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Civic Education for Media Professionals: A Training Manual

Fackson Banda

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Foreword

Civic awareness enables both media practitioners and users to appreciate the role of journalism and media in building democratic societies. This manual serves as a resource for journalism students and media professionals in developing countries, providing them with essential knowledge for the analysis of the relationship between media functions and active citizenship, and the underlying nexus of democracy, development and the media based on the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights that lie at the heart of UNESCO's mandate.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Why this manual?

The media is an important part of democracy. A good test of democracy is citizen participation. The media can help citizens play their part in enhancing the democratic experience. That is why the media is sometimes referred to as the fourth estate. The term fourth estate points to the democratic character of the media. The eighteenth century British statesman Edmund Burke (Wikipedia, 2007) is reported to have said:

'There were Three Estates in Parliament, but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all.'

At that time in British history, there were three other 'estates', as they were called – priesthood, aristocracy and commons. In today's democratic societies, we think of such estates in terms of the executive, legislature and judiciary. To think of the media as the fourth estate suggests three important points.

Firstly, it suggests that the media is an institution of political power, just like the political institutions of executive, legislature and judiciary. It is these institutions that ensure the separation of powers, providing checks and balances to ensure that democracy thrives. The media as the fourth estate must be seen as equal in political stature to the other branches of government. Therefore, locating the media as the fourth estate suggests that it is empowered to check and counterbalance the executive, legislature and judiciary.

Secondly, it implies that the media is often structurally embedded within the political system of a country. The fact that the media is accommodated

within the political symbols of state power signifies its political nature. For example, in a majority of democracies, it is normal for the media to have a 'press gallery' in such key government buildings as parliaments and courts of law. The rationale is that the media 'represent' the people more directly. It was perhaps because of this particular assumption of the representational role of the media that Edmund Burke saw it as 'more important far than' the three other estates.

Thirdly, the 'news' practices of the media are intrinsically political, such that they present a definitional flexibility for media professionals to reconsider 'news' in terms of its potential to enhance civic and democratic expression. What is important to emphasise here is the fact that it is possible to construct normative roles for the media. Normative media roles are those ideal-typical functions that people, at various points in their history, would like to see the media perform. The media has played different roles at different times in its historical development.

The normative nature of the media opens up avenues for negotiating what the media can do to deepen the democratic experience of developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. This is the potential civic role of media practitioners. The broad aim of this training manual is thus to:

- Raise greater civic consciousness among media professionals about the democratic role of the media in the transitional democracies of the developing world;
- Enhance the civic competence of media practitioners to aid them in their analysis and reporting of civic affairs; and
- Encourage greater prioritisation of civic news among media institutions.

It is evident that the media is becoming increasingly important to citizen participation. This is particularly so in developing-country situations of near civic apathy. For example, in the 1990s, sub-Saharan Africa registered high levels of civic engagement, as a result of the collapse of one-party politics across the continent (Bratton, 1994). It was not long before that civic interest and activism gave way to apathy. But there seems to be a reinvigoration of civic education all across the globe.

Box one: Renewed interest in civic education

The renewed interest in civic education in the United States of America (USA) stems from the decline in the political involvement of youth over the previous two decades. Surveys and behavioural studies conducted over the past few years routinely found high levels of apathy, low rates of voter turnout, a loss of confidence in governmental institutions, and poor showings on history and civics tests (Hartry & Porter, 2004).

There are good reasons why the media is vital to civic education. Studies show that media reporting of civic and political events can influence the ways through which people perceive, and participate in, political life. For example, in a study to establish campaign learning during the 2001 British general election, Norris and Sanders (2003) concluded that the public, when exposed to more information under certain conditions, 'can learn, quite a lot, quite rapidly, and from television news, party web-sites, and newspapers.'

For the purpose of this manual, civic education refers to the cultivation of civic knowledge, civic skills and civic virtues. Civic knowledge consists of fundamental ideas and information that learners must know and use to become effective and responsible citizens in a democracy. Civic skills include the intellectual skills needed to understand, explain, compare, and evaluate principles and practices of government and citizenship. They also include participatory skills that enable citizens to monitor and influence public policies. Civic virtues include the traits of character, dispositions, and commitments necessary for the preservation and improvement of democratic governance and citizenship. Examples of civic virtues are respect for the worth and dignity of each person, civility, integrity, self-discipline, tolerance, and compassion. Commitments include a dedication to human rights, the common good, equality and the rule of law (Quigley, 2000: 4).

1.2 Assumptions

The manual assumes that:

- Students have prior basic journalism knowledge and skills.
- Students are in the process of receiving such knowledge and skills.

1.3 Learning outcomes

By the end of this training programme, students should be able to:

1. Analyse the relationship between media and democracy.
2. Explain and apply the principles of civic journalism to citizen participation.
3. Explain the meanings associated with the concept of democracy and citizenship.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the institutional infrastructure of democracy.
5. Interpret human rights in relation to media and democratic citizenship.

1.4 Training methods

Trainers are urged to adopt participatory training methods. Students should be encouraged to reflect upon their journalistic production practices. A USAID-funded study to determine the impact of civic education programmes in South Africa, Poland and the Dominican Republic concluded that civic education was,

'most effective when individuals attended three or more workshops, when workshops were conducted with participatory methods, and when instructors were perceived as knowledgeable, inspiring, and interesting. When these factors were missing, civic training had little effect on participants' involvement in local politics and virtually no effect on their attitudes and values' (Finkel, 2003).

Elsewhere, Henry Giroux (1980: 329-366) observes:

'If citizenship education is to be emancipatory...its aim is not "to fit" students into existing society; instead, its primary purpose must be to stimulate their passions, imaginations, and intellects so that they will be moved to challenge the social, political, and economic forces that weigh so heavily upon their lives. In other words, students should be educated to display civic courage, i.e., the willingness to act as if they were living in a democratic society. At its core, this form of education is political, and its goal is a genuine democratic society, one that is responsive to the needs of all and not just of a privileged few.'

This manual recommends student-centred training techniques, such as (i) 'focus groups'; (ii) community projects; and (iii) student portfolios. This manual uses three types of training techniques:

- **Boxes:** These contain highlights of specific civic issues and phenomena.
- **Exercises:** These give activities aimed at stimulating student reflection. They can be done individually, in groups, or in class.
- **Pointers for media investigation:** These pose specific questions to prod media interest in a civic issue or phenomenon.

1.5 Structure

This manual is divided into five chapters. Each chapter has its own set of learning objectives, as a way of ensuring that each chapter can be studied on its own. This manual can be used both individually and collectively.

Chapter 2 helps the student to analyse how journalism can enhance citizen participation and democracy. It discusses the role of the media as a civic educator. It does so in two ways. Firstly, it explains the notion of the media as an inclusive public sphere. Secondly, it introduces the student to the concept of civic journalism. It is possible to conceptualise journalism in a way that supports media engagement in civic education.

Chapter 3 discusses the concept of democracy and citizenship. Media is a necessary part of this discussion. For example, a more inclusive definition of democracy and citizenship is more likely to result in the use of a multiplicity of voices in news stories.

Chapter 4 takes up the discussion in Chapter 3 and develops it into an analysis of the supportive institutional infrastructure of democracy. It looks at: (i) the specific institutions of democracy; (ii) the relationship between democracy, citizenship and human rights; and (iii) the relationship between democracy, development and the media.

Chapter 5 summarises the key learning points in this manual. It gives an overview of the key arguments developed under each of the chapters.



Exercise one

The trainer could divide the class into groups and ask them to think critically about the media in their communities. To facilitate the discussion, the following questions can be put to them:

1. What roles do you think the media actually perform in your community?
2. What ideal roles do you think they might perform?
3. Is there any anecdotal evidence to suggest that the community folk are dissatisfied with the performance of the media?
4. How do you account for the dissatisfaction, if any?

1.6 Recommended reading:

Bratton, M. 1994. Civil Society and Political Transition in Africa. Institute for Development Research (IDR) Reports 11(6): 6.

Center for Civic Education. 1995. The Role of Civic Education: a Report of the Task Force on Civic Education. [0]. <http://www.civiced.org/whpaper.html>

Finkel, SE. 2003. Can Democracy be Taught? The Impact of Civic Education Programs in Developing Democracies. Summary of a public presentation at the National Endowment for Democracy by Dr. Steven E. Finkel, written by Adam R. Brown of the International Forum for Democratic Studies. May 7, 2003.

Giroux, HA. 1980. Critical Theory and Rationality in Citizenship Education. Curriculum Inquiry 10(4): 329-366.

Haas, T & Steiner, L. 2006. Public Journalism: a Reply to Critics. Journalism 7(2): 238-254.

Hartry, A & Porter, K. 2004. 'We the People' Curriculum: Results of Pilot Test. Berkeley, CA: Centre for Civic Education.

Norris, P & Sanders, D. 2003. Message or Medium? Campaign Learning during the 2001 British General Election. *Political Communication* 20: 233-262.

Quigley, CN. 2000. Global Trends in Civic Education. Speech given at the Seminar for the Need for New Indonesian Civic Education Center for Indonesian Civic Education (CICED). Bandung, Indonesia. March 29, 2000.

Wikipedia. 2007. Fourth estate. [0]. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_estate

Chapter Two: Media, Citizen Participation and Democracy

2.1 Learning objectives

By the end of this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Define the concept of public sphere and explain its implication for enhancing civic participation
- Apply the concept of civic journalism within the context of the role of media professionals in civic education
- Demonstrate understanding of the limitations of the concept

2.2 The public sphere

The concept of the public sphere is associated with the German social scientist Jürgen Habermas (1989). His work was translated into English in 1989, and has since become a useful framework for discussing the role of the media in promoting citizen participation and democracy.

According to Habermas, the period of early capitalism seemed to approach the 'ideal speech situation'. During these formative years, discussion among the educated elite was intensely political, focusing on contemporary affairs and state policy. Gentlemen's clubs, salons and coffee-houses provided the spaces for these informed conversations which helped to form and shape public opinion.

The public sphere was in line with European Enlightenment ideas and ideals, such that it became associated with the principles outlined in the box overleaf.

Box two: Principles of the public sphere

- Open access, at least in theory
- Voluntary participation
- Participation outside institutional roles
- The generation of public opinion through assemblies of citizens who engage in rational argument
- The freedom to express opinions
- The freedom to discuss matters of state policy and action
- The freedom to criticise the way state power is organised (Fourie, 2001: 218).

To Habermas, 'private' opinion was distinct from 'public' opinion. However, the structure of the nineteenth-century public sphere is not the same as that of the contemporary public sphere. What Habermas refers to as the 'structural transformation' of the public sphere is partly a consequence of the growth of the advertising and marketing industries. In addition to the influence of the commercial imperative on the contemporary public sphere, post-modern thinking, coupled with the rise of new information and communication technology (ICT), has given rise to new, alternative public spheres. This discussion can be developed in focus group discussions.

But of particular concern here is the fact that the Habermasian public sphere was inherently gender-insensitive. Indeed, it only included the landed or propertied gentry, with no regard for women and poor people. It would be inappropriate to apply such a concept, without revising it, to the notion of civic education. Civic education is meant to be inclusive; it is meant to enhance and amplify the participation of marginalised groups, especially women and young people, in public and civic life. It is for this reason that attempts are constantly being made to reconceptualise the public sphere as a more inclusive, gender-sensitive arena for open deliberation or public discourse. For example, Fraser maintains that the public sphere is not for a homogeneous elite but necessarily comprised of co-existing factions and forces that include women, people of colour, those speaking minoritarian languages, etc. (in Sawchuk, 2006: 285-286).

