

UPSC Civil Services Examination

Subject – UPSC GS-III

Topic – Good Governance

The actions that a government takes to manage its affairs in a state or a country are to be called as governance. It can be positive or negative; good or bad keeping in note the outcomes of the governance and how the citizens/public receives them. Good governance is a term of increasing importance in today's world order. It is commonly discussed both on the national and international arena and hence becomes important for [IAS Exam](#).

In this article, you are provided with the facts on good governance along with the major characteristics of good governance, barriers to good governance, etc.. You can download the good governance notes PDF provided in the end of the article.

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- [Current Affairs](#)
- [UPSC Notes PDF](#)

Good Governance Introduction

The concept of good governance is not a new concept, even though it seems to be the buzzword now for major organisations and aid-givers to evaluate whether aid should be given to countries or not.

- In India, the concept was talked about in the **Arthashastra**, authored by Chanakya. He mentions the characteristics of a good king thus, "In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself, he does not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he considers as good."
- Mahatma Gandhi had also given the term 'Su- Raaj' literally meaning good governance.
- **Governance can be defined as 'the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented.'**
- Governance refers to the decision-making and administration involved in any level, i.e., national, regional, local, corporate, family, etc.
- Government is a key actor in governance.
- Depending upon the level of governance talked about, other actors would be cooperatives, bodies, associations, unions, NGOs, religious leaders, influential landlords, industry, political parties, finance institutions, lobbies, think tanks, military, etc.
- In governance, all actors apart from the government and the military are called 'civil society'.
- In some areas, organised crime syndicates such as the land mafia can also influence decision-making and hence, governance.

- An important point to note is that citizens are at the core of good governance. Hence, citizen-centric administration and good governance go hand in hand.

Good Governance Definition

- The **World Bank** defines governance as ‘the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.’
- According to a document released by the World Bank in 1992 titled, ‘Governance and Development’, good governance is an essential complement to sound economic policies and is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development.
- Components of Good Governance (according to the World Bank):
 - Capacity and efficiency in public sector management
 - Accountability
 - Legal framework for development
 - Information and transparency
- Because of the close link between corruption and poor governance, many international organisations such as the [World Bank and the International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#) are preconditioning their aid to countries on the guarantee that the recipient countries undertake good governance practices.
- The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** has defined governance as ‘the rules of the political system to solve conflicts between actors and adopt decision (legality).’
- Definition given by the **Commission on Global Governance** (1995) describes governance as ‘the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest.’

Good Governance Characteristics

The United Nations (UN) has given 8 major characteristics of good governance. They are briefly described below:



Good Governance - Participation

- A vital cornerstone of good governance is participation by all sections of society.
- This includes men and women, vulnerable sections of society, backward classes, minorities, etc.

- Representative democracy does not necessarily translate into representation of all people. This is where good governance comes into play.
- Participation also implies freedom of association and expression.

Good Governance - Transparency

- This means easy access to information to all concerned and especially to those being affected by the decisions made.
- This also implies information is available to the media.
- Another important facet is that all decisions are taken and enforced in such a manner that all rules and regulations are followed.

Good Governance - Rule of Law

- Rule of law warrants that fair legal frameworks are implemented impartially.
- It also means protection of human rights.
- This also requires an adequate and impartial judiciary and police force.

Good Governance - Responsiveness

- This implies that processes and institutions should serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.

Good Governance - Consensus oriented

- Consensus oriented decision-making ensures that even if everyone does not achieve what they want to the fullest, a common minimum can be achieved by everyone which will not be detrimental to anyone.
- Good governance is consensus oriented. A broad consensus should be reached by proper mediation.
- For this, a proper understanding of the society's historical, cultural and social contexts is needed; along with sustainable human development.

Good Governance - Equity and inclusiveness

- Good governance assures an equitable society.
- In such a society, no one or no section feels left out and marginalized.
- Opportunities should be given to all irrespective of their backgrounds, and no one should be discriminated.

Good Governance - Effectiveness and efficiency

- Good governance implies that institutions and processes create results that meet the wants of society while making optimal use of resources at their disposal.
- This also encompasses sustainable use of natural resources and the conservation of the environment.

Good Governance - Accountability

- This is a key trait of good governance.
- Accountability is not possible without the rule of law and transparency.

- Accountability should be there not just for the government, but also for citizens, the private sector, industry, NGOs, and all stakeholders.

Necessary Pre-Conditions For Good Governance

A study of the hindrances to good governance shows that there are many preconditions that must be satisfied to make governance citizen-centric. A few of the preconditions are given below:

- Effective legal framework
- Sound and effective institutional mechanism for correct implementation of laws
- Competent employees manning these institutions and efficient personnel management policies
- Apt policies for delegation, decentralization and fixing accountability.

In addition, several tools can also be used to make the administration citizen-centric. These are listed below:

- Re-engineering processes
- Adopting correct modern technology
- Right to information
- Citizens' charters
- Independent services' evaluation
- Grievance redressal mechanisms (Read the [components of redressal mechanism](#) in the linked article.)
- Active citizens' participation – public-private partnerships

Some important polity articles are linked in the table below, which aspirants should not miss reading:

Black Economy	Constitution of India - Overview
42nd Amendment	44th Amendment
Types of amendments	Sources of Indian Constitution