



THE STATE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA: ANALYZING PROCESSES AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

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Abstract: Civic engagement processes in the country have been constrained, thereby, resulting in poor public participation in governance and public policy processes. This is in contrast to well-functioning democracies where governments and citizens are required to work together to address issues of public concern. Through this process, the citizens influence public policy outcomes and determine the political choices that impact on their lives and wellbeing. This paper interrogates the civic engagement context and processes in the public sector, in the past decade (2012-2022). This is as a result of the backdrop of unprecedented low level of public participation in the political and governance processes during the period. The qualitative methodology is employed in the paper with focus on content and descriptive analysis. The paper adopted the Theory of Participatory democracy as the theoretical framework. The paper argued that this scenario has resulted in citizen's exclusion from the policy process with attendant negative consequences on governance outcomes. The paper recommended expanding the engagement space through political reforms and good governance practices to ensure citizen's participation in the political and governance processes, especially, at the grassroots level.

Keywords: Citizens; Civil Society; Governance; Democracy; Public participation.

Introduction

In well-functioning democracies, the public sector is expected to provide services that improve the wellbeing of citizens. Such services usually manifest in various forms such as the provision of affordable and accessible healthcare, qualitative education, and other basic social and economic infrastructures. Given that public sectors offer such essential services to the people, it becomes expedient to integrate a large percentage of people into the governance processes (Rajkotia&Gergen, 2016, p.6). However, most citizens are yet to be actively involved in the political and governance processes in most countries (McNeil & Mumvuma, 2006; USAID, 2013). There has been a growing consensus among scholars and development practitioners that citizen participation is very essential to public policy formulation and implementation, as well as in the actualization of improved development outcomes (Gaventa&Barret, 2010, p. 9). Unarguably, functional mechanisms for civic participation do not only situate development priorities within the goals of the community, it equally improves communication between the state and the citizens. It further strengthens the capacity of civil society organizations in the aspect of representing and advocating for the people (Gaventa& Barrett, 2010; Joshi, 2013).

It is important to note that in most African countries (Nigeria inclusive), majority of citizens are not actively involved in the political and governance processes. This development has created rooms for non-responsive governments whose performance in terms of service delivery is unchecked and abysmally poor. This constitutes serious impediments to improved public service delivery as well as in the actualization of human development goals (McNeil & Mumvuma, 2006). Evidently, the benefits derivable from active engagement of citizens in the public sector abound. It is imperative to note that when citizens are actively involved in the policy process, it tends to sustain democratic governance (Cloete, 2013). In addition, the democratization of public policy avails citizens the opportunity to convey vital information concerning public needs and demands to the policy makers. Bekker (2012) further argues that it promotes government's responsiveness towards the needs of the citizens.

Nigerians have over the years engaged in decision making processes that concern their wellbeing using various platforms. Such platforms include labour unions, students' unions, political, social, economic and cultural interest groups, and political parties among others. During the colonial era, platforms like political parties, student union bodies and labour unions were used to push for political independence. Often, strategies like protests, propaganda, strikes and civil disobedience were adopted in the course of demanding for change (Akinboye & Oloruntoba, 2007 cited in Aniekwe & Agbiboa, 2015, p.14). Nonetheless, the prolonged military dictatorship has its attendant negative consequences on citizen engagement in the political process. The military government during the twenty-seven years of rule by force undermined the rights of citizens to participate in the political and governance processes. Various military juntas particularly in the regime of Sani Abacha did only stop at banning political activities but also dealt severely with social activists and critics, journalists, as well as politicians (Chiluwa, 2012, p.62). As the country returned to democratic rule on May 29, 1999, there began a gradual participation of citizens in the political and governance processes. Civil society groups and all forms of socio-political associations began to make their voices heard with the mass media and the internet becoming the major means of political participation (Chiluwa, 2012, p.62).

