

Role of Mass Media in Improving Quality of Public Services Provided to Citizens

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Introduction

Development is the fundamental element for stability and human progress. It encompasses comprehensive and continuous improvement of the human condition, addressing economic, social, and intellectual needs and capacities. However, in the face of economic and social challenges, development alone is no longer sufficient. Sustainable development has emerged as a global imperative, incorporating social and environmental dimensions alongside economic considerations, ensuring responsible utilization of resources while safeguarding the rights of future generations.

The objective of sustainable development is to guide society towards positive economic and social transformation. This involves setting medium and long-term goals to transition to a better state while ensuring good governance that aligns with economic, social, and intellectual needs without compromising the environment, cultural heritage, and human rights. It aims to enhance the life opportunities of individuals within society without diminishing those of others while achieving tangible increases in production and services in a comprehensive and integrated manner that aligns with societal progress.

The attainment of sustainable development goals relies on various mechanisms and approaches that strengthen the bond between governments and their people. Responsibility for sustainable development is participatory, extending beyond government policies alone. It necessitates reinforcing local governance mechanisms to ensure effective participation in the development and implementation of policies aimed at achieving development goals. This underscores the significant role of Mass Media in facilitating the success of these plans and efficiently monitoring their implementation.

The media, in turn, plays an active role in promoting and supporting development endeavors by raising awareness among citizens, advancing development objectives, and upholding principles of good local governance such as participation, effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. Moreover, it fosters human rights values by enabling public opinion to engage in policy development, encouraging citizen involvement and diverse social groups in decision-making processes, particularly at the local level. It also presents initiatives for accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption measures, contributing to the improvement of public services provided to citizens.

With the rapid advancement of technology and its tools, media outlets are evolving in terms of format, operational mechanisms, audience reach, and global impact. Local media can now reach millions worldwide and shape global public opinion on various issues, not limited to local concerns. Furthermore, media development extends beyond the means and tools utilized, encompassing the content itself. It has become easier to engage the public through visual, audio, and written formats via a single medium. Additionally, the use of explanatory and illustrative tools such as graphs, numbers, and vivid imagery enhances effectiveness and impact, enabling effective communication of events to decision-makers and creating public pressure on pertinent issues.

With the current advancements, the creation of messages and media content is no longer restricted to traditional Mass Media outlets. We now live in the era of the "Citizen Journalist," where individuals can use their phone's camera to communicate their messages and publish them through personal accounts on various communication applications. Social media platforms have played a significant role in spreading citizen-generated content rapidly, influencing and compelling Mass Media to engage with this content. Consequently, officials are obligated to respond to the issues raised by citizens and addressed by the Mass Media.

Within the scope of **Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights'** commitment to promoting good local governance, this paper explores the role of Mass Media in enhancing the quality of public services provided to citizens. It highlights how Mass Media serves as an oversight mechanism, conveying citizens' demands and complaints to local authorities. Additionally, it delves into the effective utilization of media by citizens to efficiently communicate their expectations to local administrations, thereby contributing to administrative efficiency and the fight against corruption.

Methodology

This study focuses on the role of Mass Media in improving public services for citizens by examining the connection between sustainable development goals, good local governance, and the impact of Mass Media in achieving these objectives. It particularly emphasizes the role of citizen journalism and the power of citizens to create media content that reveals facts, events, and the perspectives of fellow citizens. Of notable significance is the ability of citizen-generated journalistic content to effectively communicate demands and visions to local administrations, thereby enhancing the provision of public services and facilitating the successful implementation of sustainable development plans and good governance mechanisms.

What Is Mass Media

Mass Media has become an integral part of our daily lives, facilitating the free flow of information and knowledge across the globe, bridging geographical distances, and connecting people. In general, Mass Media encompasses various tools and channels through which information is directly transmitted to the general public. These means of communication include radio, television, newspapers, magazines, books, the Internet, and its diverse applications.

Mass Media represents a process through which messages are disseminated to large, diverse, and anonymous audiences. It involves shaping the content or message in a suitable format for distribution to broad segments of the population.

