**Governance Data Alliance**

**Update to Original Concept Note (September 20 2013)**

*Nathaniel Heller, Global Integrity*

Updates, proposed next steps, and a summary of an initial discussion between organizations are below. The original concept note is also included here as an appendix for posterity’s sake, as is a helpful chart from Robin Hodess at the Transparency International secretariat delineating their summary of existing governance data that might address the need (or not) for tracking a post-2015 MDG on governance/transparency.

3 September 2013 Brainstorming Call

Joining the conversation were:

Nathaniel Heller (Global Integrity)

Hazel Feigenblatt (Global Integrity)

Vivek Ramkumar (International Budget Partnership)

Francesca Recanatini (World Bank)

Alejandro Ponces (World Justice Project)

Jim Cust (Natural Resource Charter / Revenue Watch institute)

Robin Hodess (Transparency International)

Carrie Huisman (Freedom House)

*A Possible Post-2015 MDG*

A number of colleagues expressed interest in exploring greater collaboration amongst governance data providers in part because of the opportunity and challenge presented by a possible post-2015 MDG on governance/transparency. Several colleagues felt the High Level Panel report had opened a significant opportunity to push for a transparency goal, and that governments had yet to push back hard on this, although of course this could change in the coming months and years. A working assumption is that G-77 countries would likely object to the use of third-party independent data to track their progress on a possible post-2015 MDG, while others had heard of interest emerging from the EU in combining government self-assessments with third-party data from independent civil society organizations. Stressing country participation and sustainability of any data gathering efforts would be key.

*New vs. Improved Data*

Speaking to the trade-offs between developing a new “one governance data set to rule them all” and a gap filling approach to improving and streamlining existing data, a number of colleagues were strongly in favor of a gap filling approach rather than a major effort to develop something brand new. Setting aside cost and level of effort questions (which clearly favor a gap filling approach), the group felt that there would be little return on investment in attempting, yet again, to develop a mythical perfect “governance” data set. Colleagues were instead more interested in improving the quality and scope of data by drilling down further into “governance” in specific sectors, especially MDG-germane sectors such as health and education.

*A Demand-Driven Approach?*

Within the context of the post-2015 debate, two colleagues echoed an interest in exploring a demand-driven approach to a possible Governance Data Alliance. Perhaps countries could dictate which data gaps they felt were most significant and relevant to them and work with Alliance members to generate new (and/or improve upon existing) data to support their progress towards fulfilling and tracking post-2015 MDGs on governance/transparency.

Nathaniel Heller closed the call by promising to share summary notes with participants as well as those that couldn’t join the call. He also suggested meeting in person, for those that were attending, on the margins of the Open Government Partnership summit in London in late-October.

Thoughts, Feedback and Ideas since the 3 September Call

These are *ad hoc* ideas, notes, and comments that have emerged since our first conversation:

* **Integrating the “consumer” side of the equation**. We would do well to quickly engage with the consumers and users of our data to shape any decisions regarding a possible Alliance. This should include both government users and aid donors (in developing country contexts). Soliciting their feedback could shed helpful light on some of the major issues, and exploring a more permanent mechanism to engages “users” and “consumers” of our data through the Alliance itself (for example, imagine separate “producers” and “consumers” committees) could prove interesting.
* **No organization wants to be constrained in what they cover or produce.** While this might seem incompatible with some of the thinking in the original concept note, no one is arguing for a possible Alliance with the authority to approve or disapprove any organization’s research or data gathering efforts. The interest has always been in more of a gentle and transparent consensus-driven process that seeks to harmonize, streamline, and fill gaps where they exist.
* **The possibility of a post-2015 MDG on governance/transparency appears to be an immediate driver of interest in a possible Alliance**. That said, organizations have voiced equal interest in knowledge sharing around best practices and techniques that go beyond the post-2015 discussion.
* **We should explore potential synergies with a UNDP Oslo Governance Center idea for collaboration amongst governance assessment providers**. The Oslo Governance Center is exploring building a “Global Governance Assessments and Accountability Knowledge Alliance” as a way to facilitate greater knowledge sharing within the field; Global Integrity attended a small kick-off meeting in late-August organized by UNDP. Bringing in additional partners and exploring ways to lash up with UNDP in the context of the post-2015 discussion likely wouldn’t hurt.

