

Core Concepts and Key Definitions

Active Citizenship:

The active engagement of citizens and organizations – including civil society organizations, enlightened businesses and public institutions committed to societal change – in civic education, advocacy and civic action on behalf of citizen rights, the promotion of civic values and civic practices, the rule of law, and greater citizen participation and influence in governance, including policy and decision-making on the allocation of resources. Individuals, associations, businesses, and public institutions may all engage as “active citizens” in pursuit of these civic objectives and priority concerns.

Business Citizenship:

“Business citizenship” refers to active citizenship by businesses and, for many observers, is a preferred concept to “corporate social responsibility.” Corporate social responsibility is appropriate to large corporations. Business citizenship is appropriate to all businesses, including small and medium enterprises. Businesses are citizens with the rights and duties of citizenship.

Business Sector:

In Egypt and many other countries, the business sector includes companies and organizations of both the private for-profit and public (state-owned) enterprise sectors. The private business sector comprises Egyptian firms of all sizes and economic activities plus growing numbers of large, multinational firms. In contrast, the public enterprise sector includes a limited number of large state-owned companies. In several key industries, such as banking, insurance, transportation, construction, and trade, the public enterprises are dominant or leading companies. Both private and public enterprise companies are potential partners with civil society and government to support good governance and active citizenship.

Citizens:

Persons who, as members of a political state, possess the rights and privileges of political participation, are entitled to full protection in the exercise of these rights, shoulder the civic responsibilities and obligations of state membership, and work towards the betterment of their society through participation, volunteer work and efforts to improve life for all citizens and enhance the public good. Gender equality is a core principle in our definition of “citizen.”

Civic Domain:

Refers to the sum of all opportunities, events, initiatives, programs, and relationships for individuals, groups, organizations, businesses, public institutions (including media and universities), and government to engage in active citizenship, advocacy for social change, or policy and decision-making in support of good governance, civic responsibility and the public good.

Civic Engagement:

Civic engagement is a broad term that refers to all activities related to citizens, civic duties, citizenship, community affairs or public life. It is the start of voluntary participation of any citizen, organization, business, government or public institution in civic life and generally precedes “active citizenship”. *Responsible* civic engagement is the lawful and respectful participation of citizens in their own governance, public administration and public services. Through civic engagement, citizens learn and begin to demonstrate the civic values and attitudes, knowledge and awareness, and collaborative practices of effective and meaningful participation in democratic governance.

Civic Partnerships:

Contractual initiatives in support of active citizenship, civic responsibility and good governance undertaken jointly by civil society organizations with public institutions (including government) and/or businesses. Civic partnerships may be short in duration and project-specific, or institutionalized and enduring.

Civic Responsibility:

The moral obligation of all citizens – be they individuals, groups, organizations, associations, or institutions – to actively participate in educating, promoting, enforcing, respecting, and defending the attitudes, policies, behaviors, and practices, in both the public and private realms, that best express civic values (both universal values and those specific to their society) and good governance, expose corruption and other societal ills, and affirm the consanguinity, fundamental rights, basic welfare, justice, dignity, and worth of all citizens.

Civic Values:

That sub-set of cultural values and moral principles pertaining to the rights, responsibilities and practices of citizenship, and citizen engagement with other citizens & the State. Examples of personal and institutional civic values include: honesty, compassion, respect, trust, responsibility and courage.

Civil Society:

Comprises those private and self-governing, non-profit organizations – including both formal associations and emerging, informal groups and movements, as well as networks, coalitions and fora of such groups, foundations and associations – committed to social, cultural, political, and economic change through the promotion of civic values and human rights, civic responsibility and active citizenship, advocacy for the common good, and the active engagement of all citizens, especially poor and marginalized citizens, in good governance. By this narrow definition, civil society is the *sub-set* of all non-governmental organizations (e.g. NGOs, cooperatives, associations) committed to promoting and demonstrating active citizenship as a principal focus of their mission, choice of activities and public initiatives. Civil society thus encompasses both this sub-set of organizations and the civic values, moral principles, norms, behaviors, and practices that guide their choice of activities. Individual citizens participate in civil society as members of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Civil Society Organizations:

Comprise all private, self-governing and non-profit associations that are committed to public advocacy, the defense of the public good, the promotion of civic values, civic responsibility and active citizenship – irrespective of *other* services, goals, objectives or mission of the organization. CSOs may be formal, registered associations or emerging, informal groupings of citizens engaged in civic action. CSOs are a sub-set of the larger realm of NGOs, cooperatives, nonprofit research centers, foundations, youth centers, and faith-based groups.

Good Governance:

The process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs (including both the processes of public decision-making and implementing those decisions); inform, communicate with and respond to citizens; manage and monitor public resources; and guarantee the realization of human rights in accordance with the following major principles: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, promotion of consensus, equity and inclusiveness, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency. These principles ensure, for example, that corruption is minimized and that the views and voices of all citizens (including minorities, the poor and marginalized citizens) are taken into

account in policy and decision making. ACE considers good governance synonymous with democratic governance. But in the current Egyptian context and in Arabic translation, “democratic” governance is too narrowly associated with political representation and participation only.

Poverty & the Poor:

Poverty is the state of exclusion, marginalizing and deprivation of citizens from their essential social, economic, civil, cultural and political rights. The key measures of poverty are not economic alone; nor are the poor limited to families and persons of low-income. Poverty is also measured by the lack of information, access and diminished capacities of citizens to participate in the institutions and governance of their society.

Public Institutions:

Those non-commercial institutions established and administered by the state and local government to serve the public good, including media, schools and universities, institutes, hospitals and medical centers, and other social welfare institutions.