

Seminar Report
Governance Assessments and the Paris Declaration:

Opportunities for Inclusive Participation and National Ownership

2007 Bergen Seminar

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Introduction

There is an increasing demand from both developing country governments and international development partners to be able to measure various aspects of democracy, human rights and governance at the national and sub-national level. For UNDP and partner countries, governance assessments can be catalysts for nationally driven reform, especially if configured and undertaken through inclusive and consultative processes. Donor driven governance assessments do not necessarily emphasise the role of national partners in the assessment process or provide opportunities for developing national capacities to monitor themselves the quality of governance within their countries.

Moreover, co-ordination and lack of harmonisation in countries where there are several governance assessments being undertaken simultaneously, have undermined the commitments that donors have made to the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. This is an important issue for the OECD, and the organisation is playing an important role in convening a dialogue within the donor community on the existing and emerging donor approaches to governance assessments. The UNDP is engaged in this ongoing dialogue.

The 2007 UNDP/CMI Bergen Seminar focused on governance assessments in the context of the Paris Declaration and its principles of national ownership, national capacity development, alignment and harmonization. It complements the OECD/DAC discussions by providing an international forum to bring in the voice of developing country partners as well as to expand the focus of governance assessments beyond donor driven approaches to nationally driven governance assessments and assessments based on a peer review mechanism.

This report provides a detailed account of the seminar's proceedings, including presentations by the various panellists and a summary of subsequent discussions. For ease of reference, the Seminar List of Participants is enclosed as an annex.

List of Abbreviations

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CMI	Chr. Michelsen Institute
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
DFID	Department for International Development
DGI	Democratic Governance Indicators
PAF	Performance Assessment Framework
ICNRD	International Conference on New and Restored Democracies
IPI	Institute of Policy Interaction
JASZ	Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MGDS	Malawi Growth Development Strategy
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SGACA	Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis
SORA	Strategic and Operational Research Agenda
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

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Setting the Scene

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Anne Stenhammer**, Norway's State Secretary for International Development, emphasised that governance encompasses power and authority, and as a multi-dimensional concept, it is not just a matter of effective government. Citing the recent elections in Norway and how voters 'assessed' their government through the vote, the State Secretary stated that governance is also about people and their relationship with the state, including the balance of power between those that govern and the governed and the transparent management of resources.

In this context, she mentioned as an example the Norwegian model of management of oil resources, based on the premise that such resources are public property and as such should be managed transparently for the public good. In the absence of good governance, natural resources can on the other hand create risks for corruption, conflict and exacerbated poverty as a result.

Noting that while the ultimate goal of development cooperation is to make poverty history, the State Secretary underscored that this can only be achieved through better governance. Hence, the importance of governance analyses to measure progress and strengthen state effectiveness. Norway, she concluded, remains committed to this effort, utilizing national systems wherever possible, in order to avoid duplication and contribute to home-grown development efforts.

Delivering the first keynote speech, **Prof. Göran Hyden** identified three ways in which the Paris Declaration has changed the parameters of governance assessments: i) Through a shift from external to local or national assessments; ii) Relying less on experts and more on national institutions and experts; iii) The adoption of a more political, rather than a managerial approach. In this context, four challenges have arisen, with conceptual, political, institutional and operational dimensions.

With regard to conceptual challenges, there is a need to arrive at a definition of governance. According to Prof. Hyden, the essence of governance is in the relations between people and the state, and how power is exercised. Donors may rely on definitions that emphasise either the rules of the game or lack of capacities, with a tendency to stretch the concept to cover a multiplicity of dimensions. Qualifying adjectives such as "good" or "democratic" governance may prevent local stakeholders from identifying their own definitions of governance, yet an open-ended concept may risk not providing any direction.

Secondly, there is a political challenge in ownership. It is not a concept that exists in a void - hence, should one ask local stakeholders to "fill the glass" in a certain way, or fill it based on what "is already in the glass"? The issue of ownership is key in this context in terms of determining whether government ownership constitutes real national ownership. An important question is how much pressure donors should apply, if at all, to make ownership inclusive.

At the institutional level, a key issue is who undertakes assessments, and how autonomy can be ensured. Are assessments about progress measured over time, or a plan of action? A governance baseline can become an instrument of civic engagement.

Finally, Prof. Hyden recommended a number of operational principles for assessments. These include: The need to be parsimonious and concentrate on what is important here and now; not underestimate the value of comparative assessments to citizens of a particular country; use tested methodology rather than reinventing the wheel; rely on national primary or original data rather than aggregated and secondary data; separate analysis from activism; and make sure that costs of measurements are proportionate to results.

The second keynote speaker, **Mrs. Marie-Angelique Savané**, presented a comprehensive overview of how the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) functions in practice¹, based on her experience as a member of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons. Mrs. Savané emphasised that the APRM is a voluntary mechanism for African countries, as a means to ensure that national policies and practices conform to NEPAD principles. To date, she mentioned, 26 countries have acceded to the APRM, with no external involvement by donors or experts during reviews, which renders assessments fully 'owned' by Africans.

Moreover, Mrs. Savané argued that the concept of governance cannot be accompanied by adjectives, which may be universal, broad or Western-oriented, as this would mean a bias in favour of pre-set criteria that may not be relevant to the reality of many people in developing countries and traditional societies. Ensuring broad participation by civil society, the media or the business community also entailed particular challenges, as in some countries civil society is weak or focused on social services, rather than political processes.

Mrs. Savané concluded her presentation by encouraging donors to try to understand the APRM and support it rather than carry out parallel assessments.

Following the two keynote speeches, **Prof. Lise Rakner** presented an overview of the three main modalities of governance assessments currently used – carried out by national actors in their respective countries (self-assessments), carried out by peers (peer-based assessments) and finally, those carried out by donors and multilateral organisations (external assessments).

The presentation raised a number of questions around assessment modalities and the principles of national ownership, harmonisation and alignment, as some of the main cornerstones of the Paris Declaration. Mentioning the cases of Zambia and Malawi, where a plethora of external assessments undermined national initiatives, Prof. Rakner argued that there is a gap between commitments made by donors and practices on the ground, which are often dictated by individual donor needs. This translates into duplication of efforts and higher transaction costs, which can be potentially mitigated in the case of self-assessments and peer-based assessments such as the APRM.

¹ All Seminar documents are available at:
<http://www.undp.org/oslocentre>

Furthermore, lack of alignment and harmonisation can entail a heavy burden in the capacities of the poorest countries, which are most dependent on aid. Prof. Rakner said that while assessments can be made to inform programming priorities, tying assessment results with conditionality can prove ineffective and unproductive. Rather, while recognising that external partners may have valid needs to understand the status of governance in partner countries, Prof. Rakner stated that the current proliferation in governance appraisals is excessive and unnecessary, and recommended that external assessments be aligned with or draw on existing self-assessments and peer-review mechanisms.

Key Concepts: Summary of Discussions

In the discussion that concluded the session, the questions raised included issues regarding ownership as well as indicators for democratic governance. Questions were also raised regarding the desirability of being parsimonious as advocated by Prof. Hyden. It was stressed that people in the south see governance in holistic terms as inclusive of democracy, accountability and socio-economic justice. It is hard to be parsimonious without failing those popular aspirations in developing countries.