However, citizen engagement in the political process is still rated below appreciable level. Citizen engagement in the decision-making process should be one of the topmost priorities of governments at all levels. This is because citizen participation in democratic governance process enhances legitimacy of a government. It also helps to stabilize the entire political process (Asante, 2020, p.1; Okewale, 2019, p.159). Given the unprecedented low level of citizen participation in the political and governance processes in the country, the paper interrogates civic engagement processes in the public sector in the past ten years. The paper argues that during this period, Nigerian citizens have not fully participated in the political and governance processes that help shape their lives.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Participatory democracy was adopted as the framework of analysis in this paper. The ideological root of this theory could be traced back to the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau who believes that citizens' participation in the decision making process of a state is very crucial, and that it is the bedrock upon which participatory democracy thrives (Schwartz & Galily, 2017, p. 277). According to Pateman (1970, p.24) "Rousseau's ideal system is designed to develop responsible, individual social and political action through the effect of the participatory process". This theory strives to promote the level at which citizens participate in the different public decision making processes in a democracy. It lays much emphasis on the importance of a politically active civil society in order to broaden the number of participants while making decisions that affect all and sundry (Schwartz & Galily, 2017, p.276). The theory argues that when there is a maximal increase in the level of citizen's involvement in the political and governance process, it tends to foster inclusive development. Participatory democratic theorists believe that when the decision-making power is delegated into few hands, it

tends to alienate the citizens from the governance process (Noyberger, 2004, p.116). The theorists regard citizens' participation as a vital element to the sustainability of democratic governance.

Etymologically, the Greek word *demos* and *kratos* simply means that people are in power. Therefore, democracy ought to be participatory. The theory advocates for more involvement of the citizens rather than the traditional representative democracy. It strives to create more opportunities for people to contribute meaningfully to the decision-making processes in a society. Muse (2016, p.114) contends that it gives the local population the avenue to participate in issues that affect their day-to-day living as a people. Importantly, participatory democracy thrives in an environment of mutual trust, honesty, open agendas, equity and respect for diverse views. In addition, it thrives where there are other critical elements like accountability, rule of law within the context of basic freedoms, as well as open communications and feedback from all units that are accommodated. It has been argued that "participatory, accountable and efficient governance harnesses the activities of the state and its citizens to the objectives of sustainable social and economic development" (DAC, 1997 cited in Schneider, 1999, p. 5).

The relevance of this theory is premised on its stance on the popular participation of citizens in sustaining democratic governance. The theory focuses on ensuring that there is active participation of the majority, and not just the elite class. This theory can be applied to engender citizen's participation in the political and governance processes in the country using sustainable platforms such as political parties, town hall meetings, pressure groups, community groups and various interest groups, as well as labour and student groups. In participatory democracy, citizens play active roles in the governance process. It avails citizens the opportunity to prioritize their needs rather than relying solely on the choices made by the elected representatives for them (Santos, 1998 cited in Muse, 2016). This becomes unavoidably necessary when one considers that in so many cases the elected representatives after securing seats in the parliament relocate their residences far away from the villages where they were elected to the city. This is mostly evidenced in Nigeria (Oyediran et al., 2002). Nonetheless, many scholars have argued that participatory democracy becomes successful when it is localized in regions with a relatively small population, rather than as a nationwide participatory democratic outlook that might be cumbersome to manage (Dinerstein & Ferrero, 2012, p.6).

Governance gap

Governance can be categorized as either good or bad. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (2006) define good governance thus: "A participative manner of governing that functions in a responsible, accountable and transparent manner based on the principles of efficiency, legitimacy and consensus for the purpose of promoting the rights of individual citizens and the public interest, thus, indicating the exercise of political will for ensuring the material welfare of society and sustainable development with social justice" (The United Nations Economic and Social Council, p. 4). Good governance is one of the barometers used to evaluate the performance of governments of states (Oseghale, 2020, p.8). When there is widespread corruption, high state of insecurity of lives and properties arising from all manners of criminality, the government failing to deliver on the needs and expectations of the citizens, etc., it simply implies that there is poor governance in such a state.