Media, or mass communication, is a specialized form of social communication that necessitates an understanding of its nature and techniques when engaging with the public. It encompasses the process of comprehending and exchanging information with a broad audience. This intricate process occurs in collaboration with the public rather than in isolation, particularly in the era of digital development. The public's reactions to published content have transformed them into active participants who continuously evaluate the media message and its presenter through social media platforms. As a result, the public asserts itself as an active part of the media landscape, prompting

message presenters to strive to align with the audience's vision, orientations, and needs.¹

The goals of media means and messages encompass a wide range of purposes, including entertainment, education, awareness, and advertising. Mass Media, as a potent tool capable of attracting millions of individuals, utilizes all available means to captivate the public and effectively convey its messages, aiming for the highest dissemination rates at local and international levels. Notably, the media plays a role in political promotion for governments and parties, as well as serving as a vehicle for achieving commercial profits.

One of the critical functions performed by Mass Media is the mobilization of public opinion, whether for the benefit of governments, parties, or commercial entities. Consequently, media messages in their diverse forms work towards mobilizing opinion in favor of desired goals by leveraging modern media tools. Given its ability to shape public opinion, the media can foster supportive views and endorsements for development projects and sustainable development plans. Furthermore, it can contribute to enhancing public services by highlighting deficiencies in development plans and advocating for the demands and aspirations of citizens, thereby ensuring they remain of utmost importance to those responsible for such plans.

Mass Media serves a broader purpose beyond conveying abstract news, advertisements, or entertainment. It also makes substantial contributions to the economy and influences social norms and political trends. Its impact on the national economy is particularly noteworthy, as economic news can significantly affect the economic trajectory and influence citizens' purchasing behaviors and political inclinations.

One of the roles of Mass Media is to serve as a social arbiter, advocating the virtues of hard work, education, and societal progress. It creates a platform for discussing values and beliefs, influencing individuals' thought processes. Additionally, the media plays a

¹ وسائل الإعلام الجماهيرية ومواجهة الأزمات من خلال الحملات الإعلامية رؤية في الوظائف والتطور التاريخي، <https://2u.pw/5Jvw3K2>

role in promoting goods and services, contributing to the improvement of citizen services and increasing awareness of available services.²

With rapid technological advancements, Mass Media has surpassed traditional forms and now encompasses a wide range of digital and interactive platforms. These platforms rely on the Internet and innovative means provided by the World Wide Web, granting individuals access to major media outlets and the ability to express their views.

The primary function of Mass Media is to deliver specific messages to the masses, capturing their interest and shaping their understanding of concepts and ideas. It aims to enrich knowledge and raise awareness throughout society, utilizing various media channels such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and the Internet. In the realm of mass communication, Mass Media analyzes and compiles information, presenting it objectively and accurately. Furthermore, it fosters spaces for discussion and dialogue on important and controversial societal topics. As a source of information, Mass Media serves as a platform for public opinion, transmitting society's attitudes and trends.

Media and Good Local Governance

To improve the quality of public services, it is essential to focus on the providers of these services, namely local administrations that directly interact with citizens. Effective local governance represents the highest standard of administration, facilitating citizens' access to their needs and fulfilling their aspirations.

The United Nations Development Program defines good governance as the “exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage state affairs at all levels. It encompasses mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and society express their interests, exercise their legal rights, fulfill their obligations, and seek mediation to resolve conflicts.”

Within the Arab Human Development Report, good governance is defined as “governance that promotes, supports, and preserves human well-being. It is based on expanding human capabilities, choices, enthusiasm, and economic, social, and political

² الاتصال الجماهيري: الوظائف، الخصائص، الأنواع، متاح عبر الرابط التالي، <https://2u.pw/qR1K2gl>

freedoms. It seeks to fully represent all segments of the population and be accountable to them, ensuring the interests of all members of society are met.”

