



Gender issues: relevance to good governance

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ABSTRACT:- Gender equality is an important goal in itself and a means for achieving development. Development policies and institutions must ensure that all segments of society –both women and men –have a voice in decision making, either directly, or through institutions that legitimately represent their interests and needs. Yet persistent and pervasive gender disparities in opportunities, rights Vis-a –Vis the state and public institutions ,and voice ,particularly limit women’s ability to participate as full citizens in social, economic ,and political life .The exclusion of women from full participation constrains the ability of public sector policies and institutions to manage economic and social resources’ effectively. Such gender-biased exclusion compromises the prospects for high-quality service delivery.

Keywords:- equality, gender, high quality, social issues, socio economic factors,

I. GOVERNANCE

Governance happens at five interconnected levels – the household, community, local and national government, and global institutions (Ashworth 1996). The institutions and actors involved in governance processes vary according to the level. For example, at the national level the institutions where governance happens include businesses, schools, hospitals, the military and the media, as well as the government. At the local level, governance takes place not only in local government offices but also in community and household decision-making processes. At a global level, governance is less easy to locate in particular institutions, but the term „global governance“ is often used to describe the complex processes of management, and the frameworks and rules through which international social and economic policy is coordinated and regulated (Grugel and Piper 2007: 3). The global sphere includes multinational corporations as well as international institutions such as the UN agencies and WTO. From a gender perspective, the inclusion of the household, or family“, as well as communities as institutions of governance is essential – this is where many gender inequalities are acted out, shaped by decisions made at international, national and local levels that define rights and responsibilities.

II. EFFECTIVE OR ‘GOOD’ GOVERNANCE?

Good governance means creating well-functioning and accountable institutions – political, judicial and administrative – which citizens regard as legitimate, in which they participate in decisions that affect their daily lives and by which they are empowered.”(Annan 1998, Chapter 4, paragraph 114)

The terms governance and good governance are often used interchangeably by a range of organizations –from donor agencies to CSOs. We make a distinction between “governance” as being about processes of decision-making, mechanisms and management, while „good“ or „effective“ governance refers to the quality of these processes, judged against a set of governance principles .The notion of good governance is being applied in developed as well as developing countries, as a set of standards all governance institutions should be striving for, and as a recognition that „bad governance “happens in developed as well as developing countries. However, it is most commonly used by international development agencies– including bilateral and multilateral – which link the continuation of poverty in many countries of the South to „bad governance“ which is viewed as inefficient, undemocratic and often corrupt .But it is not only international agencies that use this term. Citizen-focused organizations such as CIVICUS also use the term good governance (Malena2006).

Some have argued that the polarised notions of good and bad governance beg the question of who decides what constitutes good governance; whether those making the judgments are leading by example, being accountable for their own governance processes — and whether the way they assess the effectiveness of governance adequately captures the complexity and sometimes contradictory nature of local cultural, social and political contexts (Pettai and Illing 2004: 349). These are important questions, given that donors and financial institutions are increasingly basing aid flows and loans on the condition that „good“ governance reforms are

introduced. This means that some associate the term good governance with particular and negative manifestations of particular donor policy and behaviours.

Many agencies and organizations in developed and developing countries – including bilateral and multilateral donors, country governments and CSOs – agree that effective governance is a route to more democratic, corruption-free societies, but – as Section it is explained – organisations differ as to what they think effective or „good“ governance is and how it should be assessed. Some – for example, international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank – see governance that promotes efficiency in financial management and administration as a priority for achieving poverty reduction and democracy. For others, governance is only effective if it promotes social justice and equality, and furthers the realization of rights for all citizens. This report takes the view that governance can only be effective if it focuses on achieving social justice and gender equality, and that gender equality in society enables more effective governance.

III. DEVELOPING A GENDER-SENSITIVE DEFINITION OF GOVERNANCE

A holistic, gender-sensitive definition of governance needs to acknowledge governance processes at all levels –and the diversity of citizens through their gender, sexuality and ethnicity. It also needs to recognize that existing policies, processes and traditions are imbued with inequalities, which need to be addressed for gender-sensitive reform to take place. So a more progressive and gender sensitive definition of governance and of good governance requires:

- Clarity on the gendered mechanisms of governance – what are the gender dynamics of the institutions, processes and relationships through which the everyday work of governance is done?
- Clarity on the goals of governance in terms of achieving gender equality.
- Clarity around the stakeholders of governance – how do governance institutions understand „citizenship“? Who do they see as participants in governance, and who do they see as recipients?
- Quality around what makes governance effective from gender equality perspective-what does gender sensitive governance’ means, and how can it be assessed.