When a state is failing in its social contract with the people, it creates a governance gap. Bad governance occurs when the government consistently proves incompetent, irresponsible and unresponsive to the needs and expectations of the people. It also occurs when such a government is unaccountable and non-transparent. When these and many more are observed, there is governance gap in such a system. Governance gap is also created when the state is visionless with respect to development and unable to show its commitment to the realization of its vision (if there is any). Sobhan (1998, p. 13 cited in Mukhtar, et al, 2017, p. 350) insists that "governance gap is created when the government of a state is unable to develop the capacity to fulfil its commitments to the people". Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, visionary and focused leaders have not been privileged to be part

of the political and governance space. Regrettably, the country has continued to recycle corrupt, self-serving, visionless and unpatriotic rulers. Okafor (2016, p. 26) insists that “the absence of competent leadership especially at the national level has negatively affected the country’s development path...” The so-called political leaders have turned themselves into demigods while the followers have become completely alienated from the governance processes. Corruption has become institutionalized while the inalienable rights of citizens are trampled upon without recourse to the justice system. The judiciary has also lost its essential ingredient of being the ‘the last hope of the common man.’ Various forms of youth restiveness, criminality and insecurity, agitations for separation etc., have as a consequence taken over the Nigerian space.

Interestingly, the security of lives and properties of citizens remain one of the fundamental objectives of any state. It is for this reason that a state like Nigeria is expected to vigorously pursue the security of lives of its people and their properties. Few decades ago, particularly during the era of the military, the government did not only make serious effort to protect the people and their properties but its military was regarded as one the best in Africa. The military carried out peace keeping operations to restore peace and security in some West African countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, over the years, the country’s security apparatuses have been struggling to restore security within the country and at the borders due to the onslaught of the Boko Haram terrorist groups, criminal herdsmen, bandits, kidnappers, armed robbers, etc. Again, given the plural nature of the country both on ethnic and religious lines, it is expected that successive governments should develop a formidable institutional framework to ensure that citizens co-exist in peace and harmony.

Okafor (2016, p.26), further argues that existing institutions and structures have been weakened with little efforts of strengthening or putting in place sustainable ones. Regrettably, successive governments have failed in this regard due to evident weaknesses of these institutions at various levels. In the past ten years, the rate of unemployment has risen astronomically. For instance, the current unemployment rate has risen to 37.9%, in the first quarter of 2022 (O'Neill, 2022). A study by the World Bank Group shows that before the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, about 4 out of every 7 Nigerians were living in poverty. Between 2018 and 2021, about 40.1 percent of Nigerians lived below the national poverty line of N137 per person per year (World Bank Group, 2022, p. 13).

Citizen’s Exclusion: Impact on Policy Process and Outcome

The clamour for the participation of citizens in the public space has become an appreciable idea all over the world. The idea behind the initiative of civic engagement is to ensure that citizens are fully involved in the governance process; and that public accountability is improved upon for positive development outcomes (Chiweza, 2005; Hussein, 2003 cited in Okewale, 2019, p.160). Unarguably, majority of the people globally are not actively engaged in the political and socioeconomic decisions that shape their lives. Often, the greater majority of citizens shy away from the political and socio-economic processes that shape their lives. This often results in the making and implementation of policies hugely influenced by elite preferences. When these happen, it tends to favour the few privileged minority to the disadvantage of the less privileged majority, thereby, widening the inequality gap. Civic engagement is imperative for overall socio-political and democratic sustenance of any country. Regrettably, some countries are still showing lacklustre attitude in this area. Nigeria falls under the category of countries with low level of citizens’ participation in the public space. In Nigeria, citizens’ participation has not been very encouraging. This is largely due to the level of electoral malfeasance in the polity as well as the self-serving attitude of the political class. There are also other factors that impede citizens’ participation in the country. Such factors are political, socio-cultural, attitudinal and bureaucratic. Okewale (2019) insists that the country’s history which has been replete with poor citizen engagement creates an environment of governance discontent and development disparity. Basically, the ability of a government to align its priority towards the demands of the people is predicated on the rate at which citizens get involved in the governance process (Okewale, 2019, p. 161).

The nonchalant attitude of citizens towards the political process could be attributed to the long years of repressive military policies which excluded the citizens in the governance process. This assertion was aptly buttressed by Ojo (2008, p.15), who noted that the “many years of military dictatorship has left some psychological scars in the minds of the generality of the Nigerian populace and this has weakened the inherent disposition of the youths to agitate for change”. This argument was further corroborated by other scholars who stated thus:

The covert and overt state terror perpetrated by the agents of the military regimes was not without attendant psychological impact. Brutal and naked force unleashed on innocent and young activists as well as university students culminated in a confluence of divergent cause and effect connections (Ekpo&Argoye, 2018, p. 83).