Proposed Next Steps

* We chat briefly (no more than 90 minutes) again in early-/mid-October, specifically to 1) discuss whether and how to reach out to UNDP, and 2) include more organizations that couldn’t make the initial call.
* For those attending: we meet in London on the margins of the OGP summit.
* Coming out of the summit, and for those organizations interested in taking an Alliance forward, we refine some of our options, think about resource requirements, and develop a plan for launching something before the end of the calendar year.

**Appendix 1: Transparency International Assessment of Existing Data Availability for a post-2015 MDG on Governance/Transparency**

The proposal below is to provide some potential ideas for how to frame targets that will capture governance principles as part of a specific governance goals as well as integrating these concerns across the other commitments.

Following additional discussions as part of the post-2015 global processes, targets would need to be made time-bound with intermediate mileposts included to monitor progress. Indicators would also need to be officially agreed. These provide a starting point for reflecting on existing data sources.

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| **GOAL: Ensure governments are more open, accountable and participatory** |
| Topic | Potential Targets | Potential Indicators |
| Anti-corruption | All countries uphold the rule of law | Rule of Law Index from the World Justice Project (WJP) (<http://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index>)Share of government spending dedicated to judiciary and law enforcement sectors:Share of development assistance funding governance and anti-corruption programmes (iatiregistry.org and <http://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>). Number of countries reporting the judiciary as the most corrupt public institution (TI Global Corruption Barometer: <http://gcb.transparency.org/gcb201011/>). Number of countries with independent oversight bodies.<http://www.gettingthedealthrough.com/books/2/anti-corruption-regulation/>.  |
| All countries have eliminated public sector corruption.  | Reported rates of perceived corruption in the public sector (TI Global Corruption Barometer and regional public opinion surveys). |
| All countries have eliminated corruption in basic public service delivery | Reported rates of corruption in basic public services (TI Global Corruption Barometer).Indicators: Reported rates of corruption in social policies. |
| Anti-money laundering | Countries provide adequate provisions to prevent and detect illicit flows | UNCAC Independent Review Reports<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/country-profile/index.html> |
| Illicit flows are eliminated. | Current levels of illicit flows: <http://www.gfintegrity.org/> |
| Topic | Potential Targets | Potential Indicators |
| Asset recovery | Countries provide for the timely and full return of stolen assets | Length of recovery periods (based on World Bank StAR initiative)<http://star.worldbank.org/star/> |
| Citizen engagement | Citizens have basic protections of their civil liberties and the space to engage in public policies. | Political participation, free and fair elections and civil liberties (as measured by the Economist Intelligence Unit.Citizen participation in the formulation, execution and evaluation of social policies. |
| Civil society organisations have an enabling environment to operate | Number of countries with restrictive legislationCivil Society Enabling Environment Index (under development). |
| Corporate transparency | Companies are reporting tax, revenue and royalty payments on a country-by-country basis. | SEC filing reports for Dodd-Frank and EU Directive on country-by-country reporting. <http://www.sec.gov/spotlight/dodd-frank/accomplishments.shtml> (forthcoming). |
| Beneficial ownership legislation is in place in all countries | Countries with beneficial ownership regulations in place for corporate registries. |
| Fiscal transparency | All countries meet basic standards for budget transparency.  | Countries’ scores on the Open Budget Index. <http://internationalbudget.org/what-we-do/open-budget-survey/>. |
| Freedom of expression | All countries have access to information laws are in place | Review of access to information laws (draft and/or approved): <http://right2info.org/>.  |
| All countries have a free and independent press. | Freedom of the press index (Reporters without Borders).[http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html](http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013%2C1054.html) |
| Procurement Integrity | All countries meet the standards for procurement and public finance. | Countries’ performance on public financial management survey:OECD: <http://webnet.oecd.org/budgeting/Budgeting.aspx> ; PEFA: [www.pefa.org](http://www.pefa.org) CPIA (Country Policy and Institutional Assessment). <http://gateway.transparency.org/tools/detail/225>.  |
| Topic | Potential Targets | Potential Indicators |
| Procurement Integrity (cont) | All countries are using transparent and accountable procurement processes. | Countries implementing e-procurement processes in at least 75% of public contracts (World Bank – developing indicator).Countries that have introduced procurement thresholds for public contracting. MAPS (indicator 6: <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/45181522.pdf>.Countries using competitive tenders. MAPS (indicator 7). <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/45181522.pdf>. Export credit agencies have rules on bribery, fraud and collusion. |
| Public sector ethics  | All countries have legal instruments mandating income, asset and conflict of interest disclosures by public officials | Public officials have income, asset and conflict of interest disclosures UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) independent review group reports (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/country-profile/index.html>). |
| Tax integrity | Countries have reduced levels of tax evasion to under 20 percent | World Bank and IMF data on country accounts \* <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator>). Number of countries exchanging tax information. |
| Whistleblower protections | All countries have whistleblower protections in place | Existence of whistle blower provision (for public and/or private sector). UNCAC Independent Review Reports<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/country-profile/index.html> |

