UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Description of the Committee

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the UN's international development organization that provides countries with the knowledge and resources necessary to help foster economic development. The UNDP operates in 166 countries by working with them to craft solutions unique to their development challenges. The UNDP additionally works to strengthen international cooperation over developmental and economic issues. The Executive Board of UNDP is made up of 36 member states under the authority of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In addition to helping nations receive aid and advising them on the use of aid for development, the UNDP produces a vast network of advocacy, analysis and support programs. UNDP also uses corporate assistance to further its goals. Some of the areas on which UNDP places major emphasis are democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, energy and environment, information and communications technology, post-conflict reconstruction and investment. In relation to democratic governance, the UNDP is the leading agency on democratic governance throughout the UN system. One third of total resources go to democratic governance projects, programs and initiatives each year. They promote advocacy, capacity development, policy advice and technical support, partnerships, and sharing experiences of good governance.

Topic: Democratic Governance

Introduction

Poor economic development in countries is not always caused by a lack of resources, infrastructure, education or opportunities. If this were the case, developed nations and other international institutions could provide the necessary missing elements and dramatically improve human capacity enough to support health, education, and other aspects of development in poorer nations. Although these factors are vital to development, no amount of resources transferred or infrastructure built can compensate for poor governance.[1] Corrupt, tyrannical, and incompetent governance is the bane of development efforts. Where governance is endemically bad, public resources are squandered instead of being used to generate public goods that improve the well-being of society.[2] Unless we improve governance, we cannot foster human development.

How then does one improve governance? Though there are no simple answers, one can look to the tremendous body of literature focused on the improvement of governing institutions. By making them more efficient and effective, strong institutions can increase equality, transparency, participation, responsiveness, accountability, and the rule of law. The UNDP thus believes that governance must be democratized to maximize effectiveness and efficiency.[3] In order to achieve democratic governance, three key areas need to be strengthened within a given state: inclusive participation, responsive institutions, and international principles.[4]

UNDP Democratic Governance in Nepal – The People-Centered Approach

Background

Civic engagement

Too often, the voices of the poor, women, and minorities go unheard and thus the resources necessary to improve their livelihoods are not allocated to them. To address this, democratic governance first requires the participation of all citizens, who collectively identify and address issues that are of public concern.[5] This civic engagement allows for the formation of an indigenously grown civil society that has a greater sense of ownership and trust for government processes because local communities and marginalized groups are actively engaged in strategic decision making.

The UNDP Regional Initiative on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Development (RIPP) was founded in September 2004 for the purpose of offering governments, UNDP Country Offices, agencies and indigenous peoples' organizations, a platform to discuss and agree on frameworks for cooperation. Through its several programs, the RIPP seeks to promote biculturalism and empowerment of the indigenous where governance practices are lackluster.[6] The RIPP also facilitates capacity and skill building for indigenous women by allowing them to participate in the decision-making processes, including climate change and resource management.[7]

Washington Post – Thumb Prints - Elections in Afghanistan

Electoral Systems and Processes & Parliaments

To foster inclusive participation, **free and fair elections** should be a fixture in any program seeking to increase democratic governance. To do so, nations must establish effective channels for every citizen to cast a vote, to participate in the public sphere, and to promote their interests through political parties, interest groups, and other aspects of civil society. It is through these channels that citizens articulate their demands and pressure public officials, elected representatives, and governments to be accountable for their actions. For these processes to be viable, effective **parliamentary institutions** where ordinary people can participate are fundamental to the establishment and consolidation of democracy. These institutions include congresses, assemblies, and legislatures that allow for the protection of human rights and oversight of governance practices.

E-governance and Access to information via ICT

Access to information is vital to the development of democratic governance (DG). It paves the way for transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law, which empowers individuals to become active players in the political decision-making process. Inclusive participation is weakened when important information is not communicated to the public or is intentionally withheld.[8] To prevent the latter, enhancing the utilization of information and communications technology for development (ICTs) is an important avenue for DG. These programs provide a platform and entry point for the promotion and strengthening of the DG process through e-governance techniques. **E-governance** refers to the government's use of information technology to exchange information and services with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government.[9] The most important anticipated benefits of e-government include improved efficiency, convenience, and better accessibility of public services.

