGs and build on existing planning instruments, such as national development and sustainable development strategies, as appropriate". Para 65 stipulates that each government [will set]" its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each government will also decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies"

18. Governments and parliaments should enhance efforts to ensure that public administrations are held accountable on the impact of their work including on the poorest and most vulnerable. Accountability mechanisms would need to be inclusive and to engage all segments of the population. Independent audit institutions can help review implementation. Governments must take the lead in defining national targets and base-line data. These need to be publicized for effective and inclusive review of SDGs implementation.

19. Particularly urgent is to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts. Big data, geospatial data and citizen-generated data are important to assess the situations of the poorest and most vulnerable.

20. Building the capacities of public institutions at all levels is critical for realising all the SDGs. International support is therefore important. Capacities are needed to develop and implement national plans and strategies for realizing the SDGs, including eradicating poverty and inequality, and to review progress. No country should be left behind and special attention must be given to the acute challenges public institutions face in countries in special situations. Specific attention should be given to the least developed countries, the small island developing States and countries in post-conflict situations.

21. Large inflows of migrants and refugees pose unprecedented challenges and severe strains on public institutions. Global and regional responsibility-sharing could be strengthened by allowing countries faced with large-scale population movements and those hosting large refugee and migrant populations to access to development assistance. Equally important is the need to relocate refugees through resettlement agreement and other legal pathways such as temporary protection and humanitarian visas.

22. The HLPF is an important platform to exchange good practices and lessons learned on institutional arrangements and policies and their impact in implementing the SDGs and improving the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable.

23. Actions to leave no one behind should be an integral part of the national and thematic review of the implementation of the SDGs to be conducted at the HLPF.

24. The Committee of Experts on Public Administration will provide inputs to the annual thematic review of the HLPF on the challenges faced by institutions in supporting the SDGs and ways to overcome them and leave no one behind. It can also keep track of good practices and lessons regarding institutional arrangements in these areas. Good practices regarding institutional arrangements for the SDGs can also be posted on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.[2]

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[2] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/

Introduction

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is the central platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the United Nations in September 2015.[3] From 18 to 20 July 2016, it will conduct its first thematic review of progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are at the core of the 2030 Agenda. The theme will be "Ensuring that no one is left behind".

The 2030 Agenda decided that HLPF thematic reviews would be supported by reviews of functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, as well as other relevant intergovernmental organs and forums and similar bodies. Such reviews "should reflect the interrelated nature of the goals as well as the interlinkage among them." They "will engage all relevant shareholders" (Agenda 2030, paragraph B5).

It is recommended that CEPA provides an input to the review of the HLPF. This would inject into the HLPF discussions the Committee's vision on institutions and how institutions can support the realization of the SDGs and ensure that no one is left behind.

The success of the 2030 Agenda will be critically influenced by the public institutions underpinning its implementation. Public institutions and governments will have a particularly important role in "ensuring that no one is left behind". This principle, which is a core principle of Agenda 2030, sheds new light on the importance of overcoming some challenges that public administration have long faced and the urgency of realizing the social equity principle of public administration. Innovative ways also have to be found to ensure that the concern to leave no one behind pervades all public policies and public institutions. This note identifies possible elements to make this happen.

Enshrining "Leave no one behind" in efforts to implement Agenda 2030

Who is at risk of being left behind?

The vision of the 2030 Agenda is that development should be for all. The goals, targets and indicators will not be considered fulfilled unless they are met for every person on Earth.

Leaving no one behind is a call to guarantee that the poorest and most marginalized have the opportunity to fulfil their potential. No person, regardless of gender, age, race, and ethnicity - and regardless of geography, income or other social or economic identity, should be denied basic rights and services. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the importance of gender equality and identifies a number of socially excluded groups such as all children, youth, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, indigenous people and migrants.[4] Leaving no one behind also applies to older persons, refugees, internally displaced persons as well as to all those who live in extreme poverty or destitute conditions. Other such groups exist as people with serious diseases. Leaving no one behind also applies to countries in special situation such as the Least Developed countries, the small island developing States and countries in post-conflict situations.