IV. LOOKING AT THE MECHANISMS OF GOVERNANCE THROUGH A GENDER LENS

Definitions and understandings of governance need to recognize that the mechanisms of governance – its institutions, processes and relationships – are gendered and need to be challenged. This will enable greater clarity in identifying what needs to change, where these changes are needed and who needs to make the changes. To assist this process, below we provide a gender perspective on some of the key components of governance. Governance as gendered institutions are only one element of governance, but they are arguably the most important sites for change, since they so often replicate gendered inequalities through their structures, processes and policies. Institutions are the often hierarchical structures and mechanisms, such as Parliaments, that have usually long been established. However, institutions also exist in less tangible forms of social „contracts“, such as marriage, that are often accepted as the norm. In either case, institutional divisions are imbued with and reproduce social power relations that are rooted in class, racial and gender differences and which privilege certain actors – often educated white men (Goetz 1997, 2007). Inequalities are perpetuated through institutions because those who are in power usually fail to challenge them, continuing to favour others like themselves for positions of authority. To effectively change institutions, it is helpful to understand how and why particular hierarchies exist; why institutional buildings and bureaucratic systems have been designed in a certain way and why certain practices have become normalized (Goetz 1997).

V. PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO GENDER-SENSITIVE GOVERNANCE

The most challenging, step to achieving gender-sensitive governance is thinking about what practical approaches should be taken – what needs to happen to bring about some of the changes talked about above? If governance institutions and actors want to ensure that any changes they make are sustainable and make a difference in the long term, they need to identify the problem. Where do gender inequalities exist, including in specific governance institutions, processes and relationships – and how are these created and perpetuated by inequalities in societies? This will help to provide „transformatory“ goals for governance institutions in terms of achieving gender equality. Find targeted, appropriate solutions and strategies. Once the extent of the problem has been revealed,

Solutions are needed that will not only address existing gender inequalities but will enable greater gender equality in future processes. These include enabling women’s entry into governance institutions and building women’s capacity to participate effectively.

Recognize that there is no blueprint for achieving gender sensitivity and gender equality in governance processes. Rather, those who want to ensure these deep-rooted changes happen need to identify the critical elements of existing best practice...and adapt these to the contingencies of each country" (Ashworth 1996: 14).

VI. ENABLING GREATER INCLUSIVENESS IN GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES.

Enable women's entry into governance: Ensure that effective quota systems are in place, and employ more female directors and senior managers of CSOs, banks and global organizations such as the UN and WTO. This means providing financial resources for women – and, particularly, poor women – to enable them to compete for office at local or national levels, building their capacity by improving their literacy and leadership skills, and challenging forms of nepotism that enable only privileged, well-connected men and women to enter governance.

Ensure all forms of discrimination are addressed in governance institutions and processes: Governance institutions need to ensure marginalized groups such as people from ethnic minorities, disabled people and LGBT people are an integral part of governance.

Ensure women in institutions are given equal opportunities and treated equally: In cases where women attain positions within government they need to have equal access to jobs in all sectors. It is also crucial to create opportunities for women to attain positions of authority.

Ensure policymaking processes are more inclusive: It is important to include women in policymaking processes, whether through consultative groups at the local level or in high-level decision-making.

Adopt or adapt methodologies that facilitate equal participation in 'citizen-led' governance approaches: Efforts are needed to ensure women are fully integrated into and leading citizen-focused governance processes. For this to happen, certain conditions need to be in place, such as subsidized childcare, and capacity building in literacy and leadership.

Build women's capacity: Training should be available for women in advocacy, lobbying and leadership skills, as well as in confidence-building and literacy. Women's organizations are playing a key role in these processes, but governments also have a responsibility to support them.

VII. CONCLUSION

(Shifting mind-sets)

To achieve more progressive goals of governance, we need far more engaged citizens, who know they can and should get involved in governance processes and that change is possible if they push decision-makers to be accountable. This will involve: challenging common sense, accepted ideas embedded in the public consciousness that associate governance with male-centric, top-down institutions that act for rather than with citizens and creating shared understandings of what democratic governance could mean for ordinary people in terms of enabling their participation – for example, raising public awareness of accountability mechanisms with which they can engage at local levels or online through e-governance tools. The need to challenge entrenched gender inequalities in society to guarantee women's long-term participation in these processes, citizens should also be examining and addressing their own prejudices and assumptions about the social roles of men and women. Attitudes need to change among their male partners and relatives, and those in positions of influence can assist this process by:

- I. Promoting positive representations** of women in the media and in educational material that challenge preconceptions that women cannot participate in governance;
- II. providing positive role models of women engaged in all levels of governance;** challenging the unequal distribution of assets and resources that prevents women from engaging in politics in particular – for example, women often lack funding for electoral campaigns;
- III. Challenging the unequal care burden which limits women's ability** to engage in activities outside the home; and working with women and men – and their communities – to explore and challenge social norms that define women's legitimate space as being in the 'private' sphere of the home and men's to be in the 'public', thus opening up the possibility and legitimacy of women engaging in formal and informal politics.

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