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Challenges for institutions in eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world

Contribution by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration to the thematic review of the 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development

1. Efforts to eradicate poverty need to be accelerated as a matter of priority and as an integral part of overall efforts to implement the SDGs.
2. Governments have the primary responsibility for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the people they serve, and therefore for eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity.
3. Effective, inclusive and accountable institutions and the sound functioning of the public sector are necessary to drive poverty eradication and promote prosperity.
4. The principle to leave no one behind should guide public institutions and public administrations in delivering on all their functions, alongside the principles of effectiveness, inclusiveness and accountability, as recognized in SDG 16.¹

Recognizing the multiple forms and dimensions of Goal 1 on poverty eradication

5. To identify the poorest and most vulnerable people and understand their needs, public institutions need to have an in-depth and holistic understanding of various dimensions, manifestations, factors and dynamics in poverty, and of who is at risk of being left behind.
6. This requires not only quality disaggregated data, but also employment creation and decent work, as well as active political and institutionalised engagement and participatory processes that are truly inclusive of the poorest and most vulnerable.
7. In pursuing poverty eradication, it is important to ensure that all people especially the poorest and most vulnerable, have equal opportunities to participation and equal access to services and infrastructure.
8. Public administrations have the responsibility to improve the well-being of not only citizens but also minorities, migrants, refugees and other poor and vulnerable people in the country.

Developing effective multidimensional poverty eradication strategies

9. Some countries have made major progress in eradicating poverty and lessons can be learned from their experience. Eradicating poverty requires a whole-of-government approach involving ministries, local authorities, agencies and a multiplicity of actors working across sectors and boundaries of

¹ See CEPA's contribution to the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development

society. It is important that people have free access to information, law and government regulation, a precondition for the effective rule of law.

10. It is important to develop well-resourced poverty eradication strategies with specific objectives, clear target beneficiaries and timelines, and a focus on the multiple dimensions and factors of poverty. Addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty requires social security policies and sound policies that promote employment and decent work, develop educational and skills, improve housing, invest in infrastructure including water and electricity, and bolster health services. Efforts to improve governance at all levels and make institutions more effective, inclusive and accountable are an integral part of poverty eradication efforts.
11. Important regional disparities often exist within countries regarding the level, characteristics and dynamics of poverty. To ensure balanced progress in eradicating poverty in all regions, it can be useful to develop a national plan for sub-national development and poverty eradication,² which in particular address urban and rural dimensions of poverty.

Social protection

12. Eradicating poverty in all its forms requires addressing the deep inequalities that exist in many countries, which may require governments to play a greater role in the effective redistribution and social protection programmes including through more progressive and effective taxation systems and administration.
13. Well-functioning social protection policies not only improve equity for the poor and vulnerable people, but also enhance resilience against impacts of different shocks for the most vulnerable and the near poor (those at risk of sliding back into poverty) and create opportunity for all people.
14. Poverty eradication strategies on conditional cash transfers coupled with empowerment have been shown to bring improvements in incomes, children's health, nutrition, and education, thereby having long-term positive impacts on productivity and wealth creation as well as contributing to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty.
15. Implementing nationally appropriate social protection floors is of utmost urgency, as called for by SDG 1. Social protection floors provide a framework for coordinated public support to households and thus require integrated support from governments. One stop shop models for delivering social protection floors and related programmes can assist in reaching the poorest, most vulnerable and most remote people.³
16. Social protection floor can be implemented through long-term strategies based on the countries' specific situations, needs, priorities, capacities and resources.
17. Social protection strategies may be hampered by corruption, misconduct and governance weaknesses which need to be countered by public administration accountability measures at all levels.

Job creation and employment

18. Creating jobs, promoting entrepreneurship, promoting growth and productivity, building organizational productive capability, enhancing formal sector employment and working on the integration of the informal sector are major components in eradicating poverty. They also help ensure successful redistribution and welfare programmes. While there is a good knowledge on how to make social and redistribution programmes more targeted and effective, there is a need to find new

² Poverty eradication through regional development: the case of Brazil, by Alexandre Navarro Garcia (E/C.16/2017/7)

³ Rolling out national social protection floors, conference room paper for CEPA 16th session, by Rowena Bethel

approaches and to build capacities to implement programmes related to entrepreneurship and skill training for example, for both men and women, at local level, including in the urban and local areas.

19. New innovative ideas and policies are also needed to support decent work for the poorest and most vulnerable. The government has the responsibility to promote a conducive business environment for small-medium enterprises. It should also continue to take a lead in pioneering research, technology and innovation to boost job creation and sustain growth.
20. Vocational education and skill training are also essential for sustainable economic growth and should be geared at equipping people for integrating the labour market.
21. Digital identity schemes can enable the poorest people to gain legal identity, which is a precondition for accessing credit and other livelihood sources.