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[3] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld
[4] United Nations, 2015. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1. Para 23.

Broadly, in the context of public administration, a vulnerable or disadvantaged person may be defined as one who is unable or at risk to be unable to access the product or service s/he requires, or for whom such access requires a disproportionate level of effort, and that this lack of access causes him/her to be disadvantaged. This may be deliberate, for example in denial of services, absence of legal status, or exclusionary policies. It may also be unintentional, for example through inattention to power dynamics, lack of access to consultative processes, or one-size-fits-all approaches.

The danger is that some people may not receive medical care; or vital financial support, - such as welfare benefits- ; or essential services, such as utilities or access to finance. This causes detriment and distress for individuals, and can trigger further problems, such as debt and homelessness.

The consensus is increasingly that vulnerability is a dynamic and shifting state. Simply listing risk factors will not, on its own, identify those who need different ways to access services.[5]

The critical role of the governments in ensuring no one is left behind

Public institutions and governments play a critical role in ensuring the successful implementation of the SDGs. They have the responsibility for public service delivery, such as security, education, health and social well-being. They also play a leading role in pioneering technology research and societal development that have helped in advancing human development.

Reaching the SDGs requires a society-wide effort. But generally, institutions,[6] in particular the public administration,[7] are expected to proactively pursue the 2030 Agenda and to uphold the principle to ensure that no one is left behind. It is therefore important to enshrine this principle from the outset in the institutional arrangements that governments are putting in place to implement the SDGs. This principle has very different meanings depending on whether an institution is in charge of delivering services or managing economic dimensions or delivering other functions.

A first step will be to identify the marginalised groups within the country or region and understand how to address their needs. This requires not only quality disaggregated data, but also institutional processes that engage people, including the poor and vulnerable, themselves in this process.

A second step is for governments to commit to ensuring that policies address the vulnerabilities experienced by the marginalised groups.[8] Plans and actions of all public institutions need to address, as a core concern, the needs of the people. Specific targeted policies are also usually necessary.

Leaving no one behind requires more than social policies. It requires, for example, pursuing gender equality, promoting economic stability, and full and productive employment and decent work, sustainable infrastructure, preserving the environment, making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient

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[5] Lizzie Iron and Christie Silk, 2011. 'Citizens Advice', *Myddelton House,* [online], available: https://www.hitpages.com/doc/5428628477181952/1/. Last accessed: 11 March 2016
[6] ie the state organizations responsible for the delivery of public goods and service
[7] Note: Public administrations comprises all processes, organizations and individuals in charge of the management and direction of affairs of the executive government, implementation of laws and regulations and delivery of public goods, including those outsourced or delivered by commissioned third parties whether private sector or civil society
[8] http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10206.pdf

and sustainable, reducing inequality within and between countries and addressing climate change. In addition, the quality and reach of public services needs to be improved. Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth reduces poverty and inequality; whole equality is often associated with higher growth. Institutional reform may be needed. A major effort is needed to raise awareness and understanding about the vision of Agenda 2030 and the principle to leave no one behind. Education, media, training and capacity building are all needed. International agreements in areas such as policy coherence or migration also have a great impact. Without the existence of effective and coherent government actions, it is unlikely that that the vision of leaving no one being in implementing Agenda 2030 could be achieved.

Making all institutions and policies work to leave no one behind

The principle to leave no one behind should cut across all ministries and agencies. For this to happen, the highest level of government has to be committed and to drive the implementation of this principle. As they develop ways to steer implementation of Agenda 2030, countries could consider entrusting this responsibility to a strong ministry, such as finance or planning (depending on the country situation), or a strong institution connected to the Head of Government, and ensuring that it proactively pursues and promotes the principle to leave no one behind.

