



Commonwealth Foundation

A Glossary of Terms

Civic voices

The term 'civic voices' captures the range of citizen engagement arrangements in which citizens participate directly or indirectly to exact accountability and shape development outcomes. Civic voices includes, but is not limited to, civil society organisations (CSOs), informal alliances, social movements, individuals and collectives. The term recognises that CSOs are no longer the only interlocutor with government and that other civic voices can effectively influence public discourse, participate in policy processes and engage with government and governance institutions.

Governance institutions

Includes government, policy-makers, public authorities, corporations, donors and other stakeholders that are involved in and influence governance and public policy and practice.

Public discourse

The exchange of information, ideas and deliberation on issues of public concern in the public sphere. The 'public sphere' includes the space between the state and the private sphere of citizens, households and private corporations. Through a range of communication channels, public discourse can influence public debate and form public or collective will, which has the potential to demand accountability of governance institutions and influence political decision-making.

Accountability

Process of holding actors responsible for their actions. It is the concept that individuals, agencies and organisations (public, private and civil society) are held responsible for executing their powers according to a certain standard (whether set mutually or not).

Creative expression

Use of different art forms to express yourself, including creative writing, drama, dance, music, photography and the visual arts. Creative expression can be used to express ideas and tell stories that can help people make sense of events and issues as well as engage and inspire people to take action for social change.

Gender equality

Women and men have equal rights to, and opportunities for, human, social, economic and cultural development. Gender equity is the exercise of these rights. Gender equity leads to gender equality and fair and just outcomes for women and men. It may include special measures to redress historic inequalities, access to resources and power imbalances between women and men, as well as groups negatively affected by gender-based discrimination.