



Towards an Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda:
Perspectives from the UNECE region
Questionnaire

Please complete

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Please return the completed questionnaire by **FRIDAY, 8 AUGUST 2014** to:

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
Development Policies and Cross-Sectoral Coordination Unit

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The electronic version of the questionnaire is available at:

www.unece.org/post-2015/regionalministerialconsultation2014.html

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I. Objective

This questionnaire is meant to collect regional perspectives from a wide spectrum of stakeholders in the UNECE region, including member States, civil society, private sector, and other regional organizations on elements for an accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda and the potential for a regional framework for accountability anchored at the national level and feeding into the global level.

The UNECE Secretariat will compile and synthesize the responses received. The synthesis report will be submitted as an input from the region to inform the Stocktaking Event of the President of the General Assembly (New York, 11-12 September 2014) on the elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda. The synthesis report will also serve as a background document for the Regional Ministerial Consultation on “*Monitoring and Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda – The Regional Dimension*”, to be held on 15

“Accountability for a universal agenda can be understood as the joint commitment of the global community to monitor, evaluate, share and discuss progress towards the implementation of the agreed goals. An accountability framework could allow each Government and development actor to contribute to and benefit from a better global understanding of challenges and effective strategies. The concept of accountability extends beyond Government, and applies to all stakeholders being held accountable for their role in implementing a universal development agenda, within their respective governance frameworks and scope of responsibility.”

and 16 (a.m.) September 2014 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva that will be convened upon the request of the Secretary-General.

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Source: Background note for the interactive dialogue on elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, convened by the President of the General Assembly on 1 May 2014

II. Background

In July 2013, the General Assembly decided on the format and organizational aspects of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in its resolution 67/290. Paragraph 8 of 67/290 “Decides that the forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda.” The reviews shall be voluntary, state-led and provide a platform for partnerships.

Recognizing that a transformative, people-centred and universal post-2015 agenda requires an accountability framework at all levels, the President of the General Assembly convened an interactive dialogue on 1 May 2014, to address the "Elements for a monitoring and accountability framework for the post-2015 development agenda." The dialogue reaffirmed the importance of an accountability framework at the regional level as countries in the same region shared similar challenges and were likely to make greater progress by collectively addressing them. The [background note](#) prepared to that event elaborated on a number of experiences with accountability mechanisms, including through peer reviews at the regional level.

The [main messages](#) that emerged from the dialogue were:

(a) a universal and transformative agenda would require a strengthened accountability framework that is inclusive, participatory and engages people at all levels; (b) a decentralized system of accountability would ensure that all stakeholders take ownership and are incentivized to share,

evaluate and adjust their policies; (c) national and regional accountability frameworks need to be anchored in a global accountability framework that is simple, focused and provide clarity on the roles of different actors; and (d) a multi-layered approach could work with parliaments at the national level, peer review mechanisms at the regional level, and with HLPF and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) at the global level.

III. Questionnaire on Elements for an Accountability Framework at the Regional Level

A) Overall accountability mechanism

As noted above, there is an emerging view that the accountability mechanism for the post-2015 development agenda should be multi-layered.

Question 1: In general terms, what should an overall accountability mechanism involving the national, regional and global level look like and what could be the role of the regional level in this mechanism?

World Vision underscores the quote from the 2014 Progress report on Accountability for Women's and Children's Health (WHO, 2014), that, '*Rigorous and independent mechanisms for accountability hold great promise as a way of ensuring that resources are spent wisely, honouring commitments, fine tuning programme strategies in line with evidence of results, maintaining the confidence of donors, and winning the support of parliamentarians and ministers of finance*'.

