

**Governance for Poverty Eradication  
And Sustainable Development.**

**Issues In Development Co-operation**

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## Introduction

Most countries of the world have adopted the goals of poverty eradication and sustainable development as stated in their official documents. For instance, CIDA's Sustainable Development Strategy 2001-2003, states that "*the purpose of Canada's official development assistance is to support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world*"; DFID's White Paper "*sets out the Government's policies to achieve the sustainable development of this planet. It is first, and most importantly, about the single greatest challenge which the world faces-eliminating poverty*"; Policy statement by the DAC confirms the commitment "*to reducing poverty in all its dimensions and to achieving the seven International Development Goals*" ([developmentgoals.org/Poverty](http://developmentgoals.org/Poverty)); and *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* follows two other World Development Reports on poverty, in 1980 and 1990. These objectives of poverty reduction and sustainable development will be measured against the MDGs which "call for reducing the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day to half the 1990 level by 2015—from 29 percent of all people in low and middle income economies to 14.5 percent" ([developmentgoals.org/poverty](http://developmentgoals.org/poverty)). The goals have been commonly accepted by 147 states as a framework for measuring development progress.

Countries have also recognised governance as a central factor in contributing to progress and in helping achieve these goals. To illustrate, the OECD confirms that "*good, effective public governance helps to strengthen democracy and human rights, promote economic prosperity and social cohesion, reduce poverty, enhance environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources, and deepen confidence in government and public administration*" and that "*governance and development go hand in hand. Without good governance structures, developing countries cannot hope to compete efficiently in global markets*"; and the World Bank recognises local governance and national governance as two of the main areas of application of empowerment principles (access to information, inclusion and participation, accountability and local organisation capacity). ([worldbank.org/poverty/empowerment](http://worldbank.org/poverty/empowerment)) which go in hand in hand with poverty reduction objectives.

What remains to be seen, however, is the policy programmatic and operational linkages between governance as broadly defined and the goals of poverty reduction and sustainable development. Such linkages have not been clearly articulated. For example, the distinction between constitutive and distributive governance, which is necessary for appropriate emphasis if goals are to be translated into reality. Moreover, many still support governance as an end in itself and while this may be appropriate in many circumstances, for development co-operation, governance as a means to poverty reduction and sustainable development is much more amenable to support.. By using the single concept of sustainable livelihoods to reflect the twin goals of poverty reduction and sustainable development, this paper makes the case for linking governance to the desired development goals, and suggests practical steps for doing so.

## **Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication (Sustainable Livelihoods): What have we Learned?**

The evolution of sustainable livelihoods (SL) as a key concept of development confirms the beginning of a new era in international development cooperation by stressing that development simply does not work for people unless it is conceived and realized by them. Gone are the days when development was a top-down affair, organized by government institutions for the people. So are the days when poverty eradication was viewed in terms of redistribution of public resources to meet anticipated needs of the poorer segments of society. With SL, in are such concepts as ownership and empowerment, both associated with a bottom-up approach, where access to resources and incentives to action have replaced the redistributive needs approach of the past. This remarkable shift in development thinking, which may be described as a silent revolution, has still to be fully operationalized by multilateral and bilateral agencies. Their action does not always match their rhetoric. By focusing on how governance relates to the realization of sustainable livelihoods, this paper tries to indicate what can be done to ensure that SL not merely remains a rhetorical device.

The idea of sustainable livelihoods was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development as an approach to enhancing resource productivity, securing ownership of and access to resources and income-earning activities, as well as ensuring adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs. Sustainable livelihood security was seen as a precondition for stable human populations and a prerequisite for good husbandry and sustainable management of natural resources. Agenda 21 expanded the concept and was the first intergovernmental forum to demand sustainable livelihoods for all as a universal objective. By integrating SL into poverty eradication strategies, Agenda 21 also contributed to incorporating the concept into mainstream economic development thinking. Subsequent fora such as the Social Summit in Copenhagen and the Beijing Conference on Women have made use of SL in their program statements as have an increasing number of agencies, both multilateral and bilateral, as they have increasingly turned their attention to poverty eradication.

At the core of the SL approach are two broad principles. First and foremost is its integrative potential. The concept allows policies to address issues of development, sustainable resource management and poverty eradication simultaneously. Second is its emphasis not just on jobs but on the full complexity of livelihood systems which need to be both understood and addressed in the context of families, households and communities. The overall policy objective of SL, therefore, must, as the Social Summit emphasized, be that of identifying the livelihood systems, survival strategies and self-help organizations of people living in poverty, and working with such organizations to develop programmes for combating poverty that builds on their efforts, ensuring the full participation of the people concerned... (World Summit for Social Development 1995, Programme of Action, para 26). Individual scholars, notably Chambers and Conway (1992), Davies (1993), and Singh and Titi (1994), have continued to buttress the concept and developed participatory methodologies that facilitate the implementation of SL.

SL has evolved in recent years as a cornerstone in the program thinking of many agencies. Growing out of the concern with human development -- and their desire to link that to Agenda 21 -- SL has gradually become a major policy objective with the following principal dimensions:

- use of self-empowerment
- focus on community assets and strength (including local knowledge, coping and adaptive strategies)
- improved access to resources
- recognition of the cross-sectoral nature of the approach and the need, therefore, to find levels of analysis and action commensurate with its complexity and dynamics
- livelihoods as a function of activities, assets, and entitlements which people use to make a living
- emphasis on the capacity to cope with shocks and stresses as well as the ability to deal with economic efficiency, social equity, and ecological integrity
- recognition of the linkages between micro action and macro conditions and policies

By putting the emphasis on what poor people can do by and for themselves, it follows that the system must be adjusted to serve them rather than be guided by some general and vague state policy objective that means little or nothing to the poor because they never see it implemented. SL has the potential of bringing public policy closer to the real interests and demands of poor people. In order to do so, however, institutions at the macro level -- both national and intergovernmental -- must revise their strategies. It is here that the concept of governance comes in, because it draws attention to the rules that determine the conduct of public affairs.