> **CRITICAL THINKING**
>
> What channels of social accountability can help foster inclusive participation where formal institutions of representative democracy are weak?

Public administration

Recent debates have made strengthening **public administration** of utmost importance for development efforts. In achieving the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs), many have identified weak public administrations at the heart of many shortcomings. Strong public administration allows for the delivery of services to the people and a means to curb corruption thereby focusing development efforts on the poor and marginalized.[10] Public administration is indicative of the strength of civil society and the trust in governance and thus acts as a bridge between society and government. An unhealthy state-society relationship is not sufficient for democratic governance.

Decentralization and Local Governance

In order to reach the poor, sub-national democratic institutes are critical avenues for participation in governance and influence over decisions or legislation that are particularly relevant to their livelihood. What structure a country chooses to decentralize power is almost always the backbone behind the delivery of public services. For nations pursuing post-conflict reconstruction efforts, **local governance** is key to delivering peace-dividends tailored to the needs of that population.[11] By providing these services, nations become better at reflecting citizens' priorities and thus developing a greater sense of accountability towards them.

International Principles

Anti-corruption

Corruption strikes at the heart of democracy because it not only impedes development efforts, it corrodes rule of law and the institutions that support democratic governance.[12] In addition, it hinders economic growth because it distorts markets, thereby damaging the integrity of the private sector.[13] The people lose trust in their leaders and oftentimes for women, minorities, and the poor, it means even less access to avenues that improve their livelihoods.

UNDP Bangladesh / Munira Morshed

"When public money is stolen for private gain, it means fewer resources to build schools, hospitals, roads and water treatment facilities. When foreign aid is diverted into private bank accounts, major infrastructure projects come to a halt. Corruption enables fake or substandard medicines to be dumped on the market, and hazardous waste to be dumped in landfill sites and in oceans. The vulnerable suffer first and worst."

- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, International Anti-Corruption Day, December 2009

Access to justice and rule of law

In the absence of a suitable access to justice, people are unable to have their voice heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination or hold decision-makers accountable for their actions.

Rule of law is the foundation of both justice and security for citizens. For example, the absence of property rights and legal protection for small-scale entrepreneurs and business initiatives may result in a situation where the poor become targets of exploitation as well as arbitrary eviction from their homes, land, and business stands.[14] Poor and disadvantaged people, who rely heavily on natural resources for subsistence, may not be able to raise concerns, seek protection and regain access when faced with the violation of their rights by powerful actors.[15] Consequently, their livelihoods are directly affected.

Ikidia women of Mali, shea nut entrepreneurs, at Saving for Change meeting.

Source: Rebecca Blackwell for Oxfam America

Thus, a legal framework that empowers the marginalized along with efficient and fair justice systems are additional prerequisites for achieving the MDGs. Efforts to bring about the legal framework can reap untold rewards. An example of these efforts is the UNDP, the UN peacekeeping mission and the legal fraternity in Chad all collaborating to fill the gap in judiciary professionals in the eastern part of the country, by training civil servants to perform the functions of magistrates.[16]

Human Rights

For democratic governance to be effective, human rights need to be protected. Human rights express the bold idea that all people have claims to 5 major human capabilities. World-renowned economist, Amartya Sen, emphasized 5 important human freedoms that will facilitate development efforts:[17]

- *political freedoms* reflect the opportunities people have to choose who governs them and by what principles;

- *economic facilities* that allow for the exchange of resources for the betterment of an individual's livelihood;

- *social opportunities*, which include the arrangements and allocations society makes for education, health care, elderly care, and so on;

- *transparency guarantee*s play a critical role in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility, and violation of society's rules and conduct for government and business; and

- *protective security* utilizes civil servants, rule of law, and access to justice to prevent individuals from becoming marginalized.

