Good governance and the Non-Governmental Organizations

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Abstract

In this article I would like to concentrate on connections between the values of good governance and the activities of non-governmental organizations, how these two entities interact with each other. First of all, I went through the definition, what does the term good governance mean and how it is understood in different environments. Why it is so important for many societies to implement the values of good governance in all sectors of public and privet life, besides that they have different meaning in almost every culture. Secondly, I analyzed the role of NGOs in promoting value of good governance and how this role is understood at the international fora.

Good governance and the Non-Governmental Organizations

Before getting into a discussion on the role of Non-Governmental Organizations in today's world, it is worth defining the term non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and good governance. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are legally constituted corporations created by natural or legal people that operate independently from any form of government. The term originated from the United Nations, and normally refers to organizations that are not a part of a government and are not conventional for-profit businesses.

There is no single and exhaustive definition of "good governance," nor is there a delimitation of its scope, that commands universal acceptance. The term is used with great flexibility; this is an advantage, but also a source of some difficulty at the operational level[66]. Very often the term "good governance" is connected to the public affairs and way to manage public resources. Governance is a decision making process and their way of implementation. It's not only about making "correct" decisions, but about the best possible process for making those decisions. In practice good governance is used in many sectors and areas of activities and to describe interactions between different groups of society.

It is not possible to list the different forms of governance because there are many standards that vary in different societies and countries. A variety of country level initiatives and international movements put emphasis on various types of governance reform. Each movement for reform

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[66]http://www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/Development/GoodGovernance/Pages/GoodGovernanceIndex.aspx,7.01.14

establishes criteria for what they consider good governance based on their own needs and agendas. At these places it is worth to remember that cultural differences can cause conflicts with the heterogeneous standards of the international community. The conclusion should be that the meaning of good governance should be tackled individually in every country, at least in region, especially when the implementation is meant.

Good governance and human rights are mutually reinforcing. Human rights principles provide a set of values to guide the work of governments and other political and social actors. They also provide a set of performance standards against which these actors can be held accountable. On the other hand, without good governance, human rights cannot be respected and protected in a sustainable manner. The implementation of human rights relies on a conducive and enabling environment. This includes appropriate legal frameworks and institutions as well as political, managerial and administrative processes responsible for responding to the rights and needs of the population[67].

There are some international bodies such as: The International Monetary Fund[68], The United Nation[69], the World Bank[70] or the OSCE[71], which promote, in general terms, implementation of good governance standards. The aim of it is to bring different countries on the same/relevant level of implementation of principles of, inter alia, transparency, accountability, anti-corruption, rule of law. All these values complement and reinforced each other. But for all countries, which are members of the above mentioned organizations, stronger political will is needed in order for commitments to be met and reflected in national legislation and practices. What is more, all stakeholders from private and public sector as well as civil society should be included in the decision making process to make it more beneficial and effective.

N. Al-Rodhan proposed eight minimum criteria for ensuring good national governance. These are: 1) participation, equity, and inclusiveness, 2) rule of law, 3) separation of powers, 4) free, independent, and responsible media, 5) government legitimacy, 6) accountability, 7) transparency, and 8) limiting the distorting effect of money in politics. In the book, he argues that good national governance is an important component in creating a history of sustainability

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[67]http://www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/Development/GoodGovernance/Pages/GoodGovernanceIndex.aspx,7.01.14

[68] The IMF promotes fighting corruption and ensuring rule of low, accountability, balance between too much or too less regulations in certain good governance policy.

[69] The United Nations promotes development through political institutions reform.

[70] The World Bank promotes reform of economic and social resources control.

[71]The OSCE promotes principles of transparency and good governance as well as the necessity to address transnational and cross – border challenges to security.

for the human race. For Al-Rodhan, the eight minimal criteria of good governance are expressions of the fundamental values of democracy and more liberal constitutionalism[72].

According to the World Bank, good governance has to have three aspects[73]: first, the form of political regime; second, the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's social and economic resources for development. Third, the capacity of the government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions. Good governance can be defined as a mechanism of managing resources, either in substances or implementation that is purposing to achieve an efficient and effective development fairly[74]. Thus, good governance will be achieved when there's a balanced system between state's element and societal institution (societal organization, NGO's, and mass media, etc.) in the process of checks and balances, and there's no one of them who has an absolute control of it.

The EU promotes values of good governance, which in the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (EU SDS) is defined as objective promoting coherence between local, regional, national and global actions in order to enhance their contribution to sustainable development[75]. The EU monitored mainly the principles of good governance such as: implementation of rule of law, participation in elections, e-governance, in order to ensure and empower the sustainable development not only in the EU region. The EU achievements in these activities are growing, mostly because the UE bodies are more trusted in the society.

