

Civil Society and Public Policy

The role of civil society organisations (CSO) in public policy varies greatly depending on their political contexts. Civil society in a democratic government is a channel through which citizens participate in making and implementing public decisions; in identifying, prioritising and resolving public problems, and in allocating and managing public resources. People become more involved in agenda setting, and policy implementation through various voluntary associations, which contribute to the sustaining of democracy and fosters economic growth.

In non-democratic and transitional states, the civil society sector plays a significant role in lobbying and pressuring governments for democratising politics and to complement policy changes.

In third world countries, civil society organisations have been involved in various political activities ranging from public voter education and monitoring elections; protesting what they consider unjust or unwise policies; protecting citizens from actions of repressive regimes; and opposing or even overthrowing regimes.

Generally civil society contributes to better governance through four categories, namely public policy and decision making; enhancing state performance; transparency and information; and social justice and the rule of law.