UNIT 22 NETWORKING AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION IN GOVERNANCE

Structure

22.0   LEARNING OUTCOME

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

•   Explain the concept of network

•   Appreciate the significance of networking and inter-institutional coordination in governance; and

•   Explain the mechanisms of networking and inter-institutional coordination

22.1   INTRODUCTION

Government has always played a vital role throughout the period of recorded history and any government worth its name and having the responsibility of governing a polity must develop and promote its seminal core, the parameters of good governance. The terms 'government' and 'governance' have often been used interchangeably, but an important distinction between the two remains, if 'government' hints at the machinery and institutional setup for exercising state power, and 'governance' transcends the State to incorporate within itself the civil society organisations.

We have already discussed the various aspects of relationship between the executive, legislature and judiciary in the process of governance, and inter governmental relations in Units 8, 9 and 10 of this Course. These organs, we know, do not function in isolation. They being formal organs are influenced by the pressures put by informal organisations. Governance in this sense is a congruence of formal and informal actors. Hence inter-institutional coordination and networking are essential to foster good governance. To illustrate, any worthwhile poverty eradication programme has to involve a network of organisations – government agencies, non-government

organisations, local peoples' initiatives, and above all the self-help efforts of the poor.

A government's role in governance is guided by law and the principles of a welfare state. Most often, such roles relate to collection of revenue and tax, administration of justice, maintaining law and order and generally facilitating the development of people and society. In an increasingly liberal and global economy, governance also relates to governments undertaking important regulatory functions. If a government is keen to ensure good governance, then its processes need to focus on three main goals, namely, quality including democratic (people's) participation, openness and transparency, and proper time and resources management. In this Unit, we shall discuss the important aspects of networking and inter-institutional coordination in governance and its various mechanisms.

22.2 NETWORK: CONCEPT

The concept of network is of recent origin. It is the outcome of the collaborative processes and arrangements between organisations and individuals. Governance involves several key stakeholders, which include government, markets, communities, citizens, media etc. Networks become important in mobilising all the concerned stakeholders in matters of concern. Rhodes (1997), considers governance as 'self organising, inter-organisational networks'. There is dispersal of functions, power, authority, responsibilities to other actors by the State, to ensure better delivery of services and consequently high quality of life. Globally, non-state networks are playing a significant role.

According to Newman (2001), there are governance shifts in the present scenario. The existing literature indicates that we are witnessing:

1) A move away from hierarchy and competition as alternative models for delivering services towards networks and partnerships traversing the public, private and voluntary sectors.

2) A recognition of the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.

3) The recognition and incorporation of policy networks into the process of governing.

4) The replacement of traditional models of command and control by 'governing at a distance'.

5) The development of more reflective and responsive policy tools.

6) The role of government shifting to a focus on providing leadership, building partnerships, steering and coordinating and providing system-wide integration and regulation.

7) The emergence of 'negotiated self-governance' in communities, cities, and regions based on new practices of coordinating activities through networks and partnerships.

8) The opening-up of decision making to greater participation by the public.

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9) Innovations in democratic practices as a response to the problem of complexity and fragmentation of authority, and the challenges, these present to traditional democratic models.

10) A broadening of focus by government beyond institutional concerns to encompass the involvement of civil society in the process of governance.

The concept of network brings within its purview not only the third sector, but also those organisations which have been contracted for certain services by the government. Networks are collaborative structures, working with government and other actors.

Castells (1997), explains the rise of network society due to changes in technology, communication, production and politics. The Nation-state is said to be challenged by non-state networks, which include networks of capital, communication, international institutions, non-governmental organisations etc. States, according to Castells, are now subject to contradictory pressures in their attempts to act globally and locally. This produces information politics and crisis of democracy. The State, it is considered, is unable to provide comprehensive welfare to the citizens and new forms of networks are on the increase. Networks, in the present context are meant to bridge the space between public and private sectors, bureaucracies and markets.

Rhodes (1997), speaks of policy networks especially in the context of British Government. Policy networks are characterised by

- interdependence between the organisations that are involved

- continual interaction between the membership that exchanges resources and negotiates shared purposes

- interactions that are governed by the 'rules of the game' and that develop trust;and,

- a significant degree of autonomy from State interventions.

Kickert *etal* (1997), consider policy networks as institutional formations that are shaped around particular policy problems and/or programmes. They bring together a variety of actors in partnership, and in theory, no single actor has enough power to determine the strategic actions of the network.

Networks comprise of all those coming together committed to pursing certain interests, exchanging resources, functioning in informal ways, with no conventional organisation structures of command and control. Networks are in a way organisation of social capital.