Parliaments would ideally also need to be engaged within existing constitution and framework. Not only the national development strategies and plans, but also sectoral policies should address the situation of the groups most at risk of being left behind. All institutions and organisations should go beyond the minimum statutory duties and actively consider and address the needs of all potential users.
An immigrant integration policy, for example, should be mainstreamed in programmes and policies that address public service needs of the general population. Arrangements should also be found to give special attention to vulnerable groups who may be currently excluded from mainstream social protection programmes, such as labour migrants, displaced persons, certain minorities such as indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and those denied citizenship where they live.[9]

In addition to promoting the concern to leave no one behind across the board, specific ministries are often entrusted with the mandate to improve the situation of specific groups. Committees, institutions, parliamentary mechanisms or SDG desks may also be created to drive integrated efforts to lift people out of poverty and discrimination[10]. Such arrangements may help to develop integrated and holistic approaches targeted at specific groups and cutting across sectors. Such integrated approaches are important in part because poverty, vulnerability and discrimination have multiple facets and dimensions. Some groups of population also face multiple types of discrimination like indigenous women with disabilities. This complexity mirrors the integrated and interrelated nature of the SDGs. It would be important to review how various types of institutional arrangements have managed to improve the situation of vulnerable groups and learn from best practices.

Strategies to address discrimination of ethnic or other minority groups, including people with disabilities, also require education in fields where they are likely to be underrepresented (e.g. sciences, research,

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[9] United Nations, 2011. Report of the 10th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E./C.16/2011/44).
[10] Save the Children: "From agreement to action: delivering the SDGs"

engineering, technology) and vocational training. Ideally, for the voice of the poorest and most vulnerable people to be heard, public institutions at all levels need to be fully representative of all segments of the population. This may require antidiscrimination laws and, in some cases, removing the structured barriers that make it difficult for members of the vulnerable or disadvantaged groups to hold their offices for example through affirmative action policy. In the case of marginalization due to gender and ethnicity, some public agencies have introduced an alternative admission programme for female public servants belonging to these marginalized groups. This holistic approach encourages inclusive participation by addressing multiple barriers.[11] Some public administrations have implemented measures to address the limited participation of youth in policy-making through targeted policy and institutional reform (e.g. the creation of a national youth congress and related legislation). Enhanced responsiveness of service delivery to the needs of the youth stimulated an increase of proposals put forward by these groups as inputs to policymaking.[12] SDG target 16.7 calls for ensuring inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Monitoring the proportions of positions by sex, age, persons with disabilities and other population groups in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary and comparing it to national distributions, as called for in SDG indicator 16.7.1, can assist public institutions in identifying gaps in representation and inclusion. Similarly, dedicated programmes have increased employment opportunities for people with disabilities.[13]

Promotion of civil registration and legal identity[14] are preconditions for empowering vulnerable groups and ensuring that they benefit from the range of public services. Target 16.9 pledges to provide legal identity for all including birth registration. This requires prompt action.

Institutional arrangements alone are not what will ultimately determine success. Public institutions' leadership needs to have the capacity for integrated multi-disciplinary system thinking and problem solving in complex and increasingly volatile contexts. It should also be adaptable and future-conscious to ensure that progress on SDGs and leaving no one behind is not reversed due to unforeseen factors, conflict, disasters, etc.

Ensuring whole-of-government action to leave no one behind also may require a change in organizational culture and different ways of working. Public servants should be aware that specific groups need to be proactively engaged and require different kinds of service and access. A few general strategies may be considered in this area. Reform-minded individuals within Government who have experience in other spheres such as civil society and academia can be crucial - mediating between citizen interests and competing interests and pressures. In addition, openness from policymakers to receiving messages from outside and seeking collective solutions is essential. Also important is patience from citizens to allow reforms to emerge slowly, through a process of trial and error, rather than to expect an immediate quick fix. Efforts can also be made for more of those public servants to come themselves from historically disadvantaged groups. Collaboration and consultations across organizations and with NGOs and other actors helping vulnerable people should become the norm.

