

Democratic Governance and the role of Civil Society (NGO's) The Key to Political and Economic Reform

Democratic Governance:

Democratic governance comprises the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how government decisions are made on a daily basis. It is the vehicle through which citizens can routinely participate in policymaking.

Lack of democratic governance and civil society leads to

- **widespread corruption,**
 - **poor infrastructure,**
 - **high business costs,**
 - **low investment, growth, employment and income levels,**
 - **national, regional, and international instability,**
 - **growing citizen disappointment**
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Many governments are quick to propose reforms but fail in their implementation due to

- **corruption**
 - **poor institutional development**
 - **opaque legal systems**
 - **weak enforcement mechanisms**
 - **lack of transparency in administration**
 - **inability to provide and effectively manage public services**
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Lack of Democratic Governance leads to:

- 1. Unresponsive policies and uneven playing fields**
 - 2. Erodes legitimacy and support for democracy and key reforms**
 - 3. Unstable legal and regulatory frameworks**
 - 4. Inconsistent and poor quality of goods and services**
 - 5. Squanders and misallocates foreign and domestic resources**
 - 6. Encourages corruption and stunts growth**
 - 7. Lowers income and increases illiteracy and infant mortality**
 - 8. Fuels economic and political crisis**
 - 9. Jeopardizes national, regional and international security**
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How to attain Democratic Governance

1. Increase transparency

- **Adopt and enforce freedom of information laws**
 - **Determine standards for what information is to be provided**
 - **Determine what format information is presented in**
 - **Determine which government agency is to publish which type of info.**
 - **Determine how info is to be disseminated**
 - **Determine the timeframe info is to be released**
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2. Establish and protect freedom of the media

- **Adopt and enforce laws that guaranteed freedom of media**
 - **Allow private ownership of media outlets by standardizing license and permit requirements.**
 - **Promote impartial news coverage within state owned media by having independent oversight boards**
 - **Provide media with regular access to information related to gov. activities.**
 - **Offer journalism training to equip journalists to detect poor governance, fraud and corruption.**
 - **Promote press responsibility so that journalists report on key social and political issues**
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3. Increase public participation in decision-making

- **Drafts of all laws are to be made public before they are**
 - **Citizens and media are then given one month to submit comments and feedback**
 - **Citizens should be given the right to participate in public hearings**
 - **Citizens should have the right to challenge arbitrary or unresponsive laws**
 - **Citizens should have the right to initiate referendums on proposed laws or new ones.**
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4. Reduce the degree of government official's discretion.

- **Laws and regulations should be clarified so that rights are clearly defined, rules are clearly specified**
 - **Duplicate, complex and conflicting laws should be eliminated**
 - **Guidelines should be issued requiring disclosure and set standards where gov. may award subsidies, quotas and exemptions from fines.**
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5. Reduce legal and regulatory burdens

- **Substitute most ex ante requirements that create legal bottlenecks with ex post controls**
 - **Decentralize decision-making procedures**
 - **Promote user participation to control the application of all decisions.**
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6. Reform Government Agencies

- **Streamline and simplify internal procedures**
 - **Establish and enforce codes of conduct**
 - **Regularly evaluate agencies' performance**
 - **Conduct independent audits of budgets and procedures**
 - **Regularly audit public officials' financial interests**
Establish clear and transparent rules on conflict of interest
 - **Provide routine opportunities for citizens and employees to voice concerns**
 - **Include citizens and NGO's on oversight committees**
 - **Implement measures to improve poorly performing agencies**
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7. Strengthen Administrative and Enforcement Capacity of Government Agencies

- **Cultivate a staff of well-qualified civil servants by hiring and promoting based on verifiable professional standards.**
 - **Provide sufficient financial and technical resources to administer laws expediently.**
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8. Strengthen legislative oversight of the executive Branch

- **Legislative oversight committees should be formed to monitor policy implementation by the exec. Branch.**
 - **Provide committees with sufficient resources to conduct thorough research.**
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9. Reform the Judiciary

10. Provide Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms

11. Establish Ombudsmen

12. Promote well-designed decentralization of government functions

- **Clearly stipulate the responsibilities of local gov.**
- **Give local officials sufficient authority**

- **Provide local gov. with adequate financial, human and tech. resources.**
 - **Develop and implement sound accounting systems based on transparency**
 - **Cultivate an independent, investigative local media**
 - **Encourage the development of civil society org.**
 - **Establish feedback mechanisms**
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13. Promote democratic governance within public sector companies

14. Encourage the establishment and involvement of civil society organizations

- **Remove legal barriers that prevent the establishment of civil society org.**
- **Give Civil Society organizations tax-exempt status.**
- **Develop programs that involve civil society orgs. In the reform process.**
- **Strengthen advocacy skills of business associations and civil society organizations**