22.3 NETWORKING AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION IN GOVERNANCE

Governance touches our lives at so many points. Some of them are very basics of social living-law and order, and justice. But more often than not, our experience with the institutions of governance leaves much to be desired. It is agreed that we all want better governance for our country. But in many areas our efforts at achieving this have had less than optimum success.

The concept of "governance" is not new. It is as old as human civilisation. Simply put, "governance" means the process of decision-making and the manner in which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, global governance, national governance and local governance.

We have already discussed in detail about the concept of governance in Unit 7 of this Course. It has acquired a wider connotation in present times. Governance, as Bovaird and Loffler (2002), point out:

- assumes a multiple stakeholder scenario where collective problems can no longer be solved only by public authorities but require the cooperation of other players (eg. citizens, business, voluntary sector, media) and in which it will sometimes be the case that practices such as mediation, arbiration and self-regulation may be even more effective that public action.

- deals with formal rules (constitutions, laws, regulations) and informal rules (codes of ethics, customs, traditions) but assumes that negotiation between stakeholders seeking to use their power can alter the importance of these rules;

- no longer focuses only on market structures as steering mechanisms, as in conventional 'new public management' approaches, but also considers hierarchies (such as bureaucracies) and cooperative networks as potential facilitating structures in appropriate circumstances

- does not reason only in terms of the logic of ends and means, inputs and outputs, but recognises that the characteristics of the key processes in social interaction (eg. transparency, integrity, honesty) are likely to be valuable in themselves.

- inherently political, concerned as it is with the interplay of stakeholders seeking to exercise power over each other in order to further their own interests and therefore cannot be left to managerial or professional decision-making elites.

Governance is the process of decision-making in matters of collective social problem solving. It includes processes of implementation of decisions. An analysis of scope of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decisions.

Government is one of the many actors in the governance process. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under discussion. In rural areas, for example, they may include influential land lords, associations of farmers, cooperatives, non governmental organisations, religious leaders, political parties, etc. The situation in urban areas is much more complex. Figure 1 provides the linkages between actors involved in urban governance. At the national level, in addition to the above actors, media, lobbyists, international donors, multi-national corporations, etc., may play a role in decision-making or in influencing the decision-making process.

All actors other than government and the military are grouped together as part of the "civil society." In some countries in addition to the civil society, organised crime syndicates also influence decision-making, particularly in urban areas and at the national level.

Similarly formal government structures are one means by which decisions are arrived at and implemented. At the national level, informal decision-making structures, such as "kitchen cabinets" or informal advisors may exist. In some rural areas locally powerful families may also influence decision-making.
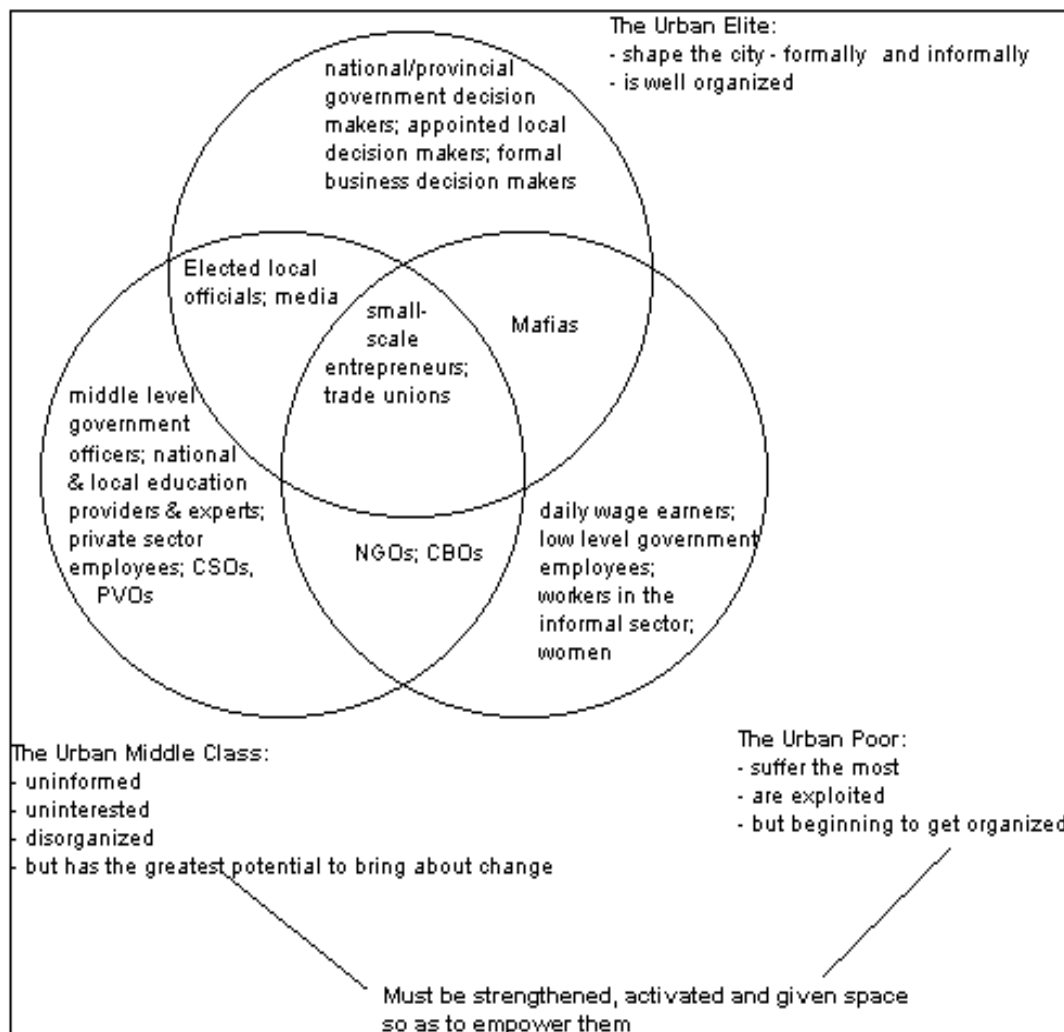