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[11] Creating Access to Education for Disadvantaged Female Civil Servants, Ethiopia, UNPSA, 1st place winner, 2013
[12] Youth Participation Committees, Republic of Korea, UNPSA, 1st place winner, 2010
[13] Tandem in science, Network for Integration Projects, Germany, UNPSA, 2nd place winner, 2012
[14] United Nations, 2016. Report of the World Social Situation

Ensuring access to information and services

Inequitable power relations and discrimination often inhibit the ability of women, those living in poverty and other vulnerable groups to access public services. Public institutions should ensure access to services and information for everyone without biases or discrimination.

They should thus be proactive in efforts to improve the lives of the people they serve, including the ones who are the hardest to reach. This requires going beyond the minimum statutory duties and proactively considering the needs of all potential beneficiaries. A public institution with a truly inclusive approach will have mechanisms to identify and respond proactively to people who are unable or unwilling to express their needs, live in extreme poverty and discrimination and have a high risk of vulnerability.

Considerable work has been done recently by financial services and utility providers on how to better service vulnerable people. Local authorities are also recognising the social and economic value of improving access to their services.

Examples of good practices in this regard relate to:

- Allowing various methods for people to access public service.
- A preventive approach to understand barriers and pre-empt potential problems, through seeking direct feedback from vulnerable groups and other means
- Proactive approach to identifying vulnerability
- Appropriate support targeted to the user's needs
- Accurate recording of personal information and establishing follow-up procedures.
- Respect for and trust in intermediaries/advocates.
- Appropriate data-sharing to improve customer service.
- Engaging one agency to coordinate access for very vulnerable people to provide a holistic problem-solving service
- Addressing accessibility barriers that are faced by persons with disabilities, in both the physical and virtual environments

Ensuring that there is no discrimination in the recruitment of public servants is another way to ensure that public institutions are responsive to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable. Respecting long established principles of public administration such as non-discrimination, ethics, merit-based recruitment will be critical. Specific training is also required.

Public institutions can also utilize Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a tool for reaching out to in particular the poorest and the vulnerable. While access to Internet is seen a basic service, there are gaps between and within countries and between women and men. The private sector and scientists need to be encouraged to develop policy frameworks, services, technologies, content and technical standards that would ensure no one are left behind. For example mobile banking in Africa[15] has already brought direct benefits to millions of people who were previously unbanked.

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[15] Africa Leading the Way in Adoption of Mobile Banking http://gadgets.ndtv.com/mobiles/features/africa-leading-the-way-in-adoption-of-mobile-banking-686451

Finding the right balance between actions at national and local level

Empirical evidence shows that local authorities, under the right conditions, are better placed to understand and respond to the needs of people. They play an important role in delivering public services and infrastructure. They appear also be more prone to taking holistic approaches to development compared to national sectoral ministries as well as easier to hold accountable. They can thus make major contributions to realizing the SDGs and ensuring that no one is left behind[16].

It would be important that local authorities develop 'local Agenda 2030' or 'local SDGs achievement plans' with a strong focus on leaving no one behind. This should start with an effort to localize the goals and targets, so that they are attuned to the situation of people, but respecting the ambition of the global and national Agendas. CEPA has in the past recommended the elaboration of local development strategies, designed on the basis of local consultations and addressing the needs of the poorest, most vulnerable and discriminated groups.[17]

At the same time, many local authorities lack the capacities, the means and, in some cases, the power to deliver on the functions related to realizing the SDGs for the poorest and most vulnerable. A carefully staggered approach is thus needed in devolving responsibilities to local authorities. Responsibilities should be accompanied by corresponding resources, capacity development and support. Appropriate fiscal reform and financial instruments may also be needed, bearing in mind that some authorities are in a good position to mobilize resources and others not. At the Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development, United Nations Member States committed to measures to help subnational authorities to finance necessary investments, along with risk mitigation mechanisms.

Local participation strategies, if they are not carefully designed, can bring about challenges including dominance of vested interest groups and traditional elites. They can even exacerbate difficulties in making the voices of vulnerable groups heard. To help overcome such problems, it would be important not only to carefully design and monitor such strategies but also to build the capacities of local authorities and civil society organizations and support social mobilization.