Another important critique of the Habermasian deliberative-democratic public sphere as a site or space for reaching rational consensus is mounted by Chantal Mouffe (2000). Mouffe introduces the notion of 'agonistic pluralism' to indicate that 'the primary task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, in order to render a rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs' (Mouffe, 2000: 16). A key issue here is that, although a 'pluralist democracy demands a certain amount of consensus', it must be acknowledged that 'a well functioning democracy calls for a vibrant clash of democratic political positions' (Mouffe, 2000: 16). As such, the Habermasian deliberative public sphere must be reconceptualised as a more pluralistic space which does not place 'too much emphasis on consensus' but allows for 'democratic contestation' (Mouffe, 2000: 16-17).

This is important for media work in three specific senses. Firstly, the media must be structured and operated in a way that makes them readily accessible to divergent societal agendas. They ought not to be biased in favour of one hegemonic agenda, to the exclusion of alternative political perspectives. Secondly, the media must not ignore the political contestations rife in any society. Such contestations reflect 'agonistic pluralism' and can be used as a measure of the democratic health of a society. Thirdly, given the concept's emphasis on adversity as opposed to enmity, media coverage ought to promote greater respect for the civic virtues of tolerance, respect and integrity.

2.2.1 Media as public sphere

The concept of a pluralistic public sphere is increasingly used to denote how the media should be structured in order for them to perform the types of function that the eighteenth-century public sphere performed. As such, the media is expected to be organised in such a way that it:

- Can be open to all people, regardless of their standing or position in society. As such, the media must be accommodating to women as well.
- Must encourage voluntary participation of those who want to participate in the formation of public opinion.
- Must be open to all shades of opinion.

- Must facilitate discussion of matters of state policy and action.
- Must allow for the criticism of the way state power is organised, or whatever else may be criticised.

2.2.2 Normative roles of the media as a public sphere

The notion of the public sphere offers possibilities for reconceptualising the particular roles that the media can play in society. This suggests that the media can play roles that are generally supportive of citizen participation and democracy. These roles are developed in the next section on civic journalism.

Exercise two

Ask the students to think about the various types of media that they have consumed in the past one week, such as newspapers, radio, television, etc. Then ask them what they think could be the more democratic functions of the media in their society. How, for example, could the media become more inclusive of the perspectives of women and young people?

Box three: Normative roles of the media

The idea of the normative roles of the media can be traced to theoretical work in 1963 by Frederick S. Siebert and his colleagues (1963) in their analysis of the so-called 'Four Theories of the Press'. These were:

- The authoritarian theory;
- The libertarian theory;
- The Soviet theory; and
- The social responsibility theory.

Because these theories are not applicable to all media types, in all places and at all times, they have undergone some revision, resulting in various reformulations. One such revision sees the normative roles of the media in terms of the following:

- Collaborative: A role the media plays when a nation-state is young and insecure. In other words, media are seen as national communication organs that must collaborate towards development ideals, nation-building and national interest. This is usually the role governments want the media to play. It would not be far-fetched to suggest that the civic role of the media, under this orientation, would be to support the fledgling democracies in transitional democracies.
- Surveillance: The media here is expected to play an adversarial role, acting as a watchdog and agenda-setter. The media exposes violations of the moral and social order. Clearly, there is a challenge for the media in the developing world to be involved in the surveillance function as a way of monitoring governmental behaviour or excesses that may be out of the ordinary.
- Facilitative: The media seeks to create and sustain public debate. This is the essence of the public or civic journalism movement. Critical/dialectical: Journalists examine in a truly radical way the assumptions and premises of a community. The media's role is to constitute public debate about, not within, the political order of the day (in Fourie, 2001).

2.3 Civic journalism

The rise of civic journalism has a history to it. Some of that history is related to the way conventional media journalism is perceived. The other reason for the emergence of civic journalism is related to the declining levels of civic participation in the US.

To take the first point: The practice of conventional journalism has often been normalised in terms of a particular professional approach. Most debates about the professional basis of journalism suggest five ideal-typical traits or values, namely: (i) public service; (ii) objectivity; (iii) autonomy; (iv) immediacy; and (v) ethics (Deuze, 2005).

Extending this catalogue of traits, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2001: 70-93) stress what they call 'the essence of journalism as a discipline of verification'. They argue that the discipline of verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction, or art. Based upon their interviews with journalists and citizens, they isolated the following core set of concepts that form the foundation of the discipline of verification:

- Never add anything that was not there.
- Never deceive the audience.
- Be as transparent as possible about your methods and motives.
- Rely on your own original reporting.
- Exercise humility.

The above set of traits can form part of a class discussion about what constitutes 'good' journalism. An equally important point made by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001: 72) concerns the possible 'lost meaning of objectivity'. According to them, 'objectivity' did not mean that journalists were free of bias. On the contrary, it recognised that journalists were full of bias, often unconsciously. The calls for objectivity aimed to encourage journalists to develop a consistent method of testing information – a transparent approach to evidence – precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work. In short, this is the kind of problem that the discipline of verification would address.

Objectivity, which supposedly legitimises journalism in the public eye, has, as suggested by Kovach and Rosenstiel, been an object of several counterarguments. Some criticism looks at objectivity as a function of the economic nature of the media, usually designed to serve the commercial interests of media owners. Other criticism looks at the impossibility of attaining objectivity, given the fact that what the media consider to be the truth can be explained in many other different ways (McNair, 2001). Some other criticism uses the idea of civic journalism, which sees journalists as citizens and thus actively engaged in the process of socio-political change as they go about covering issues and events (Haas & Steiner, 2006: 238-254).

With regard to declining civic participation, it can be pointed out that civic journalism (also known as public journalism) emerged in the early

1990s in the US. This was in response to the widening gaps between government and citizens, and between news organisations and their audiences. Declines in voter participation in political elections, and in civic participation in local community affairs, were cited as evidence of widespread withdrawal by citizens from democratic processes. Those scholars and journalists who were critical of news organisations' horse-race approach to political campaigns saw this trend as proving widespread public disaffection with mass-mediated political discourse. In response, many news organisations began to experiment with ways to enhance civic commitment and participation in democratic processes and to think of their audiences not as 'consumers' but as 'citizens' (Haas & Steiner, 2006: 238-239).

2.3.1 Defining and applying civic journalism

Civic journalism recognises the fact that the journalist is a citizen first and a media professional second. It builds upon this conception to encourage journalists to undertake the following:

- Raising consciousness;
- Facilitating change; and
- Enabling resolution (in Charity, 1995: 4-12).

Consciousness-raising

This is the stage in which the public learns about an issue and becomes aware of its existence and meaning. Most of what conventional journalism does well plays to this first phase of the process. In living up to the call of objectivity, the media gathers and filters information on a wide variety of issues and then insists on their importance. But journalists could reduce the chances that people will give up on these issues by also helping the public to set an agenda. Citizens are looking for an agenda that corresponds to the problems they themselves see. The media is expected to highlight those issues that have a particular resonance with the public.

This has a direct relationship to the virtue of citizenship participation. It follows that the media ought to expand the space for the public to participate in governing their lives. Indeed, to sustain public interest in an issue, the media should engage the public at their points of need.

Facilitating change

When the consciousness-raising stage has been completed, the individual must confront the need for change. The media need to help people to struggle with the conflicts, ambivalence and defences that the need for change arouses in them. People must abandon the passive-receptive mode that works well enough for consciousness-raising.

To facilitate change, it is important that the media undertake the following:

- **Reduce issues to choices:** Public debates are formless until they come down to choices. Clear alternatives are what make elections relatively easy for journalists to cover and citizens to focus on. The public should comprehend the broad range of options proposed by experts and leaders but also – like the agenda itself – embrace those ideas the public values highly, even if experts and leaders do not.
- **Cultivate the art of public listening:** Learning to listen to citizens in new ways is the most transformative step in the practice of (civic) journalism, because it is ultimately humbling. The journalist who drops all preconceived notions of news and instead listens for how citizens see things learns something new. Such a process of listening will almost invariably result in a deeper connection with the people and compel the journalist to initial changes in reporting techniques. Alternative coverage is likely to emerge, encompassing new sources, group interviews, or a broad source base. The journalist must step out of the world of official communications and enter into organic relationships with real people, whose language is often different from that of the official sources of information. Their language tends to be 'sanitised', less reflective of the complexities of human interaction. Official language sometimes tends to be lost in the jargon of public administration, disconnected from the real civic problems, needs and aspirations of the people.
- **Highlight core values:** The most difficult public choices involve conflicts not only among individuals but within them over things they believe in deeply. To the extent that the media can bring these true conflicts into the open, it can both make the conversation more honest and help people in their decision to adopt change.

- **Spell out the costs and consequences of each choice:** The media is expected to help people weigh the costs and repercussions of each choice available to them, so that they can arrive at a realistic option. One way of doing this is for the media to simply list and discuss the pros and cons of each choice in a systematic way.
- **Bridge the expert-public gap:** If people cannot make sense of expert opinion, they cannot take part in meaningful policy debate. To this end, the media can help by translating technical language into everyday language and weeding out detail that is irrelevant to the people's choices. This means promoting a two-way communication process. It is not only what experts want to tell the people that is necessary for good decision-making; what ordinary people want to tell the experts is indispensable as well.
- **Facilitate deliberation:** Before they can achieve resolution, citizens need to think and talk through issues in their interactions with other human beings. Dialogue emerges as the journalist facilitates conversation among communities of people. In so doing, the media discovers that people have a good understanding of issues that directly affect them. Their understandings and perspectives are an outcome of personal experience and emotion. The process of deliberation involves sustained coverage of the people, documenting how they are wrestling with their problems, and how solutions are emerging out of the people's conversations. This kind of coverage would go beyond political 'events'; it would focus on people's perceptions of and perspectives on such events.
- **Promote civility:** The media can help citizens make decisions just by setting standards of civility and open-mindedness more conducive to the marketplace of ideas and the concept of community. They must promote tolerance among citizens. This is their civic virtue.

Enabling resolution

This is less a stage than a result. People never feel satisfied about their choices until those choices have been acted upon. Media professionals can help in this process of resolution by prodding action on the public's

choice. Indeed, from the perspective of media practitioners themselves, the effect of a civic journalism project must be such that it emboldens them to actively seek the engagement of citizens in the process of public problem-solving. As Austin (2002: 4) puts it aptly: 'When public journalism is effective, it leaves something behind – a conversational effect, at the least, and, at best, an ongoing structure for citizen engagement.'

A graphic for 'Exercise three' featuring a black scroll-like shape with a white border and a small white arrow icon in the top right corner. The text 'Exercise three' is written in a blue, sans-serif font inside the scroll.

Exercise three

1. Debate the differences between conventional journalism and civic journalism. Can these differences be reconciled in a way that enables media journalists to enhance citizenship participation?
2. Identify two particularly topical civic issues in your community (e.g. gender inequity, the rate of unemployment, voter apathy, etc). Applying the principles of civic journalism discussed above, demonstrate how you would go about covering such issues.

Box four: Contrasting civic and conventional journalism (Charity, 1995: 10)

Public journalism

1. Change-orientated
2. Experimentation and creativity
3. Citizen participation
4. Citizen involvement in news production
5. Journalistic activism

Conventional journalism

1. Tradition-bound
2. Fear of experimentation and creativity
3. Media-centrism
4. Journalistic professionalism
5. Professional objectivity

In concluding this chapter, it is important to reiterate that civic or public journalism does not mean a lethargic, 'biased' approach to news-gathering. It still stresses the important discipline of verification advanced by Kovach and Rosenstiel above. While it recognises the socially constructed biases of journalists, it enjoins upon them to adhere to key principles that can serve to enhance the journalistic qualities of truthfulness, honesty, transparency, originality and humility.

2.4 Recommended reading:

Austin, L. 2002. Public Journalism in the Newsroom: Putting the Ideas into Play. [0] http://www.imdp.org/artman/publish/printer_87.shtml

Charity, A. 1995. Doing Public Journalism. New York & London: The Guilford Press.

