

DECISIONS FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE

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ABSTRACT

Civil society is essential in making decisions that affect people's lives, especially in democracies where decisions are meant to be made for the people and by the people. Civil society comprises of people and organizations that are independent, act like a bridge between the individuals and the government. Civil society's role in decision-making is diverse, including providing information, raising awareness, mobilizing communities, conducting research, advocating for policies, monitoring implementation, and holding governments accountable. Civil society organisations (CSOs) often represent marginalized groups, such as women, children, and minorities, voices of whom are mostly ignored or unheard in decision-making processes. Civil society's role in decision-making is critical to ensure that the people are heard, and their needs are addressed. Through their engagement, CSOs help to build more responsive, transparent, and accountable governance, which are necessary for sustainable development and social justice. This paper discusses the crucial civil society's role in decision-making processes that affect people's lives, particularly in democracies. Civil society, which comprises individuals and organizations independent from the government and private sector, acts as a bridge between the people and the government. The paper outlines the diverse roles of civil society in decision-making, including providing information, raising awareness, mobilizing communities, conducting research, advocating for policies, monitoring implementation, and holding governments accountable. The paper emphasizes civil society's capacity to represent marginalized groups in processes of decision-making. The paper also highlights civil society's ability to work with Government and other stakeholders to make sure that policies and programs are more effective, transparent, and accountable. The paper concludes that civil society's role in decision-making is critical to ensure that voices of the people are heard, and their needs are addressed.

KEYWORDS: Decision-Making, Civil Society, Accountability, Transparency,

INTRODUCTION

Civil society's role is crucial in decision making as it represents the interests and voices of citizens outside of the Government and the private sector. Civil society includes organizations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, religious organizations, labour unions, and advocacy groups.

In decision-making processes, civil society organisations can provide valuable inputs and feedback on policies, laws, and regulations that affect their communities. They pay attention to issues that might otherwise be overlooked by decision-makers. They can mobilize public opinion and apply pressure on decision-makers to take certain actions or adopt specific policies. Civil society organisations serve as a check and balance on government power by monitoring decision-making processes and holding decision-makers accountable for their actions. This helps ensure that decision-making processes are transparent, inclusive, and equitable. The

involvement in decision making by civil society can help ensure that the needs and interests of citizens are considered.

OBJECTIVE

- To outline the process of Decision making
- To analyse civil society's role in decision making Process.
- To emphasize transparent relationship of government and civil society.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Society adverts to the organizations and associations that exist in a society outside of the government and private sector. These organizations are typically formed by individuals or groups of individuals who share common interests, values, and goals, and they operate in the public sphere aiming to promote, social, political, and economic objectives.

Civil society organisations can take different forms, like non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community

groups, religious organizations, labour unions, and advocacy groups. They often work to address issues like public health, environmental protection, and social justice, which play an important role in promoting democracy and holding governments accountable.

Civil society is considered an essential element of a democratic society because it provides a space to citizens for participation in decision-making processes and express their views and opinions outside of formal political structures. Through civil society, citizens can come together to influence policy, promote social change, and hold governments and other actors accountable.

There are different definitions and interpretations of civil society by various thinkers and scholars. Here are a few examples:

1. According to Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political thinker, civil society is "the network of associations that exists in society outside the state." He saw civil society as a vital component of a democratic society, as it allows citizens to associate freely, express their opinions, and take action on issues that matter to them.

2. Robert Putnam, an American political scientist, defined Civil society as "a web of associations and institutions that act as a social glue, facilitating coordination and cooperation among citizens." He emphasized the role of civil society in building social capital, which he argued is essential for a healthy democracy.

3. Jurgen Habermas, a German philosopher, saw Civil society as "the space of public deliberation where citizens can discuss and debate issues of common concern." He argued that Civil society is crucial for the progress of a robust public sphere, which allows citizens to engage in rational and inclusive debates and hold those in power accountable.

Civil society is seen by many thinkers as a crucial component of a democratic society, providing a space for citizens to associate freely, express their opinions, and take action on issues that matter to them.