Working in partnership with other actors

National or even local authorities may not be always in the best position to reach the poorest and most vulnerable people -- such as slum dwellers or refugees. Mobilizing civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may thus be a solution. Such organizations often provide services. Their work can complement the one of state actors. In some cases, they may even act "like surrogates or proxies for government that is too weak or unable to provide key services to its people because of financial, geographical or other limitations."[18] There are various modalities, including cases

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[16] Note: Expert group meeting on ""Moving from commitment to results in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" organized by DESA on 17-18 February 2016. The Habitat III Conference in October 2016 provides the opportunity to learn about lessons of engagement at municipal levels of government in SDG implementation.

[17] United Nations, 2013. Report of the 12th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E./C.16/2013/44).

[18] United Nations, Expert Group Meeting on Formal/Informal Institutions for Citizen Engagement for implementing the Post 2015 Development Agenda, Paris, France, October 2014.

where the government still funds a programme and sets eligibility criteria, but does not provide the service itself.

At the same time, public institutions need to be equipped and willing to work with non-state actors and to engage them in policy implementation and decision-making. General strategies may include: identifying common goals, aligning incentives and building trust, for instance, by initiating participatory dialogues or forming alliances between social movements and parliamentary committees or political parties.

The same elements apply to cooperating with the business sector. There is need for adequate enabling legal, regulatory and fiscal frameworks. Partnering with NGOs and business requires knowing exactly who they are, how they are structured, whether they abide by the rule of law and whether their actions are in line with national policies.

Partnerships must also be accompanied by robust legal frameworks - allowing in some cases to favour certain kind of projects for the purpose of leaving no one behind. Combined with legal impediments, this may have limited private sector roles in some countries.

It is very important to set up accountability mechanisms to ensure that the collaboration between the public and private sector brings about meaningful results for the public at large and the most vulnerable groups in particular.[19] Shared accountability is required to ensure that both state and non-state actors are held accountable for the results of their collaboration. Its implementation should be explicitly recognized, encouraged and facilitated by government policies.

The public sector can also create a well-staffed monitoring mechanism of progress achieved with projects developed under partnerships and design an ongoing engagement strategy with the public. "Public awareness of the value that the asset provides to the community or the challenges the project faces are essential to maintaining a healthy Public-Private partnership. Ongoing community meetings, widely available financial reports, and sometimes even a direct helpline can be used to keep the public informed."[20]

Central offices at governmental and parliamentary levels may also be used to liaise and solicit inputs of non-state actors and oversee the implementation of joint initiatives. Compliance should however not be an excessive burden that undermines public service or performance.[21]

Ensuring participation in decision making

Eradicating poverty, which is the overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda, requires ensuring participatory decision-making (as called for by SDG 16). For policies to be effective in realizing the SDGs, vulnerable

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[19] United Nations, 2013. Report of the 12th session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E./C.16/2013/44).

[20] Private Capital, Public Good: Drivers of Successful Infrastructure Public-Private Partnerships
http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports2/2014/12/17-infrastructure-public-private-partnerships-sabol-puentes
[21] United Nations, 2015 World Public Sector report on Responsive and Accountable Public Governance.

and disadvantaged groups must be given a voice[22]. They should be engaged in localizing the SDGs, identifying their priorities and needs and giving feedback and suggestions on aspects that affect them the most. Public institutions thus need to ensure that initiatives and programmes aimed realizing the SGDs are participatory and address the barriers that constrain the opportunities for vulnerable groups to participate and access services[23]. Gender equality and the engagement of diverse stakeholders (youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.) in decision-making are also critical for building community resilience. Various innovative approaches are being explored and implemented in these areas. They should be emulated.

As said above, participation in formal policy making institutions is also essential. There is a need to improve public space for engagement at the local level. Public spaces are integral to successful community development. Governments should share the responsibility and ownership of public space with the civil society and other stakeholders.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and online tools can help governments reach out to large numbers of people in a single process and across vast distances. ICTs can empower citizens to access public services and have their voices heard. Over the last decade, many such processes have been devised. ICTs, however, do not replace traditional forms of public participation, whether through face-to-face meetings, paper-based communications, telephone calls, physical bulletin boards, among other modalities.