The expansion of human rights through these freedoms leads to capacity building and is critical to democratic governance efforts.

Gender

For democratic governance to be effective, one important perspective to consider is the empowerment of women. When women participate in politics, there are benefits for women, men, children, communities and nations. The **empowerment of women** has been an important strategy to remove those institutional barriers that prevent women's participation in politics. The presence of women in elected office is a vital aspect of women's involvement in politics.[18]

Current Situation

Case Study: Women's Representation in Indonesia

For a long time, the number of female representatives in Indonesia's parliament was dismal—only 10% representation, despite previous legislation promoting affirmative action.[19] However, Indonesia's democratization in 1998 led to a movement that increased women's representation in the public sphere. Supporters and advocates for the movement lobbied for the inclusion of an election law requiring all political parties to have a 30% quota for women in their candidate list – an astronomically high number relative to its history.[20] Despite the movement's legislative success, it did not have enough strength to encompass all political parties. Only few parties adhered to the legislation. However, the legislation is significant because it generated awareness that resulted in the increase in the number of women in national parliament by 25% in 2004.[21]

Women voting in Indonesia.

A greater achievement was seen in 2008 where a new election law combined the 30% quota with a "zipper" system in which one out of three candidates had to be a woman.[22] The significance of this far outweighs the progressive efforts of even standard practices in advanced democracies. Although the quota system was removed later that year, the Indonesian case shows public support for women's representation. The case also conveys even in the world's largest Muslim nation, voters overlooked the qualms about supporting women in politics.[23] The significance of this is that it negates the overarching stereotype commonly associated with Islamic religious belief.

International Action

International efforts to develop democratic governance have been considerable. International organizations often work in tandem with governments and the private sector to facilitate the process for democracy. In addition, the UNDP's democratic governance efforts are especially significant in the progress that they have made. To support the efforts presented in previous sections, UNDP also invests in the global management of knowledge. It provides funding for piloting of innovative initiatives, and ensures that lessons learned are used for training of staff.

Oslo Governance Centre

In 2002, the UNDP established the Oslo Governance Center (OGC), which is part of their global policy network dedicated to democratic governance.[24] The primary objective is to promote democratic governance in accordance with achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As the champion for democratic governance, it provides a vast knowledge network for relevant resources, multi-disciplinary team work, and policy guidance and support tailored to each specific UNDP country office around the world.

Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund

The DGTTF is a venture capital fund that works to provide the necessary funding and resources to democratic governance efforts around the world. It centers itself on promoting innovation in key areas where development is most needed. It is primarily funded by UNDP, governments, and private organizations and has positioned itself to be at the forefront of strengthening the links between democratic governance, poverty reduction, and achievement of the MDGs. Over the course of 9 years, it has raised over US $126 million to facilitate these projects.[25]

Cooperation Talks

The Africa-EU Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights is a joint partnership that serves to enable a comprehensive dialogue and cooperation on local capacity strengthening, human rights protections, democratic principles, rule of law and the access to justice, anti-corruption efforts, and institutional development that supports reform, democratic governance, and security.[26]

World Bank and Development Banks

The World Bank primarily views democratic governance through the lenses of economic and social resources control. However, the key factors that affect these lenses are the type of political regime of a nation, the processes by which authority is exercised to manage economic and social resources, and the capacity of governments to create policies that are conducive to resource management.

Other development banks, like the Asia Development Bank (ADB), are also working to expand the processes involved to establish democratic governance. ADB and UNDP signed an agreement to enhance reforms in local governance in Nepal. The African Development Bank Group (ADBG) works for fiscal decentralization and local governance efforts in the most rural parts of African sub-continent where people in those areas are often ignored.