Good local governance is founded on principles such as participation, effectiveness, accountability, and transparency. These principles ensure that community members have the right to participate in decision-making, express their needs and aspirations, and hold local officials accountable for their actions. Accountability can take the form of discussions and inquiries to understand the reasoning behind specific decisions.³

In light of the good local governance principles that stress citizens’ right to express their needs and hold those responsible accountable, Mass Media plays a crucial role in good local governance by providing citizens with a means to express their desires and improve the quality of public services. Through various media outlets, citizens can voice their concerns and pressure local officials to address their demands for better local services.

The development of media aligns with plans for sustainable development on both international and national levels, which requires media to have active roles in development. While countries may differ in their resources and capabilities, they all strive to improve societies and meet the needs of their members. Development is a collaborative effort involving states, citizens, and civil society, each with their assigned roles.⁴

Given the complexity of development, it is essential to have effective and influential media that actively contribute to shaping ideas, presenting opinions and information, and guiding society's behavior in line with development plans, which makes us shed great light on the developmental role of Mass Media.

The media's role in supporting development depends on providing accurate information about development plans, addressing citizen needs, and promoting their

³ مفهوم الحكم الرشيد، متاح عبر الرابط التالي، <https://2u.pw/sp9jDVh>

⁴ الإعلام والتنمية المستدامة، بحث مقدم لجامعة طنطا، متاح على الرابط التالي، <https://2u.pw/t30eRU>

involvement in evaluating services and participating in the success of development initiatives.

In light of the challenges that countries face, including internal crises and international and regional challenges, the role of the media goes beyond amusement and entertainment. It serves as a powerful tool for educating citizens about risks, mobilizing enthusiasm for effective participation in sustainable development plans, and shaping public opinion towards desired goals. The media also emphasizes the role of individuals in implementing development plans, bringing them special benefits, and achieving the interests of the state. During times of crisis, the media's role is crucial. It extends beyond simply spreading news or presenting the government's perspective. Instead, the media plays a vital role in clarifying the true causes of the crisis, and its projected timeline, guiding citizens and the government on how to deal with it, and suggesting alternative methods for obtaining necessary services until the crisis is resolved.

Media and Support for Sustainable Development

Development is a deliberate and directed process undertaken by society to transform and improve economic and social life, moving it towards an advanced state using various means and tools. Within this context, the role of development media becomes apparent. Development media refers to the main or subsidiary media systems specialized in addressing development issues. It is a branch of media activity that aims to bring about social transformation for development and modernization. Development media directs the media and mass communication channels within society in alignment with the goals of the development movement and the best interests of society. It is an integral part of the transformation of a society from a state of poverty to a dynamic state of economic, social, and political growth.⁵

While addressing the overall development process and its role in societal progress, we prioritize sustainable development. The aim is to achieve its goals in a manner that is

⁵ الإعلام التنموي ودوره في خدمة المجتمع المصري وتنميته (الواقع والمأمول)، <https://2u.pw/Ru75qTE>

sustainable and beneficial to individuals, society, and the environment. Sustainable development is a global call to action for poverty eradication, land preservation, and improved livelihoods worldwide. In 2015, all member states of the United Nations adopted 17 sustainable development goals as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This agenda sets a 15-year plan to achieve these goals. Sustainable development requires an effective media role to accomplish its objectives, which are closely linked to national plans and ongoing efforts.⁶

Development media plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable development and improving the level of services provided to citizens. It possesses several characteristics that contribute to its effectiveness in aligning with strategic plans and meeting citizens' aspirations. First and foremost, development media aims to achieve society's fundamental goals and core interests. It creates an enabling environment for the success of development plans and strives to enhance public participation in the development process and issues of community concern.

Furthermore, development media operates in a deliberate and planned manner, closely linked to development plans and societal interests. It seeks to convince public opinion about the necessity of social change to achieve development goals. It addresses various dimensions such as health, economy, society, and politics, and raises awareness among individuals about sustainable development goals and how to attain them.

