

GOOD GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE IN THE LESS DEVELOPMENT COUNTRIES

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For the European Union and UNDP (2006), the quality of governance is ultimately attributed to its democratic content. Thereby the promotion of 'democratic governance' is a core element in their development assistance strategy. UNDP argues that human development and governance are inseparable. From the human development perspective UNDP has stated that 'good governance' is 'democratic governance. According to Brandi (2008), Democratic Governance is the glue that holds all the other development priorities set out across the MDG's together. In post-conflict societies it is much advocated by the international community that democratic systems provides the best mechanisms for reconciliation and are the best guarantors of lasting peace (Brandi & Clara, 2008).

According to Boex, Kimble and Pigeay (2010), a government is essential to providing security, justice, economic, and social functions and to channeling the will, energies, and resources of both the indigenous population and the international community. According to Shah (2006), governments support peace building through encouraging institutional participation in peace building and democratic process of their countries.

According to Ngware & Kironde (2010), the government's role to peace building is by ensuring that its legitimacy and credibility are intimately tied to a transparent and representative process of policy making by a council of democratically elected community leaders that enjoys legal recognition as an established corporate entity. According to the author, if this is achieved, leaders are likely to be respected and trusted and this can help to bridge divergent interests and ideas which are fundamental for peace building. Addison and Murshed (2001) pointed out that an important characteristic of effective local government is its proximity to the recipients of the basic services it provides. Thus, if government is well-recognized for its role in providing basic infrastructure such as drinking water, waste management, construction of latrines and public convenience facilities, recreational facilities and parks, and local roads, it is likely to unite people to work together for peace (Brandi & Clara, 2008).

Governance failure in Africa have their roots in several sources, principal among which are the legacy of colonialism, the nature of the independence struggle, the character of the post-colonial state and their leaders, and the structure and requirements of the global order. Colonial governance institutions were designed to promote domination and extraction, these being colonialism's principle mission. Although these institutions were the target of the anti-colonial struggle, they ultimately became colonialism's legacy to post-colonial governance. Independence struggles around Africa required mobilization and produced movements in which, with few exceptions, decision-making was largely plebiscitary. At independence, African countries maintained over-centralized state institutions that reposed enormous powers in the hands of their "founding fathers." Political mobilization and plebiscitary decision-making conveniently dominate post independence governance strategies, especially since the pursuit of development so as to "catch up" was the national preoccupation. Democracy was not a significant item on Africa's post-independence governance agenda (Ake, 1996).

With ambitions of wielding disparate groups into a "nation-state," Africa's central states relied upon an appeal to the promise of development to sustain their legitimacy as they tightened their control as a governance device. Thus, in addition to over-centralization's natural tendency to degenerate into arbitrary and autocratic rule, pressures to maintain control in the face of failed development initiatives quickened recourse to repression. Preventive detention laws, all-embracing sedition laws and increased presidential prerogatives drove governance processes. Regime maintenance became the most important if not the sole preoccupation of government.

External actors were very much a part of the governance arrangements that produced and maintained autocratic governance in Africa. Cold war machinations required responses that produced alignments that deepened divisions within and among countries, often creating a source of upward legitimacy and relieving leaders from any semblance of accountability to local populations. Cold war bipolarity was not the only external dynamic affecting African governance. Since independence, Africa's development agenda has been determined either by the former colonial powers or by the Bretton Woods institutions. The dynamics of bipolarity combined with the prescriptions of the Bretton Woods institutions to produce what Vincent Ostrom (1993) has called "crypto imperialism" as a form of governance intervention which has had a profound impact in strengthening autocracy as well as directly inducing conflict. Assessment of governance institutional failure in African countries remains incomplete unless the full impact of internal and external factors is considered.

Governance failure can be progressive and its effects incremental. What appears to be a sudden implosion could in fact be a manifestation or consequence of half a century or more of failed governance. Some autocracies operating within the Cold War global order were such predators that they destroyed the very fabric of their societies but were propped up

because of their strategic role in bipolar politics. Relying on external support and a well-catered-for but narrow internal constituency, such regimes existed for decades and became despotic. Zaire now the Democratic Republic of the Congo was one such regime; it only crumbled when the Cold War ended. Then there are cases like Sierra Leone with relatively little significance in bipolar politics but with predatory regimes that were perceived to be benign.² Seething in corruption, such regimes can grind to a halt and implode. Many others do not implode but totter on the brink while ordinary people struggle to find ways to cope with the dilemmas of daily living. Whatever the circumstance, human toll and social consequences of governance failure in Africa have been of staggering magnitudes.

The Human Toll of Governance Failure: The most visible consequence of governance failure can be seen the toll violent conflicts have taken on human beings. Most noted is the alarming level of conflict related deaths and displacement. Though estimates vary, it is generally agreed that there have been more than 6 million conflict-related deaths in Africa since 1983 (CSIS Report, 2000). There is an estimated 20 million conflict related displaced persons of whom 14 million are internally displaced. These figures constitute close to three percent of Africa's total population. (See World Population Prospects. UN Population Division 2000.) When disaggregated and their implications fully considered, they reveal a crisis of a profound proportions. In the region of the Central Africa and the Great Lakes, for example, they tell of a disruption of societies consisting of thousands of communities with linkages and spillovers that affect still thousands more. In Uganda, for example, internally displaced people (IDPs) account for close to 3 per cent of that country's population and with exponential impact on others. One quarter of Uganda's 45 districts (administrative jurisdictions) is in some form of upheaval. Warring factions operate in northern as well as western districts and sporadic conflicts involving pastoralists are waging in eastern districts. Food shortages and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have added further burdens especially on women and children. Uganda has become a strategic link between systems of conflict extending north in Sudan, west into the Great Lakes region and east into the Horn of Africa (Global IDP, 2001).

The problem of internal displacement has not been given the same level of international attention as the problem of refugees, i.e. the externally displaced. In Angola, one out of every four, in Sudan, one out of every 7 and in Eritrea one out of every 10 persons is internally displaced and destitute (Global IDP, 2001). When circumstance and duration of displacement are considered, a bleaker picture emerges. Loss of dignity and diminished hope associated with prolonged displacement can erode self-confidence and optimism—predispositions that are vital for self-reliance and self-organization. Moreover, the impact of extensive societal trauma associated with gruesome massacres often witnessed by displaced people (internal and external) can hardly be fully assessed. Resettlement can also be hazardous and rife with insecurity, including insecurity stemming from landmines and other unexploded devices.

REFERENCE

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