The role of the media and of civil society in assessments was stressed by several participants. The point was made that the media and civil society have a role to play in the process of an assessment as well as in the aftermath to an assessment. Action plans may need to be translated into political activism and civic engagement. Data, analysis and trend identification may need to be used for monitoring and accountability. These are all functions and processes that require civil society and media involvement.

An important question was also raised with regard to the concept of “good governance”, and whether its content can be considered universal, as the concept as such and the criteria that define governance as “good” have been defined in the West.

In their responses, the speakers emphasised that where there is capacity and expertise, as in the case of the APRM, assessments should be based on endogenous processes, and donors should seek to build on these, and not duplicate efforts. However, it is still a challenge to have media and civil society involved in a comprehensive manner, especially in countries where participation has traditionally been limited. Furthermore, it was recognised that the values associated with adjectives used by external partners such as “good” or “democratic” governance can indeed be problematic if full national ownership is to apply not only for the process, but also for the definition of governance.

Approaches to Assessments: Country Examples

This session was based on presentations showcasing the three assessment modalities introduced in the previous session. The case of Malawi was presented as an example of a country with multiple, external assessments, followed by the case of Mongolia, which undertook a self-assessment which culminated with the establishment of a national monitoring system for democratic governance. Moreover, the Ghana case illustrated the process of peer-based reviews under the framework of the APRM.

Being Assessed: The Case of Malawi

In his presentation of Dr. Nandini Patel's paper, **Mr. Rafiq Hajat** started by pointing out the main socio-economic and political challenges faced by Malawi. Malawi rates as one of the poorest countries in the world, and also has very high rates of illiteracy and HIV/AIDS. Mr. Hajat said that the challenge of meeting basic needs was often emphasised at the expense of governance issues, because the latter is perceived to be much more complex in nature.

While an institutional democracy is in place in Malawi, Mr. Hajat emphasised that there is very little evolution of democratic or constitutional culture to accompany the institutional infrastructure. He expanded on the 'weak' democratic nature of the country, arguing that the political culture is still characterised by neo-patrimonialism, weak political parties, the use of state machinery to further partisan interests, fragile democratic institutions and a fragmented civil society in strong need of capacity development.

Mr. Hajat stressed that the role of external donors in the development and democratisation process has been profound. Malawi has been subjected to a wide range of governance assessments carried out by different agencies, through e.g. the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS), the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF), the MCC assessment, and the APRM. Mr. Hajat emphasised that a major challenge had been the lack of coordination among donor bodies on the one hand, and between donors and local institutions on the other. This has been further exacerbated by lack of international coordination between Line Ministries, the Government of Malawi and the National Statistics Office.

Recommendations put forth by Mr. Hajat included:

- Strengthening of the democratic culture at grassroots level to meet institutional democracy halfway;
- More inclusion of key stakeholders in policy and legislative formulation;
- Adherence to the Constitution – in spirit as well as in letter;
- Increased accountability for state owned companies and a more critical approach to privatisation of essential services;
- Use of a rights based approach to budgeting;
- The need to look critically at electoral systems as well as the style of election campaigning before setting standards for 'free and fair elections';
- The need to address the fact that corruption is sometimes directly caused by Foreign Direct Investment;
- The importance of striking a balance between democratic and economic governance, emphasising that one should not come at the expense of the other;

- The importance of collecting data from the various donors and assessment exercises, and gathering them into one comprehensive local resource pool with support from all stakeholders.

Assessing Oneself: The Case of Mongolia

Ms. Hashbat Hulan started by describing the country context and the background for the governance assessment exercise undertaken by Mongolia. Mongolia hosted the International Conference on New and Restored Democracies in September 2003 (ICNRD-5). The Conference adopted the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and Plan of Action to strengthen democracy, which included concrete tools such as democratic governance indicators (DGIs) databases to monitor democratic progress over time. A follow-up project was then initiated by the Government of Mongolia with support from UNDP, which paved the way for Mongolia's self-assessment exercise. Among other factors facilitating this project, Ms. Hulan emphasised the role of direct access to funding, a clear international mandate, and government support to piloting DGIs in Mongolia.

The assessment itself was developed based on the International IDEA State of Democracy framework, and adopted a mixed methods approach which was contextualised to suit the specificities of the Mongolian situation. The assessment included the application of a public survey, as well as sets of core and satellite indicators. The objective of this approach was to bridge universally recognised aspects of democratic governance with the context specific dimensions Mongolia's socio-political landscape. Another stated objective was that the exercise should be for Mongolians and done by Mongolians. The results of the assessment exercise served as the basis for a national Plan of Action.

According to Ms. Hulan, the assessment exercise created a broad range of outcomes. In addition to the assessment tool and the strengthening of national ownership that resulted from the process, the exercise also facilitated capacity development among researchers, the government, NGOs and other stakeholders. In general, the political community became much more informed about DGIs, and the concept of DGIs is now a common reference for all stakeholders. Subsequent to the project, Mongolia also decided to adopt an MDG9 on human rights and democratic governance.

In conclusion, Ms. Hulan pointed to some of the challenges of the project. Firstly, there was an initial lack of required knowledge and experience among the various stakeholders. Secondly, the institutional location of the project at the MFA meant that the management of the project was done by a ministry with relatively little experience in national coalition building. Finally, there is the challenge of ensuring the full application of the National Plan of Action into Mongolian political processes.

Peer Assessment: The Case of Ghana

Dr. Adotey Bing-Pappoe began by describing the main players in the APRM process. At the continental level there is the Forum comprising the participating presidents, the Panel of Eminent Persons who actually oversee the evaluation process, and the secretariat. At the

national level there is the president, the national focal point, or governing council, which is responsible for overseeing the process within the country and communicating with the panel and the continental secretariat, and finally the national APRM secretariat.

He described the main phases of the APRM process as consisting of the period of self assessment which produces a Country Self-Assessment Report and National Programme of Action, followed by the review of the assessment process by the Panel, which involves production of the Country Review Report. This report is the basis of the actual peer review which is conducted by the Forum. Dr. Bing-Pappoe highlighted the main objectives of the process as political stability, economic growth, sustainable development and regional integration, and proceeded with discussing the main areas that were assessed during the APRM exercise: democracy and political governance, economic management, corporate governance and socio-economic development.

In the context of national ownership and inclusive participation, Dr. Bing-Pappoe paid particular attention to the role of civil society. APRM provisions require that civil society be included in the assessment process, and Dr. Bing-Pappoe noted that Ghana has a vibrant civil society who expected to be involved. The National Governing Council had three broad tasks, first to raise awareness about the APRM process, second, to oversee the self-assessment process which was conducted by four independent Technical Research Institutes (TRIs), and finally to engage civil society organizations through consultation fora and stakeholder validation meetings in order to validate the results of the self-assessments before submission to the APRM panel.

Dr. Bing-Pappoe pointed out that civil society organisations felt they had not been adequately represented in the Governing Council, which managed the APRM process on Ghana's behalf. He further mentioned that the sensitization and consultation processes could have been more comprehensive, but that this would have required a larger amount of resources on the part of the APRM Secretariat. He noted that civil society groups could also themselves have made a greater effort to engage with the process. Nevertheless, a number of civil society organizations are now actively involved in monitoring the implementation of the National Programme of Action that resulted from the APRM process.