One may argue that this is a contributory factor to why majority of citizens especially, the youth population have largely remained indifferent and lacklustre in the political and governance processes. In addition to this, is the way and manner corruption has become institutionalized, the daily occurrences of human rights violations, the increasing level of electoral malfeasance during the electioneering processes and the general disregard and careless attitude of the political class towards the citizens. As such, in order to curb inequality and its devastating consequences on the society, it becomes imperative for citizens to be part of the governance processes. Active and meaningful civic engagement is an antidote to inequality. It “has the potential to empower those who are under-represented and marginalized, who are often excluded to a point that it becomes difficult for them to raise their voices, influence decisions, and hold governments accountable” (Ford Foundation, n.d).

The exclusion of citizens by the political elites from the governance process has created enormous negative outcomes. The governance processes are left in the hands of minority incompetent, corrupt and self-serving political class. The activities of this political class have been largely responsible for the fragile or near-failed status of the Nigerian state. They are responsible for poor governance outcomes in the democratic experiences of the country (Bolarinwa&Osuji, 2022, p.115).Iyekokpolo (2020, p.751) avers that whenever there is contestation among them, they resort to the use of ethnic and religious sentiments. Through such primordial sentiments they manipulate the citizens and create divisions, thereby, keeping them far from the governance processes. This is one of the reasons why the incidences of corruption have remained unabated in the country. It is also the pervasive nature of corruption in the country that has made it difficult for successive governments to address the issues of infrastructural deficit and general development conundrum. For instance, public education is at its lowest, the health sector is collapsing, roads have become death-traps, inflation is at a galloping rate, and insecurity is widespread.

The Role of Civil Societies

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are indispensable tools in the democratization and governance processes of a state (Nwakamma, 2019, p.319).Alokpa, (2015, p.334) contend that they serve two major purposes. Firstly, as an effective means through which repeated abuses of state power is controlled. Secondly, as an instrument through which political office holders are held to account for their stewardship. In Nigeria, they are expected to play crucial roles both in the democratic process and its sustenance. After independence in 1960, the pattern of operation of civil societies was largely influenced by the nature and structure of politics in the country. For example, when the civil war ended in 1970, the CSOs focused mainly on the restoration of the country’s shattered unity through the process of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

During the long period of military interregnum, the various CSOs focused on critiquing and opposing the repressive and undemocratic policies and other cases of human right abuses and violations. In the build up to the Fourth Republic (basically necessitated by the annulment of June 12th 1992 presidential election presumed to have been won by Chief MKO Abiola) they played tremendous roles not only in criticizing the decision, but also in exposing the antidemocratic stance of the military junta to the international community. The various CSOs that

played remarkable roles then include the Campaign for Democracy, National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), Civil Liberty Organization (CLO), etc. The CSOs used the instruments of civil disobedience, strikes, protests and propaganda to ventilate their grievances against the military junta.

The civil society groups have played tremendous roles towards the sustenance of democratic governance in the country since 1999. A case in point was the vehement opposition mounted by the civil society groups and influential Nigerians that led to the truncation of the third term bid of Olusegun Obasanjo during his second term as the president of Nigeria. Civil society groups like the National Civil Society Coalition against Third Term (NACATT), Peoples Problems and Solutions Organization (PPSO), Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria and other eminent Nigerians like Professor Wole Soyinka, Chief Bisi Akande, Professor Ropo Sekoni, Dr Joseph Oladokun, Solomon Olufelo, among others, played very serious roles in that regard (Alokpa, 2015). The role of the CSOs was also evidenced under the Yar'Adua administration. As a result of the relentless pressure of the CSOs on the National Assembly, the then Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan was availed the power to act as the president at the time President Yar'Adua was battling with health challenges. This was made possible through the 'doctrine of necessity' which was adopted by the National Assembly. Further, the role played by the CSOs during the inauguration of the Justice Uwais-led Electoral Reform Committee helped to fine-tune the framework of elections in Nigeria (Ojo, 2011 cited in Alokpa, 2015). Presently, the YIAGA Africa, Action Aid Nigeria, Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room, Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) etc., have been working in support of credible elections and good governance in the country. The CSOs have mobilized and enhanced citizen participation in the political process through its advocacy network. They have been part and parcel of the election monitoring process. The CSOs thus, play crucial roles in the political, social and economic development of the country. Such roles span across different areas of socio-political and economic concerns and involve issues such as improving the quality of the electoral process and governance, human capacity development, human rights protection, clean environment etc.