Realism is a significant characteristic of development media, as it addresses societal issues in a manner that reflects citizens' concerns and aspirations. It remains agile in addressing emerging issues while maintaining clarity in its communication with the public, thereby fostering mutual trust.

In essence, development media serves societal issues and strives to achieve social goals based on fundamental needs and vital interests. It fosters genuine awareness of development based on transparency and factual presentation, leading to the adoption of necessary development plans. Additionally, it expands the scope of dialogue within society and encourages citizens to actively participate and engage with the national

⁶ أهداف التنمية المستدامة، متاح عبر الرابط التالي، [/https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ar](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/ar)

dimensions of development. Development media plays a positive and active role in enhancing the capabilities of all members of the local community, enabling them to contribute positively to the development process and address societal concerns.⁷

Role of Mass Media in Improving Public Services

The media, in its various forms, is expected to monitor and follow up on the local community and citizens' interactions within their environment. It also keeps track of the activities of local administrations, thereby fulfilling its oversight role. In this regard, the media can be likened to local popular councils responsible for evaluating the services provided by local administrations and gauging public opinion on these services.

With the widespread accessibility of media, local communities have gained a wealth of experiences by being informed about events across cities and regions at the national level. Moreover, citizens can now observe local and municipal services in villages from different countries. This expanded media coverage also encompasses local elections in some countries, which receive significant attention across various media platforms. As a result, citizens have access to knowledge that strengthens their demands from local administrations and enhances their ability to evaluate their performance. In turn, citizens become a source for the media to present their local concerns and demands.

When discussing the role of Mass Media in improving the quality of public services provided to citizens, one of its primary tasks is to deliver accurate information. Providing correct information is crucial as it allows citizens to understand the local reality, be aware of local administration plans, and evaluate them based on their actual experiences. By providing accurate information, the media addresses rumors and dispels any lack of clarity among citizens. This is particularly important considering the existence of central state development plans that require clarification through the media, along with explanations of how citizens benefit from these strategic plans.

⁷ الإعلام التنموي ودوره في خدمة المجتمع المصري وتنميته (الواقع والمأمول)، <https://2u.pw/Ru75qTE>

The role of Mass Media in improving the services provided to citizens is outlined in the following points:

- 1- Contributing to educating and raising citizens' awareness;
- 2- Detecting corruption;
- 3- Enhancing citizens' freedom of expression and conveying their vision;
- 4- Providing a positive role model in all public areas;
- 5- Emphasizing values of freedom, equality, and respect for laws.;
- 6- Adopting visions that have popular positions to develop and change prevailing visions to achieve development and progress that improves the level of services provided to citizens.

Through these roles, Mass Media can serve as an effective intermediary between service providers, whether it's the government or local administrations, and the citizens who receive these services. The media becomes the means through which citizens express their satisfaction with the services provided or voice their demands for improvements. This contribution of the media helps achieve sustainable development goals by aligning plans and services with actual needs and responding to citizens' demands within the framework of national development plans.

Rise of Citizen Journalists and Their Influence on Change

As we approach the role of media in improving public services provided to citizens, and as technology advances and citizens become adept at using various tools, the emergence of "citizen journalists" has become a prominent phenomenon. This phenomenon has arisen as a result of the development of communication systems, showcasing the integration of technology within the information society. It signifies a shift in media control from institutions to the hands of the public. Citizen journalism acts as a vital source in enhancing citizen culture, increasing awareness, and promoting

knowledge and information exchange among individuals, all rooted in a firm belief that traditional media can no longer fully satisfy citizens' cognitive needs.⁸

Citizen journalism represents a form of participatory journalism where the public is no longer solely a passive recipient of media messages. Instead, they actively contribute to creating media content that reflects their desires, aspirations, and opinions. This concept is part of what is known as "open-source media" or "democratic media" and is a manifestation of street journalism and alternative media.