Rule of law and justice

22. The rule of law, public security, an independent judiciary and the proper administration of justice are also important for supporting poverty eradication and the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable. Independent audit institutions can also be engaged.
23. The impact of social, economic and other policies is even greater when supported by legal measures to combat discrimination in access to public services especially in areas such as employment, access to education and healthcare. Measures are also necessary to remove or overcome obstacles to accessing public services, including financial costs, language, culture, remoteness, and a lack of access to infrastructure or technologies.

Integrating policies

24. Given the interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs, public administrations at all levels also have to be mindful of the synergies, conflicts and trade-offs that arise in policy design and implementation in the various areas addressed by the targets. It is also important to ensure a cohesive delivery of public services.
25. Integrated approaches can be promoted through relevant mechanisms, incentives and practices at all level of governments and within the public service. Many countries have been creating inter-ministerial and other coordination and collaboration arrangements for implementing the SDGs. Those can help spearhead poverty eradication as an integral part of their work. They need to be supplemented by arrangements to ensure cooperation between groups of institutions working on given target(s) and by efforts at promoting cooperation among civil servants and other actors.
26. Poverty eradication strategies should also be integrated with other national strategies related to internationally agreed development agenda, such as the Paris climate change agreement, the Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the New Urban Agenda. Environmental factors such as global warming can lead to adverse impacts on poverty eradication.
27. In financing poverty eradication strategies along with implementing SDGs and building climate change resilience, in addition to traditional sources of funding, an opportunity exists for governments to tap into global sovereign wealth funds.

The role of local governments and communities

28. Given the multiple dimensions and complexities of poverty eradication, poverty eradication should be pursued through bottom-up approaches involving actions at all levels of government and with various actors.

29. Local governments, being the government institutions closest to the people, have a particular role in eradicating poverty and delivering public services working in close collaboration and partnership with central government.
30. As part of a transformative approach to poverty eradication, it is important to support the development and implementation of ‘local Agenda 2030’ or ‘local SDGs achievement plans’ that have poverty eradication as a central objective. Local governments also have an important role in providing regulatory frameworks and infrastructure for business and jobs to sustain and thrive.
31. Local governments need to have the necessary capacities, financial and human resources, and access to disaggregated data, to develop and implement such plans. Therefore programmes for developing public sector capacity for public service delivery should always include the development of such capacities at local level.
32. Providing assistance and services to the poorest and most vulnerable also requires mobilizing local communities, notably through civil society organisations. Partnerships with non-governmental organisations and the private sector can help to reach the poorest and most vulnerable, including slum dwellers, migrants or people living in rural or remote areas. They should be accompanied by mechanisms to ensure the quality and affordability of public services and shared accountability of the state and non-state actors.⁴

Engaging the poorest and most vulnerable in decision-making and review

33. Poverty eradication strategies and measures will attract more community and other support and have a much greater impact if they are elaborated with the engagement of all people notably the poorest and most vulnerable.
34. Their participation should also be ensured in national and local accountability and review mechanisms as those should ensure that SDG implementation benefits all society segments without discrimination.
35. Poverty eradication including pro-poor public policies must also enjoy broad-based domestic support and social consensus among all segments of the population.

Transforming institutions

36. Eradicating poverty, and more generally realizing the SDGs, requires transforming bureaucratic mind-sets and the modus operandi of public institutions and public administrations especially at the level of delivery of public services. It is important to:
 - a. Ensure continuing strong political will and transformational leadership at the highest level to drive the initiation, formulation, and implementation of poverty eradication policies in all parts of the government and public administration; and undertake efforts to encourage leadership and innovation related to poverty eradication among civil servants;
 - b. Ensure that public management takes into account the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable in every action via sustained public engagement;
 - c. Introduce or reinforce anti-discrimination measures for public sector employment so that public administrations at local and national levels are fully representative of all segments of society;
 - d. Mobilize civil servants at all levels around poverty eradication and the other SDGs and bolster their knowledge, capacities and skills to develop adequate anti-poverty measures that are truly participatory and inclusive; realizing the SDGs requires mobilizing public servants and instilling

⁴ See CEPA’s contribution to the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

a spirit of commitment, creativity and leadership among civil servants. They should be reflected in the curriculums of public administration training and capacity development of public servants;

