

Youth for Good Governance
distance learning program

Module I

Introduction to Governance



THE WORLD BANK

Module I

Introduction to Governance

Module Overview

Welcome to the Youth for Good Governance Distance Learning Program. The course team is excited to have another opportunity to work with students from around the world on this important topic following our official launch on June 20.

During this module, you will be introduced to some of the basic concepts we will be using during the rest of the course. We will look at some of the functions of government, explore the meaning of governance, and start thinking about what determines good or bad governance. It is worth noting that we are starting this course on September 11, a year after the terrorist attacks in the United States. We will be exploring the link between corruption and terrorism in later modules.



Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- identify the basic functions of a government
- define and discuss the concept of governance
- understand the role of citizens in good governance
- discuss the importance of governance.

Participant Role

You are encouraged to read all the materials in this handbook and attempt to complete all the exercises before the videoconference session. If you have any questions or need guidance with the exercises, contact your facilitator through the e-mail list that has been developed for the course.



Exercise

Before the videoconference begins, you will work in small groups and prepare a short report (less than 500 words) about your country. This report will be shared with participants from the other countries in this course. In the report, you will give the name of your country and a description of your country that tells something about its history and current situation. Then you will name the main **government institutions** in your country, and describe what these institutions do and what you think of these institutions.




Definition

Government Institution: A public organization that has the power to perform certain functions in a society.



Section Two: Functions of Government

The basic work of government is to provide services, make laws, and enforce these laws. This work is carried out in  **three branches of government:** the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. Officials in each branch of government can be elected or appointed, depending on the kind of laws in place. The rules and procedures set out by the government guide the way people in your country work or study, spend their leisure time, and participate in politics.



Definition

The Three Branches of Government

Executive: The branch of government that advises on policy decisions and carries out government programs. The president or prime minister is the chief executive and appoints a cabinet of senior officials to direct the work of government departments or ministries. Other people who work in the executive branch are civil servants.

Legislative: The branch of government that makes laws, represents citizens, and oversees how laws and policies are carried out. The legislature is made up of Members of Parliament or Congressmen and women.

Judicial: The branch of government that enforces the law. The judiciary is made up of judges, lawyers, and prosecutors.





Exercise

List five functions that your government performs. For each function, identify which branch of government carries out the work.

<i>Function</i>	<i>Branch of government</i>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In small groups, discuss how important you think each function is, how well the government carries out the function, and how much the function responds to the needs and wishes of the people. Then make a short presentation to the class.



Section Three: Definition of Governance

We have seen that government institutions carry out vital functions that are needed in order for the state to function. How well the state functions depends on how effective the different institutions are in doing their job.

The following analogy emphasizes this point. A government functions much like a computer. Its institutions can be compared to the hardware: this is the physical structure that allows a computer to run, just as it allows the state to work. The rules and procedures within the institutions of government are like the software: this is the detailed material that makes the computer, and likewise government institutions, perform certain tasks.

To work well, computers need good hardware, with adequate storage and processing capacity, and good software, free of viruses and bugs. Similarly, to work well, governments need good institutions, with adequate funding and skilled workers, and good rules and procedures that are clear, consistent, efficient and useful.

The term **?** *governance* refers to the way government carries out its work. Like most things, governance can be good or bad, effective or ineffective. Good governance embodies such qualities as accountability, responsiveness, transparency, and efficiency. It assumes a government's ability to maintain social peace, guarantee law and order, promote or create



Definition

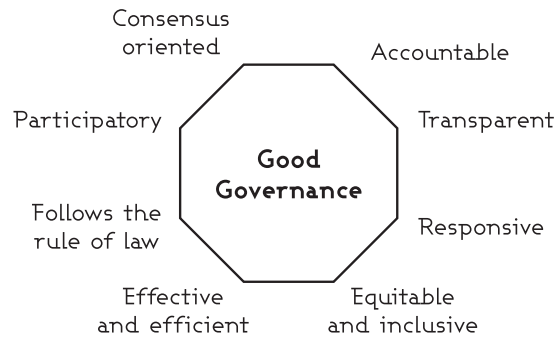
Governance: The way government uses its authority to provide services, make laws and enforce them. **Good governance** is the effective implementation of policy and provision of services that are responsive to citizen needs.



conditions necessary for economic growth, and ensure a minimum level of social security.



Exercise



Source: <http://www.unescap.org/huset/gg/governance.htm>

Look at the picture above. There you see different elements that together are important for good governance. Pick one of these elements and think of why this element is important for good governance. Also think of an example that shows why this element is important.

Section Four: The Role of Citizens in Good Governance

Citizen input in government is critical for improving governance. Through elections, public meetings, policy roundtables, committees, and surveys, citizens express their "voice" on what they want from government and how well the government is delivering services. Better policies and programs are developed where government officials coordinate and negotiate with private firms, professional and voluntary associations, labor unions, green movements, religious associations, women's groups and other stakeholders.

Democracy fosters this kind of interaction between government and civil society, and at least in principle, promotes accountability. Nonetheless, some democracies may govern poorly, and some authoritarian governments may govern well. In general, however, research suggests that governance is better where people have political rights, such as democratic elections, a functioning legislature and a political opposition, and civil liberties, such as freedom of expression, a free media, the ability of groups to organize, and freedom of dissent and criticism. For more details on this research, visit the WBI website: www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance.



Exercise

- What kinds of opportunities are there for people to participate in politics in your country?
- Rank the level of participation in governance in your country, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest.
- Do you think there is a link between democracy and good governance in your country?



Section Five: The Importance of Governance

Good governance indicates a more constructive relationship between the people and the government, but there remains a question of whether better relationship brings concrete benefits. Does better governance improve the quality of life or lead to greater opportunities for people? This is an important question, and we have some evidence to answer that it does. New research shows that government institutions that are accountable, effective and respected produce higher standards of living (shown in income per capita) and improved social outcomes, such as low rates of infant mortality and high rates of literacy. In addition, poor governance has led to political instability and frequent regime changes in many countries. For example, the overthrow of governments in countries such as Ceausescu's Romania, Mobutu's Zaire, Moussa Troare's Mali, and Samuel Doe's Liberia are a few examples of countries where mis-governance and corruption have contributed to civil unrest and coups d'état.



Exercise

Using your country as an example, defend the statement: "Good governance leads to better economic and social outcomes."

In doing so, think about the economic situation, health of the population, education levels, and political stability in your country.



Extras



Exercise

TO BE FREE, ONE MUST BE CHAINED.

Think about this statement for a while. Think about what this means to you and the country you live in, and what such a statement says about government. Do we need to be chained in order to be free? What does freedom mean and who provides it? Can we live without rules?

After giving this statement some thought, you can take 5–10 minutes in the classroom to write down what this statement represents in a half page or less (250 words). You can also make a drawing or collage representing this sentence as long as you can explain it. Then you will share your paper or artwork in groups and report the conclusions to the class. As a class, we will then discuss the way society and government relate to each other.



Exercise

Look over the following statements, and decide to what extent you agree or disagree with each of them by circling the number that most closely represents your position. Be prepared to explain where you stand on each issue.

"Democracy is an inefficient system of governance."

I agree completely

①

I neither agree nor disagree

②

I disagree completely

③

④

⑤