Commenting on the APRM questionnaire, Dr. Bing-Pappoe noted that all those that had used it were of the view that it needed to be modified and made more user friendly. He pointed out that the 58 question questionnaire had a preponderance of compound open ended questions. He also noted that it did not contain any targets, or milestones. However, the APRM process does provide for a six monthly report on progress being made in implementing the programme of action.

Comparing the Ghana's APRM institutions and processes with those in other countries that had so far conducted the self-assessment, he noted that the composition, size, and, formal independence of the national governing council helped ensure that the Ghana process was independent, efficient, and broadly free of government interference. In addition the government's early and wholehearted approval and adoption of the National Programme of Action meant that implementation could commence quickly.

Dr. Bing-Pappoe emphasized however that despite this the dimensions of national ownership and inclusive participation in relation to the APRM process in Ghana had been substantially weakened by the decision of the Governing Council not to publish the Country Self-Assessment Report.

Finally, commenting on the Paris Declaration, Dr. Bing-Pappoe observed that the Declaration's assumption that the existence of a plan was a sign of ownership was not necessarily correct. He also pointed out that greater efforts should be made to achieve alignment by paying greater heed to African initiatives. His final point was that real harmonisation would involve untying aid, and the creation of multilateral rather than bilateral funds.

Ownership of *What*: Methodology

Country examples of national assessments such as the democracy assessment in Mongolia and the APRM in Ghana demonstrate some of the ownership issues that arise with regard to methodology.

In Mongolia the development of satellite indicators assisted in capturing country-specific concerns otherwise not included in global templates. Using satellite indicators was underscored by participants as an inexpensive and flexible approach that strengthened country contextualisation and ownership.

Participants emphasized additional advantages of satellite indicators: Combining internationally recognized core indicators with country specific satellite indicators allows assessments to both adhere to international standards and evaluate country specific issues. Participants raised concerns that national self-assessments in some cases lack legitimacy with regard to international normative standards of democratic governance. Using core and satellite indicators strikes a balance between the importance of standardized methodological approaches and international good practice on the one side, and national contextualization and local innovation on the other.

Using a method that combines various levels of indicators also facilitates the inclusion of multiple sources of data. Participants explained how this may enrich the assessment, reduce costs and secure legitimacy.

Finally, concerns were raised that despite developing satellite indicators, using internationally devised questionnaires with clear associations to specific NGOs or institutions for core indicators nevertheless would encroach on the national authenticity of the assessment.

The APRM faces different concerns and challenges with regard to ownership based on its assessment methodology, as striking a balance between international conventional wisdom and Africa's own experiences has been a challenge. The APRM questionnaire was devised by African researchers, but is in the process of being revised. Participants discussed the influence of the Washington Consensus in the current index of indicators, particularly with regard to indicators of economic management.

The *How* Question: Ownership through Participation

The extent and quality of participation in the exercise of governance assessments holds consequences for the public repute and use of the assessments by interest groups, governments and donors. Participants recommended that assessments are parsimonious and focuses on what is important now. Informing the agenda of the assessment is therefore a critical point of the assessment exercise, and an important stage for building ownership.

In questions of national ownership, participants stressed that governments cannot be left out, though they do not constitute a monopoly of supply of ownership as some governments may express. On the other hand, engaging civil society and including a wide range of stakeholders may be a costly and laborious process. The example of the APRM in Ghana demonstrates that stakeholder consultations are not only about how many and who, but also about how to keep all stakeholders at the table throughout the process.

Stakeholder involvement may sometimes not be enough for securing a bottom-up perspective on democratic governance. Participants asked for caution as civil society may be less representative than assumed. Representation by civil society may be skewed in favour of, for instance, the more urban and educated, as well as by funding opportunities often dictated more by international than national concerns. The quality and extent of influence that consultations have in reality may also not live up to expectations. Elite capture of assessments may therefore remain an issue even when consultations have been secured.

The survey method of the assessment is therefore critical in securing the inclusion of the views and opinions of the poor and women. In particular, participants advocated that household and opinion surveys may hold the promise of bringing in the views of the less educated and rural populations. Household surveys are democratic in the sense that they secure the principle of 'one person, one vote' in the survey results.

In household studies, disaggregation of data by gender and income presents one inroad to capturing the views of the poor and women. Participants stressed that this is not always enough and that technical fixes, such as surveys, do not make consultations and stakeholder involvement in the agenda setting of the assessment superfluous. Indicators that address the particular concerns of the poor and women should be developed through pre-surveys and consultations.

As an additional point on surveys, participants mentioned that participation and bottom-up perspectives hold great sway on the results of the assessment. As an example it was mentioned that mirror household surveys of expert panel surveys on corruption often demonstrate dramatically different results.

Finally, a point of caution was raised. Not all kinds of governance assessments lend themselves to wide stakeholder consultations. The purposes and legitimacy of assessments may require different ownership modalities. It was mentioned as an example that building

trust in national markets by international financial institutions and corporations may require independent assessments by internationally recognized actors.

Why Ownership? Ownership to Inform National Planning

Participants emphasized that aligning assessments to national planning is a critical factor in engaging policy makers and citizens. In the case of Mongolia, it was mentioned that the democracy self-assessment is receiving a lot of support from politicians who would like to institutionalize indicators in the democratization process. This was viewed as the 'climax' of a national ownership process.

With regard to the APRM, it was mentioned that aligning the assessment to poverty reduction strategies may not be enough for securing ownership: Poverty reduction strategies may not adequately reflect the ambitions of citizens, and assessments may therefore fail to engage the public. In such cases, it is not the lack of policy relevancy, but the ownership of the policy plan to which the assessment is aligned that is problematic.

Finally, the dependency of governments' policies on aid may also be a source for undermining ownership of governance assessments. Participants argued that there is an inverse relationship between aid dependency and the ability to own policy making. This may in turn affect the ownership of assessments.

Exploring the Challenges

In this session, participants broke into three groups in order to discuss the three assessment modalities identified in the previous session in greater detail, going beyond the specifics of the country studies.

Being Assessed [Working Group]

The guiding question for this break-out session was: “How can donors and national governments contribute to maintaining national ownership, alignment and harmonization in the context of external assessments?”

Moving towards more dialogue

Donor assessments have different purposes than self-assessments. Participants underscored that donors have always assessed countries, and that this is legitimate. The new and relatively recent historical perspective now is that aid has an influence on governance, and it is within this debate that ownership of assessments is discussed to secure that countries are in the driver’s seat of their own governance strategies.

It was concluded that it is not necessarily conducive to talk about ‘ownership’ in the traditional sense in terms of externally-driven assessments. Viewed as a continuum, not as a dichotomy, the objective should be to move away from the ‘rejection’ end towards the ‘ownership’ end which consists of better dialogue for governance strategies. It was suggested that moving towards more buy-in by countries in externally-driven assessments would secure a better dialogue on governance. Governments ‘own’ the process of responding, and can do so through for instance shadow reports. In order for countries to engage effectively in dialogue it was underscored as imperative that external assessments:

- adhere to methodological transparency;
- rely on data in the public domain and data produced in-country when available;
- use local consultants and research institutions to the extent possible;
- use in-country expertise instead of international consultants;
- make results public;
- reduce burden on government officials;
- make consultations a principle;
- align to country planning processes if applicable;
- are clear about purpose.