Deuze, M. 2005. What is Journalism? Professional Identity and Ideology of Journalists Reconsidered. *Journalism* 6(4): 442-464.

Fourie, PJ. 2001. Mass Communication Theory, in *Media studies. Volume 1: Institutions, Theories and Issues*, edited by PJ Fourie. Lansdowne: Juta.

Freire, P. 1996. Pedagogy of the Oppressed, in *The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment*, edited by KP Jameson & CK Wilber. 6th edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Haas, T & Steiner, L. 2006. Public Journalism: a Reply to Critics. *Journalism* 7(2): 238-254.

Habermas, J. (1989) *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Keane, J. (1996) 'The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere'. In M.B. Anderson (ed). *Media and Democracy*. Oslo: University of Oslo.

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Chapter Three: Democracy and Citizenship

3.1 Learning objectives

By the end of this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Define the concept of democracy in its generic sense.
- Explain the notion of citizenship.
- Interpret the relationship between democracy and citizenship.
- Formulate relevant questions for media investigation in as far as democracy and citizenship are concerned.
- Give a brief overview of the status of civic culture in developing countries.

3.2 Defining democracy

The concept of democracy is heavily contested. However, it is one of the most used terms. Almost all regimes lay claim to some form of democracy. Because of the real possibility of misusing this word, it is important to be clear about what it means. True, scholars identify a variety of forms of democracy. For example, Margaret Scammell and Holli Semetko (2000: xx-xlix), in their book *The Media, Journalism and Democracy*, list seven variants of democracy. Some of these, while still in currency as ideas, are no longer widely in use. But it is important for students of democracy to understand what roles the media would be expected to play according to each of these forms of democracy (see Box six).

This manual confines itself to a generic conception of democracy as a form of civic life. But first, one needs to place the concept within its historical context. The term is derived from the Greek words *demos* or 'people' and *kratia* meaning 'authority' or 'rule'. Therefore, democracy

can be defined as a form of rule derived from the people. It must be pointed out that the term *demos*, within the context of the Greek city-states, referred to the lower classes, which constituted most of the population. Over time, 'the people' has come to mean the whole population or the citizenry of a country (Center for Civic Education [CCE], 2006: 8).

There are two ways in which the legitimisation of government by the people takes place. Firstly, the people never give up their inherent authority to make and remake their form of government. Secondly, the people continuously authorise the use of political power in their name by officials and institutions that remain accountable to them. Thus, in a democracy, the people:

- Authorise ('author') the fundamental plan of the political system at its beginning and approve the subsequent design of its institutions; and
- Consent ('agree to') to the conduct of the offices of government established as part of that system, including the actions and policies of those institutions (CCE, 2006: 8).

Therefore, the concept of democracy is based upon the principles of the sovereignty of the people. The people cannot give up their sovereign power, nor can they give up their inherent liberty to give and withhold their consent to government. In effect, they have inalienable ownership of their government. This is true even of a representative democracy, where the people authorise others to act on their behalf. The people do not in fact surrender their power; they merely delegate it to others who serve as their trustees (CCE, 2006: 9).

Since it is founded upon the sovereignty of the people as a whole, the concept of democracy at its most basic level includes majority rule and respect for those in the minority, because they are a part of the whole society. All members of the polity possess a political status of equal citizenship. To the extent that any individuals or groups of people in a political community are excluded from full participation in civic life or are unfairly targeted for negative or detrimental treatment, a political system is not fully democratic.

Of course, no existing or historical political order fully realises the basic idea of democracy, but this standard can be used to evaluate a country as being more or less democratic (CCE, 2006: 9).

Box five: Indices of democracy (CCE, 2006: 34)

- Popular sovereignty: All legitimate power ultimately resides in the people.
- The common good: The promotion of what is good for the polity as a whole and not the interests of a portion of the polity at the expense of the rest of society.
- Constitutionalism: The empowerment and limitation of government by an enforceable written or unwritten constitution. Constitutionalism includes the idea of the rule of law. Constitutionalism respects the principle that a law should be considered illegitimate if it is incompatible with the constitution.
- Equality: The right of all persons in a society to be treated equally.
- Majority rule/minority rights: The rights of the majority to rule, constrained by the rights of members of the minority to enjoy the same benefits and share the same burdens as those in the majority.
- Justice and fairness: Governmental decisions about burdens and benefits should be based on criteria that are not partial to specific groups. These procedures must be derived through procedures that reflect 'fair play' or 'fundamental fairness'.
- Political rights for citizens: The authority to control government and hold it accountable as embodied in political rights, such as freedom of speech and of the media; the right to association, assembly, demonstration, and petition; and the right to vote in open, free, fair, regular elections.
- Independent judiciary: The judicial system providing decisions on an impartial basis in accordance with the law as the supreme criterion of judgement. As such, the judicial system must operate independently of any other agency of government (separation of powers), social organisation, or corrupting influence.
- Civilian control of the military and police: The military and police must be subject to the control of civilian authority.
- Political competition: Different political parties and organised groups should be able to compete for power and influence in society.
- Political and societal pluralism: There should be multiple, alternative sources of information and vehicles for the expression of interests and ideas in society.
- Freedom from fear: The right of individuals and groups to be secure under the rule of law from exile, terror, torture, invasion of privacy by state actors, and arbitrary or unjustified detention.

Box six: Forms of democracy (Scammell & Semetko, 2000: xx-xlix)

- **Direct democracy (socialism):** It privileges the unity of the working classes, and seeks an end to the capitalist classes and class privilege, as well as to economic scarcity. It pushes for the progressive integration of state and society. The media must not be treated as 'watchdogs' over the state, as the state is not seen as potentially threatening, but acting on behalf of the working class. The media is required to provide information on art and culture as well as to provide education for the triumph of socialism (propaganda).
- **Competitive elitist democracy:** It suggests that the most that can be expected of democracy is that it may choose the most competent leaders and provide mechanisms for controlling their excesses, such as constitutions, parliamentary government and strong executives, regular elections, etc. The media are required to espouse a 'watchdog' role. There is thus an explicit commitment to freedom of the press, as an expression of the principle of freedom of speech. The media is expected to provide information for citizens to base their decisions on, apart from representing public opinion.
- **Pluralism:** It recognises the thousands of intermediary groups from community associations to trade unions, emphasising the dynamics of group politics into which the individual citizen, otherwise isolated and vulnerable, can be inserted. The media is expected to contribute towards representing the diverse interest groups in society. The media is expected to actively promote freedom of expression. The media itself must be free and pluralistic.
- **Neo-pluralism:** It defends the pluralist model of democracy and isolates as a danger to it the modern system of capitalism. Corporate business interests are systematically privileged within the key mechanisms for controlling governments – most importantly, the market and party politics. The media are seen as being in danger of corporate manipulation and, as such, must be deployed to promote knowledge and enable effective political participation.
- **Libertarianism:** This is a restatement of liberal or individual-centred democracy, as opposed to the claims of collective rights at the group or society level. Individual liberty is best ensured by free market economy. The media, under libertarianism, must be free, founded on freedom of speech and private ownership, acting crucially as an ever-vigilant watchdog against the state, providing information and representing the spectrum of public opinion via market forces.

- **Participatory democracy:** It rejects the concept of the state as a neutral umpire or 'protective knight'. The state is inescapably enmeshed in the maintenance and reproduction of the inequalities of everyday life. However, it accepts the vital importance of institutions of representative democracy and pluralism. These institutions can be democratised so that they become more participatory, just as the formation of alternative and local-level activity – for example, workplace democracy, women's groups, ecological movements and community politics – can be encouraged. The media should foster the public interest through fairness, accuracy and balance.
- **Deliberative democracy and communitarianism:** This is a variant within the participatory (democratic) theory. It emphasises the fundamental importance of consensus-oriented public deliberation to a democratic society. The stress on participation as deliberative communication or dialogue is the main distinction with earlier theories of participatory democracy. This form of democracy is closely associated with the civic or public journalism movement in the US. Journalism is seen as contributory to reinvigorating public life.

Exercise four

1. The students will probably want to discuss the types of democracy listed above in relation to their particular country context. Are there any features they think reflect their country situations? Are there any universal values and principles of democracy they would like to highlight?
2. Ask the students to think critically about the media in their specific country context. How do the media, if at all, reflect the way democracy is defined?
3. Based upon the indices of democracy listed in Box five, can the students describe what the normative roles of the media would be?

4. In the event that their country does not approximate any of the indices of democracy listed and discussed in this training programme, the students will probably want to discuss their particular political system as well as the role of the media in it. But, more importantly, they might want to highlight how such a system can be transformed to become more 'democratic'. What specific problems do independent media face in their particular context? What role can they play – as civic journalists – to assist in the democratic transformation of their country?

3.3 Defining citizenship

The public life of a democracy is centred in the citizen (CCE, 2006: 41). By way of introduction, it can be stated that citizenship is ascribed through procedures of one kind or another. For example, one's citizenship may be based on the place of a person's birth, which is known as *jus soli* citizenship. In other places, the status of citizen is based on the citizenship of one's parents, which is known as *jus sanguinis* citizenship. Some countries use both bases for ascribing citizenship. Further, most democracies have established legal procedures by which people without a birthright to citizenship can become naturalised citizens (Patrick, 2000).

A useful way of framing the debate about citizenship is given by the Center for Civic Education in *Res Publica: an International Framework for Education in Democracy* (2006: 39-46). We will adopt some aspects of the framework here, namely: (i) the status of the person in a political context; (ii) the role of the person in various forms of political system; (iii) the role of the citizen in a democracy; (iv) the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy; and (v) opportunities for citizen participation in civic life, politics and government. The last three points are taken up in Section 3.4 on Democracy and citizenship.

3.3.1 The status of the person in a political context

In terms of social and political status, the person may be:

- Included in or excluded from the political people

- Ranked within a hierarchy
- Considered one among equals.

In terms of the legal status of 'citizenship', the person may be ascribed the formality of being a bona fide member of a nation-state. As already suggested above, this may be done through such means as (i) birth; (ii) residence; (iii) ethnic origin (where persons of a specified ethnicity have a right to return as citizens to their country of origin); (iv) naturalisation (a process through which those who are not natural-born citizens of a country may become citizens of that country).

3.3.2 The role of the person in various forms of political system

Political membership cannot be removed from the political context in which it is negotiated. Political membership takes different designations. Monarchies might designate people as 'subjects'. Most democracies designate people as 'citizens'. What matters are the entitlements associated with the designation. The United Kingdom, a monarchy, attributes more or less the same democratic status to its subjects as does the US to its citizens. This issue is taken up and applied to the way in which the identities of persons in colonial and postcolonial African political contexts have shifted (see Box seven).

On the whole, the following gives an indication of how different political systems portray the role of the person:

- Passive v. active
- Subservient v. autonomous
- Dependent v. independent
- Powerless v. empowered
- Child v. adult (or paternalistic v. non-paternalistic)
- Usable/disposable objects v. having intrinsic value
- A means for attaining governmental ends v. the ends for which government is established (CCE, 2006).

In a democracy, the concept of citizenship is associated with both belonging and governing. In other words, all citizens are equal members of the polity and have the right to hold office and to choose office-bearers.

Box seven: The changing political role of persons in Africa

The concept of citizenship, as a basis for regulating politics in Africa, has an interesting history. The struggles for political liberation in Africa were largely because the colonised peoples laid claim to their 'natural' citizenship of the colonised societies. Along with that claim was another claim – to demand political, economic, and socio-cultural rights as accruals of their citizenship. We see here the notion of what can be referred to as legal-political citizenship and socio-economic citizenship. Legal-political citizenship, because it refers to the legal conferment by the post-colonial state of the rights and freedoms associated with citizenship. Socio-economic citizenship, because the post-colonial state was expected to create an enabling environment in which citizens could live up to their cultural identities and sustain that through engagement in meaningful economic activities.