- World Vision recommends the need for a robust and transparent Post 2015 accountability mechanism at multiple levels - operating at **local, national, regional and global levels**. An overall accountability mechanism must facilitate a continuum of accountability, **linking local communities and the data they generate to a global framework** and ensuring that through political will, transparency and accountability, local delivery of development priorities mirrors national, regional and global commitments. Further, the accountability mechanism **must review both the 'results' and the 'process'** of the development path and must promote the principle of mutual accountability in seeking **all stakeholders, including donors, to account for their commitments**.
- The dialogue around "Monitoring and Accountability" should **not only focus on statistics**, which depending on their provenance may distort local realities. More importantly, they must include **processes that generate dialogue and debate**, centred on communities and particularly the most vulnerable within these. The **role of all stakeholders should be clearly articulated** within the framework, including the important **role of children and youth**. To this effect, **social accountability** has much to offer to the 'data revolution', creating real-time feedback loops between citizens and their governments and involving various local actors including service providers, local government, community members, traditional and faith leaders, and in some instances engages members of parliament. "Citizen Voice and Action" (CVA), World Vision's approach to Social Accountability, equips citizens, governments, and service providers to work collaboratively in order to improve services at the facility level.

World Vision is supporting over 400 CVA programmes in 42 countries with positive quantifiable outcomes such as improvements in education and health ¹(see annex). **Citizens' voices must be incorporated at every level of the accountability mechanism.**

- Each country should have **national accountability frameworks**, drawing lessons from the Country Accountability Frameworks (CAFs) for Women and Children's Health, which place accountability soundly at the country level, with leadership of national governments, and engagement of parliaments, civil society, and development partners².
- World Vision believes in the important role of the region in a **multi-layered accountability mechanism** and as a connector between the national and global levels in the continuum of accountability. This also includes **strengthening regional collaboration and promoting the accountability of states to their regional partners**, as well as to global institutions and vice versa as elaborated on later in the questionnaire.
- Drawing on experiences from other frameworks, regional reviews should include **ongoing regional monitoring** and **peer reviews** that will feed into wider global processes. Each regional accountability mechanism should **embrace the face-to-face participation of citizens, including children** in regional review processes, as well as technology that facilitates an avenue to present **ongoing 'real time' monitoring of progress**, e.g. 'crowd map' or other appropriate style of enabling citizens in local communities to directly voice their progress and to feed into country reviews.
- As with every level, the regions should ensure **review and accountability for the 'process or how'** to attain development outcomes and not just the development outcomes themselves, ensuring that a gain in one area (e.g. economic growth) does not lead to a loss in another (e.g. environment). Review processes should ensure accountability to support **Fragile and conflict affected states** as the results from the MDG era have shown that these tend to be severely left behind.
- In addition, the regions should facilitate **collective action** to support accelerated response or redress for inaction or negative action. This is elaborated further under question 3.

In the past, review of progress on sustainable development was carried out under the auspices of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). In the area of development, monitoring and accountability under the MDG framework has been carried out through various mechanisms and procedures.

¹ www.citizenvoiceandaction.org

²

Question 2: What are the major lessons from CSD progress reviews and MDG accountability that can inform and help improve the post-2015 accountability framework? Have CSD progress reviews and MDG accountability been adequate and if not how should this be different for the SDGs?

- A key lesson from MDG accountability leads to our recommendation that any new accountability mechanism must ensure that **progress across sub-national levels, countries and regions, should be effectively captured to ensure unequal progress is noted and the most vulnerable are reached**. MDG accountability failed to recognise the diversity and mixed progress within and across different contexts. Current processes enable States to report on overall progress in their countries but perpetuate the masking of unmet need and progress for the most vulnerable and hardest to reach by focusing on national averages.
- A second lesson is that the development framework's accountability mechanism should **review both the 'process/how' and the 'outcome/what'** to ensure that the different channels of delivering development are reinforcing and not undermining one another, as well as ensuring that the most vulnerable, particularly children, are reached. MDG accountability focused largely on the end result or meeting the goals. Accountability for the processes or the how of meeting the targets, a critical consideration for sustainable development, is often missed.