The scope and quality for dialogue on externally-driven governance assessments are affected by the purposes of the assessments. It was reported that dialogue is more constructive when assessments are used for program design than when they are used for aid conditionalities. These are issues and trade-offs that donors may choose to consider when determining purposes of assessments.

It was also suggested that instead of talking about governance ‘assessments’ the term governance ‘analysis’ or a similar neutral term should be used that signal less hierarchy between the ‘assessor’ and the ‘assessed’.

Harmonizing data and allowing for a plurality of analyses

Participants observed that there are two dimensions that drive proliferation of externally driven governance assessments: 1) differing conceptual understanding of the term 'governance' and; 2) different purposes for assessing governance.

The term governance is highly contested. The many conceptualizations of governance mirror the many different agendas among bilateral donors and multilateral institutions. As an example, the World Bank focuses more on economic governance, while UNDP focuses more on political governance. Assessments serve many different purposes, and there will therefore always be a proliferation of governance assessments. In addition to donors, also international non-governmental organizations, firms and academic institutions conduct assessments for comparative ranking, but also to develop tools for advocacy.

It was identified that harmonization may take place most effectively by separating data from analysis and interpretation. The stock of data could possibly be collected through a country self-assessment, which both would strengthen ownership and dialogue with donors. Self-assessments may therefore be a vehicle for ownership, harmonization and alignment also in the context of externally-driven assessments.

The example of Zambia was highlighted as a 'good practices' example where harmonization was taking place at the implementation and country-level. In Zambia 16 donor countries have signed a joint assessment strategy. It was noted that it may be easier for donors to harmonize at the country and implementation level than at the international level.

In addition, alignment to country policies may work more effectively when focusing on key aspects at the sector level, instead of the central level, with the purpose of strengthening programs. Policy relevancy is a dimension that also drives alignment, harmonization and ownership.

Assessing Oneself [Working Group]

The second group examined the modality of 'assessing oneself'. In this context, two of the main issues discussed were the nature of self-assessment and of national ownership. The question was raised as to whether one should be talking about self-assessment, or rather a process that was nationally based and owned, as several participants doubted the general interest of countries to submit themselves to a self-assessment exercise.

Another central question was how to identify national ownership: Is it defined by the methodology used, the source of the funding, the scope and nature of national stakeholder participation, or by the actors that are driving the process forward (e.g. the government, donors, MPs or civil society)?

Secondly, several participants focussed on the issue of capacity. It was recognised that comprehensive, national governance assessments require a great deal of financial, technical and institutional capacity which is not readily available in a lot of developing countries. At the same time, it was pointed out that a national self-assessment exercise can also be a tool for strengthening local capacities.

A third key issue for the group was the importance of reciprocity, which was often placed in the context of colonial history. The point was raised that if developing countries are to undertake national governance assessments, it is also fair to demand that donors undertake their own comprehensive assessments of the impact of their ODA and their activities in the South. Further, these processes should be transparent and include relevant stakeholders and not just the donors themselves. Finally, there was a rich debate around how to bridge the universal and the context specific, especially with regard to adapting global tools, principles and approaches to national contexts that vary greatly. As a comment to the Paris Declaration, it was emphasised that many actors in the field of governance assessments have diverging agendas, and that these agendas can not always be constructively converged.

Peer Assessment [Working Group]

The third group examined the modality of peer review mechanisms, based on the APRM example. The first issue raised was about the inception phase in which acceptance by governments of the idea, method and findings of peer reviews needs to be nurtured. Another issue of concern was that of participation. Clearly various APRM country processes attest to the multiplicity of ways in which participation is managed and the various ways governments use the APRM guidelines for participation.

A third point raised related to the political context in which the peer reviews take place. Political expediency and calculations of timing of the process and of the final report play an important role in the minds of incumbent governments. Group participants raised concerns about the possible elitist nature of peer review mechanisms, alluding to the need to widen as much as possible participation in the process and dissemination of its results. In this vein, the long term nature of the peer reviews and their long term impact was stressed.

The role of external partners was debated by the group. It was found that partners can both engage at the conceptual level, yet should allow for local indicators that are disaggregated and that capture local dynamics. Partners may also function as observers of the process, critically assessing how genuine ownership is.

The group discussed the various mechanisms by which national ownership, in the case of the APRM, can be gauged. These should include national institutions such as national commissions and national parliaments and political parties. Other mechanisms include dialogue processes, polling and opinion surveys. The group also found it necessary to triangulate qualitative analysis, participative methods, attitudinal surveys and in-depth studies and not rely on composite indices alone. There was an agreement over the role

of the media and civil society engagement throughout the process of the peer review, but most importantly in the aftermath. There needs to be an open environment that allows for circulation of results in the widest possible manner as well as the utilization of results for further monitoring purposes. At best, local media and local civil society have to be given a role and have to be allowed the public space necessary for them to use the peer review results.

The group has also identified a number of challenges, recognizing that reviews may never be completely representative, and that state actors, the media and civil society may have capacity constraints to play their roles effectively. Finally, the ability of peer reviews to inform national and local policy planning was identified as key for linking governance assessments to delivery of social services and to enhance state legitimacy and citizen confidence in the country's accountability mechanisms.

Value Added, Challenges and Good Practices: Summary of Discussions

The discussions were structured around three guiding questions:

1. What value do assessments add?
2. What are the concerns regarding assessments?
3. What are the good practices of assessments?

What Value do Assessments Add?

Participants' understanding of the value of assessments to partner countries fell into two camps: one camp that emphasised the role of assessments in a broader national process of democratization; and a second camp that emphasized how assessments could contribute to improve the technical aspects and efficiency of governance.

For the camp that emphasised the role of assessments in a broader national process of democratization, assessments could potentially assist in increasing the accountability of governments to citizens. Assessments could add value by:

- Taking stock of the wider political economic context of governance
- Identifying democratic deficits of governance
- Understanding the factors and drivers of policy reform
- Providing governments with a tool for further democratization
- Contributing to peaceful and constructive oppositional politics
- Providing a tool for advocacy and fostering civic engagement

For the camp that emphasized how assessments could contribute to improving the technical aspects and efficiency of governance, value could be added by:

- Identifying institutional bottlenecks and capacity deficits of governance
- Identifying horizontal and vertical dimensions of governance in order to improve program and sector focus
- Enabling goal setting by the government that is more realistic
- Improving social and economic policy

Participants also discussed how assessments could add value to strengthening partnerships between donors and recipient countries. Benefits to such partnerships include:

- Understanding of mutual constraints
- Generating predictability in relationships
- Strengthening oversight control and accountability
- Creating entry points for dialogue

Benefits to recipient countries include:

- Meeting donor conditionalities
- Generating resources from donors
- Attracting more resources from donors

Benefits to donors include:

- Protecting ministers from parliament and the aid process in general
- Responding to the tax base and questions regarding the effectiveness of aid

What are the Concerns Regarding Assessments?