### **Clarifying the Governance Concept**

Governance is a more diffuse -- and in some respects -- contested concepts than SL. The international development community seems to have adopted a definition which implies that governance is everything, and therefore, nothing. The various agencies that use the concept suggest that governance refers to the way a country get things done. UNDP has adopted a definition which sees governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country 's affairs at all levels (UNDP 1997:2-3). In this perspective, governance comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. In the UNDP program context, governance is said to have three legs: economic, political, and administrative. Economic governance includes decision-making processes that affect a country's economic activities and its relationships with other economies. Political governance is the process of decision-making to formulate policy, while administrative governance is the system of policy implementation. As can be seen from this and similar definitions in the international development community, governance is an all-encompassing concept; it permeates all sectors -- public, private, and voluntary -- and all phases of making public

policy. It has the same vague ring surrounding it as development management had in the 1970s.

Adopting such an all-encompassing definition has its advantages when it comes to providing justification for a broad program thrust such as being attempted by many donors. Governance, as so defined, helps legitimize a wide-ranging portfolio of programs. The purpose of this paper is not to question the relevance of this usage of governance within CIDA, or any other agency, but to indicate the need for simultaneously adopting a more specific definition that allows program officers to get a better handle on the concept as it applies to the realization of SL. As suggested above, SL is a radical departure from previous perspectives on development and poverty eradication. By implying the need to start with the constraints and opportunities facing individuals, households and communities, there is a rationale for a coherent and concise definition of governance that suits this objective. When program officers talk of governance in relation to SL, they need to know that they are doing something that is specifically governance and how that particular use of the concept helps promote SL. The first task here, therefore, is to provide a more specific meaning to governance and see how it differs from other relevant concepts.

There are two aspects of the governance concept that need rethinking in relation to SL. The first is that governance -- as broadly understood, especially in the academic literature -- is associated with regime rather than state or civil society. This means that the concept refers to the constitution or reconstitution of normative rules that guide public or political action. Governance is one aspect of politics and not all; it focuses on the basic -- or constitutional -- rules that determine behavioural conduct and action. The second is that governance is different from policy-making, public administration, or project management. As suggested in Table 1, governance takes place at an analytical meta-level, meaning that the other activities listed above are circumscribed by the rules established at the regime or governance level.

**Table 1: Governance and its relation to other concepts and activities**

<u>Level</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Concept</u>
Meta	Politics	Governance
Macro	Policy	Policy-making
Mesa	Programme	Public Administration
Micro	Projects	Management

It is important to emphasize that these different levels are empirically interconnected, but there are good reasons for keeping them analytically distinct. Rules are, empirically speaking, set at different levels. For example, a community may decide to change the rules by which its members abide in order to improve the prospects of enjoying sustainable livelihoods. Such a revision of rules -- the local community regime -- has a bearing on how policy is made and implemented or singular activities (projects)

managed. Governance is also present at higher levels, ultimately in terms of establishing and managing the constitutional principles of a given country.

The more precise meaning given to governance here means that it is possible to distinguish between two sides of politics. One is the distributive side which addresses the perennial question of who gets what, when, and how? This side of politics is usually referred to as political economy because it focuses on how public resources are allocated in society. The other side is the constitutive side which addresses the question of ‘who sets what rules, when, and how?’ This is what we call here governance, because it focuses on the rules of the political game. This distinction is particularly important in relation to SL. The conventional needs approach relies more on the distributive side and does not ask for changes in the rules of the game to achieve its objectives. SL, on the other hand, which focuses on empowerment and enhanced access to resources, calls for a change in the rules and, by implication, a shift in power relations. SL, as an approach to poverty eradication, therefore, requires attention to the constitutive side of politics, i.e. governance.

### **Governance as a Management Tool**

In this perspective, it is important that governance is treated not just as a loosely connected set of activities (or a portfolio of programs) but as a tool that program officers can apply in promoting SL. As a management tool, governance may be treated as the equivalence of strategic management in business administration. Governance deals with coping and adapting to an uncertain and changing environment. In business, these conditions arise first and foremost from changes in the market and in technology. In politics, such changes are also caused by the wishes of empowered groups of people to change the conditions under which they are ruled. Governance, then, encourages actors to think beyond business as usual or the need for only incremental changes that do not call for a change in the regime. Governance, like strategic management, becomes a way of looking at a problem in the context of the big picture, of adapting systems of rule to changes in the environment (political, economic, technological as well as socio-cultural), and of encouraging leaders to find consensual -- and positive -- solutions to problems their constituents or followers encounter. With this way of treating the governance concept, it becomes a way of engaging politics, including the need for changes in power relations, rather than hiding it behind a set of generalized phrases.

At a first glance, this revised use of the concept may appear controversial. It implies getting involved in support of changes in the internal political arrangements of a sovereign state. Such fears, however, are exaggerated. First of all, virtually all multilateral and bilateral agencies are already involved in such transgressions. Democracy and governance programs by such agencies do exactly that, whether it is explicitly recognized or not. The difference between such programs and what is being proposed here in the context of an SL approach is that governance becomes more than an end in itself. Good governance exists when rules related to specific SL objectives are successfully implemented. This is a hands-on way of approaching governance and a way

of demonstrating a direct relationship between democracy and development that current uses of the concept do not really allow because it is too vague and, when disaggregated, reduced to a set of program activities that are typically not reinforcing each other.

It is precisely the ability to identify how different types of program activities may be mutually supportive that has been missing in past uses of the governance concept. Becoming a little more practical in the application of the concept, therefore, is necessary if it is going to be related to the objectives of erasing poverty and promoting sustainable livelihoods. The rest of this paper is identifying one (but by no means the only) way of doing so.

### **Governance in the SL Context**

As suggested above, it is now more widely recognized that the demobilization of the state-centred and state-directed approach to development which has been ongoing for the past two decades does not end with the liberalization of the economy. This is only a first, albeit important, step in the emergence of an alternative approach that starts with the individual, household or community. Because actors enter the market-place differentially endowed it is not an even playing-field. Already rich have an initial advantage and special measures are typically needed in order to enable the poorer segments of the population to succeed. With low public levels of confidence in government and public sector institutions at large, and a trimmed-down state machinery, compensatory interventions by government are not likely to play the role in development thinking that they did in the past. That is why the SL approach emphasizes greater reliance on local resources and strategies to cope with social and economic issues, empowerment of local actors, and the need for improving their access to additional resources that can help them make progress on their own. Reducing their sense of vulnerability and powerlessness implies realigning power relations and creating an environment that is not only enabling (the concept that is a product of economic liberalization) but also reassuring (the concept that is more closely connected with SL).