**Appendix 2: Original Governance Data Alliance Concept Note (August 2013)**

This concept note is intended to launch a discussion around the ways in which leading governance data providers can better coordinate their research and data gathering efforts to better service their audiences and constituencies, improve and regularize coverage, lower costs, and increase the quality of their data. These are initial thoughts intended to stimulate a debate and surface options as well as hidden challenges. Future versions of this document will take shape as a consensus emerges (or doesn’t).

**Context & Opportunity**

The Monterrey process at the turn of the century launched a renewed interest in governance indicators. After the creation and success of Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index and the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators, a proliferation of second- and third-generation data emerged focused on both systems-wide governance concerns (for example, the Global Integrity Report and country assessments, TI’s National Integrity Systems studies) as well as sector-specific data and metrics (for example, the International Budget Partnership’s Open Budget Index, the World Justice Project’s Rule of Law Index, Revenue Watch’s National Resource Governance Index, IREX’s Media Sustainability Index). After more than a decade of work by dozens of organizations and data providers, users now have a much broader range of data to access when designing or advocating for improved transparency and good governance reforms.

At the same time, the explosive growth of the open data movement in the past 3-4 years has poured (helpful) fuel on the fire. Quality and comprehensive data (including governance data) is less seen as a nerdy, academic pursuit and more a vital necessity for policymakers, advocates, and researchers alike. In more recent months, it’s become clearer that the post-Millennium Development Goals agenda will place helpful importance on the quality and prevalence of data, including governance data. It remains possible that a standalone post-2015 MDG will in fact focus on governance and anti-corruption. If this comes to pass, there will be an acute and renewed focus put on the availability of “actionable” governance data capable of tracking progress towards that post-2015 MDG. The high-profile Open Government Partnership relies exclusively on third-party governance data to assess country eligibility. More innovative bilateral donors such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation base funding decisions largely on the availability of third-party governance data.

In short, the importance of high-quality, comprehensive governance data has never been greater. Yet the reality is that the community of data providers has stagnated in keeping up with that demand. To wit:

* **No new and improved systems-wide assessment tool or dataset has emerged in nearly a decade** to improve upon the TI NIS or CPI work, Global Integrity national assessments, or even qualitative political economy assessments such as the DFID “Drivers of Change” studies.
* **Country coverage remains spotty, arbitrary, and concentrated on the “usual suspects.”** Everyone likes to cover Indonesia, the United States, and Kenya. No one wants to cover the Solomon Islands, Belize, or Chad.
* **Sub-national data remains very much a hodgepodge effort** driven largely by funding and arbitrary “pet country” interests (see Mexico, Kenya). While a modest number of data providers (for example Doing Business, TI, and Global Integrity) have generated high-quality sub-national data (both systems-wide and sector-specific data), sub-national coverage remains largely non-existent across most data providers. Repeated sub-national coverage is virtually unheard of; the vast majority of these initiatives have remained one-off efforts.
* **Coverage often remains slower than necessary.** Despite the advent of better methodologies and technologies designed to streamline the research process, some data providers have locked themselves into biannual or longer-term research cycles. While the predictability is helpful, current uses of these data (for example, to assess OGP eligibility) often call for at least an annual refresh. It’s worth exploring in more detail, particularly with actual users, what realistic coverage cycles might be both useful and feasible.
* **Unit costs and quality standards remain ephemeral.** While there is a certain degree of one-to-one sharing amongst particular data providers around project management methods and tools, little progress has been made in understanding what it really should cost to generate X amount of governance data in Y country, what the best (and worst) tools and methods are for producing those data, and where to find quality in-country partners and contributors. The results are quite natural: higher unit costs, lower data quality, inefficient and random coverage patterns, and a reluctance on the part of donors to make significant investments.
* **Data remains locked in PDFs, spreadsheets, and other static, non-machine readable repositories.** As a community we are failing to take advantage of the advent of the open data movement by not migrating our data and information to machine readable, API-accessible formats. This stifles use and uptake of our research, creates major inefficiencies and costs for users when comparing and consuming data across providers, and prevents real-time updating of data when inaccuracies or updates are identified.

