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**The relationship between democratic governance and MDG achievement**

**Annotated outline, May 2012**

Executive summary (2 pages)

An Executive Summary will set out the main arguments of the paper, which aims to review some of the latest evidence, bringing together current understandings of the key political and governance (including democratic governance) features which shape development outcomes and processes for MDG achievement.

1. Introduction (2 pages)

The Introduction section will set out the main aims of the paper, the original research questions from the TORs, and will summarise the main methods of the study (desk review, drawing largely on qualitative data but cross checked against quantitative data where available). It will also set out the structure of the paper and define key terms (such as democratic governance).

1. Reflections on the relationships between democratic governance and the MDGs (2 pages)

This section will briefly review some of the known relationships and links between aspects of democratic governance and general achievement of the MDGs. Crucially, it will look at both positive and negative relationships, i.e. where governance features have contributed to MDG achievement and where they have contributed to their under-achievement.

It will touch on the relationships between MDG achievement and human rights, democracy, accountability and transparency. It will select key texts and key points of these debates, rather than systematically assessing these diverse literatures, using boxes and bullet points to summarise the main points.

Overall, it will suggest that there is still a mixed picture in terms of effects on aspects of governance on MDG achievement. In general, emerging evidence points to the importance of context and that the extent to which the above variables (human rights, democracy, accountability/transparency) shape outcomes depends on underlying incentives and conditions in each context (Booth 2011; Pritchett and Woolcock 2004). For example, linkages have made between public expenditure and democracy but whether this translates into improved outcomes depends on the wider institutional context (see Carbonne 2009 comparison of health in Ghana and Cameroon). Increasingly, this has led to calls for a greater focus in on particular sectors and the specific governance features that seem to shape outcomes/results within them, including in relation to MDG targets. This suggests the need to more systematically understand how particular governance features can effect outcomes and different aspects of sectoral reform.

1. Sectoral analysis, democratic governance and the MDGs (12-14 pages)

This section forms the main body of the report. It will focus on some specific sectors and services, where there is a growing evidence base in terms of the specific governance mechanisms and processes that can determine MDG achievement or underachievement.

Here, we will note that while evidence base is growing, particularly through forms of sectoral political economy analysis, there are remaining gaps in terms of analysis linking political economy and governance analysis to specific outcomes/targets such as the MDGs. This means we will largely draw on sectoral analysis and where possible, examine the impacts on outcomes for services, including those most relevant to MDG targets.

This section will largely draw on country case studies (particular sectoral political economy studies where available). It will present illustrations of how different governance features seem to affect outcomes and aspects of MDG achievement (and positive and negative effects); some of these are indicated below, but this is not a definitive list and will be further refined in the drafting process.

*3.1 Review of key sectors*

The proposed sectors to be reviewed in this sector are:

* Maternal health (MDG Goal 5: Improve maternal health):

Progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality, but achievement is still mixed and levels of maternal mortality remain high. Recent work by the Africa Power and Politics programme has examined some of the institutional features which seem to be necessary to make progress. Their analysis points to the role of policy coherence (so that policies are consistently implemented at different levels of governance), forms of political leadership and community involvement and engagement (e.g. Chambers 2012). This will be examined, alongside other reviews and case studies, to highlight some of the key trends in this sub-sector.

* Water supply and sanitation (MDG Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability; Target 7c: Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation)

A growing body of political economy analysis has begun to examine water supply issues; it suggests that politicians can have particular incentives to address water supply, for example where it involves more visible or quantifiable outputs (e.g. borehole construction) and there is some reflection on how this has been affected by both more programmatic party systems and in more neo-patrimonial settings (e.g. Keefer and Khemani 2005). Recent shifts towards both hardware (supply side) investments and more ‘software’ investments, in terms of greater community participation and mobilisation, particularly in relation to maintenance of water supply points will also be examined (Harris et al 2011). This will be reviewed with reference to key country studies.

Moreover, recent political economy analysis suggests that where communities are not involved in sanitation provision – and without efforts at sensitisation and behaviour change – reforming practice remains a significant challenge. We will review recent analysis of these trends, and highlight some of the community-led strategies which have been developed in response.

* Primary education (Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education)

Significant progress has been made in increasing access to primary education. In many countries, this has been supported through political will and the leadership of senior politicians. We will examine what sorts of governance arrangements seem to have best supported improved access, as well as exploring incentives and arrangements that best support improvements in quality of education too.

Where possible, we will also draw on available sectoral reviews which look across a set of countries and at systematic reviews and forms of impact assessment.