Governance, referring to changes or management of the rules of the game at different levels in a society, is an important aspect of realizing SL but not enough on its own. It needs to be seen in the context of other potential measures such as technological means to enhance the local resource base and right policies to encourage greater self-reliance and the prudent use of scarce public resources. By being concerned, however, with the strategic aspects of change -- the big picture -- it is especially important in order to provide a vision of and justification for changes in the relations between public authorities and citizens as well as among groups of citizens. It is also important to acknowledge that governance in the context of SL means working both at macro and micro levels. Leaders with a vision and the political courage to challenge the status quo -- at whatever level it manifests itself -- are needed in order to realize the conditions that will allow a successful implementation of SL objectives. At the same time, it is clear that local citizens themselves have a much more active and meaningful role to play in

improving their own livelihoods in a sustainable fashion and thereby contributing to a sustainable human development at the national level.

Since the ultimate end of constitutive politics -- or governance -- is the realignment of relations between public authority and citizens with a view to enhancing the legitimacy of the regime, it is important to point out that the SL approach can deal with programs in several different ways. In this paper, we suggest a four-pronged approach that takes into consideration that changes in power relations are the result of leadership interventions from above as much as citizen demands from below. The first aspect of changing power relations is *articulation*, i.e. the readiness and ability of individuals to demand the freedom to make decisions of their own on issues that concern the use of common-pool or public goods. The second aspect is *mobilization*, that is, the readiness and ability of groups of citizens to work together to maximize gains for themselves without doing so -- in a zero-sum fashion -- at the expense of others. Like articulation, this aspect refers to the generation of citizen demands from below. The third aspect is *distribution* of power, which becomes important as more and more groups begin to compete for influence. In order to accommodate this growth of demand for freedom and the right to organize for enhancing SL, it is important that the leadership is ready to distribute power in such a way that the political system becomes more pluralist and groups have access to complementary resources through the market, the state, or other relevant institutions. The fourth aspect is *confirmation* of power. This typically takes place through the decisions taken by judicial institutions but is more generally dependent on the readiness of both citizens and public institutions to respect the principle of rule of law. This aspect is important in an SL context because it points to the importance of a rights-based approach to development.

The operationalization of governance in relation to SL is built around the realization of these four aspects of power in the context of specific programs. Precisely how this has been done is summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Operational aspects of governance in the context of SL.

<b>Power Aspect</b>	<b>Governance Focus</b>	<b>Programme Concern</b>	<b>Institutional Issue</b>
Articulation	Self-Organization	Ownership	Empowerment
Mobilization	Social Capital	Capability	Civil Engagement
Distribution	Social Space	Access	Pluralism
Confirmation	Strength	Rights	Rule of Law

We shall now discuss how each of these four aspects actually can be translated into a set of programs that are mutually supportive and have a direct relationship to how sustainable livelihoods can be developed and enhanced. As indicated above, this is not necessarily the only way of doing it, but it is an effort to provide a coherent governance program that is associated with and supportive of the SL program objectives.

**a) Articulation**

Being able to articulate one's own views on a public issue is the first step on a long path toward realizing SL. It is when individuals begin to articulate their own views that a meaningful discussion and dialogue with others emerges and the prospects for spontaneous organization of efforts become real. If SL -- like human development -- means expanding the choices for all people in society, it also implies increasing the opportunity of both men and women to participate in, and endorse, decisions affecting their own lives. To be sure, it is unrealistic to assume that every person would be able to participate in all decisions affecting them, but it is important that as a means of increasing such opportunities, they are able to organize themselves freely at the local level and claim ownership of the decision-making process at that level. Governance, therefore, means changing the rules to the extent that such self-organization is becoming increasingly possible.

A governance measure may not in itself be enough but it must be regarded as part of any effort to realize SL. Such measures may include new rules for who can participate in community affairs and decide on such matters. For example, in many patriarchal societies, the idea of extending opportunities to women on an even basis -- and taking complementary measures to realize that objective -- would be one relevant case in point. Studies have shown that women in such societies are especially hesitant to voice their opinion in public unless they have been given a chance to learn how to speak and thereby gain confidence to interact with men. Another would be a group of peasants or workers initiating a move to have the rules changed in order to allow them greater influence over what transpires in a factory or on the farm where they work. The latter may have an opportunity to feel that they are stakeholders in the exercise. This is not only a matter of enhancing social equality but also one of prudent management. A member organization, therefore, may often be a more efficient way of getting things done than a regular corporative structure.

The important thing here is to use governance as a lever. The idea that governance deals with the big picture can be used in order to demonstrate how issues that have been buried in a parochial context may be raised to a new level and thereby open up opportunities for change in the relations between members of a given community or group. An emphasis on the strategic role that governance plays in public affairs is also important for the purpose of demonstrating the commonalities rather than the differences in communities or groups. Governance itself, therefore, can have an empowering effect as it serves as a catalyst for organization of efforts at the local level.

Especially when one deals with poor people, it is important to stress that any governance measure must be seen as complementary to other supportive measures. For example, many people live in such poor circumstances that aspiring for more freedom and control over one's own destiny is overshadowed by other concerns, notably just getting by. In Africa, for example, it is quite common that the manfolk has lost interest in working together because they no longer trust others. They have retreated into an existence where each lives and works pretty much for himself. Readiness to organize with others has all but vanished. The result is often that the burden to secure the livelihoods fall upon the shoulders of women, who organize in groups with the sole purpose of earning a meagre

income that allows them to buy food and clothes for themselves and their children. In these circumstances, it can be argued, the prospects of self-organization in communities is very low and improvement in SL can only be achieved with the development of indigenous technologies that are not costly and the local population itself can use and develop.

People may find it somewhat easier to organize when the enemy is social rather than an inadequate resource base only. For example, wherever there is a legacy of exploitation by one group of another, antagonisms have typically crystallized into feelings of solidarity that can form the basis of new group action. In this situation, the local actors themselves may regardless of their economic resource endowment take action together to change the circumstances of their life. In so doing they are also likely to change the rules of public conduct. Such self-organized action may lead to giving these people rights -- civil-political or social-economic -- that they had been previously denied.

