Forum: United Nations Development Programme

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Introduction

Democratic governance consists of giving citizens a say in decision making and is characterized by accountability and transparency in the private and public sector. A participatory governance process takes into consideration the citizens and business needs resulting in more legitimate and better policies (CIPE). Democratic governance is of major importance to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially in the elimination of poverty (UN). While the concept of democratic governance seems beneficial to all parties involved its application comes with many obstacles. This is especially true for developing countries where struggles have been clear. "There have been large amounts of financial and human resources invested to foster democratic governance in developing countries yet a significant improvement in living standards has not been achieved." This can be especially seen in the Sub-Saharan Africa region were even though they are taking steps to improve, 40% of the 600 million people still live below the poverty line (Mudacumura). Corruption and poor governance contribute to the poverty in these countries as the county's institutions are weakened resulting in the misappropriation of public funds and major policies and programs are undermined. Even though the implementation of democratic governance comes with many obstacles, the UN and other international organizations recognize a democratic governance's key role in efforts to reduce poverty, promote human development and sustain the environment.

Definition of Key Terms

Democracy: A system of government where the power is vested in the people.

Governance: The government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of the type of government." (Fukuyama)

Civil Society: The assemblage of non-governmental organizations and institutions that display the will and interest of citizens.

Civic participation: The population's involvement in decision-making and creation of policies.

E-governance: The application of information and communication technology for government services, spread of information, and communications between government to citizens and businesses.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): A not for profit entity formed by people of the community that operate separate from the government and private market.

Public Administration: Field of service that maintains the civil society and provides the needs of the public.

Corruption: Misuse of public power for private gain.

General Overview

Corruption

To ensure a democratic and equitable governance it is essential to keep the government corruption-free. Corruption can be defined as "the misuse of entrusted power for personal gain" and can take many forms including bribery, extortion, and nepotism among others. Corruption has a negative impact in society in all aspects of society. Corruption raises costs and creates an unstable economy by wrongfully changing rules and fostering nepotism. Which leads to businesses relocating outside of the corrupt country furthering weakens the economy and society. Realizing corruptions such devastating effects towards democracy, the UNDP began addressing this issue

with projects and programs since the mid-1990s. The first program that was started was the Accountability and Transparency (PACT) in 1997 which was later backed by UNDP's "Fighting Corruption to Improve Governance" policy paper. While the issue of corruption was first addressed by raising awareness the efforts shifted into more technical services by providing national governments with proper development methods and tools.

The UN has also recognized the importance of governance to successfully reach the MDGs which can't be achieved while corruption is present in countries. Fighting corruption also supports human development and the eradication of poverty. This has resulted in other international organizations to join the fight against corruption. The World Bank developed an anti-corruption strategy. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) believes that the fight against corruption should be by reinforcing the key elements of a governance system that are addressed in the following subsections of the general overview. It is important to note that even though there are numerous organizations and programs to fight corruption, levels of corruption around the world are still high. This can be seen in the Corruption Index created by Transparency International that indicate that over 100 out of 176 countries are perceived as corrupt.

Fostering Inclusive Participation

Participation in government is often not equally represented by members of different genders. Women are especially underrepresented in politics and in recent years many countries and the UN have attempted to address the issue. They have taken an approach to reach *gender equity*, which refers to being fair to men and women. Equity compensates for historical and social events that avert men and women to be seen as equal. Examples of methods attempting to promote gender equity include the use of quotas, gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment. Quotas attempt to reduce the extreme disparity of men in government and require that a minimum percentage of women participate in bodies such as the government or the assembly. Gender mainstreaming takes into consideration all genders in any planned action in all areas and at all levels. This helps gender equality by ensuring that both sides are heard in future policies. For a truly democratic governance there must be full participation of

both genders. Men and women don't share the same perspectives, and, in a democracy, there has to be an equal representation of the genders. There must be a gender balanced participation with not only the presence of women in decision making but also where they play a vital role in it.

Access to information and E-governance

Access to information is a basic right that needs to be ensured promote a democratic governance and e-governance could be the solution. E-governance is the application of communication and information technology for government services, spread of information, and communications between government to citizens and businesses. E-governance enhances citizen engagement which results in more efficient, transparent and accountable government. Communication mechanisms that promote the right to information can enable the people to express their views and concerns leading to a more democratic process. This should strengthen the capacity of poor and marginalized groups to hold the government accountable to receive access to basic human rights such as health, housing and education among others. Access to information promotes these groups to voice their views on policies and issues that could directly impacting them. E-governance can also enhance receiving equitable and effective services in response to the people's experience.