*3.2 Towards more systematic assessments*

The cases discussed above are likely to suggest it may be most helpful to identify specific governance features that affect outcomes, rather than adopt blueprint or fixed models of democratic governance. This section will therefore reflect on what a more systematic assessment of these features might look like. This will cover three key areas:

* Understanding governance constraints and opportunities *across* sectors. Drawing from the country cases, and some of the theoretical analysis on public goods and services, we will explore what seem to be some of the common features affecting outcomes across sectors (and which are likely to be particularly important for MDG achievement). These may include: levels of ‘commitment credibility’ of politicians, levels of policy coherence (horizontally and vertically) for service delivery, levels of (or capacity for) collective action for delivery of public goods and services, and information flows and accompanying incentives.
* Understanding how these constraints and opportunities play out *within* sectors. This has been less well analysed to date, but there are some emerging findings on the nature of sector characteristics (and related to choices of modes of provision or who delivers services and how). For example, some sectors (such as water supply) may be particularly vulnerable to commitment credibility issues. Other sectors (such as sanitation) may be particularly amenable to collective action solutions and to more demand led, community involvement.
* Assessing the particular challenges of fragile states. We will also briefly reflect on the experiences of different types of countries, with a particular focus on fragile states and the particular governance constraints – and opportunities – for MDG achievement. [[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Assessing the evidence base (2 pages)

This section will identify gaps in evidence and knowledge, drawing from the analysis in previous sections. Empirical gaps in relation to governance assessments are well known, and in part reflect challenges for attribution and identifying causal effects between institutions, incentives and eventual outcomes. Moreover, while there are a growing number of sector studies, in general the evidence base is fragmented and patchy, largely building on stand-alone country case studies, which makes cross country analysis challenging.

This section will briefly review some of the main attempts in recent years to address these gaps, both through methods which try to reconstruct causal chains (including forms of impact assessment, RCTs and so on) and through political economy methods that aim to better understand assumptions, theories of change and incentives for reform.

It will provide a brief overview of some of the contributions of these two approaches, and some of their limitations. It will then explore whether more systematic appraisal of governance constraints and opportunities at the sector level provides useful paths for future assessments.

Indicative list of references

A full reference list will be provided in the first draft, but some of the key texts to be used include:

* Batley, R., and Mcloughlin, C., 2010, ‘Engagement with Non-State Service Providers in Fragile States: Reconciling State-Building and Service Delivery’, Development Policy Review, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 131-154; Batley, R (2004) The politics of service delivery reform, Development and Change 35(1): 31-56
* Booth, D (2011) Towards a theory of local governance and public goods provision, IDS Bulletin, 42(2) 11-21
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* The Centre for the Future State (2010) “An Upside Down View of Governance”. Brighton: IDS: Brighton
* Chambers, V (2012) Improving maternal health when resources are limited, Safe motherhood in rural Rwanda, Africa Power and Politics Policy Brief
* Darrow “The Millennium Development Goals: Milestones or Millstones? Human Rights Priorities for the Post-2015 Agenda” (forthcoming, 2012)
* De Waal, D. et al. (2011) ‘Pathways to Progress: Transitioning to Country-Led Service Delivery Pathways to Meet Africa’s Water Supply and Sanitation Targets.’ AMCOW Country Status Overviews, Regional Synthesis Report
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* Joshi, A (2009) Producing social accountability? The impact of service delivery reforms, IDS Bulletin, 38(6) 10-17
* Kaen, K. (2006) ‘Evidence from Systematic Reviews to Inform Decision-Making towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals for Reducing Maternal and Child Mortality’, Thailand: Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research
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* McGee, R. and J. Gaventa (2010) Synthesis Report: Review of transparency and accountability initiatives, Transparency and Accountability Initiative
* Mcloughlin, C.,and Batley, R (2011, unpublished) The politics of wjat works in service provision: An evidence-based review, A working paper for the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Programme
* OHCHR reports (including OCHCR (2010) Human Rights and the MDGs in Practice: A review of country strategies and reporting; Darrow “The Millennium Development Goals: Milestones or Millstones? Human Rights Priorities for the Post-2015 Agenda” forthcoming, 2012)
* PRIA (2011) “Democratic Accountability in Local Governance: Experiences from South Asia” PRIA Global Partnership
* Pritchett, L and Woolcock, M (2004) When the Solution is the Problem: Arraying the Disarray in Development, World Development, 32(2), 191-212
* Rampa, F. and Piñol Puig, Gemma (2011) Analysing governance in the water sector in Kenya, Discussion Paper No. 124, ECDPM [www.ecdpm.org/dp124](http://www.ecdpm.org/dp124)
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* Wild, L. and Foresti, M (2011) Politics into Practice: A dialogue on governance strategies and action in international development. London: Overseas Development Institute

1. This section will draw on recent work by Richard Batley and Claire McLoughlin at the University of Birmingham (for example – Batley and Mcloughlin 2010), among others. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)