Institutions have acquired experience of working with participatory methodologies that may be particularly suitable for the purpose of promoting this type of governance measures. Some such methodologies, however, are likely to be more successful than others, as not all of them do necessarily emphasize the ownership dimension of such approaches. It is important, therefore, that program staff are familiar with the various participatory analysis approaches that are being used and can arrange for a proper assessment of how appropriate they are for a governance in SL type of activity.

## **b) Mobilization**

Articulation is only the first step in an approach that emphasizes the need for greater local initiative and ownership. It focuses on making the individual more ready to take initiatives of his or her own. Self-organization, in this respect, is evidence of the search for power, if not power itself. These local initiatives, however, stand little chance of becoming really empowering experiences for people involved unless they lead to the mobilization of social capital. The latter here translates into trust and readiness to engage in reciprocal action. Trust itself is an outcome of reliability in social interactions. When individuals realize that they have something in common and stand to gain from concerted action, trust may not be too difficult to develop. Such conditions, however, are not omnipresent. Very often, people start interacting with each other in a climate of distrust. This makes the task of creating trust so much more difficult.

Since SL implies the use of local knowledge and information, the principal challenge is more often social than technical. People usually have the requisite technical know-how, but what is often missing are the social skills that translate into sustaining local initiative and power. That is why the concept of capability is more appropriate than capacity, which connotes technical or physical ability. By referring to capability, the approach emphasizes the importance of institutional or social dimensions in realizing the objectives of SL. Particularly significant is the readiness and ability of people to engage each other in a civic manner, civic referring to behaviour that is consistent with the rule of law and is tolerant of the view of others. While there has been a good deal written about the need for

scaling up successful local initiatives, the point here is that equally important -- maybe a prerequisite for scaling up -- is scaling out, i.e. the idea that people can extend their contacts beyond the scope of their primary social organization -- household, village or community -- and work or interact with people whom they may not have known before. Such branching out is necessary if local actors are going to have access to more resources and challenge monopolies or entrenched social forces that otherwise may subvert or destroy local initiatives.

Mobilization of local power and the formation of social capital is a sensitive process that requires both tact and integrity of program officers responsible for implementing SL programs. The governance aspect of this process is not so much the technical issue of establishing, for example, savings and credit institutions or other community-based initiatives, but really the task of encouraging a revision of the rules that guide who is responsible for what and who can interact with whom. Many donor offices already have experience of working with some of these issues. The Local Initiative Facility for Urban Development (LIFE) has been involved in encouraging local-local dialogues with a view to improving solutions to local problems as well as creating opportunities for local groups, including women, to participate in public policy-making. Lessons from programs such as LIFE should be of relevance also to realizing SL objectives. One such experience is that leaders must be credible to their followers. Trust and confidence in organizations is fomented only when leaders themselves show respect for their followers and the latter understand both the constraints and opportunities which their leaders face. Again, therefore, governance measures alone won't necessarily make the difference. They have to be seen in the context of other inputs or measures that help realize local aspirations. These include ensuring prompt delivery of goods or services that are important for enabling local groups to sustain their own project initiatives; better use of local resources; and, avoidance of high-cost solutions that cannot be sustained by local stakeholders.

These latter measures notwithstanding, it is important that the particular governance dimensions are not overlooked or downplayed. As suggested above, governance deals with realigning relations between the authorities and citizens and among groups of citizens in society. Such interventions are not achieved merely by the stroke of a pen. They need to be carefully nurtured and followed up. Donor program staff cannot be in the midst of such an exercise but they can help such a process along by assisting local groups of people to gain strength by allowing them to get involved with others and to become more efficient in getting things done. This does not mean creating large-scale -- and bureaucratic -- types of organization around a successful local initiative in order to replicate it elsewhere. Rather, it implies nurturing loose local partnerships or alliances based on dialogue and reciprocal interaction, where learning comes at a pace that is commensurate with local capacities and processes. The rules that need to be reformulated, therefore, are not along administrative but political lines. They should make various actors mindful of the need to respect local ownership while at the same time feed new ideas and other resources into the minds of various stakeholders. This typically requires more patience than what many actors, especially in government, are ready to allocate to the exercise. Yet, one of the principal lessons learnt from previous

attempts to foster development is that accelerating the process in an artificial manner without local understanding and support leaves it unsustainable.

Social capital is formed when actors have enough time to get to know each other and learn from each other's experience. Trust, confidence, and reciprocal action emerge in a manner that supports civic engagement especially in those circumstances when the autonomy of local action is respected and not neglected; when it is building on local initiatives without being perceived by others first and foremost as a threat to their own livelihoods. Current efforts to strengthen civil society need to become especially sensitive to this aspect. Success in this field does not consist merely of tangible material improvements that can be measured but also of more diffuse -- yet important -- process outcomes such as greater trust among stakeholders and better understanding and appreciation of each other's constraints and opportunities for action.

### **c) Distribution**

As suggested above, both articulation and mobilization of power are really prerequisites for the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. It is the provision of opportunities for local actors to set their own agenda so that it suits their circumstances which is at the core of SL. This does not mean that what is being advocated here is some form of local autarchy. That is neither desirable nor feasible. What the previous two sections have advocated, however, is the need for local actors -- individuals, households, groups, and communities -- belonging to the poorer segments of the population to become empowered vis-à-vis other actors in society by relying more on their own resources and skills. Still, the realization of an SL approach cannot be pursued from the bottom up only. Even if local groups get empowered and can be more in charge of their own destiny they will sooner or later encounter the limits to their new power set by other groups in society. To avoid choking local initiatives, therefore, it is necessary to enlarge the social and political space that they enjoy. The political leadership plays an important role in realizing this by offering the poor greater access to resources provided by the public, private or voluntary sectors. This implies realigning the relations of power in society in such a way that the opportunities for benefiting from the availability of public goods become easier and more even. More specifically, governance for SL under this heading involves two measures of special significance: (a) delegation of power and responsibilities, and (b) the institutionalization of political pluralism.

The delegation of power and responsibilities must aim at ensuring that locally elected bodies are allowed to play a greater role in administering development. Many acts of decentralization have been pronounced in the past but they have only amounted to an administrative decentralization -- deconcentration of administrative authority -- rather than delegation of real political power and responsibility. What is needed is a much more genuine decentralization that involves the delegation of power to autonomous local authorities with the right to collect their own revenue. Such authorities may be at district level but it is important to emphasize that at that level these institutions are still far from the poor. A genuine decentralization, therefore, should also include a devolution of authority to levels below the district where the opportunities for poor people and their representatives typically are greater.

