



## Overview

The citizen-led assessment approach should be used to implement, monitor and establish country owned accountability mechanisms for the post-2015 development agenda. International IDEA's State of Democracy, State of Local Democracy and Democratic Accountability assessment frameworks (developed as global public goods) offer a basis for designing such a framework.

The Mongolia experience provides a practical example of how it is possible to assess progress in the achievement of democracy and democratic governance goals. It illustrates how using citizen-led approaches can ensure that an 'inclusive and people centred' approach to developing the post-2015 development agenda is upheld in its implementation and monitoring.

## About International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with a mission to support sustainable democracy worldwide.

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## The citizen-led democracy assessment approach

### Lessons that Mongolia offers for the post-2015 development agenda

Democracy and governance can be assessed and measured. Doing so through citizen-led<sup>1</sup> and owned democracy and democratic accountability assessment approaches builds country ownership of such measurements and assessments.

Since the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that followed the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000, a variety of global data sets for measuring democracy and governance have been established. During the same period, citizen-led and owned approaches to democracy and democratic accountability assessments, such as International IDEA's State of Democracy (SoD), State of Local Democracy (SoLD) and Democratic Accountability in service delivery assessment frameworks, were developed, tried and tested in a number of countries. Such approaches use both universal and context-specific indicators to enable comparative analysis while at the same time illuminating the uniqueness of a particular country's democracy.

These assessments are led and become owned by the assessment countries themselves. This is an important attribute that sets them apart from other assessments.

Mongolia's experience in applying the citizen-led approach to democracy and governance assessment offers valuable lessons for establishing country owned accountability mechanisms for inter-governmental processes such as the post-2015 development agenda.

In September 2003, Mongolia hosted the Fifth UN International Conference of New and Restored Democracies (ICNRD-5) that adopted the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and Plan of Action, therein committing governments to draw and implement plans to strengthen democracy and 'develop nationally-owned democratic governance' indicators in order to monitor progress. In implementing its follow up actions to ICNRD-5, Mongolia chose International IDEA's SoD

### Foundations of the citizen-led and owned assessment approach

<b>Goal</b>	Reform
<b>Concept</b>	Popular control of decisions and decision-makers. Equality between citizens in the exercise of that control.
<b>Leadership</b>	In-country led by multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary assessment teams.
<b>Method</b>	Balance between professionally conducted research and dialogues among a diversity of in-country stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup> Citizen-led in this case refers to 'people led and owned' and 'people centred.' 'The people' refers to women and men in all sections of society.



*Based on the democratic governance indicators used by the assessment and the country information, we were able to formulate a national programme of action to consolidate democracy in Mongolia.*

HE Ambassador Ochir Enkhtsetseg, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations, 2007–2012

assessment framework because it offered a template for assessing and establishing progress towards democracy. The attraction of the SoD assessment framework was also that it enables the development of both universal and context-specific indicators of democracy, based on universal democratic principles and values. The universal indicators allow for comparative analysis, whereas the context-specific indicators capture the unique dimensions of a country's democracy, hence enabling each assessment to reveal every democracy's unique story. In this regard, the Mongolia experience offers three key lessons for the post-2015 development agenda.

First, the Mongolia experience demonstrates that the citizen-led and owned approach, on which the SoD assessment framework is based, is an effective mechanism for governments to translate the outcomes of inter-governmental processes, such as the post-2015 development agenda, into country-led and owned agendas. The unique combination of research and broad based in-country dialogues broadened the engagement beyond the executive arm of government to include a multiplicity of stakeholders such as parliamentarians, civil society organizations, academia and ordinary citizens. It should be emphasized that the 'broad based in-country dialogue,' a core feature of the approach, was central in both the 'process of assessing' the state of democracy in Mongolia and more importantly, in

the 'development of the democratic governance indicators,' in response to the assessment findings. In this regard, the citizen-led approach to assessing democracy and governance addresses concerns among some countries that a democratic governance goal and related targets could threaten the national sovereignty and favour external interference in domestic politics.

Mongolia was the first government to apply the SoD assessment framework, followed by the Netherlands in 2006. As such, Mongolia led the way, not only in demonstrating the need for governments to actively lead their citizens in processes that translate international commitments into action. More critically, Mongolia's experience showed that it is possible to build country ownership of international commitments through inclusive and highly interactive approaches. Such leadership, however, requires firm political will and a commitment to reform. The fact that both Mongolia and the Netherlands used the SoD to assess their democracy and governance also attests to the applicability of SoD in diverse socio-political and economic contexts.