CONCEPT OF DECISION-MAKING BY DIFFERENT POLITICAL THEORIST

Here are some definitions of decision making by different political theorists:

1. Robert Dahl: According to Dahl, decision making refers to "the process by which the members of a group arrive at a decision or a set of decisions."

2. David Easton: Easton defines decision making as "the allocation of values in a political system."

3. Harold Laswell: Lasswell defines decision making as "who gets what, when, and how." He sees decision making as a process of allocating resources and benefits among different groups in society.

4. Graham Allison: Allison defines decision making as "the act of choosing between alternatives in a situation of uncertainty."

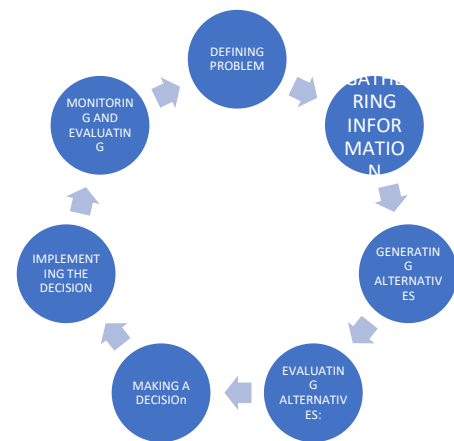
5. John Kingdon: Kingdon sees decision making as a three-streams process, where problems, policies, and politics converge to create a window of opportunity for change.

Decision making is a crucial aspect of politics, and different political theorists have approached it from different angles, emphasizing different aspects of the decision-making process, such as allocation of values, problem-solving, and power distribution.

STEPS OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decision making refers to the process of identifying and choosing among different alternatives to achieve a desired outcome.

The decision-making process typically involves several steps, as shown in Diagram below



DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. Defining the problem: Identifying the issue or challenge that requires a decision to be made.
2. Gathering information: Collecting relevant data, facts, and opinions related to the problem.

3. Generating alternatives: Considering different options or solutions to address the problem.
4. Evaluating alternatives: Assessing the potential benefits, costs, and risks associated with each option.
5. Making a decision: Choosing the best alternative based on the evaluation and selecting a course of action.
6. Implementing the decision: Putting the chosen alternative into action.
7. Monitoring and evaluating: Assessing the effectiveness of the decision and making adjustments if necessary.

Effective decision making requires critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the ability to evaluate and manage risks. The quality of decision making can be influenced by factors such as personal biases, emotional states, and external pressures. Therefore, it is essential to approach decision making in a thoughtful and deliberate manner, considering multiple perspectives and sources of information.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DECISION MAKING

Civil society plays an essential role in decision-making processes by advocating for the interests and rights of the community they represent. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are non-state actors that operate in public sphere and serve as intermediaries of the government and citizens. They are important stakeholders in decision-making processes as they represent the voices of marginalized communities and provide an avenue for citizens participation in governance. The ways from which civil society contributes to decision-making processes is through advocacy. CSOs advocate for policies and programs that promote the common good, advance human rights, and protect the environment. They engage in dialogue with government officials, lawmakers, and other stakeholders to promote their cause and ensure that the concerns of the communities they represent are addressed.

Additionally, Civil society organisations often act as watchdogs, monitoring government actions and holding officials accountable for decisions. They use different tools such as media campaigns, public demonstrations, and legal action to promote transparency and accountability in governance. Research shown that involvement of Civil society in decision-making processes can lead to more inclusive and equitable outcomes. A study by the World Bank found that the participation of civil society in budgetary decision-making in Bolivia led to greater equity in the allocation of public resources, with a greater share of resources going to underserved communities. Similarly, In Ghana, the participation of Civil society in the implementation of a maternal and child

health program led to improvements in the quality and accessibility of healthcare services.

Civil society play critical role in decision-making processes by representing the voices of marginalized communities, promoting transparency and accountability, and advocating for programs and policies promote the common good.