Recommendations for Creating a Resolution

Policy recommendations vary from country to country and region to region. It is highly recommended to think about policies relative to the current social, political, and economic frameworks of a particular nation or region. The UNDP has country offices and regional service centers that specifically focus on this issue. Below is a breakdown on regional office strategies that delegates should consider when developing policy proposals:

Asia and the Pacific
- For this region, the primary factor that impedes democratic governance efforts is rising inequality. Combined with the effects of the recent economic crises, poverty increases the difficulty of establishing functioning democratic institutions. To address the needs of this region, the democratic governance Practice in Asia and the Pacific supports democratic governance and bringing countries closer to achieving the MDGs by "increased responsiveness, accountability and transparency of governance institutions" and enabling disadvantaged groups to participate in decision-making.[27]

Latin America
- The effects of the financial crisis and natural disasters have complicated the establishment of strong institutions for democratic governance in Latin America. Having varying experiences with elected governments and representative democracy, Latin America must pay particular attention to addressing "institutions, the quality of life of citizens, persistent inequalities in socio-economic terms, and cultural-ethnic and gender relationships".[28]

Africa
- As a result of African countries addressing "stagnant or marginal growth, high levels of poverty, corruption, election management, cross-border wars and internal conflicts," the Continent has not experienced marked improvement.[29] democratic governance can help these nations stabilize their priorities and build consensus for policies that will bring African closer to attaining its MDG targets.

North Africa and the Middle East
- Arab states must seek to be responsive to [their] citizens, deliver equitably, improve state capacity to plan, allocate resources, distribute and regulate assets, improve mechanisms of accountability and emphasize social inclusion, legal empowerment and political participation.[30]

Eastern Europe
- Increased interaction and outright inclusion into the EU has helped push for reforms that increase democratic governance. Most the countries of Eastern Europe have come make substantial progress in their establishing of legal frameworks and vibrant civil societies. Government accountability and allowing for more participation of citizens in all aspects of government could help to strengthen democratic governance.[31]

Questions to Consider

1. What type of government does your country have? How does it affect your country's views about democratic governance?
2. Are other countries in the region democratic? Why would your country be concerned about that?
3. If your country is a democracy, how long has it been one? If it isn't, why not?
4. What are the obstacles preventing your country or others nearby from becoming democracies? What steps can be taken to move towards a more democratic government?

Research Aid

UNDP's full list of countries that can help delegates understand their country policy
- http://www.undp.org/countries/

UNDP Democratic Governance Focus Areas can help delegates see real examples of UNDP work with respect to those areas listed under "key areas to focus on"

- http://www.undp.org/governance/focus_intro.shtml

UNESCO Institute of Statistics can help delegates find the numbers associated to their country or events in their region.

- http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev.php?ID=2867_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

World Bank Project Database allows delegates to search current WB funded projects that are DG focused

- http://www.worldbank.org/

USAID Democratic Governance study provides statistics, democracy waves, and ways in which nations can progress towards DG

- http://www.usaid.gov/fani/overview/overview_governance.htm

Terms and Concepts

Free and Fair Elections: Elections where people have an equal voice in determining the political makeup and future policy direction of their respective government

Parliamentary Institutions: organizations of legislatures.

E-Governance: The government's use of information technology to exchange information and services with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government

Public Administration: The implementation of public policy by the state

Millennium Development Goals: Eight international development goals set by the United Nations to achieve targets to significantly and measurably improve people's lives by 2015. They include reducing child mortality rates, fighting disease epidemics, and eradicating extreme poverty.

Local Governance: The process of making decisions, allocating funds and delivering services at the local level. It involves actors (e.g. mayors, local councils, NGOs, business associations), formal and informal institutions (e.g. municipal administration, council, but also rules and regulations), and available means (e.g. human resources, money).

Corruption: The use of improper or unlawful means to achieve an end, often involving the misuse of public funds for private gain.

Rule of Law: An enforced legal framework where government authority is only exercised in accordance with written law.

Empowerment of Women: Increasing the political, social, or economic presence and strength of women within their respective communities.

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