Non-governmental organizations are often used as bodies promoting the broad scope of the good governance. But in different circumstances, NGOs may be used in a various way. What does the term NGO really mean in different areas of good governance methodology? Kofie Annan said that NGOs are the "conscience of humanity"[76]. Some people think that NGOs are "pressure groups" or "lobby groups". NGOs may be considered as bodies which could have great legitimacy, sometimes more than national authorities. Economists sometimes refer to NGOs and the broader, non-profit part of the economy as the "Third Sector", to distinguish it

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[72] N. Al-Rodhan, *Sustainable History and the Dignity of Man: A Philosophy of History and Civilisational Triumph, 2009.*
[73] L. Prakash, *Good Governance: As If People Matter*, accessed from http://www.jesuit.ie/ijnd/ goodgovernance.pdf on May 9th 2008.
[74] *Kompilasi Bahan Diskusi Rutin 'Good Governance',* accessed from http://www.goodgovernance-bappenas.go.id/informasi.htm on May 8th 2008.
[75] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/sdi/indicators/theme10, 13.01.2014
[76] Speech of Kofi Annan in 2002, accessed from Global Policy Forum, http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/185/40406.html, 13.01.2014

from government and private business[77]. At the other hand NGOs create "public goods", needed by citizens, which are not ordinarily created in the profit market place.

In the past NGOs were treated as panacea for all illness such as poverty, lack of democracy or lack of economic growth. Most believed that NGOs could be part of civil society and that they can contribute to good governance. But to keep these points of view as credible notions the NGOs should reform themselves in order to increase transparency, accountability and efficiency. Nowadays the role of NGOs is seen unfortunately in different way, rather negative or biased.

Some governments and international organizations at times find NGOs a nuisance or even threatening to their interests. But officials nonetheless look to NGOs for innovative ideas and information. Officials also grudgingly recognize that consultation with (and support from) NGOs gives their public decisions more credibility[78]. At the other hand the officials and the international organization know that non-governmental organizations influence citizen participation in governance through advocacy, capacity building and education in order to create or strengthen civil society and the rule of democracy.

So, all those bodies (government, private sector companies, officials) juggle with the NGOs and use them for various purposes whenever they need it. The NGOs know as well that they need support from either officials or international society so they are ready to play these games. That's why NGOs are often meant as serving donor's interests.

In specific areas such as environment and good governance policies, the NGOs create networks in order to strengthen their efforts to achieve a common goal. Only with coordination and working together they become a good negotiation position at the local, regional or international level. Due to globalization the NGOs have to represent the cross border community and reflect their needs. Networks of NGOs can be better recognized by international communities and international organizations.

It is worth mentioning that besides all accusations to the world of NGOs, for the time being, they constitute the strongest allies and trusted agents of the Western governments and international development organizations.

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[77]J.A. Paul, Executive Director, Global Policy Forum,
http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/177/31611.html; 8.01.2014

[78]J.A. Paul, Executive Director, Global Policy Forum,
http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/177/31611.html; 8.01.2014

Countries around the world are seeking to encourage the growth of an independent, voluntary not-for-profit sector, sometimes known as civil society, to serve as a partner with the government and for-profit sectors for social and economic development. NGOs are moving beyond charity and self-help activities, and are increasingly being asked to perform important services once the exclusive province of the government. They are being encouraged to seek funding for their expanded activities not only from charitable contributions and volunteer services, but, increasingly, from government grants and contracts and by encouraging business sponsorship and cooperation in new social and development-oriented activities[79]. Increasing cooperation between government and NGOs could lead to better understanding, what the society really needs and complement work of both sides.

NGOs relationship with development partners - like the other local non-for-profit organizations, international NGOs, national and international governments, international development agencies, and the private sector need to be redefined. The present practice where NGOs are merely seen used as implementing agents and consultants by the international donor agencies, for instance, does not seem to have yielded enough result[80].

Conclusion

Taking into account above mentioned arguments, it is easy to understand, that NGOs could be helpful in persuading governments and civil society to implement good governance in public and private sector. But the NGOs need to reexamine the way, how they are working. In many societies they need to improve not only their independence and transparency. Nongovernmental organizations can indeed serve society. Especially in a time when governmental bodies are withdrawing from direct delivery of public services, goods and programs.

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[79] A. E. Ezeoha, Can NGOs Aid Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa? Some Theoretical Insights, http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/Fall2006/PDF/Arc_Can%20%20NGOs%20Aid%20Good%20Governane.pdf, 8.01.2014
[80] A.E. Ezeoha, as above

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7. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/sdi/indicators/theme10, 13.01.2014