Figure 1: Urban actors

Source: www.unescap.org

Networking involves establishing inter-connections between a large number of people, groups, institutions etc., and bringing them together in a system. Common interests can now transcend geographical and social constructs for fruitful association. Governance concerns the collective interests of large communities. What are the implications of the networking power at a larger societal level – for actions that meet the needs of large human groups? Networking with its capacity to bring together micro efforts into meaningful association, is already adding a new dimension to the development of civil society. The civil society by this means is directly taking control of what the local governance does. Governments, as the custodian of common interests in the society, can hardly afford to stay unmoved by the new opportunities.

Clearly, the historic monopoly of institutions –both private and public – over information is being shattered by the networking, and emerging in its stead is a citizenry that is empowered by access to information, services and to government officials. At the World Trade Organisation Conference in Seatle, it became clear that affairs of great importance to everyone in the world would

not be decided without listening to the (hitherto) unorganised voices. The networking emerged as the major platform for bringing together and articulating desperate concerns from across the globe, be they the voices of labour organisation or of the environmentalists.

22.4 MECHANISMS OF NETWORKING AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION

The founding fathers of the Indian Republic chose to build further on the foundations of institutions which already existed and which they had known, had worked. The Constitution rejected British rule over India but not the institutions that had grown on the Indian soil.

That the Constitution and the representative institutions established have endured and freedom and dignity of the individual have been preserved to a great extent is a great tribute to the strength and resilience of Indian democracy. India can take legitimate pride in that-some temporary aberrations notwithstanding -whatever problems the nation faced were sought to be resolved within the existing democratic framework and that she remained the most stable and enduring democratic system in South Asia -the only one where the same political system and the Constitution continued for more than fifty years. Despite Galbraith's characterisation of India as a "functioning anarchy" and Myrdal's conceptualisation of "soft state", it cannot be denied that in India, the judiciary has remained fairly independent, the press has, by and large, remained free, and the civil authority has remained supreme. The latest feather in the cap of India's democratic polity is the constitutional status and stability provided to the grassroot Panchayati Raj institutions. It is unique in the history of democracy to have over three million elected representatives with one-third representation given to women and reservations for deprived sections of society. These are constitutionally mandated provisions to 'empower' the hitherto excluded groups and enable them to be active participants in the country's governance.

But still, Indian democracy is passing through critical times. The functioning of democratic institutions and the constitutional system leave much to be desired.

Ours is a multi-layered and exceedingly complex system of government. The federal arrangement has to be carried on by orchestrating the efforts of the centre and the constituent states and union territories. Then there are the local self-governing institutions – in urban and rural areas – which are now constitutional entities. There are numerous para-statal agencies and non-government organisations that function in specific fields and geographical areas. In this kind of a complex governing set-up, bringing about inter-institutional coordination is no easy task. The Constitution has provided for some coordination agencies such as the National Development Council and the Inter-state Council about which we have discussed in Unit 10 of this Course. Many other agencies have been set up by the executive fiat such as the North-East Council, Central Council of Local Self-Government etc. In this context, reference has to be made to the primary coordinating role of the major formal agencies: the three organs of government, namely, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The work of the professional executive is to execute the policies laid down by the legislature and the political executive. The legislature representing the people and the political will play a very

important coordinating role in the process of governance, whether it is a parliamentary or a presidential form of government.