TYPES OF DECISION-MAKING

There are several method of decision-making processes that organizations and individuals can use, depending on t nature of the decision, available resources, and decision-makers' preferences. Here are a few commonly used methods, with citations to support their efficacy:

1. **Rational decision-making:** This method involves identifying the problem, generating alternatives, evaluating and selecting the best alternative, implementing the decision, and monitoring and evaluating the outcomes. This approach is logical and systematic and is often used in business settings. A study by Martina G. Gallarza and Jose L. Molina-Azorin (2017) found that rational decision-making leads to better outcomes in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

2. **Intuitive decision-making:** This method involves relying on one's instincts and past experiences to make decisions. This approach is used in situation where time is limited, and there is no clear-cut answer. A study by Elke U. Weber and Eric J. Johnson (2009) found that intuitive decision-making can be effective when individuals have relevant expertise and experience.

3. **Collaborative decision-making:** This method involves involving multiple stakeholders in the decision-making process to ensure a more inclusive and diverse range of perspectives. This approach used in where decisions can have significant impacts on multiple parties. A study by Kathryn E. Newcomer and Marc Holzer (2015) found that collaborative decision-making can lead to more innovative and creative solutions.

4. **Behavioural decision-making:** This method involves considering cognitive biases and emotional factors in decision-making processes. This approach recognize that people are not rational and may take decisions based on emotional responses or biases. A study by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky (1974) found that people often make decisions based on cognitive biases, such as the availability heuristic and the representativeness heuristic.

5. **Group Decision Making:** This involves making decisions collectively as a group, where the group members

discuss and evaluate different alternatives and come to a decision through consensus or a voting process.

6. **Incremental Decision Making:** This involves making decisions incrementally, based on past decisions and feedback, rather than making a single large decision. This type of decision making is useful in situations where the outcome is uncertain or where there is limited information available.

7. **Crisis decision making:** This decision making involves taking decisions quickly and under high pressure in response to a crisis situation. It often requires a flexible and adaptive approach to decision making.

8. **Political Decision Making:** This type of decision making based on political considerations, such as power relations, ideology, and interest groups. This approach is often associated with Harold Lasswell, who developed the concept of "who gets what, when, and how."

The Method of decision making used depends on the situation, the available information, and the decision maker's goals and preferences. Each type of making decision has its own advantages and disadvantages, and choosing the appropriate type of decision making is critical to making effective decisions. The choice of decision-making method depends on the context and the preferences of the decision-makers. By understanding the different methods, individuals and organisations are able to make more effective decisions.

IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PARTICIPATION OF POLITICAL DECISION MAKING

The participation of Civil society in political decision-making is necessary for the functioning of a democratic society. Civil society plays a crucial role in political decision-making as it provides a platform for citizens to engage in the democratic process and hold elected officials accountable. civil society's participation in political decision-making is important

1. **Promoting transparency and accountability:** Civil Society organisations can monitor the decision-making process, advocate for transparency and accountability, and make public officials accountable for their actions. This help to make sure that political decisions are made in public interest and not influenced by special interests or corruption.

According to the World Bank, "Civil society is crucial to ensuring accountability, transparency, and good governance, and to holding governments and institutions accountable for their actions and decisions." (World Bank, 2017)

2. **Bringing Various viewpoint and expertise:** Civil society organizations bringing together people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. This diversity can

enrich the decision-making process by bringing in fresh ideas and perspectives that might otherwise be overlooked.

As noted by the UNDP, "Civil society can provide unique perspectives and expertise that can help to inform policy development and implementation, and promote greater inclusiveness and participation." (UNDP, 2020)

3. **Advocating for marginalized groups:** Civil society organizations often represent marginalized groups who may not have a voice in the political process. By advocating for these groups, Civil society helps to ensure that political decisions based on the needs and interests of all members of society.

4. **Representation:** Civil society organizations represent diverse groups in society that have no voice in the political process. According to World Bank, Civil Society Groups can "advocate for the interests of the poor, marginalized and vulnerable communities, and act as intermediaries between the state and citizens" (World Bank, 2020).

5. **Expertise:** Civil Society have expertise in specific areas, like human rights, environmental protection, or public health. This expertise can be valuable in informing policy decisions and ensuring that policies are evidence-based.

6. **Innovation:** Civil society organizations can be more innovative and flexible than governments. They experiment with the different social problem approaches to and propose alternative solutions to complex issues.

7. **Legitimacy:** Civil Society Groups can provide legitimacy to political decision-making processes. By participating in the decision-making process, these organisations can ensure that policies are perceived as legitimate.