Too much power in the past has been concentrated to central government ministries and other state institutions that have been accountable upwards to individual ministries rather than to the public. Very few of these have worked in the public interest. The vast majorities have been inefficient and corrupt. Delegation of power and responsibilities, therefore, has in many countries included privatization of many such state institutions. Although privatization is no panacea because there is always a risk that privatized enterprises are taken over by individual tycoons with little interest in the public welfare, as long as there is competition the prospect is there that such hegemony can be challenged. Whatever one thinks of the market, it has at least one characteristic that is helpful in the context of the SL approach: the rules of the market tend to be less restrictive than those found in the political arena and in the market it is typically also easier to arrive at split-the-difference type of compromises over their content. The market, therefore, is an important counterweight to the state and a potential ally of SL as long as it provides opportunities for local actors to have more influence over their own affairs. A genuine political decentralization is the best way of ensuring that such matters as building schools, health clinics and roads are increasingly handled by local authorities with the right to control their own revenue -- if not all, at least a substantial part of it. Organizations -- both private and public -- that provide complementary resources for local development, e.g. credit and technical services, are also part of the institutional landscape that will support SL.

What is typically needed here are not big and expensive investments but relatively small amounts of money that can be prudently used by local actors. UNDP, for example, has already worked with small-grants programs for some time to promote community-based initiatives. These include LIFE (already mentioned above), Partners in Development Programme (PDP), the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SANE), Africa 2000, and Asia-Pacific 2000. Decisions concerning these programs and their implementation have been taken by national selection committees, which ensure inclusive and participatory decision-making and implementation.

It seems important for donors to build on this experience as it considers adopting an SL approach. In the interest of enhancing partnership in member countries and as a means of promoting a demand-driven approach spurred by groups of local -- and typically poor -- people, there is good reason to evaluate the experience with small grants and revolving loan funds for rural development and take the necessary steps to institutionalize measures that encourage greater local responsibility for development. The idea of public, but politically autonomous funds that focus on a particular sector or thematic concern, e.g. women and children, is a natural sequence to what donors have already done and a measure that fits the ideals associated with SL. Such funds would be registered as legal entities in the member country and administered by boards of trustees drawn from both government, civil society, and the resource providers. It is important that these funds, however, are not funded and controlled by one donor alone as that tends to reduce the sense of local stakeholder involvement. Such funds should serve as catalysts for multi-donor funding in a given sector or for a given thematic concern. That way, local stakeholders will have a chance of experiencing ownership with the resource providers

constituting a minority, yet influential enough to blow the whistle (if necessary) and serve as a moderating factor in any unresolved issues between the various local stakeholders represented on the boards. These funds would require governance intervention to ensure that impartiality rather than partisanship determines resource allocation. This is an issue that has taken on increased importance as most countries around the world have moved in the direction of multi-party democracy. In this new political dispensation it is not unusual for groups of people being denied access to public resources because governments punish them for having voted for the opposition. The autonomous development fund model would transcend partisan loyalties and make available to any group, regardless of political stance, resources that are necessary for their own development.

Managing a multi-party regime has proven to be complicated and difficult in many countries where a democratic legacy is absent and where ethnic or religious divisions in society provide a fertile ground for politicization. Yet, a politically more pluralist dispensation is in the long run an important ingredient in the SL approach. People must feel free to express themselves in public and also organize without fear. These are freedoms that do not necessarily come without demand from the citizens themselves, but it is important that the leadership is ready to guarantee such freedoms. This means that the government and other prominent actors in society are ready to respect human rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution. Donors have already engaged in a multitude of activities, typically in its Governance Programmes, that relate to this SL concern. For example in Guatemala, after years of civil war, donors have assisted in the restoration of individual dignity by fostering programs aimed at a more active citizenship. In South Africa, it has supported the Women's Development Foundation, which focuses on the political participation by women in local government. In Eastern Europe -- and other places, for that matter -- donors have worked with national organizations to establish human rights mechanisms and other fundamentals of a functioning legal system. These are all part of what are termed here governance measures that aim at reconstituting rules that promote a more popular and participatory approach to development.

#### **d) Confirmation**

Confirmation of realigned relations of power is perhaps the most challenging of all governance measures. What is at stake under this heading is the institutionalization of power relations that are meant to give greater social space and strength to groups that previously may have been both ignorant and placid. Much of what has been suggested under the previous heading would be to little avail unless the new rules can be assured by institutions in society. Such a process does not get completed over night. It takes time and it involves finding ways that allow actors to engage each other without first and foremost sensing that they are losing face. As suggested in Table 2, providing disadvantaged and poor segments or groups of society greater strength centres of the establishment of a human rights regime, in which the rule of law prevails. This is particularly important if one is concerned with poverty eradication and SL. Because of their comparative weakness, these groups are particularly prone to abuse of power by other actors in society. The latter often take action as if the poor do not matter. This is true, as history tells, both in the economic and political sphere. An unregulated market tends to cause its

own failure, because actors do not start with the same endowment of resources. The result is the marginalization of many who cannot manage to compete in such a context. Similarly, a state-controlled system where the market has been reduced to no role in allocating resources, also leads to a skewed distribution of benefits, because those in power have no one to challenge them. What is needed, therefore, is a regime in which the costs of a market or state failure can be reduced to a minimum by virtue of rules that respect each person on an equal basis and are attuned to the conditions of the poor and disadvantaged in society.

Fortunately, the global political climate is beginning to change so that new opportunities exist for the first time to really make headway in this direction. That is why the governance dimension of SL is so vital to the realization of its objectives. Being able to put in place a system of rules that (a) allow actors in society to realize that politics is a positive-sum game, and (b) provide guarantees that the rights of the poor cannot be trampled upon with impunity is the highest priority in order to make SL work.

The SL approach has the great advantage of being comprehensive and thus viewing the condition of the poor not only in socio-economic but also in civil-political terms. This means that in tackling poverty this approach invites actors to bring into consideration concerns about both socio-economic and civil-political rights. There must be a growing political understanding that not allowing the poor to develop on their own terms is a cost, leave alone embarrassment, to society. This means that the economic and social systems need to be reformed as well so as to cater for the interests of such people.

