

Tabled at Hearing 15/03/2013

## **Measure What You Treasure:**

### **Reflections from the Post-2015 Governance Consultation Meeting**

As a part of THE WORLD WE WANT, the post-2015 global thematic consultation on governance held in Johannesburg on 28 February – 1 March, I communicated my message for civil society strategies in 4 words, “Bring your measuring stick!”

#### **If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist**

You might not agree to the theorem, “If you can't measure it, it doesn't exist.” However, we need to recognise that this is the dominant mode of operation – and increasingly so these days – in policy-making circles at global, regional, national and local levels. So what we need to do, in light of the formation of the post-MDGs goals and indicators on the horizon, is to “measure what you treasure,” instead of “treasure what you can measure,” as succinctly put forward in the video message by High Commissioner Navi Pillay during the consultation meeting.

As civil society actors, we all need to clearly formulate what we “treasure” in this opportune time and try to develop their respective yardstick (ie., measurement framework) so that we increase our chances of having what we “treasure” incorporated into the new set of globally-agreed targets and indicators post 2015. This is particularly true in the governance domain, where its key ingredients might be amorphous and abstract. Thus my message, “bring your measuring stick.”

Indeed, the first prize for civil society actors is to have what one treasures included in the post-MDGs goals and indicators. However, I went on to emphasise in my intervention that even if what we treasure doesn't make it to the final goals – for political and other reasons – it is still a very valuable exercise because it will send our message to the world on how the world needs to be “framed” or looked at with a new lens when the current MDGs expire. A case in point is the “beyond GDP” discussion in which people are proposing alternatives (and alternative means of measurement) of framing the world to the economic primacy model.

#### **Centrality of Governance and Enabling Environment for Civil Society**

At this consultation meeting, the core message from this thematic consultation to the entire post-2015 debate was emerging. In my interpretation, it was something like: the centrality of democratic governance founded on human rights principles with effective accountability mechanism that ensures duty-bearers are held to account. With the caveat that things can be toned down in the final report, this is all good from CIVICUS' perspective.

It is with this assessment where I spoke about the “bring your measuring stick” strategy. As an example, I introduced CIVICUS' attention to enabling environment for civil society and the yardstick we are developing: the Enabling Environment Index (EE Index). CIVICUS is working on a comprehensive EE Index to measure and compare the operating conditions for civil society primarily because it was formally recognised in the post-Busan (Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in

Busan November/December 2012) document to be used as a part of the global monitoring framework for aid and development effectiveness. At the same time, we believe that it can also be used in different contexts, including the post-2015 debate, to offer a lens to look at the world.

### **The Governance Consultation**

CIVICUS was one of the civil society representatives of the reference group that prepared the programme for this two-day consultation meeting, organised by the UNDP and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In the lead up to this final meeting, the consultation included regional dialogues in Africa (Johannesburg, October 2012), the Asia-Pacific (Manila, November and Dhaka, December), the Arab region (Cairo, November) and Latin America and the Caribbean (Brasilia, November), as well as a technical expert meeting in November. A synthesis report from these meetings and the e-discussion had been written prior to this final meeting.

With the help of Jeffery Huffines (CIVICUS UN Representative-New York), I joined Mandeep Tiwana (Policy and Advocacy Manager) and David Kode (Policy and Advocacy Officer) to play various speaking and moderating roles during the meeting, which attracted global experts from a broad set of stakeholders including national governments, parliamentarians, local government offices, civil society and academia. I spoke at a plenary on Day 2 titled, "Positioning Governance in the Post-2015 Agenda" in which the focus was on strategy setting.

### **Success Factors of Measurements and Multi-Stakeholder Process**

Referring to a recent blog post by Duncan Green, where he cited a report by a group called Bringing Alternative Indicators into Policy, I shared their insight about the success factors of measurements affecting policies, which are: 1) relevance to policymakers; 2) simplicity, understandability and good communication; and 3) credibility, legitimacy and neutrality. I also mentioned that measurements can be not just indices but include qualitative/descriptive data that accompany a simple presentation of numbers. The power of succinct measurement information is an appeal to a broad audience, which of course can be turned to a policy influence.

These days, we can create civil society-led multi-stakeholder processes with the support of those who have technical expertise, policy knowledge and political network to produce and promote useful indicators. Fifteen years ago, in the formation of the MDGs, this was not possible. Today, many in different stakeholders look to civil society for ideas and perspectives that can become a foundation for developing a common understanding about the state of the world. In other words, it is within our purview to bring on these resources and create a variety of strands of "measuring what you treasure" for civil society. Why don't we marshal our efforts to make it happen?

In solidarity

Katsuji Imata Acting Secretary General (until 1 March 2013)

CIVICUS, March 2013.