There are various examples of successful participation of civil society in political decision-making, such as the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the women's suffrage movement in the U.S, and the environmental movement in Europe. Civil Society participation in political decision-making is essential for the Working of a democratic society. The CEIP notes that "Civil society organizations can amplify the voices of marginalized groups, such as women, minorities, and youth, and advocate for their rights and interests in the political process." (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019)

In summary, civil society's participation in political decision-making is essential for promoting transparency and accountability, bringing diverse perspectives and expertise, and advocating for marginalized groups.

FROM PROTESTS TO POLICIES : HOW CIVIL SOCIETY CREATES CHANGE?

Civil society, also known as the third sector and individuals who are not part of the government or private sector. This includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, activist organizations, and other groups that work to promote justice. Civil society creating change by raising awareness of issues, mobilizing public opinion, and pressuring policymakers to act. Protests are visible and direct ways that civil society creates change. Protests bring issues to the forefront of public attention and can inspire people to act. Protests can also create pressure on policymakers to act by showing widespread people support for an issue. Civil rights movement in the America used protests and civil disobedience to bring attention to the issue of racial discrimination and ultimately led to changes in laws and policies. However, protests are just one part of the broader work that civil society organizations do. Civil society organizations also engage in research, advocacy, and lobbying to influence policy decisions. This work is often less visible but can be just as important in creating change. NGOs works on environmental issues may conduct research to show the local communities, that address climate change, such as renewable energy targets or regulations on greenhouse gas emissions. Similarly, NGOs may conduct research to show the discrimination of marginalized communities and use this research to promote equality and justice. Civil society organizations also engage in community organizing to build power and mobilize people around common issues. This includes working with communities to identify their priorities, providing resources and support, and building networks.

The primary means by which civil society creates change is by holding those in power accountable. This can involve monitoring policies and actions of governments and corporations, exposing corruption and human rights abuses, and advocating for transparency and accountability. By shining a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed, civil society plays a critical role in creating change by raising awareness of issues, mobilizing public opinion, and pressuring policymakers to take action. While protests are a visible and direct way that civil society creates change, research, advocacy, community organizing, and accountability are crucial techniques that can lead to lasting policy change. By working together, civil society can assist to create a more just and sustainable world for all.

Civil society, which includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and activist organizations, plays a crucial role in creating change by raising awareness of issues, mobilizing public opinion, and pressuring policymakers to take action (Banks, 2018). While protests are often the most visible and direct form of action of civil society. Primary ways of civil societies to create change is through

research, advocacy, and lobbying to influence policy decisions. that work on environmental issues may conduct research to show the impact of climate change on local communities. They use research to advocate for policies that address climate change, such as renewable energy targets or regulations on greenhouse gas emissions (Carmin & Darnell, 2014). Similarly, NGOs that work on social justice issue may conduct research to show the discrimination of disadvantaged communities and use this research to advocates for policies that promote equality and justice (Banks, 2018).

Community organizing is another critical technique that Civil society organisations use to create change like working with communities to identify their needs and priorities, providing resources and support, and building networks of individuals who work together to create change. Through community organizing, civil society organisations empower individuals and communities to take action and advocates for their demands (Hildyard, 2009).

Civil Society organisations also play a leading role in holding those in power accountable. This can involve monitoring the policies and actions of governments and corporations, exposing corruption and human rights abuses, and advocating for transparency and accountability. By shining a light on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed, civil society helps to ensure that those in power are held responsible for their working (Carmin & Darnell, 2014).

Finally, civil society organizations use protests and other forms of direct action to bring attention to issues and create pressure on policymakers to act. Protests can also inspire people to act and show policymakers that there is widespread public support for a particular issue. For example, the civil rights movement in the U.S used protests and civil disobedience to bring issue of racial discrimination and ultimately led to changes in laws and policies (Banks, 2018).

In conclusion, civil organisations play an essential role in creating change by using a variety of techniques and tactics, from research and advocacy to community organizing and protests. Through these efforts, civil society organisations empower individuals and communities to act, hold those in power accountable, and ultimately create lasting policy change.

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