Participants raised several concerns regarding assessments that, if not addressed, would undermine their value. These included:

- Lack of trust with regard to externally-driven assessments which reduce the potential for contributing constructively to domestic politics;
- Lack of trust with regard to self-assessments' ability to demonstrate methodological rigour and adherence to international standards of democracy;
- The timeline of assessments, and donors' often short time horizons versus the broader more long-term concerns of countries;
- Diminishing value if the assessment is too technical and fails to take into account power analysis, drivers of change and the interests of different social groups;
- Risk of elite-capture of assessments.

What Could Features of "Good Practice" Assessments be?

Participants underscored the following key characteristics as possible features of "good practice" assessments:

- The democracy/governance system is anchored in the national development plan or other political commitments such as the PRSP or a Peer Review Mechanism;
- Indicators are selected and generated through a transparent, participatory and inclusive process;
- There is an institutionalized procedure to collect data from a variety of sources (surveys, administrative data, national statistics, civil society) and an institutional base for storing this information and making it publicly accessible;
- The data sources are politically acceptable to all stakeholders;
- The data sources enable disaggregation in terms of the poor and gender;
- National institutions including academia are in charge of developing the system, thus securing that national capacity is strengthened;

- There is a targeted approach to developing the capacities of national stakeholders, including government policy makers, civil society, the media, parliament, political parties and the national statistics agency or office;
- Resources are available to ensure sustainability of the system through repetition of the assessment to enable monitoring of improvements in the area of democratic governance;
- A methodology is used that secures international standards of democratic governance with country contextualisation;
- The assessment is parsimonious and focuses on people's expectations and key issues of national importance;
- The assessment is cost-effective and timely;
- The assessment process and results form part of a wider society dialogue and give leverage to civic engagement.

Perspectives on Donor Assessments

20 **Mr. James Bewsher** presented an overview of donor assessments based on a desk study that compiled publicly available governance assessment documentation from international donor agencies and OECD member countries. The study found that there is currently no harmonisation in the use of governance assessments, and that there is some confusion with regard to the terminology used for indicators and assessments.

Furthermore, the mapping revealed that assessments are currently used for four main purposes, including conditionality for aid allocation, needs assessment and programme formulation, programme and project evaluation, and, importantly, as an instrument to empower local stakeholders in promoting good governance.

Following the presentation, three representatives of donor agencies provided an overview of their respective agencies' approach to governance assessments, focusing on the principles of national ownership and harmonization.

DFID's Country Governance Analysis

Introducing DFID's approach to governance assessments, **Mr. Graham Teskey** argued that "ownership" in assessments should not be seen as a simple dichotomy – either "owned" or "rejected". Rather ownership lies along a continuum. Donors are interested in encouraging more ownership rather than less. In order to encourage it, as a rule DFID prioritises local data already available in the public domain, avoiding new research and triangulating information from various sources. Governance analyses are part and parcel of country programming processes, they are based on wide consultations with government, civil society and other donors, are carried out in-country by local aid agency staff and not consultants, and all analyses are made publicly available. The mandatory content of such analyses is limited, as they vary from country to country. Furthermore, DFID seeks to use data from existing analytical or assessment processes, such as the APRM and EU reports.

With regard to harmonisation, recognising that little progress has been made to date, Mr. Teskey noted that given the difficulties donors have experienced attempting to harmonise more 'mainstream' development work, we should not be surprised that harmonising the more overtly political work of governance analysis will be at least as difficult. In this context, he exhorted donors to become as comfortable discussing political society as they are discussing civil society.

He underlined that DFID does not use its country governance analysis for conditionality, allocations nor cross-country comparisons. The main purpose of DFID governance analyses is to understand the context, or where the country in question is coming from, to inform programme design according to local priorities, and to better prepare British authorities to handle and understand unforeseen events in a given country. A number of insights can be drawn from the governance analyses carried out by DFID to date:

- local data is available and should be used wherever possible;
- assessments put politics centre stage, which enables a forward look on political events; and
- these exercises have not harmed relations with the host government, who have often welcomed them.

The Netherlands' Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis

Ms. Mette Gonggrijp of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands emphasized that poverty reduction does not have sustainable, equitable results unless there are genuine improvements in the political realm. Therefore, the approach of the Netherlands to aid is informed by an explicitly political conception of good governance. Hence, the Netherlands has developed an assessment framework known as the Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis (SGACA), in order to shed light on how the governance context and political climate have been shaped, and enhance their ability to effectively contribute to local development processes.

The SGACA seeks to provide information to make the work of the Dutch embassies more relevant to local contexts. The process is intended to generate an analysis which includes long-term foundations for development, or where the country is 'coming from', the rules of the game, formal and informal institutions, and the 'here and now' – current events, trends, resources and actors. It draws on local surveys, national governance assessments, APRM reports, opinion polls such as Afrobarometer, and also other donors' reports, in order to reduce transaction costs.

The government of the Netherlands is committed to the Paris principles, but nonetheless experiences a number of challenges as a donor. These include coordination on various instruments used and generated both at HQ and on the ground by donors and local actors; using more qualitative rather than quantitative data, in order to understand the reasons behind trends; and ultimately, ensuring that mutual accountability does not weaken domestic accountability mechanisms, which donors should always support.

USAID's Democracy and Governance Assessments

Dr. Maria Randon presented USAID's democracy and governance assessment tool, which she defined as a qualitative diagnostic tool used to define country-appropriate programmes to assist in the transition to and consolidation of democracy. The purpose of the tool is primarily to enable USAID missions to develop strategies and subsequent programs that address the core problems of democracy and governance according to the local context of each country. Unlike the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), USAID does not use assessments to determine whether countries are eligible for aid. However, USAID does implement "Threshold Programs" for MCC approved countries to help them become MCC assistance eligible.

USAID assessments consist of a four-step process, aiming at defining a country's main democracy and governance issues. The process includes an examination of thematic issues such as rule of law, competition, inclusion, and good governance, and country specific issues such as geography, demography, socioeconomic endowments, historical legacies, and the impact of globalization. The interests, resources and objectives of key actors and organizations in the country are also analysed. Other issues taken into account are the USAID budget and priorities, as well as other constraints and incentives for assistance actions. These include the overall priorities of US foreign policy, the relative potential for success, a country's absorptive capacity, and possibilities for replication.

In addition to country-level assessments, USAID provides support to independent democracy survey projects such as the AmericasBarometer and the AfroBarometer, and is currently carrying out a multi-year initiative to examine the impact and effectiveness of its democracy and governance programs through the Strategic and Operational Research Agenda (SORA). The SORA focuses on developing rigorous comparative methods, including individual program evaluations, country case studies, large-scale quantitative studies, systematized expert interviews, democracy surveys, and specialized comparisons of areas such as the rule of law, governance, civil society, and political processes. Dr. Rendon also discussed the USAID Handbook of Democracy and Governance Programme Indicators.

With regard to the Paris principles, Dr. Rendon noted that USAID assessments may take into account the principle of national ownership, in that assessments would identify those areas of greatest importance to the development of democratic governance and likely recommend supporting components of a national development strategy or other government plans. Furthermore, Dr. Rendon suggested that an optimal area for donor harmonization would be around indicators that measure issues related to political will, noting that convergence of donor incentives to encourage reform can have significant impact. However, in reality she views this as difficult to achieve as a number of factors, particularly policy priorities, influence donors' public interactions with a partner government.