Governance measures to redress previous imbalances in the social and economic sectors would include ensuring that development in these sectors is being viewed not in a patronizing manner as meeting perceived needs, but in terms of an activist rights approach. The latter would emphasize that states are not solely responsible for the destiny of their peoples but the latter themselves, through their own organizations, share in this effort. Such a redefinition of how to do development, however, requires a broader understanding and recognition of the rights that go with it. Various social and economic rights that are targeted on improving the living conditions for the disadvantaged in society, not the least women and children, must be elevated to a higher level of political significance. They must be interpreted in the context of the big picture which means that these rights should be presented as helpful not only to those particular groups but also to society at large.

Although the issue is not resolved how far such rights can be assured in the courts, it is not at all beyond reason to assume that step by step progress can be to have such rights become justifiable. It would be a mistake to attempt to try to do so with all the various social and economic rights that have been approved in international conventions in the last few decades, but some of them are clearly more likely to be possible to work with. Such positive rights may include the right to education or the right to housing. The importance here would be to work with cases that may set precedents that can be used in other instances. Having a progressive judiciary which sees its role as creating new rules for how society conducts its affairs becomes important. Judicial power does not have to

contradict popular power. If imbued with the notion of how rights fit into the bigger picture of securing more sustainable livelihoods for a larger percentage of people, it can play a very constructive role. In short, judges can be on the side of the poor, as the work of the Supreme Court in India over the years with its activist public interest litigation approach demonstrates.

If work on social and economic rights entails both creating and securing rights for the poor, any effort in the domain of civil and political rights would be focused on reassuring people that they apply equally to all. The international community has adopted a multitude of conventions that reaffirm these rights, even though the ratification of these instruments and their incorporation into national legislation still falls far short of expectation. One issue facing those working on SL, therefore, is to ensure that these conventions are being made part of national laws and effectively implemented by the court systems. This is not going to be an easy task because with a more complex human rights regime in the making at the global level, there is also scope for different interpretations of which particular set of rights apply in a given situation. For example, in recent years -- confirmed at the International Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993 -- there has been an interest in securing the rights of indigenous peoples or minorities. This has been an important step forward in the broader context of development but it is clear that such a rights regime can also be called upon to challenge the notion that rights are universal. This is what has happened, for instance, in Fiji where the indigenous population, a de facto minority but in control of the army and most other instruments of the state, has invoked the new rights of indigenous peoples to challenge the political powers of the immigrant Indo-Fijian majority.

Such contestations notwithstanding, the important point about the emergence of a global rights regime is that state sovereignty is being challenged. In the past fifty years, the international community has moved from a recognition of the rights of all people to enjoy political independence within the context of their own state to one in which the notion of sovereignty is shifting away from state and territoriality toward people, or groups within peoples that are especially vulnerable. This gradual change in outlook is now being acted upon as both governments and non-governmental organizations refer to universally adopted declarations on human rights as justifications for getting involved in the plights of people who are being exposed to oppression or exploitation by state machineries or unscrupulous individuals with economic power. The idea of interference in the affairs of another state is no longer a principle that every one endorses. While it is true that the notion that what happens to people in one country is a concern of all, regardless of whether they are citizens or not, may be abused -- or at least applied in such a way that it appears as if the strong bully the weak -- it opens up important opportunities for governance measures to be taken to implement SL. Program officers in donor organisations cannot ignore such opportunities but should -- and need to -- support initiatives in the interest of SL even if it means challenging those in power. It is in this context that support of strengthening judiciaries becomes important. The more judges are able to act free of fear or favor, the greater the chances are that the social capital and social space that organizations of the poor and disadvantaged may have obtained for themselves can be adequately confirmed. There must be a firm and fundamental sense of

agreement regarding which rules apply to relations between state and citizens and the interaction among the latter. Without the institutionalization of such an understanding, the poor and disadvantaged will continue to face problems in realizing greater control over their livelihoods.

Governance measures under this heading, however, would not necessarily have to be confined to strengthening state institutions like the judiciary that have an official role of adjudicating on how rules apply to specific cases. Equally important is that these confirmatory measures include attention to institutions that can challenge efforts by those in state power -- or those with money -- to influence court judgments in a particular direction. This means supporting not only human rights organizations that work to educate the public on their civil and political rights but also such organizations that can ensure that the market itself becomes more social, i.e. considerate of the interests of the poor and disadvantaged. Such organizations have a particularly important role to play in teaching society that the market is a potentially constructive institution in which conflicts over resources can be resolved in a positive-sum manner. By proposing and institutionalizing new rules for how the market operates considerable gains can be made in ensuring that SL can become a reality for the poor.

More difficult but nonetheless equally important is the task of getting political actors to view themselves in a positive-sum perspective. This involves making them more inclined to see political compromises as victories rather than defeats, as the case continues to be in many countries where autocratic tendencies still remain. This may involve organizing seminars or workshops that expose such actors to what the techniques are for negotiating and resolving conflicts. The problem has been so far that leaders never get to know about these until they are involved in a crisis and learning on the job in such circumstances is not very congenial to internalizing these techniques. Preventive measures to help politicians to learn these techniques in more congenial circumstances are important for donor organizations to consider in its approach to SL.

Donors have scattered experience from involvement in measures discussed under this heading, but it is an area that may be especially important to pay more systematic attention to in the context of realizing SL. The task of helping societies realize that politics can be a positive-sum game is both sensitive and difficult. It may require, therefore, a special study that would indicate precisely how the organization may move ahead in this area in order to realize its own SL objectives and thereby help member countries to become more effective in doing that on their own.

### **Governance Issues from Monterrey to Johannesburg**

From Monterrey to Johannesburg, good governance has been identified and reaffirmed as a pre-requisite for future aid allocation. In March 2002, the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, succeeded in putting in place the framework for a “development compact” under which commitments by developing countries to transparency, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of

law were matched by donor commitments towards policy coherence and accelerated support for good performers (CIDA, p. 4-5)

The concept of a development compact has been reaffirmed at the G8 Summit at Kananaskis, Canada, in June 2002. And the WSSD, in Johannesburg, September 2002, highlighted challenges of full acceptance by developing countries of good governance and country ownership as cornerstones of successful development and economic integration as well as recognised governance and institutional framework “..within each country and at the international level as essential for sustainable development”. Beyond these summits, OECD ministers issued a statement in which they outlined their role to encourage policy coherence for development, supporting developing countries’ governance capacity, improving aid effectiveness and ensuring adequate aid volume as well as strengthening partnerships and accountability. In a report on the WSSD, they reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen co-operation with non OECD countries to promote good governance and effective policies (Observer, p.54).

