

**KEY MESSAGES FROM THE ASIA  
PACIFIC REGIONAL SOUTH-SOUTH  
EXCHANGE FORUM ON  
GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT**

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## THE FORUM

- Held 21-22 March 2012 in Jakarta, Indonesia
- In cooperation with Bappenas, Oslo Governance Centre, Asia Pacific Regional Centre, and UNDP Indonesia
- Attended by government representatives, civil society, academics, and UNDP practitioners from Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia.
- As a follow up from the Oslo Governance Forum held in October 2011.
- Aimed at exchange of experience and information across countries that have already conducted governance assessments and those that are about to embark.

## OSLO PRINCIPLES ON DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENTS

- The Forum was driven by the Oslo Principles on Democratic Governance Assessments agreed upon during the OGF in October 2011
- The principles consist of the following points:
  1. Promote country-ownership of governance process and assessments
  2. Strengthen the ability of people to hold their governments to account
  3. Apply a rights based approach
  4. Strengthen government's capability to be responsive



5. Strengthen accountability across government
6. Promote and protect space for citizens and civil society organisations to participate in democratic governance assessments and to hold their governments to account
7. Commit to transparency and access to information
8. Encourage a culture of evidence-based policy making
9. Embed the assessment in political realities
10. Align with national development and political vision
11. Support democratic governance assessments at the local level

## THE DISCUSSION

- The Forum discussed the issues what governance assessments are about and what purposes they will serve; how governance assessments can be designed and crafted; what sort of flexibility can be exercised given the political economic situation of countries; which stakeholders can participate in the process of governance assessments
- The Forum discussed the experiences of Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Bhutan, the Philippines, and Bangladesh.



## THE TAKEAWAYS

- Governance assessments are means by which several purposes can be achieved. These purposes can be construed as menu for choice in which countries can opt to have emphasis on one or more purposes.
- The most prominent purposes are:
  1. Government accountability
  2. Evidence-based planning / policy making
- Whichever purposes will be emphasised, there needs to be a process in which the assessment is country-owned.



- The involvement of the government as one of the key stakeholders in the assessment ought to be secured. This is also important to ensure sustainability of the assessment, both in terms of funding and capacity.
- It is important to maintain independence and integrity of the process and results of the assessment. It can be assured through inclusion of non-governmental stakeholders in the process, such as the academics and civil society. Some countries establish the panel of experts to be the judge of the assessment, and equip them with mandate to maintain impartially and free from intervention.

- The country-context should be regarded as a primacy. Practitioners should maintain flexibility on what will be assessed, according to individual countries' democratic development. Countries should be at their comfort zone, while gradually enlarging the areas of assessment according to the pace acceptable to the stakeholders.
- There are assessments that will be driven by the government and by the civil society. In either case, it is important to be as diverse as possible in the involvement of stakeholders in the process, although pace should be adjusted to country context.





- Lastly, it is important for the assessment to produce a set of recommendations, especially for but not limited to those that are meant to influence policy. Such recommendations should be detailed enough and should aim for improvement but should also take into account the existing capacity and the level of maturity in the polity, or in other words “actionable.”