

A Framework for Assessing Governance

Governance has emerged as one of the main themes of international development. If governance matters, so does the need to assess key aspects in a systematic matter. However, given the many political and technical challenges, governance assessments need to be operationalized in careful ways.

Based on reviews of the extensive literature, our work clusters the rules that seem to matter into six main arenas of governance activity:

- [Civil Society](#) - rules affecting the way citizens become aware of and raise issues in the public
- [Political Society](#) - rules shaping the way issues are combined into policy by political institutions
- [Government](#) - rules affecting the way policies are made by government agencies
- [Bureaucracy](#) - rules determining the administration and implementation of policies
- [Economic Society](#) - rules regarding state-market interactions
- [Judiciary](#) - rules defining the resolution of disputes and conflicts

It also outlines six principles for assessing governance. The first three are particularly relevant to the way state actors relate to citizens, while the last three are more specific to the operations of the state itself.

- *Participation* - the degree to which affected stakeholders are able to sense ownership and involvement in the political process
- *Fairness* - the degree to which rules are applied equally to every one in society
- *Decency* - the extent to which rules are handled without humiliating or harming people
- *Accountability* - the extent to which political actors are perceived as responsible to the public for what they say and do
- *Transparency* - the degree to which rules about openness and clarity are upheld in the public realm
- *Efficiency* - the extent to which rules enhance effective use of scarce resources without incurring waste or delay

These principles are universal in the sense that they are respected in different societies all over the world (even though, they may at times contradict each other in practice).

The WGA initiative puts forward a framework for assessing governance that focuses on these six principles and six arenas. They provide a comprehensive overview of the full task and disaggregate it at the same time into manageable units that can be treated independently but also in common with the others.

The WGA Framework for Assessing Governance

	Civil Society	Political Society	Government	Bureaucracy	Economic Society	Judiciary
Participation						
Fairness						
Decency						
Accountability						
Transparency						
Efficiency						

The challenge is to fill in the details for each empty box in the table! See our other webpages for indicators and an approach.

Source:

[Governance and Development: Sorting Out the Basics](#) Goran Hyden, Julius Court and Kenneth Mease (2001) World Governance Survey Discussion Paper 1.

[Making Sense of Governance: The Need for Involving Local Stakeholders](#) Goran Hyden, Julius Court and Kenneth Mease (2003) Development Dialog.