In a parliamentary form of government, Parliament should have the complete legislative powers. In practice, however, its role, many a times, under contemporary circumstances of complexities, governance, gets somewhat diluted. The executive has often to take major policy decisions in emergency situations. The policy decisions are taken by the executive with bureaucratic help and these are referred to Parliament for knowledge and approval.

The legislature in a parliamentary form of government performs many functions, which can broadly be divided into two categories:

1)   input functions, and

2)   output functions.

The functions like representation, call attention motion, questions (starred and un-starred) fall in the category of input functions, while legislation, policy-making and allocation of money for the government are output functions of the legislature. In respect of output functions, the legislature performs its essential functions of scrutiny, appraisal, and approval. Among the input functions, representation is very important, as it (i) provides legitimacy to government, and (ii) acts as a bridge between the people in the respective constituencies and the government. The legislature gathers together different interests and expectations of the nation, and acts as a forum for ventilation of all shades of views and ideas. On the political side of governance, it is the coordinating role of the legislature that lends stability to democracy as a governing system.

Sustainable development requires good governance mechanisms, which are transparent and participative based on partnership and other arrangements among the government and other elements of civil society. In Brazil, for example, by bringing grassroots electoral pressure on local governments, interaction between local administration and community has been fostered. Political interference has been kept at bay on the state government's insistence that the municipal councils, for disbursing development funds, have at least 80 per cent representation from user communities. If communities feel that they are treated unfairly by municipal councils, they can apply for funds directly from the state government (World Development Report, 2000-01).

In India, several efforts towards networking with other stakeholders are in existence. We have discussed in Unit 20 of this Course on responsiveness about the initiatives of Bangalore Agenda Task Force in provision of civic amenities. This is an example of networking. The Joint Forest Management is another effort towards promotion of resource conservation. The participation of village community as users in this effort entails the role of the State being a facilitator mobilising local initiatives. The Delhi government's concept of 'Bhagidari', citizen partnership in governance is an example of networking and inter– institutional coordination in governance. The objective has been to develop a democratic framework providing space and freedom for people to engage in collective action and work in partnership with the government, with more than 1300 citizen groups including Resident Welfare Associations, Markets and Traders Associations, Rural Groups, it works in partnership with the civic agencies and development agencies of the government to facilitate a process of dialogue and provide solutions to the issues. It has initiated measures towards empowerment of women,

environment campaigns, awareness of waste segregation, popularisation of rain water harvesting etc.

22.5   CONCLUSION

Networks are occupying a key role in present day governance. There are a variety of stakeholders who pursue their goals and strategies but also are dependent on each other to achieve the desired public policy outcomes. Governance, which earlier has been the monopoly of the State with division of powers between the formal organs of government, was considered more as a political contract. But gradually the scenario changed with other informal organs gaining in strength and showing their capacity to participate in governance. Networks that comprise public, private, nonprofit organisations, community based groups, attempt to work towards efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and equity.

22.6   KEY CONCEPTS

Global Governance

The efforts on the part of government, management and administration capabilities of the United Nations, World Bank and other international organizations various regimes, coalitions of interested nations and individual nations, to act globally in order to address various issues that emerge beyond national borders, such as development environment, human rights, infectious diseases and international terrorism(www.nira.go.jp/news/paper/global.g)

This Concept has also earlier been explained in Section 19.11.

Parastatal Agencies

These are agencies set up to carry out particular activities on behalf of the government.   They are entrusted with delivery of services according to economic and commercial principles.

Soft State

The term is usually referred to states that are unwilling to coerce people in order to implement declared policy goals such as collecting taxes, punishing evaders and so on. These states unlike the military and authoritarian regimes do not make use of force and violence to make people obey the government directives. The term 'soft' state was used by Gunnar Myrdal in 1968 in his work 'Asian Drama: An inquiry into Poverty of Nations'.

Sustainable Development

It is long term development that ensures effective utilisation of resources in present generation and also keeps in view the needs of future generation. Sustainable development according to Bruntland Commission (1987), is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts. The concept of "needs", in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organisation on the

environment's ability to meet present and the future needs (www.adrc.or.jp/publications/terminology/to.htm.)

22.7   REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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22.8   ACTIVITIES

1)   Based on newspaper reports, radio or television make observations on methods of inter- institutional coordination in governance.

2)   Visit any organisation, public or private and enquire about various means establishing networking with other agencies.