To elaborate: Citizenship in Africa can be conceptualised as 'legal' to the extent that it is bestowed at birth or through some other procedure at law. That is the more formal aspect of it, inherited from imperial-nation jurisprudence. In most of Europe, it is argued that citizenship rights were acquired through a historical process of struggle, while in Africa they are bestowed by the post-colonial state (Moyo, 2006). However, Africans, too, have had to struggle to acquire citizenship rights through rebellion against colonial despotism. That way, citizenship rights should be viewed as a result of an organic process of 'becoming human', and not something that the post-colonial state bestows on the people.

Citizenship is not only a legal ritual; it is also a political practice, because it extends rights and freedoms to citizens for them to meaningfully participate in the political life of a nation-state. This conception enables us to invoke issues of freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of the media, the right to cultural diversity, etc. And that is where we can interrogate what should be the role of communication (media) in expanding the political space within which citizens can meaningfully enjoy these rights and freedoms.

Citizenship is also economic, because the state must work to ensure that it provides an enabling environment for citizens to access the means of economic production. You must remember that in colonial Africa, the 'natives' were largely treated as 'subjects' of the imperial nation, and largely excluded from economic participation. With independence, it was expected that such natives would get out of the status of economic 'subjection' into the status of economic 'citizenship'.

But there is also a cultural aspect to citizenship – the modern nation-state is multicultural and multiethnic and must thus allow for that diversity to flourish in the best way possible. This would, of course, bring us to the issue of media representation of the different sub-national identities and how their 'citizenship' is constructed in media production.

Mamdani (1996) notes that most post-colonial states have largely continued the colonial practice of treating their populations as 'subjects' whose participation in the body politic is no more than just voting at election time to legitimise the ruling elite's hold on political power. This should bring us to analyse the nature of democratic governance in such post-colonial states, and determine how the bounds of citizenship are expanded. Another argument has been advanced that so-called citizenship rights are enjoyed more by the ruling classes than by the general population, resulting in an 'elitist' democracy. This observation generally leads to the critique of individual-centred types of democracy. What type of democracy promotes genuine citizenship? The concept of citizenship thus becomes embroiled in debates about media policy and regulation. How can we use the concept of citizenship to craft the kinds of media policies and regulations that promote inclusion, participation, etc?

3.4 Democracy and citizenship

We have already established that the public life of a democracy is centred on the citizen. This section discusses the interface between the idea of democracy and the notion of citizenship. In other words, democracy becomes operational through citizenship. The best measure of how democratic a political community is lies in the extent to which it inspires the citizen to participate in the civic life of the community.

3.4.1 The role of the citizen in a democracy

Under the principle of popular sovereignty, citizens collectively occupy the supreme office of democracy and hold its ultimate authority. This ultimate authority includes not only final decision-making power over who holds political office, but also the power to make and reconsider constitutions.

Citizenship in a democracy is more than a legal status; it is an ethos that guides relationships among persons and fires individual commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy.

3.4.2 The rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy

The principal rights of citizens in all democracies are those that allow them to participate fully in the political process, such that they can be said to 'own' the body politic. Such rights include the following:

- voting in free, fair, regular elections
- examining the conduct of public officials
- holding office
- equal membership in the polity
- petitioning
- exercising freedom of political speech, media, political association, and assembly
- education that prepares them to participate in the democratic process

Some responsibilities, such as those listed below, are cardinal to the proper functioning of a democracy:

- Ownership of the political system, such that the powers of citizenship are used in accordance with the fundamental democratic principles
- Respect for the rights and freedoms of others
- Solidarity
- Willingness to participate in civic life

Overall, citizens in a democracy are expected to be personally committed to the perpetuation of their democratic system, such that posterity can find it intact, or even improved. This is their civic virtue.

3.4.3 Opportunities for citizen participation in civic life, politics and government

A democratic system is expected to provide for avenues or arenas for citizens to take part in civic life. There are various such platforms. Their effectiveness can, of course, be a subject for media investigation. To list a few:

- **Informal and associational activity:** This space would include conversations among citizens about public affairs, participation through organisations like interest or pressure groups, social movements, trade unions and religious organisations.
- **Political activity:** These would include exchanges among citizens, face-to-face meetings of citizens with public officials; participation in political parties; pamphleteering; letters to media outlets; email, fax, telephone campaigns; marches; and boycotts and protests.
- **Formal action to influence government:** Such actions would include voting in elections, petitioning government officials, seeking and holding public office, and challenging the constitutionality of government actions in a judicial setting.
- **Direct civil society action:** As the term 'civic life' refers to the participation of citizens both in politics more narrowly conceived and in the broader realm of civil society, citizens can act directly on their own within civil society to address community problems. Opportunities may be available within civil society through established associations or by the creation of new associations. Such associations may be informal groupings and networks or formal organisations.

3.5 The role of the media in civic life

The role of the media in civic life may be framed in terms of what Peter Dahlgren refers to as the 'empirical dimensions' of civic culture. These are discussed below.

- **Relevant knowledge and competencies:** People must have access to reliable reports, portrayals, analyses, discussions, debates and so forth about current affairs. Here the media's role is central. The sources of knowledge and the materials for the development of competencies must be understandable, communicated in ways that connect with different groups of people.
- **Loyalty to democratic values and procedures:** Democracy will not function if such virtues as tolerance and willingness to follow democratic principles and procedures do not have grounding in everyday life. Even support for the legal system (assuming it is legitimate) is an expression of such civic virtue. Just what are the best or real democratic values, and how they are applied, can be the grounds for serious dispute. The media can reinforce the commitment to democratic values by giving sustained attention to them.
- **Practices, routines, traditions:** Democracy must be embodied in concrete, recurring practices – individual, group, and collective – relevant for diverse situations. Such practices help generate personal and social meaning to the ideals of democracy, and they must have an element of the routine about them, if they are to be a part of a civic culture. The interaction among citizens is a cornerstone of the public sphere, and the kinds of established rules and etiquette that shape such interaction either promote the practices of public discussion or contribute to their evaporation. Across time, practices become traditions, and experience becomes collective memory; today's democracy needs to be able to refer to a past, without being locked in it. The media obviously contribute here by their representations of ongoing political life, including its rituals and symbols, yet increasingly also take on relevance as more people make use of newer interactive possibilities and incorporate these as part of their civic culture practices.

- **Identities as citizens:** How we define citizenship is inseparable from how we define democracy and the good society. One can say that the formal status of citizenship conceptually frames much of political life in modern democracies. The media can do much to strengthen public perceptions of what it means to be a citizen in a democracy. The media can reinforce notions of participation, accountability, solidarity, tolerance, courage, etc. which define democratic citizenship.

👉 Pointers for media investigation:

The trainer can facilitate a discussion, based on the foregoing, about how the media can interrogate the vitality of democracy and citizenship in their particular localities. For example:

1. Does the school system incorporate aspects of civic education?
2. What is the status of citizen participation?
3. What is the nature of associational life in the community?
4. Are civil and political rights, as well as social, economic and cultural rights, guaranteed?
5. What is the degree of public debate and discussion (i.e. in the media, associations, etc.)?
6. In countries that are in the throes of political change, what possible role could civic journalism play to pave way for the kind of democratic citizenship highlighted above?

3.6 Overview of the status of civic culture in developing countries

We have already observed that 'civic apathy' is evident in both developed and developing countries. For example, Hartry and Porter (2004) observe of the US,

'The renewed interest in civic education stems from the decline in the political involvement of youth over the previous two decades: only about one-third of young people aged between 18 and 29 voted in the 2000 presidential election, compared with one-half that did so in

the 1970s. Surveys and behavioural studies conducted over the past few years routinely found high levels of apathy, low rates of voter turnout, a loss of confidence in governmental institutions, and poor showings on history and civics tests.'

As already noted in Chapter 2, the rise of the civic or public journalism movement in the early 1990s in the US is perceived as a response to the widening gaps between government and citizens, and between news organisations and their audiences. Declines in voter participation in political elections, and in civic participation in local community affairs, were cited as evidence of widespread withdrawal by citizens from democratic processes. In response, many news organisations began to experiment with ways to enhance civic commitment and participation in democratic processes and to think of their audiences not as 'consumers' but as 'citizens' (Haas & Steiner, 2006).

We can now extend this analysis to the developing world. For example, in Latin America, a *Latinobarómetro* analysed two aspects of Latino civic culture: 'subject' culture and 'citizen' culture. The subject culture is characterised by a passive acceptance of the political system, little tendency toward communication, and little willingness to participate. Citizen culture entails that the subject role is combined with active participation in the political process. An important foundation of democratic vitality is the confidence citizens have in their ability to influence the political elite. Lack of political participation implies unequal political influence. Those who are poorer and less educated tend not to take part in politics, and do not have much influence. In 'subject' political cultures, most people passively support the ruling elite, and identify more with an authoritarian regime (Lagos, 1997).

In most Latin American countries, the subject culture overshadows the citizen culture. Except for the impact of the vote, Latin Americans are relatively unlikely to think that they can influence the outcome of events by becoming involved in the political process. Coupled with this, Latin Americans, although dissatisfied with its present performance, prefer democracy to any alternatives to it. They profess themselves ready to defend it. Insofar as the opinions of most citizens can determine the matter, democracy is there to stay (Lagos, 1997).

In Africa, two phases in the development of the civic culture can be identified. Firstly, the liberation struggle from colonialism could be seen as having contributed towards enhancing the civic culture of Africans, seeing themselves as politically competent to take over the reigns of power from imperial nations. This is evident from the 1950s and 1960s onwards.

Secondly, the renewed interest in citizenship rights and freedoms can also be traced to the 1990s. This is largely because of the collapse of post-colonial one-party states in what was referred to as the 'second liberation.' The term 'second liberation' is used by scholars to underscore the betrayed hopes surrounding the liberation from colonial rule in the 1960s (Diamond & Plattner, 1999). In South Africa, the end of the apartheid regime became a rallying point for vigorous debates about a renewal of citizenship in the aftermath of the democratic elections of April 1994.

For some, the 1990s presented an opportunity to celebrate 'the rebirth of African liberalism', such as 'the rise of constitutionalism', 'the flourishing of civil society', the comeback of parliaments, and 'the trend toward liberalization', as examples of the institutionalisation of democracy on the continent (Gyimah-Boadi, 1999).

One outcome of the reintroduction of democratic politics was the emergence of stronger civil society. According to Bratton, civic actors in Africa derived new-found energy from the climate of political liberalisation in the 1990s. There is considerable evidence that previously closed political space was occupied by genuine manifestations of civil society, namely by structures of associations, networks of communication, and norms of civic engagement (Bratton, 1994).

However, after the initial euphoria, there seems to be a decline in political participation across Africa. This is consistent with the Afrobarometer studies (2002). For example, while 69 percent of Africans interviewed say that democracy is 'always preferable', only 58 percent say that they are satisfied with democracy's performance. An interesting finding for Africa is that about 89 percent of the people interviewed isolate 'improvements in the socioeconomic sphere' as the most important feature of a democratic society, underscoring the importance of the

socioeconomic base of citizenship.

The Afrobarometer study singled out 'low political participation in between elections' as a challenge in African liberal democracies. For instance, 47 percent of the respondents reported attending a community meeting; 43 percent reported joining with others to raise an issue; and 11 percent reported joining a protest. Notably, only 14 percent of the respondents had contacted a government or political party official during the previous year. Indeed, respondents in Africa's new democracies complain of a wide gap between citizens and their political representatives.

Kymlicka and He (2005) give a useful framework for thinking about Asian civic cultures. They argue that many Asian societies have their own traditions of peaceful coexistence amongst linguistic and religious groups, often dating to pre-colonial times. All of the major ethical and religious traditions in the region – from Confucian and Buddhist to Islamic and Hindu – have their own conceptions of tolerance, and their own recipes for sustaining unity amidst diversity.