Civic Engagement as a Means of Enhancing Good Governance

Civic engagement refers to "the involvement of the people in the decision-making processes of the state in a manner that they have substantial influence on public policies and programmes which can impact positively on the socio-economic lives of the citizenry" (Armstrong, 2013, p.5). According to the UN Public Sector Report (2008) civic engagement which is the same as citizen participation refers to:

...involvement of citizens in a wide range of policymaking activities, including the determination of levels of service, budget priorities, and the acceptability of physical construction projects in order to orient government programs toward community needs, build public support, and encourage a sense of cohesiveness within neighborhoods (Armstrong, 2013, p. 4).

It is therefore, obvious from the foregoing that effective citizens' participation in the governance process is crucial for the democratic sustenance and overall development of a country. The World Bank (1997) identified eight components of good governance. It has to be participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follow the rule of law. Again, good governance should be responsive to both immediate and future needs of the society; have the capacity to minimize corruption; accommodate the views of the minorities; and ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable groups in the society are heard in decision-making (Graham, et al, 2003 cited in Mapuva, 2015, p.407). Given that participation is one of the cardinal elements in a democracy, citizens exhibit their desire to be involved in the democratic space either by contesting for elective positions or voting for those who contest for positions. Participation avails citizens the opportunity to "influence and hold ownership of public decisions" (Cogan & Sharpe, 1986, p. 283). In the same

vein, the participation of citizens in the public space makes it possible for government to engage in programmes that are people-oriented (Spiegel, 1998 cited in Mapuva, 2015).

It therefore, becomes imperative to note that there is the need to strengthen the relationship between government and the governed to avoid political chaos. Such chaos happens when the few in power alienate the less privileged majority citizens, abandon the pursuance of basic welfare services for the people and resort to selfish agenda. However, when citizens put pressure on the government, they tend to become transparent and accountable to the people (Hyder, Zaidi& Mustafa, 2019, p.1442). “When people in government pursue private agenda rather than that which benefits the public it tends to become more corrupt-prone” (Knight, Chigudu &Tandon, 2002, p.158). Writing further, they stated thus: “If citizens are cut off from or subordinate to the authorities [who] make critical decisions affecting their lives; [and] the available means for getting redress are distant.... then] this means that government is a power over the people rather than a means through which people exercise their sovereign authority” (Knight, Chigudu&Tandon, 2002, cited in Mapuva, 2015, p. 406).

Diller (2001) identifies civic engagement as collective decision taken to improve the wellbeing of the society. One of the notable means of civic engagement is through voting during elections. Voting gives citizens, the opportunity to exercise their right by electing candidates of their choice into offices as well as voting out unpopular candidates from office (Olaleye&Ayobade, 2021, p. 7). It is expected that the elected representatives should align with the pulse of the people while in office. Town Hall meetings can also be a very veritable tool for civic engagement. In a town hall meeting, which is an informal public meeting, members of a given community have the opportunity to voice their opinions towards certain policies and programmes of government as it affects them. Olaleye and Ayobade (2021, p.7) reiterate that it provides a platform for citizens to hear the reactions of public officers and elected officials towards such issues. Studies have shown that civic engagement can lead to better governance outcomes. First, civic engagement can increase the responsiveness of the state towards the yearnings of its citizens. Second, it has the capacity to lower corruption in a state. This is because when there is public pressure on the government, it tends to change their behaviour and this further reduces corrupt practices. Third, civic engagement can lead to better budget utilization in a state. Fourth, civic engagement can lead to better public service delivery in state (Bhargava, 2015, p.2). It is therefore, expected that when citizens and the various civil society groups engage actively in the political and governance processes using the strategies outlined by Bhargava, it would lead to better governance outcomes.