Good governance as a critical factor for development progress has also been emphasised in a number of studies, including the World Bank’s *Assessing Aid* (1998) and the *Role and Effectiveness of Development Assistance*(2002). And in its 2003 report, the World Bank confirms that a broad portfolio of assets-physical, financial, human, social and environmental-needs to be managed responsibly if development is to be sustainable. Effective institutions such as property rights, rule of law and others such as Education and Science and Technology that are essential for the creation of human-made assets are needed to achieve the goal of sustainable development. Most importantly, policies that lead to an equal distribution of assets, increased access to assets (access to information and to justice) and increased participation and inclusiveness are crucially important if the institutions in place are to perform effectively their functions. This is to say that institutions alone are not enough and that a combination of a set of factors is required to attain the desired goal. From policy coherence to good domestic governance in recipient countries to partnership mechanisms, these three levels of good governance are needed to ensure effective developments co-operation.

### **Good Governance for Effective Development Co-operation Challenges to Donors**

In the context of globalization and the growing interdependence between states and interrelatedness between issues, ensuring policy coherence is crucial if aid assistance is to be effective. Policy coherence implies that governmental policies should work together and in tandem to reinforce common objectives. Although translating principles into actions is rather a challenge, the objective of policy coherence, with poverty reduction as a central goal, has been accepted and widely supported within the OECD, the G8, the World Bank, the IMF and the UN system. Policy coherence should be achieved in areas- as identified by the OECD- such as trade and investment, international finance, food and agriculture, natural resources and environmental sustainability, social issues including labour standards, immigration, health and governance and conflicts (CIDA, p.17).

Other areas of crucial importance and require policy coherence are debt, market access and tied aid. Unsustainable debts negatively affect poverty, social and environmental situation of a country (Van Hees, p.3). Debts, therefore, form an obstacle to sustainable development. The WSSD put debt relief alongside improved market access and higher levels of ODA, as a crucial milestone towards reaching the MDGs which aim to reduce poverty by half by 2015. In terms of market access and trade, Least-Developed Countries represent about 11% of the World's population and account only for just 0.5% of the world's exports of goods and services (CIDA, p.19). Greater policy coherence is, therefore, required in relation to tariffs, quotas, regulatory barriers and subsidies-which have, on the long-run, the opposite effect of what they are originally intended to achieve. As to tied aid, the practice of requiring that aid funds be used for purchases in donor countries is considered by many to represent a clear case of policy incoherence and is inconsistent with trends towards trade liberalisation, the dismantling of investment barriers and with the promotion of effective development partnerships, local ownership and capacity building strategies. At the 2001 G8 Summit, leaders endorsed an agreement reached by the OECD-DAC which commits donors to untie aid on seven categories of aid to Least-Developed Countries: balance of payments and structural adjustments support, debt forgiveness, sector and multi-sector program assistance, investment project aid, import and commodity support, commercial services contracts and ODA to non-governmental organizations for procurement-related activities (CIDA, p.21). It is now the time to translate rhetoric into action.

In this context, Canada through CIDA is assessing the effectiveness of its aid programs and is seeking to refine its aid policies to give them more focus. The principles that will guide these efforts include providing increased attention to leadership role of developing countries (local ownership), promoting greater coordination with other donors and fostering greater coherence in Canada's policies that affect developing-country partners. Good governance, building capacity and engaging civil society are also principles and factors of aid effectiveness and development progress. In terms of policy coherence, and market access, effective January 1, 2003, Canada will extend duty-free and quota-free access to all imports with some exceptions (CIDA, p.19). Changes will also be made in the tied aid policies designed to reinforce aid effectiveness. Along with the principles of strengthening aid effectiveness, decisions will be made according to geographical and sectoral allocation of CIDA's resources; Country concentration becomes important if programmatic approach and aid assistance are to be used effectively. CIDA's programming orientations will be situated within the locally owned frameworks identified by developing countries, particularly through PRSP process which involves a legitimate participatory approach.

### **Challenges to Recipient Partners**

In recipient countries, good domestic governance (policies and institutions for securing stability including rule of law, justice system, human rights and security) is recognised as a pre-requisite for achieving aid effectiveness and country concentration based on this recognition is being seen as necessary for aid to be used effectively. The mantra seems to

be that rewarding good performers helps achieve sustainable results. Good performers are one of the three categories according to which Developing-country partners can be divided based on their level of development and their ability to effectively use development assistance (CIDA, p.9-10). The first group of countries are middle-income developing countries generally characterized as having a relatively strong governance capacity, sectoral and national plans for reducing poverty. Their requirements for development assistance often involve specific high-level technical assistance rather than large amounts of resource transfers. The second group of countries is the low-income countries with weak capacity governments that are, however, committed, to varying degrees, to reforms, increased transparency, democracy as well as committed to taking ownership of their development challenges. The third group of countries consist of the poor countries with extremely low governance capacity and little commitment to reform. According to this concept of selectivity, only countries with “good policies” and “good governance” should receive substantial amounts of development aid since aid is said to be effective only in such countries. The challenge for recipient countries is, therefore, to be categorised as good performers.

It is argued, however, that aid practices should be defined in terms of poverty needs, the level of ownership, participation and local commitment to poverty reduction and *not* according to pre-set policies (the WB and other donors performance-based aid allocation system continues to put much emphasis on old Washington-Consensus type of policies such as plain trade openness that have an unknown, if not negative impact on the poor, (Moving beyond Good and Bad Performance, p.2). Evidence shows that that pro-poor expenditures, instead of pre-set policies, are sufficient conditions to ensure aid effectiveness in the broad sense. Based on such evidence, each low income country should receive an amount and type of aid defined according to its poverty needs, described in country-owned pro-poor strategies. Such process has to be transparent, participatory and focused on pro-poor expenditures and policies (Moving beyond Good and Bad Performance, p.1). The challenge remains that recipient countries should show commitment to poverty reduction goals.