Second, the Government of Mongolia and the people of Mongolia—supported by the international community—defined and packaged a clear reform agenda in the form of a new, Mongolia specific 'Millennium Development Goal (MDG) #9' that addresses democracy, human rights and corruption. On the basis of the outcome of the SoD

assessment, Mongolia developed democratic governance indicators (DGIs) which have since been used to periodically monitor the MDG-9. The SoD assessment framework provides universal indicators of democracy and democratic governance while enabling the development and inclusion of context-specific indicators that capture this dimension of each country's democracy and democratic governance. In the case of Mongolia for instance, a total of 117 'core' indicators (universal indicators of democracy) and 14 'satellite' indicators (context-specific indicators) were developed to capture both the universal values and context-specific dimensions of Mongolian democracy respectively. By enabling the inclusion of universal and context-specific indicators, the SoD assessment framework is consistent with the principles of the post-2015 development agenda of respecting national priorities and taking national context into account.

Third, on the basis of the DGIs, Mongolia institutionalized and monitored democracy and democratic governance within a national monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Law (the lead Mongolian agency in researching and developing the DGIs) partnered with the National Statistics Office in this endeavour, resulting in the DGI becoming part of Mongolia's national monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

In this regard, citizen-led and owned democracy assessment in Mongolia played a critical role in raising awareness about the state of Mongolian democracy, building in-country capacity for the conduct of SoD assessments and development of DGIs and galvanizing a nation around the domestic outcome of an inter-governmental process. Most importantly though, the SoD made it possible to develop a reform agenda that enjoys broad in-country ownership.

It is important to note that the SoD assessment process in Mongolia also enjoyed ample support from the international community, demonstrating that while any sustainable reform process is first and foremost dependent upon leadership and ownership by a country and its citizens, such processes can benefit immensely from the experience and support of the international community.

The Mongolia experience provides a solid example of how it is possible to assess progress in achieving democracy and democratic governance goals. It illustrates how citizen-led and owned approaches can provide a platform for implementing and monitoring the whole set of new goals that will be embodied in the post-2015 framework.

In conclusion, the citizen-led and owned assessment process is a mechanism that can translate and channel peoples' everyday experiences, conversations and aspirations for their democracy, governance and development into the policymaking process.

- The process ignites a dynamic but structured engagement among a variety of in-country stakeholders;
- It raises awareness about the state of democracy and governance, builds the demand side and;
- It motivates political will for broadening and deepening the quality of democracy and governance.

Adopting and adapting such an approach for implementing and monitoring a global development agenda will provide further credence and assurance that indeed; the post-2015 development agenda embodies the principles of 'inclusion and a people centred approach' as well as one of a 'people-led and owned' process.



Putting the question, ‘what does democracy mean in your ordinary life,’ to herders in the countryside of Mongolia, triggered a whole exercise about democratic values, how democracy should function, in any country, and particularly, in Mongolia.

HE Ambassador Ochir Enkhsetseg, Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations, 2007–2012

## Recommendations

- 1. The citizen-led approach should be used to implement, monitor and establish country owned accountability mechanisms for the post-2015 development agenda.** International IDEA’s State of Democracy, State of Local Democracy and Democratic Accountability assessment framework (developed as global public goods) already offer a basis for designing such a framework for the purpose of the post-2015 development framework. The citizen-led approach however, is as applicable and relevant for other development goals. Adopting it more widely will ensure that the ‘inclusive and people centred’ approach to developing the post-2015 development agenda permeates through its implementation and monitoring.
- 2. The monitoring framework for the post-2015 development goals and targets should adopt universal and context-specific indicators.** This is critical for country ownership of the post-2015 development agenda. It would ensure that even in its implementation and monitoring, the global development framework remains ‘universal in nature, while taking account of differing national circumstances and respecting national policies and priorities.’ Again, International IDEA’s citizen-led assessment frameworks and the Mongolian experience provide an illustration of how this may be achieved.



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For more information on the topic of citizen-led approaches, see *Assessing the Quality of Democracy: A Practical Guide*, which introduces the framework, its fundamental democratic principles, mediating values and examples of its application around the world. Further information relating to the State of Democracy (SOD) citizen-led assessment approach can be found at <http://www.idea.int/sod/>.