Bhargava’s template can be effectively applied in the Nigerian context for improved outcomes. Such outcomes could manifest in the form of increased responsiveness of the state and its institutions towards issues of public concerns. This can be made manifest in the lowering of astronomical rate at which corruption is rising on daily basis, improved budget management, as well as increase in the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery in line with citizens’ needs and expectations.

Expanding the Engagement Space

Citizen engagement is imperative in the policy process in a number of ways. First, it fosters good governance. Second, when citizens are engaged in the public sector, it enables the government to tap new sources of ideas that are relevant to policy processes while taking decisions. Third, citizen engagement tends to build public trust in government; it further enhances the quality of democracy and also strengthens civic capacity (Obasi & Lekorwe, 2014). Citizen engagement is crucial to the survival of any democratic governance and Nigeria is not an exception. Citizen engagement is not just limited to voting and seeking public office, it equally avails the citizens the opportunity to be part of the decision-making processes (Ibirogbu, 2019). However, it has been argued that the way the Nigerian political space is presently constituted discourages meaningful engagement. It has been argued

that “the Nigerian political system and acts of governance as presently constituted does not encourage the mass participation of people...discretely skewed to be elite driven” (Sulaimon&Sagie, 2015 cited in Ibirogb, 2019, p. 1).

Owing to the disjointed structure of the public space, the elite political class participates more than the ordinary citizens in the political and governance processes. The conspicuous absence of most citizens in the political and governance processes is often, largely caused by their lack of trust in the political class. This development has created an environment of suspicion on the government by the governed. For instance, the participation of the people during the 2019 general election suffices. Out of about 70 million eligible voters who registered prior to the elections, it was only about 30 million voters that participated in the election (Ibirogb, 2019). These narratives clearly show that there is poor citizen participation in the political process, especially given the estimated total population of the country at more than 200million. This kind of ugly scenario is not healthy for the development of democracy. It is important to note that for the country to experience meaningful growth and overall socio-political development, the citizens have to be actively involved in the governance processes, particularly at the grassroots. When citizens get involved actively at this level, they can influence government decisions as well as hold managers of the state resources accountable. More so, the more citizens become part of the governance process, the more legitimacy the government enjoys.

It is no doubt that there is crisis in Nigeria’s education sector. The current system of education affects the proclivity of citizens in the area of civic engagement. The system of education limits citizens’ knowledge of civics, history and governance. It further lacks relevance in the area of addressing socio-economic needs, demands and expectations of the time. More than a decade ago, Renton (2010) estimated the number of out of school children in Nigeria to be above eight million. Unfortunately, nothing serious has been done by various levels of government till date to address this problem. As such, this group lack the skills, neither do they possess the level of literacy that can make them to be gainful to themselves and the society. To expand the engagement space there is the need for a holistic, qualitative and accessible education for citizens, particularly the youth population. A society whose education sector is holistic, qualitative and accessible has the potentials of building a conscious, committed and actively engaged group of citizens (Olusegun, 2012). This would definitely improve learning outcomes that can be used to critically analyses problems with a view to solving them. There is also crisis of unemployment and lack of economic opportunities. Unemployment and lack of economic opportunities foster poor citizen participation in the political and governance processes. Olusegun (2012) contends that during elections politicians capitalize on the economic vulnerabilities of people, especially the youth population. They provide monetary incentives which entice the youths into engaging in violent and anti-democratic activities, to the advantage of politicians that want power at all cost. In order to curb these problems, there is the need to provide meaningful employment to the educated and expand access to economic opportunities for all.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Civic engagement is a very crucial element that sustains the democratic governance processes of a state. This implies that the active involvement of citizens in the political and governance decisions that shape their lives cannot be overemphasized. However, citizen’s participation in the political and governance processes have not been encouraging. Evidences of low citizen participation in the public space are enormous. Trust deficit towards the government and its functionaries among others, have contributed immensely towards the lacklustre attitude of the average citizen towards government policies and programmes. In the light of the foregoing analysis, the article recommends the following.

Firstly, there should be expansion of the engagement process through political reforms and good governance practices. This would ensure active citizen participation in the political and governance processes especially, at the grassroots level.

Secondly, civil society groups need to partner more with the community and government agencies for better governance outcomes instead of being perceived as enemies of the state.

Thirdly, government at all levels should initiate functional policies and programmes to promote civic engagement.

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