



United Nations
Development Programme

AIDE MEMOIRE

**GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS AND THE
PARIS DECLARATION:
OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSIVE
PARTICIPATION AND NATIONAL
OWNERSHIP**

United Nations Development Programme
Oslo Governance Centre
&
Chr. Michelsen Institute

2007 Bergen Seminar

Clarion Hotel Admiral, Bergen, Norway
23 –25 September 2007

INTRODUCTION

More countries than ever before are working to build democratic governance. Their challenge is to develop institutions and processes that are more responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens, including the poor. UNDP brings people together within nations and around the world, building partnerships and sharing ways to promote participation, accountability and effectiveness at all levels. The Democratic Governance Group (DGG) in the Bureau for Development Policy has led UNDP's effort in this area by supporting global and national initiatives for fostering democratic governance.

As part of the DGG, UNDP established the **Oslo Governance Centre [OGC]** in Oslo, Norway in 2002. Its overarching purpose is to position UNDP as a champion of democratic governance, both as an end in itself, and as a means to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This is done through knowledge networking and multi-disciplinary team work, as well as through close partnerships with leading policy and research institutions in different parts of the world. The Centre has a special focus in addressing new and emerging areas of democratic governance and in developing the capacity of UNDP's front-line staff to address these new challenges.

The **Chr. Michelsen Institute [CMI]** is an independent, non-profit research institution and a major international centre in policy-oriented and applied development research. The geographical focus is Sub-Sahara Africa, Southern and Central Asia, the Middle East, and South America. CMI is committed to a balance between applied and theoretical research. Focus is on development and human rights issues and on international conditions that affect such issues. CMI research assists policy formulation, improves the basis for decision-making and promotes public debate on international development issues.

UNDP/OGC and the CMI have entered into a partnership to take forward key themes around the nexus between governance and poverty through an annual seminar. These **Bergen Seminars** have become an important flagship event for the OGC. Major annual seminars were organized 2002-2005, each with a different theme.

The Bergen Seminar Series provide a chance to research and debate key governance issues. The Series has also been regarded as an opportunity to mobilise and consolidate the support of donor countries and partner organisations. From a programming perspective, it has been a chance to develop a shared understanding of emerging governance and poverty issues, and to adopt coordinated strategies.

BACKGROUND FOR THE 2007 BERGEN SEMINAR

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 emphasize 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.

The OECD has become seized with these issues and is playing an important role in convening a dialogue within the donor community of the existing and emerging donor approaches to governance assessments. The UNDP is engaged in this ongoing dialogue.

The 2007 UNDP/CMI Bergen Seminar will focus on governance assessments in the context of the Paris Declaration with its focus on national ownership, national capacity development and alignment and will complement 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.

Three key questions are of particular interest to the seminar:

- **How are governance assessments being used?**
- **For whom are governance assessments useful?**
- **Why are governance assessments being carried out?**

There are three main purposes for governance assessments:

1. To facilitate aid conditionality (both ex-ante and ex-post),
2. As a planning tool to enhance effectiveness of aid in support of good governance,
3. As an instrument to better engage and empower national/local constituencies in promoting good governance.

While the first two purposes have been subject to much discussion, the latter purpose needs more attention and will be especially in focus in seminar. How can government assessments be used in a participatory manner on the ground? How can local analysis be stimulated? What is constructive use of the information gained from governance assessments in the context of national political processes?

The 2007 Bergen Seminar will examine these questions further in the context of three different approaches to governance assessment:

- 1. Being assessed**
- 2. Assessing oneself**
- 3. Peer review**

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- A consensus on guidelines/strategies that can contribute to ensuring genuine national ownership of governance assessments.
- A knowledge package containing an overview of available assessment tools [in addition to what the OGC has already produced].
- A seminar report that can contribute to informing the discourse on governance assessments.

FORMAT:

The format will be that of a working seminar, at which participants will be expected to contribute their experience and expertise.

The first half-day will be devoted to setting the scene and a presentation of discussion papers around the themes being assessed, assessing oneself and peer review. The afternoon of the first day will consist of working group discussions focused on the theme *Exploring the Challenges*, with each group facilitated by key resource persons. This will be followed by a plenary session and discussion.

The programme for the morning of the second day consists of presentations and discussions exploring the themes *Perspectives on Donor Assessments* and *Country Perspectives*. The seminar will close before lunch.

The meeting will be co-hosted by **Bjørn Førde**, Director of the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, and **Gunnar M. Sørbo**, Director of the Chr. Michelsen Institute.

PARTICIPANTS

This seminar will be of particular interest to developing country government officials, donor organisations, organisations developing governance assessment tools and researchers on governance and assessment. There will be approximately 75 participants.

DATE AND VENUE

The seminar will run from Monday 24 in the morning until Tuesday 25 September 2007 at lunch time. Participants are expected to arrive in the afternoon of Sunday 23 September to participate in the official opening in the evening. Accommodation, meals and meetings will take place at the Clarion Hotel Admiral in Bergen.

For more information, please contact Hege Hermansen at the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre at hege.hermansen@undp.org.