- e. Equip civil servants with innovative tools and requisite knowledge to understand the interrelations among various aspects of poverty and create and implement integrated approaches;
- f. Put in place internal mechanisms, incentives, practices and develop skills so as to promote participation, engagement, cooperation and consultation with other institutions and civil society;
- g. Undertake and support efforts to ensure that adequate resources are mobilized and allocated to poverty eradication and related strategies;
- h. Boost institutional statistical capacities at all levels to produce, use and analyse disaggregated official indicators, statistics, data and big data – and promote their shared use across government agencies at all levels, the private sector, civil society and other actors. Also support the leadership’s capacities to understand and analyse data. Statistical offices have a critical role and should be independent institutions;
- i. Consider using poverty eradication as a benchmark against which to assess the impact of the work of public institutions and civil servants as done in some countries.

Strengthening the global partnership for development

37. It is urgent to strengthen global partnerships for realising the SDGs so as to ensure that developing countries have the level of resources and capacities necessary to eradicate poverty. North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation is therefore essential and efforts should be made to extend this imperative throughout public administrations.

Looking to future generations

38. Poverty must be eradicated for today and tomorrow’s generations. Therefore governments need to ensure that their policies and strategies break the intergenerational transmission of poverty by working to realize all the SDGs before 2030 and examining all policies from the perspective of their impact on future generations.
39. New ways must be found to address the causes of violent conflicts, which have dramatic impacts on the lives of all people, especially the poorest, most vulnerable and minorities, paralyze poverty eradication efforts and lead to displacement and refugees.
40. Only effective, inclusive and accountable institutions that fight practices such as corruption can create opportunities not only for today’s generations but for their children.

Contribution to the HLPF review of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14

41. Effective institutions and public administration at all levels are critical to the realizing the specific SDGs that will be reviewed by the HLPF in July 2017. Integrated actions relevant to specific goals and targets will involve different groups of stakeholders and thus will happen in different institutional contexts. Areas for action of cross-cutting relevance to the six SDGs include the following:
 - a. National sectoral strategies and action plans will need to be made coherent with one another and with plans for SDG implementation;
 - b. Governments can adopt systems approaches (for example, for food security and health) where objectives in relation to a specific SDG are considered alongside other connected goals, and

where links between production and consumption are taken into account. In such circumstances, whole-of-government approaches can be effective;

- c. Governments have a critical role to play in enabling the formulation of long-term, forward-looking strategies that balance goals and interests of different stakeholders, including for identification of national assets, needs, and priorities; and in assessing the performance of existing institutions in economic, social and environmental terms;
- d. Better coordination within governments can help address potential tensions between specific SDG targets and trade-related aspects that may negatively impact on such targets, including for food and nutrition, fisheries, and health;
- e. A range of practical arrangements at the national level have been shown to be effective to better integrate policies, including: multi-sector working groups; multi-stakeholder task forces; national commissions or inter-ministerial committees; multi-sector alliances within and outside Government; civil society and local community engagement; and participatory management;
- f. Education is a critical enabler of most of the goals, and governments are pivotal in ensuring that the corresponding linkages are made at the policy level. For example, Governments can promote the role of education in integrated approaches to health, including the role of schools to promote sanitation, healthy nutrition and health education and fight gender violence – all determinants of health outcomes;
- g. Governments have a critical role to play in supporting public research and development, formulating innovation policies, and promoting diffusion and take-up of appropriate technologies, including for specific groups of the population, for example in agriculture, health, ICTs and marine ecosystem management;
- h. Infrastructure is central to the achievement of all SDGs, as a catalyst and multiplier. Its impacts – positive as well as negative – have to be assessed and inform public policy;
- i. Other effective instruments for consideration are integrated and participatory budgeting and other public finance management and accountability frameworks that promote cross-sector collaboration; and analyses that apply issue-specific lenses, including poverty, gender or health, to policies in other sectors. For example, Governments should support mainstreaming of gender issues in sector strategies, starting with applying a “Do no harm” principle with respect to gender equality in devising policies in such sectors, and requiring impact assessments of sector policies on gender equality. We should also encourage the adoption of gender-sensitive budget policies;
- j. For many countries, financing and capacity building have been identified as obstacles across a range of SDGs, including for infrastructure. Appropriate frameworks and approaches may be needed to mobilize private resources, through appropriate mechanisms, and provide support to countries who need it the most;
- k. Public sector coordination is critical to integrated planning and management that incorporate social, economic and environmental dimensions;
- l. Realizing the SDGs being reviewed by the HLPF requires mobilizing civil servants and instilling a spirit of commitment, creativity and leadership among civil servants, including a change of mind-sets. They should be reflected in the curricula of public administration training and capacity development of civil servants.