The legacies of colonialism and national liberation struggles also exercise a powerful influence on the nature of civic culture. In this vein, Kymlicka and He are quick to caution against exaggerating the issue of 'conflicting values' between Western liberal and Asian communitarian or community-centred forms of citizenship. They emphasise the mutual learning and cross-cultural influences that have shaped public debates in the region. Peoples in the region have historically been open to a wide variety of outside influences, incorporating aspects of the religion, law and culture that were brought by foreign traders, missionaries, colonial officials, and now international agencies and experts.

The media in much of East and Southeast Asia, according to Shelton A. Gunaratne (2000), seems to be in strong consonance with Confucian philosophy, which stresses consensus and cooperation unlike the Occidental media's dedication to individual freedom and rights. He correlates the right to communicate encapsulated in the MacBride Commission with Oriental philosophy – Buddhist, Hindu, Confucian, or Islamic. He also observes that individualism has an Oriental foundation as well. For instance, the Hinayan school of Buddhism places heavy

emphasis on individual action and responsibility in treading the 'Noble Eightfold Path'. The Buddhist approach is consistent with the idea of the rational man so often associated only with Western political philosophy.

The above observation is important in at least two respects. Firstly, while recognising Asian cultural diversity, it discounts partisan attempts at extolling a false exceptionalism or particularism. Secondly, it recognises common human values as underpinning civic cultures across the globe.

3.7 Recommended reading:

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Chapter Four: The Infrastructure of Democracy

4.1 Learning objectives

By the end of this chapter, the student should be able to:

- Identify, describe and analyse the institutions underpinning democracy
- Integrate human rights into democratic and civic life
- Apply the normative roles of the media to effective reporting of human rights
- Analyse the role of the media in empowering citizens to appropriate their democratic right to development

4.2 The institutional infrastructure of democracy and citizenship

Box eight: Consolidation of democracy

Consolidation is the process by which democracy becomes so broadly and profoundly legitimate among its citizens that it is very unlikely to break down. It involves behavioural and institutional changes that normalise democratic politics and narrow its uncertainty. This normalisation requires the expansion of citizen access, development of democratic citizenship and culture, broadening of leadership recruitment and training, and other functions that civil society performs. But most of all, and most urgently, it requires political institutionalisation (Diamond, 1994: 15).

4.2.1 Why does the institutionalisation of democracy matter to the media?

We have already hinted at the importance of institutions in holding democracy together. Box eight reinforces this point. Democracy becomes operational through institutions. Otherwise, it remains just an idea not worthy of the paper it may be printed on.

The institutionalisation of democracy is vital to media professionals for several reasons, namely:

- Institutions encode the shared values of civic life. Such values are usually expressed as principles and codes of individual or collective behaviour. They might be expressed in some form of documentation. These can be searched for by journalists. For example, journalists can look for vision and mission statements of organisations operating in a democracy, and establish the extent to which these reinforce democratic values and norms. Such values and norms may include accountability, transparency and openness. Indeed, journalists can search for political party manifestoes and assess how 'democratic' these are. This institutional analysis can be extended to the institutional structures of such organisations in order to establish their democratic credentials.
- Institutions give meaning to civic practices. Institutions that promote democracy help to make sense of what it means to operate or work in a democratic society. By analysing the practices and work cultures of institutions, the media can establish the extent to which they uphold values and principles of democracy. For example, by analysing how parliamentary, judicial and executive authorities work, it is possible for journalists to establish whether or not the principle of the separation of powers is observed.
- Institutions unify people's civic experiences. Institutions, if they are legitimate, help to unify citizens around common understandings of the democratic experience. Citizens give support to institutions that serve them, rather than those that oppress them. It is such citizenship-enhancing institutions which make it possible for people to rally in support of the democratic ideal.

- Institutions regulate the conduct of public life. Institutions exercise a form of regulatory influence on the conduct of public life. For example, we expect those of our fellow citizens who occupy certain public offices to conduct themselves in a particular manner. We expect the police and the military to uphold the highest levels of loyalty and professional competence. We expect parliamentarians to be 'honourable', and represent the common or public good in their legislative or law-making functions. We expect our judges to be non-partisan, and to be committed to justice. We can say that institutions present a set of enabling and disabling influences. If they are structured in a certain way, they can enable public officials to discharge their duties efficiently and effectively. If, on the other hand, they are structured on partisan lines, such public institutions may not facilitate efficiency and effectiveness. It is clear, then, that the media need to expose those institutions which work against the democratic ideal.

Institutions invoke certain public expectations. As explained above, institutions make certain claims, such as being impartial and representative. It is such claims against which they must be held. Some such claims may be expressed through the Constitution. For example, some public offices are provided for by the Constitution and, as such, they must be held against the constitutional provisions which give effect to them. Examples include the offices of the:

- 👉 Auditor-General
- 👉 Public Prosecutor
- 👉 Police Service
- 👉 Anti-corruption Commission
- 👉 Human Rights Commission

These offices may be called different names in different countries, but their public functions are usually the same in all democracies. Clearly, such institutions present an opportunity for the media to analyse the due diligence with which these institutions discharge their public functions. Some of the investigative journalism that the media practise can be informed by the work of these public institutions. For example, the annual reports of the Auditor-General can serve as a barometer of the effectiveness of public finance management systems.

- **Institutions endure the test of time.** Institutions usually outlive individuals. That is one reason why they are so important in a democracy. They help to preserve the values, principles and practices of the democratic experience to the extent that we can say that democracy is 'established'. This does not mean that institutions do not change; they can, and often do, change. Institutions thus present an opportunity for the media to 'test' the endurance of a country's democratic institutions. An understanding of the history of how such institutions have functioned becomes important here.

Although we emphasise the institutionalisation of democracy, we must point out that democracy can also be entrenched in non-institutional settings. For example, intra-personal values can help orient the individual to behave in certain ways. Of course, we recognise the fact that the external political, economic and cultural environment can influence the individual to behave in some ways rather than others. It is therefore important to recognise the positive or negative interplay between personal dispositions and institutional influences on democratic citizenship.

Having made the above clarification, we must reassert the importance of the political institutionalisation of democracy. The institutional basis of democracy enables the media to shine their torchlight into the public arenas that enable or disable the full enjoyment of citizenship. This is because democratic institutions carry out specific purposes and functions. We can list the following functions:

- **Setting the public agenda to address public problems:** Civic, political and governmental institutions are a principal means by which democratic societies deal with public issues. These issues must be identified, defined and ranked in order of importance before they can be acted upon. This is what is meant by 'setting the public agenda'.
- **Acting on the public agenda:** The setting of the public agenda is nearly always in flux and subject to reconsideration. If a course of action is adopted by governmental institutions to deal with a specific issue, that course of action becomes a 'public policy'. All of the stages of identifying issues and opportunities, as well as responding to them, constitute the public policy process.

- **Evaluating alternative policy options:** Choices made in the process of dealing with public issues must be evaluated through public debate, media discussion, expert opinion, and/or through more formal mechanisms such as popular voting; or oversight by administrative, legislative, and/or judicial institutions, as well as by specially created commissions (CCE, 2006: 77).

4.2.2 Institutions of democratic citizenship

It is important to recognise the central place that citizens occupy in the institutionalisation of democracy. The basic premise, derived from the concept of sovereign power, is that it is people who 'authorise' such institutions. The institutions thus exercise delegated authority. An important point to make here is that the basic purposes and functions of democratic institutions of politics and government include (CCE, 2006: 77):

- Providing security and promoting social peace by managing or resolving conflict;
- Securing freedom, promoting progress and prosperity;
- Regulating the production, distribution, and use of resources;
- Preserving and enforcing rights and obligations; and
- Providing for the education of citizens, thereby promoting the values of democratic government and representing the polity internationally.

Arising from these basic purposes and functions of civil, political and governmental institutions, we can identify and describe the following features of the institutionalisation of democracy and citizenship:

- A free and vigorous civil society;
- A relatively autonomous political society;
- The existence of a government of laws or rule of law;
- A state bureaucracy that serves democratic authorities and makes citizen rights and grievances effective; and
- The existence of an institutionalised economy (Orozco, [Sa]).

Civil society

The term civil society has many definitions, some of them reflecting the socio-cultural context in which it is used. We need to be aware

of this fact. However, in democratic societies, civil society has come to represent 'the space of organized social life that is voluntary, self-generated, self-sufficient, free from state control, and regulated and protected by a legal order or set of shared rules' (in Orozco, [Sa]: 7).

Associational life within civil society facilitates the functioning of governmental institutions, spurs governmental action, provides checks on the power of institutions, and occasionally impedes their functioning (CCE, 2006: 95).

Although civil society is often 'organised', we must also stress the fact that what we take as civil society actions are sometimes 'unorganised' and spontaneous. But in order for such actions to become institutionalised and enduring, a degree of organisation is needed. In as far as the media is concerned, it is much easier to deal with organised civil society, but this does not mean that the media cannot encounter spontaneous civil actions. It is precisely this quality of unpredictability of civil society that makes the concept illusive.

In contemporary democracies, what we know as civil society usually expresses itself through the so-called non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Therefore, for the media, monitoring the 'pulse' of NGO activity becomes a very good measure of civil society activism. For, as Orozco says, civil society is composed of civic, cultural, economic, educational, and union groups that articulate values, create associations, and form alliances to advance their interests. They operate in the public sphere, but they exclude family or private life. Nor do they include strictly 'political' activities, such as political party formation.

👉 **Pointers for media investigation:** The trainer can divide the class into 'focus groups' to discuss various aspects of the concept of civil society. For example:

1. How does civil society express itself?
2. Is the media itself organised into a professional society?
3. What are 'acts of civil disobedience'? Do they fall under the rubric of civil society?
4. What laws govern civil society formation? Do they pass the 'democratic' test? For example, how easy or difficult is it to set up and run an NGO or labour union?

5. How strong are civil society bodies in your community in terms of influencing public policy?
6. Do political elites listen to civil society? How do they characterise the work of civil society organisations? Do they label them 'partisan'?
7. Is information on civil society organisations easily accessible to the public and the media?
8. What is the funding situation for civil society bodies?

Political society

As distinct from civil society, political society consists in both the formal and informal structures of public political organisation and expression. An example of this is the political party, which provides the means for the body politic to act collectively. Political parties aggregate and represent the differences among the citizenry – this view is based on the fact that political society, like civil society, is pluralistic. Therefore, political parties are also expected to present programmes (manifestoes) and candidates for public office through general elections.

They also continue to provide an organic link between the electorate and the elected, ensuring that the 'voice' of the people is never forgotten. Of course, this is the ideal role that political parties play. There is the danger of political concentration whereby one political party dominates the political society. This is the case in some countries. In a democracy, however, there is respect for political pluralism. As such, there is the likelihood of several parties competing for political office.

Also important here is the ease with which ordinary citizens, such as young people and women, can hold office in such parties. It is for this reason that democrats call for the 'democratisation' of political parties. This is meant to ensure that political party structures adhere to the values and norms of democracy.

A common danger arising out of the dominance of one political party is the concentration of political power in the executive branch of government, as well as in other branches of government, such as the legislature and the judiciary.



Exercise five

Consider the following questions as individuals, and then attempt to answer them in groups, before presenting your group answers in class:

1. Is political pluralism provided for in the Constitution?
2. How easy is it to form a political party?
3. What is the quality of political pluralism? Is it possible that the quantity of political parties can compromise the quality of political participation?
4. How democratic are the political parties? Do they facilitate the active participation of women, young people, people with disabilities, etc.?
5. How are the political parties funded? Are there any mechanisms for monitoring the sources of political party funding?
6. What mechanisms of political participation, if any, are available in your political system? What can media do to enhance those mechanisms?