Public institutions can also combine digital and face-to-face techniques to carry out complex discussions with large numbers of people and combine a diverse range of views and interests. These techniques have been used by Member States for instance in the public health sector to create a digital space that allows participants to identify key health issues, bringing together both offline and online conversations, and promoting electronic deliberation and dialogue to develop these issues and communicate them back to government. It should be examined how to devise such endeavour and what other policies should accompany them in order to address the concerns of vulnerable groups.

Engaging with civil society and enabling the creation of social movements and local associations, can help political institutions become more transparent and inclusive.[24]

Building trust in institutions

To gain the trust of people they serve, governments need to respect human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination.

Agenda 2030 also recognizes that accountability and transparency are critical for realizing the SDGs.

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[22] United Nations, 2008. Report of the 7th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E./C.16/2008/44)
[23] United Nations, 2013. "Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all," *Report of the Secretary General*, (E/CN.5/2013/3), paragraph 23.
[24] Ibid.

All policies need to be accompanied by robust public accountability mechanisms at local and national level so that public institutions are held responsible for delivering public goods and services in an equitable manner. Accountability should be based on monitoring and evaluation processes which engage women, the vulnerable, discriminated and disenfranchised groups. Including vulnerable groups is also more likely to build trust between citizens – as certain groups less likely to feel disempowered or excluded at the expense of some other favoured group. It promotes social cohesion etc. Accountability may entail inclusive public reporting on the implementation of local plans, including time-bound targets. Both elected officials and professional public servants need to be held accountable for results[25], including the impact on the poorest and most vulnerable.

Transparency is a key element of accountability and monitoring institutional performance. Providing open government data is one approach through which government provides raw information service that citizens can freely use and even co-produce".[26] Its impact on vulnerable groups should be examined.

Institutions must be capable of delivering not only responsive policies and sustainable public services, but also effective and ethical resource management[27]. Governments need to work to sustainably reduce corruption (target 16.5) as well as ensure effective and equitable use of funds provided by taxpayer. Institutions must be held accountable on the results they achieve in improving the situation of vulnerable groups.

Leaving no country behind

Challenges are acute and relentless for public institutions in countries in special situations, such as the least developed countries, the small island developing States and countries in post-conflict situations.

Low productive capacity and structural challenges, such as lack of infrastructure and limited access to technologies, continue to challenge public institutions in the least developed countries and Small Island Developing States. These countries are often most impacted by global crises such as food security challenges and the increasing effects of climate change which places demands on public institutions. The geographical constraints of landlocked developing countries also result in, for example, greater dependence on bordering countries for trade and infrastructure development. For the small island developing States, both intra-country and inter-community isolations also hinder the flow of information and public services, which also poses challenges to public institutions. Statistical and other capacities are also insufficient. There is a need for concerted efforts to resolve the institutional bottlenecks through support and enhanced resources. Measures are also needed to make institutions accountable and efficient institutions. Regulatory frameworks need to create an incentive structure that promotes predictability, transparency, accountability, responsible risk taking, and efficiency in the public sector[28].

Similarly, post-conflict and post-disaster situations face huge challenges and are at risk of being left behind in the progress towards the SDGs. Most countries emerging from conflict do not have sufficient

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[25] United Nations, 2008. Report of the 7th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E./C.16/2008/44).
[26] UNDESA, 2015. World Public Sector report on Responsive and Accountable Public Governance
[27] United Nations, 2015. Effective Institutions Platform, Background note: session 1 "Effective Institutions and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable Development", online, available:
URL:http://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/media/Session_1_Background_note_SDG.pdf
[28] http://unohrlls.org/custom-content/uploads/2013/09/Structural-Transformation.pdf

capacities needed to rebuild public administration or deliver basic services to their people. The dire lack of resources and 'brain drain' (or the flight of human capital) are compounded by the absence of public trust in government. Public administration is as much a political exercise as a technical one.[29] Capacity is needed to break out of this cycle; to prioritise public resources; assess the scope to decentralize and empower local authorities in political, fiscal and technical terms; and, leverage on information and communications technologies and partnerships for effective governance and public service delivery.

