**MIL and Its Importance in Democracy and Good Governance**

Today’s world is media saturated. This is not just in terms of the various media platforms that have been developed especially with the advent of ICTs, but the multiplicity of contents and voices that now pervade the public space, so much information is out there in different forms, variety and quality to the extent that an average citizen may get swamped and confused in its ever flowing torrent.

In an increasingly complex media landscape, citizens need to be able to access, analyze, evaluate and develop media content. With the help of media and information literacy (MIL) citizens become informed, to engage in the public sphere to effect change, and to demand good governance and accountability. Donors should therefore promote media literacy as an integral part of the development process.

**Defining Goals:**

1. **The Role of Media In Democracy**

Democracy is a government of the people, for the people and by the people and which gives equal chance to all the citizens to participate and play a significant role in the political process, ensures and guarantees certain rights and freedoms to the people constituting the policy. Of the fundamental freedoms that the citizens enjoy, freedom of speech and expression is one of the most important ones as it gives substance and meaning to ‘participation’ of the people. Thus reliable information sources form an important constituent of a democratic society. This is where the role and importance of media arises. They have provided information and entertainment to people across countries.

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy for at least *two reasons*. First, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Second, information serves a “checking function” by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them. In some societies, an antagonistic relationship between media and government represents a vital and healthy element of fully functioning democracies.

**Media supports democracy** by bringing out the democratic norms and inculcating the same in the general public. Providing live coverage of parliament proceedings, activities of politicians, programmes on democracies are few of the examples. Also support for media may yield results in governance activities, particularly those related to decentralization, anti-corruption, and citizen participation in the policy process. The rule of law may be further institutionalized by support for an independent media that keeps a check on the judiciary, reports on the courts, and promotes a legal enabling environment suitable for press freedom. Free and fair elections conducted through transparent processes require a media sector which gives candidates equal access, and reports the relevant issues in a timely, objective manner.

The media also exposes loopholes in the democratic system, which ultimately helps government in filling the vacuums of loopholes and making a system more accountable, responsive and citizen-friendly. A democracy without media is like a vehicle without wheels. So the ultimate goal of media should be to provide assistance to develop a range of diverse mediums and voices that are credible, and to create and strengthen a sector that promotes such outlets.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru called media ‘thewatchdog of our democracy’.

“If it were left on me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

(Thomas Jefferson)

1. **Role of Media In Good Governance**

Good governance is an indeterminate term used to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)”. Good governance is about the processes for making and implementing decisions. Its not about making ‘correct’ decisions but about the best possible process for making those decision. The concept of “good governance” centres around the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society.

Traditionally and constitutionally, the media has no defined role in governance. It doesn’t have the power to change any decisions made by the various arms of a state––the legislature, executive and the judiciary. Yet, the media plays one of the most important roles in the functioning of any society. It amplifies the voice of citizens and communicates their opinions to the lawmakers.

Good governance is an ideal system which is difficult to achieve in its totality. In other words, no country or society has ever said to achieve good governance in totality. We can only come close to this by our activities with the aim of making this ideal a reality. The journey of Pakistan from developing nation to a developed nation will depend on the role played by the media in the country. It needs to be focused on the real matters, which are mostly social and economic in nature, instead of trying to divert the attention to the non issues. Achieving the good governance requires the understanding and participation of every member of the society. The media, their significant roles, channels and contents, are considered to be the most powerful weapon to make this achievement a reality.

**Recommendations**

Media usually refers to mass media, which is any medium that provides citizens with information regarding all the current affairs of any area at a large scale. It is unbiased reporting of facts through print, television, radio or Internet. Media literacy needs to gain traction within the development community and innovative approaches are needed to promote media literacy skills among all citizens. Key recommendations for highlighting the need to:

* Support media watchdog and media monitoring groups as a tool for promoting media literacy and transforming civil society and the public into active participants in the media.
* Raise awareness of the role and function of the news ombudsman, which acts as a key link between citizens and news agencies, and helps to hold news agencies accountable and accessible to citizens.
* Develop media literacy skills through mobilization, public forums and debate on relevant topics such as current affairs, media practices, and citizens’ rights and obligations.
* Incorporate media literacy as a core element of media development programmes.
* Promote research on the impact of media literacy on citizen action, participation and good governance. Empirical evidence is also needed to build support for related policy development and advocacy efforts.

**Conclusion**

The role of media in Pakistan (one of the largest democratic state of the world) is different from merely disseminating information and entertainment. Educating the masses for their social upliftment needs to be in its ambit as well. In a country where there is large scale poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment media has a responsibility towards developmental journalism. It has a role to play behind formation of public opinion which can force the political parties to address the core issues haunting the country’s progress. It is thus referred as fourth pillar of democracy. However; public opinion can be manipulated by vested interests to serve their own goals.

**Importance of Good Governance For A Country**

Good governance is required at all levels of society and state. Essentials of good governance

* Importance for the Economic Sector
* Import/ export
* Budget Making
* Foreign Debt
* Importance for the Political Sector
* Democracy
* Leadership Crises
* Political Will
* Foreign Dictation
* Writ of Government
* Importance for the Social Sector
* Merit System
* Accountability
* Corruption
* Education