Government apparatus

In a democracy, the existence of a government is essential because it is a government that exercises power directly on behalf of the people in order to sustain and achieve the people's agreed upon goals. Such a government must be a government of laws, founded on the principle of the rule of law as well as the principle of constitutionalism. Political parties form the government of the day.

It should be evident by now that the concept of the rule of law is very important to the functioning of a democracy. Here, we define the rule of

law as consisting in an autonomous legal order in which the authority of law does not depend so much on law's instrumental capabilities, but on its degree of autonomy from such normative structures as politics and religion (Li, 2000).

To clarify Li's definition, the rule of law can be explained in terms of the following key features:

- **Rule of law as a regulator of government power:** It limits government arbitrariness and power abuse. It also makes the government more rational and its policies more intelligent. One could say it renders the government more predictable in its operations.
- **Rule of law as equality before law:** This principle suggests that all human beings in a democratic polity must be subject to the supremacy or authority of the law. Nobody, regardless of their status or position in society, is above the law. Everyone is subject to the jurisdiction of legally constituted tribunals. As such, no person can escape from the duties of an ordinary citizen.
- **Rule of law as formal or procedural justice:** This refers to the process of achieving justice by consistently applying rules and procedures that shape the institutional order of a legal system. In a system that sacrifices procedural justice for the sake of substantive justice, the danger of arbitrary government power and the threat to individual or communal freedom will be too great.
- **Rule of law as substantive justice:** While the three elements above seem to refer to the form of the law, the rule of law as substantive justice implies that the content of the law must be such that it is fair, just and acceptable to the citizens of a democratic polity. The fact that democratic citizens insulate the law from any personal, political or religious caprice means that they accept it as the best guarantor of substantive justice. But, although the rule of law is respected as such, democratic citizens reserve their sovereign right to change any unjust laws. This means that the foundation of the rule of law is the people themselves. Civic education, then, must equip citizens with the skills and abilities they need to effectively respond to any unjust laws.

As noted already, governments are formed by political actors. As such, the doctrine of the rule of law must prevail at all times in order to check any political excesses. For example, to ensure that political parties govern on behalf of all citizens, regardless of their political party affiliation, there is need for such a government to be imbued with the spirit of constitutionalism, 'which in addition to majority rule requires a strong commitment to constitutional reform procedures stipulated by majorities and the recognition of a clear normative hierarchy interpreted by an autonomous judiciary supported by a strong legalistic culture in which significant political actors accept and respect the system's legal norms' (in Orozco, [Sa]: 9).

Although political parties form the government of the day, their hold on political power in a democratic set-up is moderated through a system of checks and balances. It is for this reason that some democratic systems often distinguish among the following three organs or 'estates' of government:

- The legislature: The legislative organ of government exists to make laws, usually through elected representatives of the people, and oversee government business. Some developing democracies, such as South Africa, have parliamentary systems of representation.
- The judiciary: The judicial arm of government interprets those laws enacted through assemblies of often elected representatives.
- The executive: The executive branch of government carries out and enforces the law.

It is important to observe here that the institutional make-up of government need not be the same in all democracies. What is important is the extent to which such an institutional arrangement realises the values and principles of democratic citizenship. There are different governmental structures, some of them reflecting the socio-cultural context of the democratic experience.



Exercise six

Refer to the introductory chapter of this manual. Discuss why the media is sometimes referred to as the 'fourth estate'. What are the advantages and disadvantages of describing the media as such?

Pointers for media investigation:

1. Is there a form of institutionalised separation of powers in your country?
2. How is the government structured to ensure such a separation of powers?
3. Which organ of government exercises the greatest influence on public policy?
4. What is the 'rule of law'?
5. Are governmental institutions accountable and transparent?
6. Are they accessible to the public? And to the media?

State bureaucracy

The term state bureaucracy refers to the bureaucratic apparatus over which the government of the day exercises control to guarantee the protection of citizens' basic rights and the satisfaction of their many demands. This bureaucracy should be capable of making a country's fiscal policy (e.g. government control over budget and expenditure) so as to maintain basic services, administer justice, and guarantee collective and personal security. A government incapable of maintaining an efficient bureaucracy can do little to consolidate democracy [Orozco, [Sa]: 9].

However, the state bureaucracy must not be monopolised by the ruling political party.

'In a democracy, governing parties cannot be thought of as 'owning' the state or being its 'leading force'. Without a distinction between political parties and the state, parties cannot be adequately regulated to enable other parties to compete and possibly replace them.'

In a democracy dedicated to the welfare of the whole people, there will inevitably be disputes over what constitutes the common good. Democracy requires permanent competition and discussion among partisan perspectives and rests on the assumption that no one perspective on the common good can claim a monopoly on the truth (CCE, 2006: 91).

Exercise seven

1. What is the relationship between the ruling party and the state bureaucracy in your country?
2. To what extent can you argue that the executive branch of government does/does not dominate the state bureaucracy?
3. Is the state bureaucracy 'open' or 'closed' to media scrutiny?
4. Does the public policy process, if at all, include or exclude ordinary citizens, including women?

Institutionalised economy

The economy has an important role to play in strengthening democracy and citizenship. Economically empowered citizens have greater motivation and opportunity for playing a more active role in the public life of their country. The idea here is not to argue about which economic system is desirable. Indeed, there are many models of economic development pursued by different countries. These range from free market to centralised models.

The main point of this discussion is that one of the fundamental purposes of democratic government is to promote the common good and general prosperity. As such, enhancing and regulating the economy is a priority of governmental policy-making. This becomes more important in view of the increasing emphasis by the international community on the need for realising economic, social and cultural rights. However, there are important issues to be considered here. We will simply list them, and encourage the trainer to facilitate a discussion:

- In democracies where economic inequality translates directly into political inequality, the democratic value of the political equality of citizens is endangered. Where does your country stand in relation to this perspective?
- The political influence of concentrated wealth may stifle public debate. However, it may also unlock public debate, especially when it is linked to philanthropy. What is your country's situation?

4.3 Human rights and democracy

The challenge for most democracies is to ensure the compatibility of human rights with their democratic experience. This is no easy task. Although there is increasing recognition of the centrality of human rights in contemporary democracies, there are still many public policy hurdles to be faced, not least the financing of the full enjoyment of human rights. In most developing countries, for example, the realisation of socio-economic human rights is an issue of concern for governments because of its financial implications. Even so, seen as embodying the essential purposes of legitimate government, human rights provide a foundation for democracy and its authoritative use of power.

4.3.1 What are human rights?

Since the end of World War II, human rights have become part of the political agenda and of international concern. The lessons of the Holocaust were enough to convince humankind of the need for international respect for the human person. As such, human rights have come to signify humankind's inherent dignity and integrity. Although human rights have a specific historical context, such as their cultural and socio-economic moorings of mercantilism, domestic manufacturing and the Industrial Revolution, they have come to refer broadly to 'those

rights that are inherent in human nature, essential to human need, or fundamental to human purpose – whether these rights arise from natural, positive, or constitutional sources’ (CCE, 2006: 29).

Human rights are often described as universal, inalienable and fundamental. What do these concepts mean?

Box nine: Key characteristics of human rights

- Human rights are universal: Firstly, this means that human rights proscribe discrimination on the ground of sex, colour, social status or other similar characteristics. Secondly, it refers to the global applicability of human rights. Human rights are common to all people on all continents irrespective of cultural, economic and other differences.
- Human rights are inalienable: This reflects the idea of natural individual rights that precede the state’s authority. Each individual has human rights on the basis of his/her humanity. As such, these rights can no more be taken away from him/her by a decision of the authorities than by his/her own consent. It also means that a person can not legally give up his/her human rights by selling himself/herself as a slave. It is for this reason that human rights are often described as the inherent rights of every individual.
- Human rights are fundamental: This means that only the most important rights should be called human rights. This suggests the need for global consensus on the fundamentality of human rights. Although there are differences of opinion on what constitutes the most important human rights, it is evident that the global community considers this an important subject, by looking at the number of treaties acceded to on a range of human rights issues, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- Human rights are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent: Deriving from the fundamentality of human rights, it is possible to see why it is not enough to respect some human rights and not others. In practice, the violation of one right will often affect respect for several other rights. All human rights should therefore be seen as having equal importance. They are thus equally essential for the dignity and worth of every person (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2004).

4.3.2 The implementation of human rights

In general, the enforcement, promotion and implementation of human rights occur at three different, but interlocked, levels: (i) international; (ii) regional; and (iii) national. It is important for the media to understand these various contexts in order to facilitate effective reporting. Understanding the geopolitical context of human rights also facilitates a context-based media review of the processes of enforcement, promotion and implementation of human rights.

International implementation of human rights

The international human rights regime involves three main types of decision-making, namely (i) enforcing international norms; (ii) implementing international norms; and (iii) promoting their acceptance or enforcement (Donnelly, 1986). What we may refer to as the global architecture of human rights implementation consists in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly. This represented a significant milestone in the development of human civilisation, particularly in the aftermath of the Holocaust. The Declaration recognises the universality of human rights. This is why Article 2 of the Declaration prohibits discrimination. It also recognises the inalienability of human rights. The preamble of the Declaration, recognising that the 'legitimacy of a state is a function of the extent to which it respects, protects and realizes the "natural" or human rights of its citizens' (Donnelly, 1999: 3), proclaims itself 'a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations'. This is reinforced by the first Article of the Declaration, which states: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'.

Although the Declaration contains human rights which were considered fundamental at that time, the world has made repeated attempts at elaborating the bounds of the discourse of human rights. Such attempts have included the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 25 June 1993. Since 1948, then, some core human rights treaties have been formulated to address specific human rights concerns.

These are listed below (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2007):

- **The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD):** Adopted in 1965, this treaty establishes the principle of non-discrimination with respect to persons of a particular racial grouping. More specifically, Article 1, paragraph 1 of the Convention prohibits 'any form of distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin with the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.'
- **The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR):** Adopted in 1966, it aims to protect and promote a wide range of economic, social and cultural rights.
- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):** Also adopted in 1966, it provides for the protection of civil and political rights, underpinning the freedom of the individual to exert influence over the political life of the community.
- **The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT):** This treaty defines 'torture' in terms of those forms of ill-treatment that intentionally cause severe pain or suffering and are carried out by individuals exercising public functions. This may restrict its applicability beyond the public arena. But States parties to the Convention must exercise a duty of care to prevent cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. This covers a multitude of cases, including ill-treatment of the disabled, for example.
- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** Adopted in 1979, the Convention aims at the achievement of de jure (by law) and de facto (in fact) equality for women. The non-discrimination rights included in the Convention cover the whole spectrum of human rights, be they civil, cultural, economic, political or social.
- **The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC):** Adopted in 1989, this treaty is the first binding instrument in international

law to deal with the rights of children. It contains 42 detailed provisions enshrining the rights of children in all areas of their lives, including provisions on civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

- **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW):** This treaty, enforceable since 1990, guarantees the rights of all migrant workers and their families, and provides for the conditions to foster greater harmony and tolerance between migrant workers and the rest of the society of the State in which they reside.
- **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances:** Enforceable since 2006, this Convention enjoins upon all States parties to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent, terminate and punish acts of enforced disappearances.

Some of the core human rights conventions are accompanied by optional protocols. For example, there are (i) the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ii) the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, (iii) the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and (iv) the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

In other cases, some treaties, notably the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, have been rearticulated to account for some special cases. For example, the UN Millennium Declaration resolved to support the 'consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy' (OHCHR, 2006).

An important point to make, particularly from the perspective of media coverage of such human rights instruments, is that each of these core conventions establishes a committee of independent experts – usually referred to as 'treaty monitoring body' or 'treaty body' – to monitor the domestic implementation of the human rights provisions contained in those treaties.