Civil Society

In recent decades, *civil society* has been acknowledged as a key factor in development at all levels. This is because the rise of diversity, population and roles of society groups, making civic participation of utmost importance. *Civic participation* refers to the population's involvement in decision-making and policies. It can be expressed in actions such as casting a vote or through a collective action. Collective action is especially seen in Civil Society Organization (CSOs). The UNDP defines CSOs as a "non-state actor whose aims neither to generate profits or seek power instead they unit people to advance share goals and interests." CSOs can be extremely different from each other. They are composed of formal and informal organization, as well as associations or movements each with their unique aim. CSOs can range from providing services such as legal aid to defending citizens' right through media campaigns.

Therefore, CSO's play a crucial role in advocating rights and a country's development. This is idea is supported by former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan who believed "that a government alone can't ensure sustainable development and democratic governance" (86, UN). Civic participation gives people a way to protect their rights and freedom, play a role in decision making, and hold the government accountable.

Electoral Systems and Processes

Elections are essential for a democratic governance and can date as far back as 2,500 years ago. This was seen in Athenian assembles, where hands were counted, and the results were reported. Yet throughout many centuries the attention has been placed in the outcome of elections and election management has not be deemed as important. Electoral management requires a dedicated institution responsible for activities related to elections. Electoral councils, election commissions and electoral boards are all examples of such institutions. The generalized term for the body that is responsible for electoral management is Electoral Management Body (EMB). Elections can be solely run by the government or by a partnership between the government and an independent body or fully run by a permanent and independent body. In developing countries, they are usually run by an independent body. The EMB's responsibilities can range from determining who is eligible to vote to the adjudication of disputes. No matter the body that is running electoral management, it should always be transparent and impartial. The institutions should minorities and women and should be aimed towards increasing the countries electoral participation especially those of the disadvantaged groups. "The right to take part in the government of his country" is also recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 21 deeming elections essential as they allow the people to participate in decisions that will directly affect their livelihood. For a democratic governance there must be a holding of regular elections to accurately voice the opinions of the population. The effectiveness and precision of the elections also depend on the transparency, legitimacy and fairness of the electoral institutions and processes.

Public Administration reform

Public administration refers to the implementation of government policy. It is the "field

of service that maintains the civil society and provides the needs of the public." Public administration deals with the management of laws, regulations and decisions made by the government and manages the provision of public services. *Public Administration reform* (PAR) refers to structural changes in areas such as "organizational design, decentralization, public finance, personnel management, access to information and interaction with civil society and the private sector." In the past decade, there has been a concern for PAR in developing countries. Two main areas have been focused to improve public administration. Firstly, there has been structural adjustment programs which address the misuse of the government resources by overspending and over hiring in government institutions. This program attempts to reduce costs and downsize public service. Secondly, new public management which aims to improve efficiency and quality of public services. It focuses on decentralization therefore encourages the use of private partners regarding policy making and the implementation of functions. An effective, accountable and transparent public administration is a key of democratic governance. Public administration is a central tool through which the government can enact strategies to achieve the MDGs.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States

United States has showed their support towards democratic governance within its borders as well as outside. US President such as Ronald Raegan, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton believed in "taking actions to assist the campaign for democracy" and how these actions were vital to prevent the spread of communism in other countries (CSIS). These beliefs have been weakened by the US current president, Donald Trump. During his first years in office, Trump has criticized democratic allies, praised dictators and taken anti-democratic actions in the US. This has resulted in a downgrade of the United States global pro-democratic posture and placed the country in its weakest democratic condition in the past 40 years. Experts believe that if the United States lead by Donald Trump continue its course of actions for the remainder of his term, the country will end up stranded on the wrong side of the global democratic struggle

(Brown and Carothers). Even though, Trump's efforts to decrease democracy, local and international organizations such as USAID and CSIS are working to mitigate the damage.

China

China has deepened its authoritarianism and the Chinese Communist Party has intensified its control of the media and freedom of expression. China is taken advantage of the era of globalization to promote its own ideas, norms and approaches to governance. China has spent billions of dollars over the past decade on shaping public opinion and perception about their political operation environment around the world (Walker).

Latin America and the Caribbean

These countries have struggled and suffered throughout many centuries making it logical that public opinion polls such as LAPOP show that citizens prefer democracy over other types of governments. Yet, polls show how a substantial portion of the population is not satisfied with their democratic systems performance (49.3% not satisfied, 2014, LAPOP). Inequality and poverty have reduced, and millions of citizens have been incorporated in the middle class, the region still faces many challenges (UNDP).

Venezuela

Hugo Chavez was elected president of Venezuela in 1998 with the promise of writing a new constitution, improving the state, fighting poverty and eliminating corruption. While he stayed true to the promise of writing a constitution, Chavez destroyed existing political institutions and replaced them with ones that would give him benefits. This created internal struggle in the country between the people who believed in democracy and the president fixated on the belief on becoming dictator. This caused corruption levels to be higher than ever and even after 20 years the country of Venezuela is still facing a dictatorship like government under the reign of Nicolas Maduro, the successor of Hugo Chavez.