Following the presentations, the Chair, Ms. Pratibha Mehta, opened the discussion by noting that all presenters referred to the political dimensions of assessments, and that all their assessments are carried out through extensive consultations and made public. Where then, she asked, lay the difficulty in carrying out assessments jointly, and if these exercises are so inclusive, why is trust still an issue?

Divergences and Convergences in Donor Approaches: Summary of Discussions

The discussant for the session, **Dr. Carlos Santiso**, pointed out that the three presentations highlighted great diversity in approaches among donors with regard to governance assessments. This is linked to the different motivations for undertaking these assessments, the different aid policies and governance definitions on which these are based, different accountability requirements to which they are subjected, and the different uses donors make of these assessments. Some donor countries in fact use different approaches to fulfil various purposes. In the United States, as mentioned by Dr. Rendon, the MCC assessment is used to determine aid allocations, while USAID assessments are generally intended to inform country dialogue and programming.

Dr. Santiso noted that there are also sharp differences amongst donors, in particular between bilateral donor agencies, which are accountable to or part of a government, and multilateral development institutions, whose governance and accountability structures represent a different set of opportunities and constraints for undertaking governance assessments. As a general rule, the main purpose and rationale for donor-led governance assessments is internal, linked to donors' internal programming and accountability

obligations. On the other hand, the African Development Bank, for instance, generally undertakes Country Governance Profiles at the request of regional member states to inform policy dialogue, country programming, and project design. As for the World Bank, the allocation of its concessional resources is based on an internal assessment of country institutional and policy performance, including governance performance, through the CPIA and the “Governance Factor” introduced in 2002.

There is a trend towards more politically astute governance analysis beyond the erstwhile formalistic and legalistic analysis of the past. This trend is linked to the greater emphasis donors place on assessing and mitigating political risk, especially corruption risk and the likelihood of political crises. This trend relates to the discussion during the presentations, in particular DFID’s, on the distinction between technical and political approaches to governance analysis and the potential trade-offs between these approaches. While technical approaches privilege analytical rigor and consistency, political approaches tend to privilege impact on change and therefore selectivity in foci.

There is also a discernible trend amongst donors, bilateral and multilateral, away from benchmarks and towards a more dynamic analysis of the political economy of governance in partner countries (political risk analysis), which looks at trends and trajectories of change, rather than uniquely abstract standards and benchmarks of governance. Governance assessments should seek to determine the trajectory of the underlying trends - beyond the “blips” of governance crises - and trajectories towards better governance, rather than the attainment of a threshold of good governance or “good enough” governance. The fundamental question is whether governance is improving or worsening. This emphasis on governance trends is linked to the need to measure results in the framework of mutual accountability of aid relations, and places greater emphasis on the need for robust and consistent time-series governance indicators measuring progress over time. This in turn creates the need for governance assessments which are consistent over time and can be repeated at regular intervals. Such frameworks, with a few rare exceptions, are still lacking. An objective of the redesign of the African Development Bank’s approach to Country Governance Profiles is precisely to allow for more regular assessment of governance performance in regional member countries so as to highlight trends over time along the various facets of governance.

Participants’ interventions during the subsequent discussion highlighted that there are points of intersection between donors’ agendas and national agendas, that should be explored in the context of ownership. Political ownership is key, but as mentioned by the presenters, there are also democratically-oriented domestic groups that may share the same concerns and agenda as donors, and that is also a point of intersection in the process of undertaking assessments. It was also mentioned that the country itself is a common denominator for actors, local and external, and therefore the country should be in the driver’s seat. In one example, the use of national household surveys, for example, has sparked domestic debates, which converged with donor agendas. Furthermore, it was suggested that what is missing is an instrument that provides robust trajectory information about governance, which would be much more effective to stimulate action by local actors without the sense that assessments are owned by external partners.

In response to the comments made during the discussion, Dr. Rendon acknowledged the difficulty for donors to have the same objectives, as assessments may be triggered by decisions made on local or on central headquarters level. However, in terms of pooling resources, sharing assessments, and coordinating with other donors, there is scope for progress. Ms. Gonggrijp agreed that points of intersection are important and donors should attempt to support national processes, noting in addition that the Netherlands does work with other donors such as the World Bank and DFID in the process, so as not to duplicate work already carried out.

Finally, Mr. Teskey argued that there are reasons for optimism, in that there are countries that are taking the lead in assessing themselves now that governance is high on every country level agenda; Secondly, harmonisation and ownership are on the agenda everywhere, and there are already good examples of harmonisation. In addition, progress may be more possible thematically (the judiciary, rule of law, parliaments etc) than if donors attempt to encompass all 'political governance'. On the other hand, there are also reasons for being less optimistic: The incentives to meet individual corporate goals, for bilaterals at least, are stronger than incentives to harmonise – especially around a contested topic; Harmonisation generates significant transactions costs; Harmonising prognosis on governance issues is likely to remain out of reach, and finally, there does not seem to be a multilateral agency with the credibility, capacity and authority to lead the agenda forward.

Country Perspectives

This final session of the Bergen Seminar, chaired by **Dr. Charles Oman**, focused on further experiences in developing governance indicators and on conducting governance assessments based on international frameworks with varying degrees of national involvement and national ownership.

Uses of the IDEA Methodology in a National Context

The first speaker of the session, **Ms. Keboitse Machangana**, introduced the IDEA Democracy Assessment framework, underlining that it is a reform oriented qualitative tool intended for use by citizens to evaluate the quality of their democracy; and monitor its performance over time. It is therefore not intended for ranking countries. It is organised around four main pillars: i) Citizenship, Law and Rights; ii) Representative and Accountable Government; iii) Civil Society and Popular Participation; and iv) Democracy Beyond the State.

The tool is a global public good and can be used by developed and developing countries alike to help understand the strengths and weaknesses of their democracy. The tool has been used by no less than 20 countries; including pilot assessments conducted in Bangladesh, El Salvador, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand, Peru and South Korea. Subsequently, assessments were undertaken in a number of countries (largely led by independent institutions; but also by governments); some of the recent ones being Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the Netherlands.

Ms. Machangana further noted that different countries are motivated by different factors to conduct state of democracy assessments. As an example, she mentioned that the BiH assessment was motivated by external assessment fatigue and the difficulty of obtaining data in the post-conflict period; while in the Netherlands, the decline of people's trust in politics and politicians and the result of the country's referendum on the Constitutional Treaty of the EU were cited as some of the factors which motivated the state of democracy assessment in that country. She said that in the Netherlands, the assessment findings will be used as a basis for internal dialogue during a 'Democracy Week' planned for October. This demonstrates how the tool can be used to promote internal debates on issues that are important in the national arena. The emphasis throughout the process is on local ownership, as findings are not IDEA's findings, but owned by local stakeholders themselves. Additionally, the tool is flexible and can be adapted to different country contexts.

Finally, Ms. Machangana mentioned that a community of practice or the State of Democracy Network has developed as a result of assessments which have been undertaken in different parts of the world. This community of practice is not only a reservoir of capacity and support for new assessments; but also continues to make an invaluable contribution to further refinement of the assessment framework.

