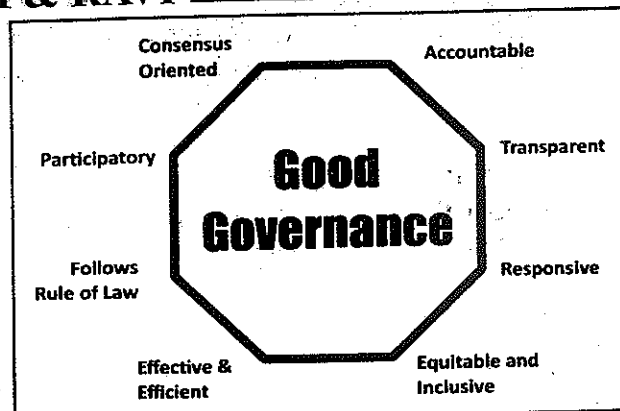


- **Equity:** All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.
- **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.

Fig: Attributes of Good Governance



Citizens' Participation In Governance

The concept of citizens' participation in governance is essentially based on the premise that citizens have a legitimate role in influencing decision-making processes that affect their lives, their businesses, and their communities. Citizens' participation in governance embodies **a shift in the development paradigm** from citizens as the "recipients" of development to one that views them as "active participants" in the development process. Equally, it involves a shift from a "top-down" to a "bottom-up" approach to development involving increasing **decentralisation of power** away from the Union Government and closer to grassroots levels. At the ideological level, direct citizens' participation in governance is seen as contributing to a **healthy democracy** because it enhances and improves upon the traditional form of representative democracy to transform it into more responsive and thus a participative grassroots democracy. It creates a voice for the poor & marginalised in public policy and service delivery. Active citizens' participation enables citizens to **demand accountability**, which helps in making government more efficient, effective and responsive. Mechanisms for citizens' participation in governance can be conceptualised on the following lines:

1. Citizens Seeking Information

Access to information (on procedures, prices, application forms, officers to be contacted for grievance redressal etc.) is a fundamental pre-requisite for ensuring citizens' participation in governance. The *Right to Information Act* in India has in essence already laid down the groundwork for ensuring this pre-requisite for citizens' participation in governance, but it is only by greater citizens' awareness of their rights under this Act that its vision of transparency can be realized.

2. Citizens Giving Suggestions

Listening to the voice of citizens not just during periodic elections but also on an ongoing basis is the starting point of participation of citizens in governance. Citizens are in the best position to articulate their needs and suggest the appropriate solutions, which is why there is often a need to complement local knowledge and skills with governmental expertise.

Examples of such participation would include participatory municipal budgeting, allowing citizens to vote directly through a referendum on specific proposals for changes in public policies, projects and laws; mandatory public hearings before approval of projects or decisions such as changes in land use plans that affect the environment and/or the local community, giving citizens' representation on management committees for local hospitals and schools, social audit, empowering the Gram Sabha to decide on issues of implementation in government welfare schemes etc.

For example, the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) was set up in 1999 to transform Bangalore into a world-class city with the participation of its leading citizens including the heads of its major IT companies, as well as prominent members of the Bangalore civic community. This engagement not only gave citizens' groups the opportunity to make suggestions on what needed to be done but also enforced accountability in the city service providers by creating a forum where their promises, once made, had to be fulfilled in a time-bound manner.

3. Citizens Demanding Better Services And Holding Government Accountable

Making public agencies work and ensuring that their service delivery would meet the criteria of efficiency, equity and customer satisfaction, requires citizens to voice their grievance and their