Iraq

Among the countries of the Middle East authoritarianism remains as a common form of government. Yet Iraq's most recent election show hope of moving towards a more democratic approach. This in immediately debunked by Transparency International report that considers Iraq's government has the most corrupt in the Middle East and is instead considered a *hybrid regime*. Which is defined as between a flawed democracy and an authoritarian regime.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
End of WWI	Temporary Victory for democracy. Democracy preserved in France and temporarily to Germany
1930s	Negative Economic Impact around the world hurt democracies. Lead to a decade of dictators in Latin America and Europe.
Post WWII	Victory for democracy in Western Europe. In Southern Europe right-wing dictatorships continued to exist. In Central and Eastern Europe countries became Soviet satellite states.
2000	
2005	In the Millenium Summit of 2000 the importance democratic governance was highlighted
	The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) was created
2008	The UNDP Strategic Plan was released

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations has highlighted the importance of democratic governance at the Millennium Summit of 2000 therefore has allotted numerous resources of the UNDP towards reaching such goal.

United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

In 2005 the UN Secretary General created the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) to "support projects that promote the rule of law and human rights, the voice of civil society and encourage participation of all groups in democratic processes." (UN). The UNDEF has funded over 600 projects in 100 countries all over the world bringing the total funds distributed to around 160 million dollars. The majority of the funds have been provided to local civil society groups. As such, the UNDEF plays a new role by working through civil society in its more traditional ways to strengthen democratic governance around the globe. Receiving 2000-3000 projects proposals a year, the UNDEF only approves for around 2%. With the projects focusing on seven main areas: community activism, youth engagement, strengthening civil society, law and human rights, women empowerment, access and freedom of information, and tools for knowledge.

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

In december 14, 2015 the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) came into force. This convention provides a common ground for local policies and demands for international cooperation when dealing with cross-border crime. State parties have the obligations to adopt preventive measures, cooperate across borders, criminalize a larger range of offenses, exchange information and agree on the mechanism that are being applied. The UNCAC is a technical guide for anti-corruption measures and also acknowledges an extensive development for a governance framework.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The UN as well as other international organizations have been working on the issue of achieving demotric governance for the past decades. They have done so by providing financial and human resources to developing countries. This is seen in actions such as distributing $160 million as done by UNDEF, and in local organizations such as Good Governance Africa (GGA) that research and stimulate the debate. While at first these efforts look in vain due to amount of countries that don't believe in governance, these efforts have resulted in 96 out of 167 (57%) with populations larger than 500,000 to be considered democracies. This is substantial improvement in the past four decades as in

1977 only 24% of the countries classified as democracies while 62% qualified as autocracies. These statistics show how around the globe more countries are starting to believe in the idea that the people's voice should be heard. Apart from the efforts of the organizations credits should also be given to the local civil society groups in each country. As most of the times the civil pressure applied to the government over many years results in a change. It is also important to note that even though more countries are classified as democracies, corruption is still a large issue present at hand. Corruption undermines all efforts of democracy and governance and unfortunately corruption hasn't drastically improved in the past decades. The organizations Transparency International publishes a Corruption Perception Index that grades nations out of 100 points for their public sector. The results were shocking as in 2017, it was reported that 85% of people worldwide were governed by regimes ranking 50 points or less in the Index. This demonstrates how integrity in authorities is still lacking even though more countries around the globe consider themselves a democracy.

Possible Solutions

It is clear that organizations and the civil societies around the world have been successful at promoting the idea of democracy over the past decades. Yet, people's voices are still not heard because of corruption. Therefore to promote more democratic and equitable governance the focus has to be placed in eliminating corruption. While this goal seems unreachable the fight has to start somewhere. A place to begin would be my ending impunity. This allows people that endorse corruption to be held accountable for their actions. As often politicians or high-ranking military officers feels as if they are above the law but ending impunity would disencourage corruption to the fear of being punished by the law. Secondly, reforming the public administration and finance management. This would be done by strengthening the part that many auditing agencies play in developing countries. Another method to eliminate corruption and promote an equitable governance is by enhancing transparency and access to information. Countries with low corruption indexes have tendency of openness, freedom of the press and high transparency and access to information. Another method would be by empowering the citizens. Empowering citizens is a

sustainable proposal to build a trust between the people and the government. There have been cases were communities watching over projects have contributed to detecting corruption, ensure that funds are properly used and increased the quality of public services. Finally, the last method to lessen the impact of corruption and increase good governance would be by closing international loopholes. A step in the right direction is the 4th Anti-Money Laundering directive that requires the states of the EU to register all beneficial owners of companies within their borders (Transparency). Eliminating corruption is the key to promoting equitable governance in developing countries which will subsequently lead to a sustainable development of the country,

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