B) Nature of possible review at the regional level

Scope of the review

In terms of the substantive scope of the review, there are a number of options. For instance, the progress towards all SDGs could be reviewed in one review cycle. Alternatively, the review could be limited to certain selected SDGs or themes. It might also involve other existing commitments that are not directly part of, but nevertheless relevant to the SDGs. There are also different possibilities in terms of the country coverage. For instance, all member States could be reviewed over a multi-year cycle. Alternatively, only governments volunteering to be reviewed could be included. In addition, the reviews could also cover other stakeholders that have responsibilities for achieving the SDGs (e.g., private sector).

Question 3: What should be reviewed and who should be reviewed?

- **Reviewing Results:** Ultimately, review processes need to assess for results. As noted above, these should **not only focus on national averages but on what is obtained at subnational levels**. Along the lines of the recommendation from the Commissioners on Information and Accountability for Women and Children's Health³, the regions must collectively monitor, across all countries in the region, an agreed minimum **set of indicators** that will review the

³www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/accountability_commission/Commission_Report_advancement_copy.pdf

region's progress towards the global framework. For Women and Children's health, 11 indicators, disaggregated by gender and other equity considerations are being used.

- **Reviewing Process:** As mentioned earlier, accountability must not only be for the result, but also for the process of getting there, including the development of **appropriate policies, plans, systems and mechanisms for delivery**. Regional accountability processes should review, for instance for the European region, European States' **accountability to their own citizens**, including **strategies they are employing to identify, reach and involve the most vulnerable within their contexts**, e.g. the Roma community.
- Accountability at the European region level should also review States' delivery of their **external commitments** for the development framework and other global commitments, e.g. as aid donors, contributions to multilateral initiatives, support to fragile contexts, etc.
- Accountability processes at all levels must ensure **answerability to commitments made by all stakeholders**, not only national governments, but also the private sector, donors and civil society and thereby promoting the principle of mutual accountability. World Vision calls for accountability mechanisms for all cross-sector partnerships to be put in place by 2020; and a global, multi-stakeholder issue platform to be put in place by 2017 for each of the new post-2015 goals, to convene diverse stakeholders and to support alignment with (and link to) national-level platforms.
- Further to answerability, there must be **responsiveness** to the reviews. The regional accountability process should include **processes to support** countries that are slipping or off track, particularly for priority targets. For instance, **stakeholders can be convened to support an action plan** to get the country back on track. Additional incentives for support and resources should be offered to countries participating in a thorough periodic peer review process.

Review process

Accountability can take different forms and modalities, ranging from more basic monitoring to more comprehensive reviews and, accordingly, with a different capacity to assist, support and advise governments and other stakeholders in achieving the SDGs:

- Monitoring of data on SDG performance which highlights where progress is and is not on track.
- Analytical reports on SDG implementation in the region which would provide an analysis of best practices and make policy recommendations where progress has been poor.
- Discussions and exchange of experiences and best practices at regional meetings, for instance Regional Forums on Sustainable Development convened by UNECE.
- Review of progress of members States by other member States (peer reviews).

Monitoring of data and tracking progress against the agreed goals will be the basis of any further analysis or review process. Different information and inputs will be needed for the various types of reviews, e.g. quantitative data or qualitative assessments and policy analysis. Different parts of the

UN system (Regional Commission, the inter-agency Regional Coordination Mechanism and the regional UNDG, specialised agencies on specific SDGs) could play a role in the various reviews. While the review process will be State-led, it will also benefit from the contributions of other stakeholders (civil society, the private sector, academia).

Question 4: What type(s) of review should be conducted and what kind of information should it be based on? What should be the role of the UN system and other stakeholders in the process?