The “State of Democracy” in South Asia

The IDEA framework was also used to complement a study on the state of democracy in South Asia, led by **Prof. Peter de Souza**. The study benefited from the participation of a community of practitioners and scholars, who analysed the implications of democracy and related discourses in the region.

In the context of the study, ownership was based on examining the public discourse in depth, in partnership with the media, so as to enhance understanding of political dimensions of democracy. Several methods were utilized by the research partners in a rich cross sectional study that was complemented with the IDEA methodology and the perspectives of a large number of actors, including non-experts. These included (i) the cross-sectional attitudinal survey of citizens in South Asia, (ii) case studies, (iii) dialogues and (iv) qualitative assessments based on the IDEA framework. The findings from these studies were then integrated into the flagship study on the State of Democracy in South Asia. Multiple stories emerged in the course of the study, raising questions for which there were no obvious and easy answers, for example with regard to the status of the rule of law in the region.

The study found that democracy is not simply a form of government but can be seen as a social movement transforming social relations in various arenas, such as in classrooms and between men and women. Democracy also develops along with state formation, as crucial concerns related to human security accompany the formation of nation states. Furthermore, democracy is one among many drivers of change, globalization being a major driver as it compels the development of national capacities to work out adequate strategies.

Democracy is bringing deep changes to South Asia, including to the role of political elites. The relationship between these and constitutions needs to be mapped, as we see elites replacing one another against the background of fragile constitutions. There is also a new popular understanding and an expanding culture of democratic processes, which is reflected in a new language of social relations, for instances when votes are taken to make group decisions. In this context, it is necessary to mobilise a democracy of communities and not just individuals. Conceptually, however, democracy needs to include elements such as rights and human dignity, and not only processes.

Joint Assistance Strategies: The Case of Zambia

Mr. Aeneas Chuma presented the Zambia case, where based on the Rome Declaration of 2004, efforts at harmonization began three years ago, prior to the adoption of the Paris Declaration. In Zambia, the United Nations agencies joined efforts with sixteen other partners in order to create the Joint Assistance Strategy (JASZ). The JASZ resulted in a division of labour whereby donors select a representative group of three agencies among themselves to represent all development partners vis-a-vis the government. Each ‘troika’ then works on a particular thematic issue or sector, optimizing division of labour and

reducing transaction costs for the government. However, including non-traditional donors such as India and China in this initiative has not been successful, which has implications for the aid environment in the country.

On the other hand, harmonisation has encountered limits in Zambia, where there are ten ongoing governance assessment exercises, including those carried out by the Millennium Challenge Corporation and the European Union. At the same time, an annual report is produced by the government on the state of governance, which demonstrates that there is potential for enhancing harmonisation and reducing costs arising from the various exercises, which use similar indicators and interlocutors. Whereas compromises could be made, especially with regard to the use of indicators, Mr. Chuma cautioned that a single instrument may not be possible due to the variety of purposes related to the assessments being carried out.

The Latin America Democracy Report

Ms. Myriam Mendez-Montalvo presented the Latin America Democracy Report, encompassing 18 Latin American countries. Its overall purpose was to take stock of what three decades of democratization has meant in practice for the region. Approximately 200 indicators were collected during the exercise, measuring aspects ranging from electoral processes to support for democracy within societies. The assessment drew attention to a number of issues, such as civic and social dimensions of citizenship, the institutionalisation of democracy, citizens' expectations and whether democracy has delivered. The results of the exercise were used by a number of actors, including Latin American governments, international organisations, NGOs, academics and the media.

Ms. Mendez-Montalvo argued that the benefits of taking into account a multiplicity of views outweighed the costs, as the assessment has created a momentum for mobilising efforts to meet challenges. A network of actors was involved in choosing indicators and defining concepts substantively. Initial criteria were revisited in the course of the exercise, for instance, from considering elections to electoral competition, political party financing, etc. One lesson learned was that such exercises must have political actors as well as academia on board, as their value can be limited if they are viewed as irrelevant by the political community.

Are Ownership, Alignment and Harmonisation Feasible and Desirable? Summary of Discussions

Following the presentations, **Prof. Okey Onyejekwe** launched the discussion by noting that there needs to be a balance between socio-economic, cultural and political context as well as "political correctness" and what one accepts as general principles of governance. With regard to country ownership, again a balance must be struck between technical rigour and process in the face of weak institutional capacities, and buy-in by the various stakeholders.

In conceptual terms, there is convergence among stakeholders regarding what is accepted as desirable in a development context. Good governance, he argued, cannot be value-free, so one needs to address these values. In his view, one should not shy away from qualifying governance as governance is about values, which constitute the premise for undertaking various assessments. What would be the value of assessments, he added, if one cannot make qualitative judgments?

One important question, however, is how to mitigate the asymmetry between donors and aid recipients in assessments. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of national ownership in the same context as aid dependency, so one should focus on mitigation. This can be done through assessments that can trigger interventions to achieve development outcomes, for example by utilising national institutions. As the study on democracy in South Asia demonstrated, ownership cannot be taken at face value, so it is important to examine the depth and breadth of ownership, particularly related to those who claim to own and the extent to which they truly represent people.

There is a general agreement that it would be desirable to align donor initiatives, and by extension, governance assessments, premised on the assumption that alignment will go a long way in achieving desirable development outcomes and aid effectiveness. However, alignment cannot be separated from national ownership, hence the need to ensure that there is credible and legitimate ownership to which donors can align their policies.

With regard to harmonization, Prof. Onyejekwe emphasised the political implications and tensions inherent to the concept and its application on the ground, stating that while it is generally acknowledged that harmonisation can improve aid delivery and decrease aid recipients' costs in terms of reporting to multiple donors as in the Zambia case, it may not be feasible nor desirable. Multiple donor geopolitical interests may not make harmonisation feasible, and in this context, these inherent tensions may be useful as a 'safety net' for aid recipients vis-à-vis overbearing donors. He underlined that assessments will continue to be relevant if undertaken for the right reasons, and ultimately, 'the more the merrier', if the objective is ultimately to assist countries in achieving better and sustained development outcomes and enable nations to escape the aid dependency trap.

In conclusion, he cautioned, one must avoid analyses based on snapshots but rather focus on trends, as governance is a process subject to the vagaries of internal and external shocks, as the Latin American experience demonstrates.

Participants contributed to a rich discussion, with questions on issues ranging from the feasibility of applying the IDEA tool in sensitive contexts, methodological considerations for middle income countries and the role of elites, the middle class and the poor in strengthening democratic principles, and the limits and desirability of harmonisation.

It was argued that middle income countries require refined approaches with regard to assessments, in order to gauge participation in elections, and what can be done to change a scenario where relatively well-off countries still have half of their population under the poverty line. There are also limitations in how experts can interpret data, which should be substantiated by tools such as household surveys.

National ownership was problematized in terms of aid dependency, raising the issue of how feasible it is for aid-dependent countries to assert themselves vis-à-vis donors, and the implications of this. On the other hand, in many middle income countries, the traditional project approach does not work well for governance, as countries such as China have resources. The question here is, how confrontational can partners be?

Referring to the presentations based on the South Asian and Latin American studies, participants welcomed the notion of democracy as a social movement, noting that while in Asia elites may be actively competing for power, in Peru for example participation among the poor is increasing, while elites are disillusioned. In this context, there may be various lessons to be drawn in linking assessments with social strata.