These challenging contexts, however, offer opportunities to revitalise the public administrations to innovate, modernize and, most importantly, motivate the public service to commit to the public good for sustainable development. Strategies for achieving the SDGs may include striving to achieve deep structural changes to simultaneously meet the basic needs of all people, including the poorest and most vulnerable groups, while developing a shared future on the basis of participatory processes.[30] Governance transitions provide avenues to correct imbalances or anomalies in public administration systems especially to ensure that no one is left behind.

The varied challenges of various segments of the population

Many persons with disabilities lack access to services everywhere. The situation in particularly acute in LDCs and in post-conflict and post-disaster situations, where this is related to damaged infrastructure and lack of previously existing assistance. Also, the number of persons with disabilities may have increased in post conflict and post disaster situations due to disability acquired during the conflict/disaster. Accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities should be a priority in actions and policies of public institutions in LDCS, post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

Large inflows of migrants and refugees also pose severe strains on public institutions. Especially in developing countries with weak institutions, mass population movements may overwhelm national capacities to identify and register new arrivals at the border and to provide migrants and refugees with short-term humanitarian assistance, including food, water, shelter, and emergency medical relief upon arrival. In these emergency situations, international organizations and non-governmental organizations have a role in providing support to countries facing a large population influx, including facilitating the access to official development assistance.

When situations of mass displacement become protracted and short-term emergency relief is phased out, host developing countries face a particular challenge as humanitarian situations are generally not funded through regular development aid budgets. Dependency on public, both national and international, institutions is reinforced when refugees and migrants are barred from free movement and access to the labour market. Millions of refugees and persons seeking asylum languish in camps for decades and even generations. There is a need to promote the economic and social integration of protracted populations of migrants and refugees, in particular by providing access to the labour market.

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[29] United Nations, 2013. Report of the 12th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E./C.16/2013/44)
[30] United Nations, 2008. Report of the 7th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (E./C.16/2008/44)

Developing institutional capacity and providing support

Agenda 2030 has brought to the fore important policy challenges which public institutions have been grappling with or need to start addressing in both developing and developed countries. It brings together a wealth of aspirations and objectives. Its complexity and the focus on leave no one behind shed new light on the capacities required for effective policy making at national and local levels. The need to understand and act on the interrelations between sectors and subsectors adds to this complexity. Agenda 2030 therefore recognizes the importance of building the capacities of developing countries and institutions.

Much attention has also been given to building statistical capacities. Disaggregated data is necessary to support the development of targeted policies to address the situation of specific groups and the extreme poor, as well as to measure progress. Good data and indicators can also help address the societal distrust of policies that target a particular group over others. SDG 17 committed to "By 2020, enhance capacity building support to developing countries, including for LDCs and SIDS, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, truly and reliable data" disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts (target 17.18).

Monitoring and reviewing the Agenda 2030

Governments need to be held accountable in their actions committed to its people in implementing the SDGs. Public institutions need to be identified to take up the task of setting up and implementing monitoring frameworks in the progressive review of the Agenda 2030. Such frameworks need to be both participatory and collaborative, including all relevant stakeholders either directly or indirectly. Audits conducted by independent entities, citizen observatories and service charters, etc. are tools that can be used based on each specific context. It is important that key milestones and indicators are identified to guide the review progress of the fifteen-year implementation strategy of Agenda 2030. The national reviews at country level will feed into regional reviews and national reviews of implementation at the HLPF. Those need to review progress in leaving no one behind as a priority.

Conclusion

The HLPF will be an important platform to exchange information and good practices on policies and institutional arrangements to leave no one behind. It has a key role to keep the momentum in implementing the SDGs. It is critical that the HLPF helps the international community keep the focus on leaving no one behind between now and 2030. It may be useful to make available an inventory of effective institutional arrangements, policies and practices supporting the implementation and review of the SDGs and leave no one behind.