- There should be ongoing monitoring of overall progress towards the development goals, particularly on an agreed minimum set of priority targets that are compulsory for all countries in the region. A **combination of different review approaches should be employed**, possibly in alternate years. Analytical reports, case studies and peer reviews should be part of the regional reviews, and of both processes and outcomes as referred to in question 3.
- **Country progress reports** must be prepared through multi stakeholder input and received for regional review after **community and stakeholder validation**.
- In order to ensure the development goals are met **for all, all countries** must be included in some form of regional **periodic review**.
- World Vision would like to emphasise the importance of **directly including citizens, including children and youth**, in these regional reviews processes, both in person and through technological advancements that facilitate ‘real time’ voices from local communities to regional platforms (e.g. through ‘crowd map’).
- As referred to earlier, accountability at all levels should include **opportunities for dialogue**.

Peer review mechanisms are considered to be an effective instrument to strengthen accountability in a multilateral context with strong ownership by participating governments. Some examples are the [Universal Periodic Review](#) conducted under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, the [OECD Peer Reviews](#), ECOSOC’s [Annual Ministerial Review](#), the WTO [Trade Policy Review Mechanism](#) and the [UNECE Environmental Performance Reviews](#).

Question 5: If you favour peer reviews, what could such reviews at the regional level look like and what existing models do you consider relevant?

Peer reviews are a powerful way to review progress, put some pressure to accelerate action and responsiveness, and for stakeholders to convene to provide support. The voluntary nature of some of these reviews demonstrates the willingness and confidence of those opting in, to progressing on their commitments. For the peer reviews, **locally-led monitoring and accountability** should continue to be a central feature, promoting national as well as **alternative stakeholder reports**, as is the case with the shadow reports of the Universal Periodic Reviews. Children’s participation should be promoted in these, especially as **children tend to raise issues that may not have been prioritised by adults**.

For example, World Vision has directly seen the outcomes of direct children involvement in Universal Periodic Reviews. In 2013, approximately 40 children from World Vision and Save the Children’s committees all over Albania, and representing many more children, came together to write their own report to the UN’s Universal Periodic Review. The review was scheduled for April 2014. The report

focused on access to education, violence against children, discrimination against Roma and children with disabilities, and child participation. In February, staff from World Vision International and Save the Children in Geneva travelled to Albania to do some training over a weekend with children from the committees, explaining to them how the UPR and CRC reporting works and how to link national and international advocacy. Several children then took their recommendations to different countries' Embassies in Tirana. The children selected three of their peers to go to Geneva. The three children participated in lobbying Governments in Geneva to raise their particular concerns and recommendations during the review. Three weeks later, the review took place and all the children's recommendations were presented, with the Government of Albania even addressing child participation in its opening presentation, and brought a child rights expert in as part of the UPR delegation. The first ever recommendation made in any UPR on the need to ensure child participation was made by a Government whom the children had lobbied (Slovenia).⁴

Linkage with global and national reviews and other mechanisms

A regional accountability mechanism needs to be part of a multi-layered structure with a strong national and global dimension. This requires regional reviews to be anchored at the national level and to feed into the global level. Reviews at the global level will be carried out by the High-level Political Forum. For example, the regional level could therefore provide a regional synthesis to the global deliberations and align its theme with the global review. It could also go beyond merely complementing the HLPF and be more systematic and ongoing, taking into account the regional priorities and particularly transboundary issues. A key pillar of the overall system will be national accountability. National SDG reports, prepared by governments and supported by the UN Country Teams and the UNDG agencies as appropriate, could play a key role in the review process and provide important inputs into the regional review. National parliaments could also be involved. In addition, it will be critical to build on and integrate existing accountability mechanisms in the post-2015 follow-up process, for example those under relevant existing legal instruments or programme activities or carried out in other fora.

Question 6: How should the reviews at national, regional and global level be linked? And how can existing accountability mechanisms be integrated?