In some cases, there are also procedures which allow individuals who claim to be victims of a violation by a State party of the rights set forth in the respective treaties to submit individual complaints to the treaty monitoring body (OHCHR, 2007).

Box ten: Excerpts from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

PREAMBLE

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people...

Now, therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction...

Article 1: *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood...*

Article 3: *Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*

Article 4: *No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.*

Article 5: *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...*

Article 8: *Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.*

Article 18: *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

Article 19: *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

In terms of international institutional mechanisms, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 60/251 on 15 March 2006, which created the United Nations Human Rights Council. Set up to address human rights violations, the Council is the successor to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, which was often criticised for the high-profile positions it gave to member states that did not guarantee the human rights of their own citizens (Wikipedia, 2007).

The Council, whose work is to be reviewed within five years, is mandated to, among other things:

- Enhance the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development;
- Promote human rights education and learning as well as advisory services, technical assistance and capacity-building;
- Serve as a forum for dialogue on thematic issues on all human rights;
- Make recommendations to the General Assembly for the further development of international law in the field of human rights; and
- Promote the full implementation of human rights obligations undertaken by States and follow-up to the goals and commitments related to the promotion and protection of human rights emanating from United Nations conferences and summits (United Nations General Assembly, 2006).

Exercise eight

1. Why is it important for human rights to be characterised as 'universal', 'inalienable' and 'fundamental'?
2. To what extent does your country's Constitution, if at all, guarantee human rights, as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)?
3. Browse the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – <http://www.ohchr.org>. Note the following:
 - (i) The simplified version of the UDHR.
 - (ii) Simplified human rights terminology.
 - (iii) List of organisations, national, regional and international, working in the field of human rights.
 - (iv) Any media informational kit.
4. Part of the Preamble of the UDHR encourages all to 'strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance...'
 - (i) Do you think the media are doing enough 'teaching and education' to promote respect for and the realisation of human rights?
 - (ii) Are there any specific measures that the media can devise to 'teach and educate' people about human rights?
 - (iii) What problems do the media face in executing their human rights obligations?
 - (iv) How can such problems be resolved?

Regional implementation of human rights

Regional human rights regimes are a geopolitical recognition that human rights can be more effectively enforced, promoted and implemented within blocs of nations. There are many examples of regional regimes.

Europe: The human rights regime is embodied in the Council of Europe. Personal, legal, and political rights are enshrined in the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols, while economic and social rights are laid down in the 1961 European Social Charter. They both reflect the norms of the Universal Declaration. The decision-making procedures of the European regime, unlike those of the international regime, are more effective, especially the strong monitoring powers of the European Commission on Human Rights and the authoritative decision-making powers of the European Court of Human Rights (Donnelly, 1986: 620).

However, economic and social rights are supervised through separate procedures somewhat weaker than those established under the Convention. Implementation is entirely through biennial reports, which are reviewed, along with comments from national organisations of employers and workers, by the Committee of Experts. There is no machinery for authoritative enforcement, but it certainly serves as a strong monitoring body (Donnelly, 1986: 622).

The Americas: The American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, adopted in 1948, presents a list of human rights very similar to that of the Universal Declaration. The 1969 American Convention on Human Rights, a binding treaty, is limited to personal, legal, civil, and political rights. The regime's norms are rounded out by a variety of single-issue treaties, such as the Inter-American Convention on the Granting of Political Rights to Women (1948).

On 16 November 1999, the members of the Organisation of American States (OAS), recognising the shortcoming of the American Convention on Human Rights, and desirous of upholding the principle of the indivisibility, interrelation and interdependence of human rights, gave effect to the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the area of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (more commonly known as the 'Protocol of San Salvador'). It represented an attempt to take the inter-American human rights regime to a higher level by enshrining the protection of the so-called second generation rights in the economic, social and cultural sphere. It thus covers such areas as the right to work, the right to health, the right to food, and the right to education (Wikipedia, 2007).

In terms of human rights implementation, another point to make here is that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, set up in 1979, may take binding enforcement action. As in the European regime, its adjudicatory jurisdiction is optional. The Court may also issue advisory opinions requested by members of the OAS.

Also important to highlight is the fact that the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights is the procedural heart of the regime. It is empowered to develop awareness of human rights, make recommendations to governments, respond to enquiries of states, prepare studies and reports, request information from and make recommendations to governments, and conduct on-site investigations but with the consent of the government (Donnelly, 1986: 624).

Sub-Saharan Africa: The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, drafted in Banjul, the Gambia, in June 1980 and January 1981, was adopted by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (now renamed African Union) in Nairobi in June 1981. Some interesting normative differences between the African Charter and all other international human rights regimes is the addition of and emphasis on collective or 'peoples' rights. The Charter also stresses the rights to peace and development, and highlights individual duties (Donnelly, 1986: 627).

The African Charter creates an African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which allows for interstate complaints and even envisions the receipt of individual communications. The communication procedure for filing complaints is outlined as follows:

- If a State Party to the charter has good reasons to believe that another State Party to this charter has violated the provisions of the latter, it may either refer the matter to the Commission or be contented with a negotiated settlement, by obtaining, in the latter case, satisfactory explanations or statements from the other state.
- Otherwise, within three months from the date on which the original communication is received by the State to which it is addressed, either State shall have the right to submit the matter to the Commission by addressing a communication to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the State concerned.

- If a complaint emanates from a person or organisation other than a State Party to the Charter (physical or moral person, private or public, African or international), the matter shall be considered by the Commission at the request of the majority of its members. Moreover, the Commission shall only embark on a substantive consideration of the matter after ensuring that the conditions of admissibility of the complaint have been met.
- In both cases, the Commission only considers a case after ensuring that all local remedies have been exhausted if any, unless it is obvious to the Commission that this procedure is unduly prolonged (African Commission on Human and People's Rights, 2007).

There are other developments worth noting in the African regional human rights regime. Take, for example, the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, brought about as a result of a UNESCO-supported gathering on May 3 1991 in Windhoek, Namibia, of media practitioners and press freedom organisations. The Declaration set the background for the proclamation by the UN General Assembly of May 3 as 'World Press Freedom Day'. The Declaration repudiates state ownership of media institutions and justifies the doctrine of media liberalisation and privatisation.

Other important human rights documents and bodies in Africa include:

- The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression in Africa, adopted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Declaration includes a number of points relevant for the development of broadcasting services in Africa, such as (i) the need to encourage the development of private broadcasting, (ii) the need to transform state or government broadcasters into genuine public broadcasters, and (iii) the need for independent broadcasting regulatory bodies.
- The African Charter on Broadcasting, adopted in 2001 on the tenth anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration.
- The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression in Africa, appointed by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.

- The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the ACHPR.
- Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, appointed by the ACHPR, to strengthen the protection of the rights of human rights defenders across Africa.

Asia: There are neither regional nor decision-making procedures. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is perhaps the most promising sub-regional organisation, but even there the level of cooperation and perceived regional community remains relatively low (Donnelly 1986: 628). However, it is increasingly evident that Asia's civil society has at times stepped in to publicise and advocate on behalf of human rights across the Asian region and its sub-region, but NGO activism should not be seen as replacing an inter-governmental mechanism or the need for one (Amnesty International, 2007).

Middle East and North Africa: The League of Arab States established the Permanent Arab Commission on Human Rights in 1968, but there are no substantive regional human rights norms. For example, the Arab Charter on Human Rights has largely been ignored since its inception in 1971. The Draft Arab Covenant on Human Rights, formulated at the 1979 Symposium on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Arab Homeland, seems just as ignored. By 1986, Donnelly (1986: 628) was to conclude that the Arab Commission had been largely inactive.

A Charter provision in 2004 to establish an Arab Court of Justice to deal with human rights violations has not been implemented (Amnesty International, 2007).

Although there appears to be a lack of a formal unified inter-governmental human rights body or a regionally-ratified human rights instrument in the Middle East and North Africa, there are clearly other partnerships and instruments which are applicable to various countries in the region (Amnesty International, 2007). For example, the participants at the 2000 Fifth International Workshop for National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights held in Morocco adopted the Rabat Declaration which reaffirmed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and, among other things, called upon national institutions to 'fight [...] poverty' and realise the 'effective enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by all persons' (OHCHR, 2000). Furthermore, Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia are all members of the

African Union, effectively subjecting them to the human rights provisions of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.

National implementation of human rights

The national context is a key determinant of the enforcement, promotion and implementation of human rights. There is evidence to suggest flagrant violations of human rights at the national level – these are documented by a range of organisations, such as Amnesty International, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee to Protect Journalists, country chapters of the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA), etc. As Park observes, the factors affecting human rights performance are contextual, and they include a wide variety of socioeconomic, cultural and political variables (Park, 1987).

More often, some governments cite such factors as impediments to their implementation of human rights programmes, but such factors may also be used as a pretext for a lack of political will and commitment to realising human rights. The media have a particularly important role to unravel the real reasons why national human rights programmes are not on track.

Pointers for media investigation:

Assess your knowledge with regard to the following:

1. What is the extent of your knowledge vis-à-vis the international, regional and national context of human rights implementation?
2. What is the extent of your knowledge of the domestic human rights monitoring bodies affiliated to the United Nations system?
3. What is the nature and extent of your knowledge about civil society groups active in the field of human rights in your community?
4. What is the extent of your knowledge about available human rights information resources?
5. Would greater access to such information resources make any difference to your work as a media practitioner? If so, what difference would it make?

Box eleven: The media and human rights protection (Hamelink, 1998: 3-11)

An important part of the protection of human rights is the public exposure of violations. Exposure recognises the victims as individuals or as groups that are entitled under international law to the protection of their integrity. Exposure identifies the perpetrators. Exposure may shame the perpetrators so as to deter future violations. Exposure may relieve some of the burden on the victims. Exposure may shape public opinion on human rights matters and educate the general public. Without public exposure many victims may be forgotten.

The exposure of perpetrators of human rights violations requires extensive human rights coverage by the media. This often leaves a lot to be desired in the daily media practices as most media pay only limited attention to human rights issues. As a matter of fact, few media have a so-called human rights 'beat' and many lack the expertise and commitment to follow developments in the human rights field or systematically report violations since (...) the area of human rights is not accepted as a special field of reporting.

Across the world we find shocking illustrations of situations in which media not only failed in educating and reporting about human rights, but are themselves among perpetrators of human rights violations.

In 1994, in just a few months, some 500,000 to one million Tutsis were killed. Radio Television Mille Collines (RTML) played an essential role.

Essential to any debate on human rights and the media is the observation that the media are also often a victim of the violation of the basic human right to freedom of information.

4.4 Democracy, development and the media

In much of the developing world, any talk of democracy is incomplete without reference to development. It is important to make this point here for three key reasons. Firstly, there is a school of political thought which

believes that the issue of development must precede that of democracy. We have already seen an example of this in the debate about Asian values.

Secondly, there is a school of political thought which privileges democracy over development. This view was largely shared by those who placed economic growth above all other forms of human development (cf. Rostow, 1960). Such a view sees the media as agents of modernity. Under this logic, the media can serve to 'diffuse' those modernising values required for traditional societies to graduate into modern societies (Rogers, 1962).

Thirdly, there is a view that holds that democracy and development are inseparable. The motive force for this view is that democracy embraces development as a human right. It is for this reason that a number of scholars and activists see the media as an enabler of the kind of civic participation and empowerment that promotes human development. For example, noting this connection between democracy and economic development, the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (1999: 6) observes:

'In that context, we have to look at the connection between political and civil rights, on the one hand, and the prevention of major economic disasters, on the other. Political and civil rights give people the opportunity to draw attention forcefully to general needs and to demand appropriate public action. The response of a government to the acute suffering of its people often depends on the pressure that is put on it. The exercise of political rights (such as voting, criticizing, protesting, and the like) can make a real difference to the political incentives that operate on a government.'