Departing from the conventional wisdom in terms of harmonisation, one participant made a point regarding the danger of aggregation versus pluralism. In a context where donors, domestic actors and civil society may have diverse interests, should there not be a menu of options?

With regard to the IDEA tool for national assessments, Ms. Keboitse Machangana emphasised that the tool envisages a long-term engagement and in fact, its use is not recommended in unstable conditions, as it may trigger conflict.

A central message that could be taken to decision makers in donor countries, argued Prof. de Souza, relates to the centrality of the constitutional process. In this context, there is a fundamental tension between elites and constitutions in South Asia, and in cases where there are tensions between ruling elites, the constitution loses its 'guiding' and 'trumping' functions, though this is improving in the region. Reiterating that governance is a process, Mr. de Souza concluded by saying that in South Asia the democratic process has engendered optimism for the future and for self-improvement.

In addition, Ms. Mendez-Montalvo underlined that the analysis of democracy in Latin America has provided an excellent platform for UNDP as a multilateral institution to enhance dialogue on key issues across governments and civil society, translating national agendas for reform into programmes, and boosting intra-regional cooperation on issues of common concern. In this sense, the assessment provided an important push towards democratic governance.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Gunnar Sørbo made final remarks in which he emphasised the importance of listening to people's voices and concerns, and of qualitative assessments. He pointed out that there will always be plurality in methods and purposes, but also of perspectives, and standardization should be contested, however ensuring that robust processes promote alignment and participation in assessments.

Mr. Bjørn Førde closed the seminar by underscoring that for UNDP, adjectives are important, such as gender sensitive, pro-poor and especially *democratic* governance. This is UNDP's mandate and one of the organisation's top priorities and main funding areas. Inclusive globalization, he concluded, must be driven by bottom-up democratic governance.

List of Seminar Papers

Keynote Speech by Prof. Göran Hyden

Distinguished Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Florida

[Key note speech](#)

Keynote Speech by Mrs. Marie-Angelique Savané

Member of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons

[Key note speech](#)

Preliminary Survey on Donor Use of Governance Assessments by Mr. James Bewsher

Co-Director, Centre for Democratic Governance, University of Essex

[Donor Use of Governance Assessments](#)

Governance Assessments and the Paris Declaration by Prof. Lise Rakner

Senior Researcher, Chr. Michelsen Institute

[CMI Paper](#)

Country Case Studies

Peer Assessment: The Case of Ghana by Dr. Adotey Bing-Pappoe

Independent Consultant and Author of OSI/AfriMAP report on Ghana's APRM assessment

[Ghana Case Study](#)

Being Assessed: The Case of Malawi by Dr. Nandini Patel

presented by Mr. Rafiq Hajat

Institute for Policy Interaction

[Malawi Case Study](#)

Assessing Oneself: The Case of Mongolia by Ms. Hashbat Hulan

National Adviser to Support in Achieving MDG-9 on Human Rights and Democratic Governance Project

[Mongolia Case Study](#)

Bergen Seminar Agenda

Sunday 23 September 2007	
	Arrive at Clarion Hotel Admiral in Bergen
18:30-20:00	Opening Reception and Welcome Remarks: Bjørn Førde, Director, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre Gunnar Sørnbø, Director, Chr. Michelsen Institute
Monday 24 September 2007	
09:00-09:10	Welcoming Address from the Government of Norway Anne Stenhammer, State Secretary for International Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
Session 1	Introduction and Setting the Scene Chair: Gunnar Sørnbø, Director, Chr. Michelsen Institute
09:10-09:30	Keynote speech 1 Prof. Goran Hyden, Department of Political Science, University of Florida
09:30-09:50	Keynote speech 2 Marie-Angelique Savané, Member of the African Peer Review Panel of Eminent Persons
09:50-10:10	Presentation of Issues Paper Prof. Lise Rakner, Senior Researcher, CMI and Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen
10:10-10:55	Discussion
10:55-11:25	Coffee/tea break
Session 2	Approaches to Assessments: Country Examples Chair: Noha El-Mikawy Policy Advisor for Governance and Poverty, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre
11:25-12:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation 1: Being assessed (Malawi) – Rafiq Hajat, Institute for Policy Interaction, Malawi • Presentation 2: Assessing oneself (Mongolia) – Hulan Hashbat, National Adviser, Support in Achieving MDG-9 on Human Rights and Democratic Governance Project, Mongolia • Presentation 3: Peer assessment (Ghana) – Dr. Adotey Bing-Pappoe, Independent Consultant and Author of OSI/AfriMap report on Ghana's APRM assessment
12:10-12:55	Discussion
12:55-14:30	Lunch
Session 3	Exploring the Challenges Chair: Jorge Chediek UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Peru
14:30-14:40	Introduction to afternoon session by the Chair
14:40-15:40	Three parallel sessions, with each discussing one of the assessment focus areas in depth in the context of the respective case studies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group one – Being assessed <i>Chair: Lise Rakner, CMI</i> • Group two – Assessing oneself <i>Chair: Joachim Nahem, UNDP OGC</i> • Group three – Peer assessment <i>Chair: Noha El-Mikawy, UNDP OGC</i>
15:40-16:10	Coffee/tea break
16:10-16:25	Feedback from the parallel sessions in plenary
16:25-17:20	Discussion
19:30---	Dinner

Tuesday 25 September 2007	
Session 4	Perspectives on Donor Assessments Chair: Pratibha Mehta UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Mongolia
08:30-08:45	Donor Assessments Presentation by James Bewsher Co-Director, Centre for Democratic Governance, University of Essex
08:45-09:30	Donor perspectives - Facilitated panel debate with representatives of donor organisations. DFID – Graham Teskey, Deputy Director and Head, Governance and Social Development Group Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands – Mette Gongrijp, Senior Policy Advisor USAID – Dr. Maria Rendon, Acting Director, Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Crisis & Humanitarian Assistance Discussant: Dr. Carlos Santiso, Manager, Governance Division, African Development Bank
09:30-10:15	Discussion
10:15-10:45	Coffee/tea break
Session 5	Country Perspectives Chair: Dr. Charles Oman Senior Economist and Head of Research Programme, OECD Development Centre
10:45-11:05	Towards National Ownership Joint presentation by Keboitse Machangana, Advisor for Democracy Assessments and Analysis, International IDEA Prof. Peter Ronald de Souza, Professor and Co-Director, Lokniti-programme of Comparative Democracy, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi
11:05-11:25	Discussion
11:25-11:55	Country Perspectives - Facilitated panel debate Myriam Mendez-Montalvo, Programme Adviser UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean Aeneas Chuma, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, Zambia Discussant: Prof. Okey Onyejekwe, Director, Governance and Public Administration Division, UNECA
11:55-12:45	Discussion
12:45-13:05	Close of seminar by: Gunnar Sørnbø, Director, Chr. Michelsen Institute Bjørn Førde, Director, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre
13:05-14:30	Lunch
14:30 -	Departure for airport

List of Participants

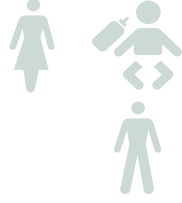
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