Many countries have existing mechanisms or platforms for monitoring and accountability for global or national commitments in one or more themes, e.g. Nutrition, Education, etc. It is important to **recognise existing accountability mechanisms**, and work towards strengthening and broadening them to support accountability for the next development framework as appropriate, e.g. by improving their inclusiveness, participation opportunities, targets, capacity etc. **Local data from non-State led social accountability and participatory monitoring processes should have a formal place** in multi-stakeholder sub-national and national accountability processes and fora that are State-led. There should be clear roles for different stakeholders, e.g. Parliament, independent media, private sector etc.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Y2ysOafNDU>

Sub-national and national accountability processes should result in a national progress report, which should have been first fed back to citizens and validated in a national multi-stakeholder forum, ensuring domestic accountability to citizens is paramount in the continuum of accountability. The national progress report should then be presented to the regional accountability processes. Regional accountability processes will review the national reports, alongside a synthesis of 'real time community voices' from the 'crowdmap' style platform, shadow reports, Peer review reports, case studies from participatory monitoring etc.

As mentioned in responses to question 3, the review processes should facilitate stakeholders to convene and act in support of a country that is off track. Reviews made at the global level should take into account the difference across regions and, if appropriate, facilitate a global collective action to redress in action or in sufficient progress.

Annex

Examples of Impact of Social Accountability drawn from research and evidence in World Vision's programmes and as presented in the 2014 World Vision report, **'Europe Can Make the Difference: How Social Accountability Improves the Lives of Children'**⁵.

1. Improving Education outcomes in Uganda

In a series of randomised control trials, World Vision partnered with Makerere University, Oxford University and Georgetown University to study a variety of ways to reduce teacher absenteeism in 180 rural government primary schools in six districts in Uganda. In the first trials, researchers concluded that the 'scorecard' used in the CVA approach had resulted in⁶

- An 9 per cent increase in primary school test scores
- an 8–10 per cent increase in pupil attendance in the treatment
- communities using the CVA scorecard
- a 13 per cent reduction in teacher absenteeism
- a 16 per cent higher likelihood that communities would solve collective action problems

2. Helping mothers access health services in Pakistan

In Pakistan, one in every 110 women dies due to causes related to childbirth. As part of a CVA process, 25 community members attended a meeting with the district health officer, asking the government to establish a labour and delivery room at a local basic health unit. Lack of budget meant the district health officer initially denied the request. During a second meeting, people presented evidence from the CVA process about their village to the government officials and after multiple meetings, health officials agreed. The government has since provided basic equipment, including delivery kits and surgical instruments at a labour and delivery room of the basic health unit, which is now properly functional. Between 20 and 25 babies are delivered each month; 80 women benefit from prenatal check-ups; and more than 1,000 patients have been registered.

3. Communities influencing national decisions in Uganda

World Vision currently supports 37 CVA programmes in Uganda. By aggregating community-level data, practitioners have been able to influence national-level policy. In 2013, CVA practitioners worked to aggregate and analyse the evidence from dozens of clinics in Kiboga district. Together with coalition partners, CVA practitioners were able to document serious gaps in clinic personnel. They progressively and constructively raised these issues with government officials, including their elected representatives.

Representatives responded. During one meeting brokered by World Vision, one Member of Parliament, Honourable Sylvia Namabidde, stated 'Given the evidence on the ground, as legislators, we are going to block the budget until more is allocated to the health sector'. Together with other representatives, Representative Namabidde persuaded the Ugandan parliament to ensure that the funding gap was addressed. Two weeks later, an additional US\$49.5b (€14 million) was allocated to the health sector for recruitment of health workers and enhancement of medical workers' salary packages. The prime minister's office publicly committed to the hire of 6,000 new health workers. Staff costs aside, the World Vision Uganda office estimated the cost of the advocacy work at just €2,900.

⁵ Available at <http://www.wvi.org/world-vision-european-union/publication/citizen-voice-action>

⁶ A. Zeitlin, L. Bategeka, M. Guloba, I. Kasirye & F. Mugisha, 2011 (draft). *Management and Motivation in Ugandan Primary Schools: Impact Evaluation Final Report*. <http://www.iig.ox.ac.uk/output/reports/pdfs/iiG-D10-UgandaPrimarySchoolsImpactReportFinal.pdf>.