Such a conflation of political and economic rights is clearly evident in much theorising about participatory approaches to communication (and media) (Servaes, 1996). For example, McQuail's notion of the 'democratic participatory' role of the media focuses on media's 'centrifugal' tendencies towards diversity, plurality and change (McQuail, 1987:94-96).

The participatory approach to communication (and media) lies within the paradigm of 'another development' (Melkote, 1991: 220). This model emphasises the need for cultural identity, democratisation and participation at all levels of society. It is an approach which is inclusive

of the traditional receivers of mediated communication. It is a rights-based development strategy echoed by the Millennium Development Goals, given the emphasis on 'local ownership and participation' (UNESCO, 2006: 7).

Box twelve: Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals were agreed to by 189 countries following their signing of the UN Millennium Declaration in September 2000. There are eight (8) such goals, namely:

- Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- Achieving universal primary education
- Promoting gender equality and empowering women
- Reducing child mortality
- Improving maternal health
- Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Ensuring environmental sustainability
- Developing a global partnership for development

The goals confirm the paradigm shift in development thinking towards linking the attainment of development to the expansion of people's 'entitlements', and the 'capabilities' that these entitlements generate. Such entitlements transcend income and include the totality of rights and opportunities that people face (Sen, 1999). For this reason, then, Sen sees the expansion of freedom both as the primary end and primary means of development. He calls for social development – enhanced literacy, accessible and affordable health care, the empowerment of women, and the free flow of information – as necessary precursors of the kind of development most economists are concerned about, namely: increase in gross national product, rise in personal incomes, industrialisation, and technological advance.

Mediated communication thus becomes more 'concerned with process and context, that is on the exchange of "meanings", and on the importance of this process, namely, the social relational patterns and social institutions that are the result of and are determined by the process' (Servaes [sa]). Participatory communication and media are

thus predicated on the notion of 'empowerment'. Rensburg (1994) sees 'empowerment' as a move to inform and motivate the community to advance development in a way that may not turn out to be no more than 'paternalism', a 'de-empowering' phenomenon which entails 'acting out a fatherly role by limiting the freedom of the subject by well-meant rules, guidelines and regulations'. Participatory communication entails a great deal of emphasis on what Rensburg calls 'grassroots participation'. In that sense, argues Rensburg, participatory communication tends to be pluralistic. It enables the community to set its own priorities and standards which may be unique to its problem situations.

Critical to such participatory media, then, is the right to freedom of expression. This right is recognised as a basic human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Norris, 2006). As such, it lends itself to universal recognition and application. The work of Pippa Norris (2006) on the statistical correlation between a free press and democratisation, good governance and human development, although its focus is fundamentally on liberal conceptions of media, democracy and development, must be noted as contributory to evidentiary arguments for linking media to the realisation of democracy and development.

Using this participatory framework and accepting the revisionist analysis of normative media theory (in Fourie, 2007), we can isolate the following as key defining features of the role of the media in supporting both democracy and development:

- **Democratic enculturation:** Cultivating a culture of respect for the rule of law in which just laws are upheld by all. This can be done if the media themselves exhibit the democratic-civic values of respect, integrity, inclusiveness, plurality and courage. In other words, the media must imbibe the culture of democracy in order for them to serve the role of democratic enculturation.
- **Critical solidarity:** The media represent a social institution enmeshed in a nexus of other social institutions. Although the media must adhere to the 'discipline of verification' as a method

of operation, they nevertheless are linked to other societal institutions in ways that make them part of the social structure. They are one of several institutions of democracy. But they must exist in critical solidarity with such other democratic institutions as political parties, civil society bodies, government organs, corporate interests, and the like. Even as they 'watch' other social institutions, they are themselves a subject of scrutiny. There is thus a dynamic tension between them and other institutions, strengthening 'agonistic pluralism' in the process. Here, the role of the media is much more than that of a 'watchdog'. It becomes one in which the media are preoccupied with constantly 'democratising' their professional practices and allowing for more robust scrutiny of their own practices. As such, the media are not necessarily above other social institutions, but exist in tandem with them.

- **Development-facilitation:** Here, the term 'development-facilitation' is not synonymous with state intervention in the developmental role of media operations. It is simply an affirmation of the universally accepted discourse of development as an integral part of freedom, democracy and democratisation. Although some media workers do not see themselves as working in the service of the development needs of their societies, they do so by default. By providing certain types of information, the media facilitate the process of developmental decision-making at different levels of society. As such, we can view this role as representing the sometimes inadvertent or unwitting media intervention in the development process.

The above aspects of the democracy-development functionality of the media are consistent with the ideal of civic journalism that we have already described elsewhere. It imbues journalists with sufficient agency to influence the social context in which they operate. It recognises the media as an important variable in the interplay between freedom and development. The media can play a catalytic role in promoting access to information of all types, thereby facilitating active citizen engagement in the body politic. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that access to information could lead to all sorts of human-

development formations (see Banda, 2007, whose study of radio listening clubs in Malawi and Zambia unearthed mediated possibilities for rural development).

4.5 Recommended reading:

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Chapter Five: A Summary of Key Learning Points

This chapter summarises the key learning points that should by now have been covered by this training manual. As such, it should serve as a revision of the general learning outcomes.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Key learning points:

- There is a need for greater awareness among media professionals of the actual and potential democratic role of the media in the developing world.
- There is a need to enhance the civic competence and literacy of media practitioners as a way of enabling them to more effectively analyse and report issues and events relating to civic and political participation.
- There is a need to sensitise media professionals to the political dynamics in which the media operates. The media is located in different power structures. A politically-sensitive media practitioner will recognise that society is stratified along political power lines. Such a media professional realises the importance of exercising their power as an integral part of the fourth estate.
- The media is important in promoting democracy. In a developing-country environment of civic apathy, it behoves the media to cultivate an even greater engagement in civic life.

CHAPTER 2: Media, citizen participation & democracy

Keylearningpoints:

- The media constitute a public sphere.
- A public sphere represents an inclusive place for citizens to engage in debate about matters of public interest.
- The media must be free from institutional and other constraints in order to fulfil the role of public sphere.
- The idea of civic journalism helps media professionals to become more active in public and civic life.
- The civic journalism movement believes that journalism can be used to effect political and social transformation, resulting in a civically engaged citizenry.
- Civic journalism treats media professionals as citizens first and journalists second. As such, it assumes that the civic journalist will be fired up by a desire for civic activism.
- Civic media professionals can play the specific normative roles which include: (i) reducing issues to choices; (ii) cultivating the art of public listening; (iii) highlighting the core democratic values; (iv) assessing the costs and consequences of public choices; (v) bridging the expert-public gap; (vi) facilitating deliberation; and (vii) promoting civility.

Chapter 3: Democracy & citizenship

Keylearningpoints:

- The concept of democracy is traceable to the Greek city-states, where prototypical direct citizen participation is evident.
- Democracy arises from the will of the people.
- Many countries lay claim to the concept of democracy.
- Authentic democracies emphasise the centrality of popular sovereignty.

- Democracy upholds certain notions of citizenship.
- In democracies, the worth of citizens is evaluated in terms of whether or not they are passive or active; subservient or autonomous; dependent or independent; powerless or empowered; child or adult; usable or disposable; objects or having intrinsic value; and a means for attaining governmental ends or the ends for which government is established.
- The media can facilitate citizen participation in the governance of their political community.

Chapter 4: The infrastructure of democracy

Key learning points:

- Democracy needs supportive institutions.
- Institutions of democracy give meaningful expression to the democratic experience of a people.
- Such institutions could include: (i) civil society groups; (ii) political parties; (iii) the media; and (iv) state organs.
- The discourse of human rights serves as a pillar of democracy.
- Human rights, inherent to all people, become enforceable when they are codified as conventions, covenants, or treaties, as they become recognised as customary international law, or as they are accepted in national or local law.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in 1948, guarantees the universal applicability of human rights.
- The media have an important role in the teaching and education of human rights.
- Major international, regional and national human rights instruments recognise the right of the media to communicate.
- The media professionals need to be knowledgeable about human rights if they are to sharpen their intervention in the promotion, protection and realisation of human rights.
- The media are a key factor in the interplay between democracy and development.

Glossary of Selected Civic Education Terms

Checks and balances/separation of powers: The idea that political power should be dispersed among different branches of the government, and that these branches should be held accountable to others. It requires that each branch of the government shares decision-making and also has the ability to check others.

Citizen/citizenship: The idea of 'citizenship' encompasses two notions: the status of being a citizen, "a person co-existing in a society", and the role, duties and rights that come with being member of a community. It involves issues relating to equality, diversity and social justice. It also includes the range of actions carried out by an individual that impact on the life of the community and thereby require a public sphere for action.

Civic apathy: This refers to a situation whereby citizens lose interest in public life, such as in voting. Usually, this is associated with loss of confidence in the capacity of politicians to deliver on their promises. This is one of the most cited reasons for voter apathy in sub-Saharan Africa.

Civic competence: This refers to the knowledge and ability acquired by a citizen through education and socialisation to actively take part in public affairs.

Civic culture: It refers to that complex whole which consists in the citizens' civic engagement, political equality, solidarity, trust and tolerance, as well as social structures of cooperation.

Civic education: It is a process of learning to think about one's life as a citizen in a community and cultivating the knowledge and skills needed to act as such.

Civic engagement: To participate in public life, encourage other people to participate in public life, and join in common work that promotes the well-being of everyone.

Civic knowledge: This refers to fundamental ideas and information about public affairs, such as how government operates, legal provisions, human rights, etc., which one needs to know and use to become an affective and responsible citizen of a democracy. Knowledge alone is not enough. When knowledge is mixed with ability or skill, it results in civic competence.

Civic life: This is the public life of the citizen concerned with the affairs of the community and nation, that is, the public realm.

Civic literacy: It encompasses a knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of government as well as a basic knowledge and understanding of community processes that are necessary to successfully function within society. It also implies a basic familiarity with the dominant social values and norms and an awareness of current issues that confront the society. Intellectual awareness and an understanding of concepts and ideas form the foundation of civic literacy.

Civic skills: These include the intellectual skills needed to understand, explain, compare, and evaluate principles and practices of government and citizenship. They also include participatory skills that enable citizens to monitor and influence public policies.

Civic virtue: This refers to those good traits of moral and intellectual character that make for effective participation in public affairs, such as toleration, civility, trust, initiative, outrage at social injustice, etc.

Common or public good: Belief, systems, or actions that are seen to benefit a politically organised society as whole. In practice it would be difficult to find complete agreement on public good or interest.

Conflict resolution: Reconciling opposing perspectives, stories, or experiences and deciding on a response that promotes and protects the human rights of all parties concerned.

Convention: A legally binding agreement between nations designed to protect human rights. A convention is considered to have more legal force than declarations, although declarations may be so established as to be treated as customary law. Once a convention is adopted by the UN General Assembly, Member States can then ratify it.

Protocol: A treaty that modifies another treaty (e.g. adding additional procedures or substantive provisions).

Sovereignty: The supreme power to govern, or the ultimate overseer, or authority, in the decision-making process of the state and in the maintenance of order.

Sustainable development: It suggests that development processes must achieve a balance between social, environmental and economic growth.

Treaty: A formal agreement between nations, which defines and modifies their mutual duties and obligations. When such agreements are adopted by the UN General Assembly, they become legally binding for the Member States that have signed them.

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Useful Websites

Centre for Communication & Civic Engagement, Washington:
<http://depts.washington.edu/ccce/Home.htm>

Centre for Civic Education, California: <http://www.civiced.org>

Civil Society International (CSI): <http://www.civilsoc.org>

Civicus – World Alliance for Civic participation:
<http://www.civicus.org>

Civitas: <http://www.civnet.org>

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<http://www.unesco.org>

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