The community of governance data providers thus faces a fascinating paradox: renewed demand for their data despite significant executional barriers. Solving some of those executional challenges could unlock vast economies of scale and efficiencies, improve overall quality of data, and attract greater levels of resources to the collective effort. Below are some ideas for how to make that happen.

**A Governance Data Alliance**

A lightweight coordination mechanism -- call it the Governance Data Alliance for lack of a better term -- could be a low-effort, high-reward approach to addressing many of the above challenges. The overarching goals of such an alliance would include:

* the sharing of best practice methodologies and tools
* facilitating information exchanges around proposed country/sub-national/thematic coverage
* improved communication with the user base, particularly governments as well as donors (in the developing world), around anticipated coverage patterns and ways to engage meaningfully with data providers to both critique results as well as participate in methodology design processes
* improved publication and outreach strategies to increase the reach and penetration of each data provider
* enhanced technical solutions to liberate and increase accessibility to best-of-breed governance data

There are potentially even deeper ways in which such an Alliance could drive greater coordination, quality, and output from governance data providers, including:

* deliberate and proactive synchronization of country, sub-national, or thematic coverage
* streamlining of methodologies to eliminate duplicative or redundant questions or thematic issue areas between data providers
* development of “best practice” standards for governance data and a certification system to publicly endorse and celebrate high-quality, best-of-breed data providers
* deployment of best class technical standards and platforms to increase the machine readability of governance data along with its adherence to best practice open data standards.

Operationalizing such an Alliance could involve the formation of working groups to focus on particular Alliance priorities (for example, developing best practice methodology guidelines, recommended technology tools, etc) as well as quarterly meetings or calls to bring all Alliance members up to date on working group progress while simultaneously engaging on community-wide issues or strategies. An Alliance coordinator or two could ensure that the trains run on time and decisions are advanced on schedule. That said, there is no need for an overly formalistic, bureaucratic structure to make this work. Many of the data providers listed below already know and/or work with each other, and we should leverage those existing relationships to launch something that is practical and value-added.

**Potential Members** (Org / Product or Data Set)

Global Integrity (multiple products)

Transparency International (multiple products)

International Budget Partnership (Open Budget Index)

Revenue Watch Institute (Resource Governance Index)

World Justice Project (Rule of Law Index)

World Bank / Brookings (Worldwide Governance Indicators)

World Bank (Public Accountability Mechanism indicators)

IFC (Doing Business)

World Values Survey (same)

IREX (Media Sustainability Index)

Freedom House (multiple products)

World Wide Web Foundation (Web Index)

Mo Ibrahim Foundation (Ibrahim Index on African Governance)

Latinobarometer (same)

Afrobarometer (same)

Arabarometer (same)

Many others of course could and should be added; this is just an initial attempt to list some of the major players.

*To be determined*: government-to-government peer review (or self-review) mechanisms and processes (APRM, MESICIC, UNCAC, etc) present interesting dilemmas in that their data/assessments tend to be more politically influenced than third-party data. It’s worth exploring whether and how best to include these actors in an eventual alliance.

**Next Steps**

Much of this may be overtaken by events, overly ambitious, or unrealistic. But it seems that an initial conversation is worth having amongst data providers to explore what’s truly possible. Global Integrity would be happy to host an informal, non-committal discussion in Washington, DC at the [OpenGov Hub](http://opengovhub.org) to take the conversation forward.