Citizen Journalism involves citizens playing an active role in collecting, transmitting, analyzing, publishing, and sharing news and information using various internet tools and platforms. Those who engage in citizen journalism typically do not seek financial gain but aim to amplify their voices and the voices of the masses. They strive to expose corruption and practices that undermine good governance and democracy. Citizen journalists also draw attention to local issues that may not receive sufficient coverage from traditional media outlets.

The internet has played a significant role in the growth of citizen journalism, particularly with the widespread use and development of social networking sites. Citizens now have direct and constant contact throughout the day, moving beyond being mere recipients of information to becoming active participants in creating and promoting content. This active participation allows them to express their attitudes, orientations, and requirements regarding the services that impact their daily lives.

It's important to note that when we refer to "**Citizen Journalists**," we are not implying that they possess the same professional skills and experience as trained journalists. Citizen journalists often rely on simple tools, such as their phones, to convey their messages. Their actions are driven by their awareness and desire to take positive steps towards improving public services and engaging with community issues, particularly at the local level. They focus on news and topics that traditional mass media may overlook.

⁸ظاهرة المواطن الصحفي)، متاح عبر الرابط التالي، <https://2u.pw/m9c2TIF>

While **citizen journalists** may lack the expertise and adherence to professional and legal standards that professional journalists possess, they aim to express their own needs and voluntarily contribute within a framework of self-commitment and social responsibility. They interact voluntarily with their surroundings, both in person and online.⁹

The ease with which citizen journalists can publish and document events in their social environment highlights the importance and effectiveness of their movement. They possess a close connection to their local surroundings and are aware of the problems and concerns of those around them. These issues may fall outside the scope of traditional media, which often focus on broader state policies rather than local matters. Citizen journalists have the advantage of quickly responding to events, generating content rapidly, and interacting with the people involved. This enables them to effectively contribute to delivering a media message aimed at improving the quality of public services.

While emphasizing the active role of citizen journalists in collecting, transmitting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information through the internet, it is crucial to highlight the need for a "Journalistic Code of Honor." This code should be based on moral and societal commitments, ensuring respect for laws, good governance, and the reporting of corruption.

Under **Journalistic Code of Honor**, citizen journalists should adhere to this code while engaging in activities that contribute to improving public services. They should commit to serving the public interest, addressing community issues, providing accurate information, respecting individuals' privacy, and avoiding any exploitation of their work for illegal purposes.¹⁰

⁹ دليل المواطن الصحفي، متاح على الرابط التالي، [/https://ar.mdc.tn/1433-2](https://ar.mdc.tn/1433-2)

¹⁰ انظر المرجع السابق

Conclusion & Recommendations

Mass Media can effectively participate in enhancing public services. This begins with the media's role in raising awareness about development plans and sustainable development. It involves highlighting how these plans benefit citizens in their local areas and facilitating the active participation of the public in expressing their opinions and requirements to local administrations. This engagement contributes to service improvement, enhances governance, combats corruption, and continuously evaluates the effectiveness of development plans to strengthen governance mechanisms. It also allows for appropriate modifications to development plans in response to public demands, ultimately improving the services provided to citizens.

To enhance media's role in improving public services, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Mass Media should embrace their role in raising awareness about sustainable development plans and national initiatives at all levels, clarifying their benefits to citizens in local areas.
- Media should provide platforms for the governorates, including their cities and villages, to allow citizens in these areas to express their concerns and requirements. This would foster communication between citizens and officials, facilitating dialogue and action.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development believes that good governance is “the use of political power and oversight in society, with the relationship to managing the resources necessary to achieve economic and social development.”
- Enhancing media’s mechanisms for communicating with citizens and receiving their complaints and opinions regarding development plans, and paying attention to these complaints and opinions by redirecting them to local officials.
- The importance of receiving Mass Media, citizen journalism, and receiving and publishing media materials that citizens create regarding complaints related to localities.

- Enhancing the culture of citizen journalism among citizens by disseminating citizen journalism mechanisms among the masses and codes of honor that can be relied upon to be more effective.
- Local officials must interact with citizens' complaints and opinions, respond to them, and clarify the goals of sustainable development plans and their positive returns for citizens.