### **New Partnership Mechanisms between “Donors” and “Recipient” countries**

At the 2001 G8 Summit in Genoa, African leaders presented a clear articulation of their commitment to positive change in the form of a plan to promote stability, reduce poverty and end Africa’s marginalisation. Nepad is an example of a new form of partnership between Africa and the developed world based on mutual respect and responsibility and the international principles of aid effectiveness. It reflects increased political will and leadership and emphasizes African ownership of the development process with assistance from development partners. Like Nepad, innovative partnerships should be established between developed and developing countries to help move from projects to programs to policy and ultimately to stronger governance relationships.

The shift from projects to a program and country level with a focus on sustainability is consistent with the objectives of strengthening aid effectiveness. In support of PRSP, as a

programming instrument, SWAp or Sector-Wide approaches involve implementing projects that support sectoral plans or contributing aid funds to a common pot that the developing country would then use to implement its sectoral plan. Whether PRSP or SWAp, these instruments emphasize local ownership and donor coordination as well as reflect a comprehensive approach to development. They also reflect a strong emphasis on strengthening government capacity in developing countries, through the provision of technical assistance and the establishment of policy environments conducive to social and economic progress. The drawback with SWAp, however, is that it is sectoral as opposed to cross-sectoral. By nature, SWAp is, therefore, limited. On the other hand, a sustainable livelihoods approach is a broad program approach which allows space for cross-sectoral participatory development.

In the provision of providing technical assistance to developing countries to strengthen their policy capacity in the appropriate areas, good governance will be fostered and sound policy enhanced. Over time, governance relationships will be strengthened.

### **Applying the principles to a Caribbean Governance Agenda**

The ultimate goal of a Caribbean governance agenda must be to build and maintain strong economies with sustainable livelihoods for all. There is, however, a gap between what should be and what is and translating goals into reality is not always an easy task. This agenda, in fact, faces challenges due to a number of reasons. Among others, are the multiple vulnerabilities stemming from both internal and external factors. Internal factors include small open economies, disposition to natural disasters, fragile ecosystem and high per capita infrastructure costs while external factors include trade issues, prices of world market primary commodities such as sugar and bauxite, tourism (aftermath September 11<sup>th</sup>). In addition to these vulnerabilities, the issue of constitutive politics poses a challenge to this agenda. How to influence the rules and those who make these rules lies at the very sources of vulnerability, whether at the local, national or international levels, is a challenge to the whole system in place, a challenge which requires leadership and will at all levels of local, national and international levels.

At the local level, actions should be geared towards empowerment through decentralisation (which could have reverse effects leaving the poor exposed to the mercies of the local overlords) (Bardhan, p.18). Empowerment requires that the top allows space to the bottom to demand power and that the shift in power relations takes place through articulation, mobilization, distribution and confirmation. Micro-macro linkages should be established and bottom-up and top-down approaches combined. This is when the role of sub-regional local level networks of government organisations, NGOs and CBOs become crucial. In Jamaica, for instance, there is a clear need to develop appropriate mechanisms to empower the emerging community-based organisations as a means of strengthening Jamaican democratic governance (Munroe, p.6). These new institutions of voice at the community and other levels provide ready material for empowerment within the framework of a democratized local government, including decentralised and regionalized economic development planning (Munroe, p.8). Well

conceived partnerships between different instances of the community and of governments at the national and international levels could effectively contribute to rebuilding the social capital including rebuilding trust across ethnic and institutional divides.

In addition to local action and micro-macro linkages, managing the forces of globalization is essential to make openness work for all, especially to allow the local levels of societies to seize the opportunities offered by globalization. Clearly the process of globalization requires increased decision-making at supra-national level whether regional, hemispheric or global. More effective cooperation is required between governments to strengthen reforms in inter-governmental organizations (e.g WTO) to make such bodies more open and transparent in order to reduce the “external democratic deficit”(Munroe, p.3). Enhanced grass-roots participation to influence governmental functions and increased support for community-based organisations and civil society bodies are also important mechanisms for representation and accountability (Munroe, p.4). It is also important that Caribbean countries make use of their strategic influence in relevant external fora, national and international, to bring about the desired change as defined in the agenda. Partnerships with donor countries is another effective way to exert influence on power relations to their advantage to build strong resilient economies with sustainable livelihoods for a. to achieve this objective, New goals, skills, resources and accountability criteria could also be defined for the foreign service.

Most importantly, as shown by the Jamaican case, which represents lessons that can be learned in other developing countries, poverty reduction should be upgraded into national priorities. It is shown that most poverty reduction programmes in developing countries are formulated, designed and implemented sectorally. As a result, they lack the necessary integration and co-ordination. There is a need for a clear mandate given under the national budget for all relevant governmental agencies to pursue poverty reduction under agreed national objectives which implies that poverty reduction should become an integral part of national development policy across the board (P.Osei, p.786). Effective partnerships between community, governments and private sector could also offer an alternative institutional arrangement in the process of poverty elimination (P.Osei, p.787).

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this paper has been to demonstrate the significance of governance to SL and the various ways that it can be conceived and operationalized. It has provided a somewhat more specific definition of governance in order to enable donors program staff to treat it as a tool of the trade rather than an all-encompassing rubric for a broad set of agency programs. As such, it does not contradict but focuses the efforts already being made to use the concept in these organizations. Governance, as defined here, becomes especially important because it emphasizes the big picture, thereby elevating discourse about what needs to be done to a meta level where the rules for policy and action are being set. It is acknowledged that donors already have extensive program experience in the areas covered above, but that the new approach entails becoming more sensitive to

the political dimensions of development, especially the significance of rights as opposed to needs as its basis, and provides an operational way forward.

The issue that remains to be addressed here is how far governance in the context of SL can be translated into a program manual. The suggestion is that the issues associated with governance are not easily treated in a technocratic manner. Rather, they rely on good judgment and the creative application of each program officer in a given country context. What this paper has tried to demonstrate is the underlying logic or potential for dynamic use of governance in an SL approach. It indicates various ways of creating social and political synergy effects that foster SL. In the final analysis, however, how exactly the various power dimensions identified above may relate to each other, e.g. in terms of sequencing, will depend on the situation in each given country context.

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