

Caux Scholar's Report on the stream "Just Governance" at the Caux Forum for Human Security

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Over the course of the week, we have identified four main criteria that would make up a just government, based on the stream discussions. This list is not exhaustive, but it represents the themes that were discussed during the stream sessions.

These four elements include:

- fair and egalitarian judicial and legal systems,
- equal and humane treatment for all citizens,
- the ability to hold elections and the freedom to implement the results of an election, and
- universal education.

In order for these elements to be realized, two crucial conditions must be met, namely that the proper infrastructure be in place, and also that civil society be heavily involved. Through mobilization of civil society, a population has the ability to influence areas such as:

- the media, in terms of protecting freedom of the press and objective reporting;
- the legal system, in terms of setting legal precedents and protecting civil and human rights;
- and the education system, in terms of ensuring an unbiased curriculum including educating citizens of their rights and the standards to which people should hold their government.

With further regard to civil society, the emphasis must be on the prevention of violence as well as upholding integrity within institutions. We heard about the Pais Libre organization in Colombia working to combat kidnapping. They have had amazing results by working with communities to educate them and empower them against this problem.

We also heard about the Nonviolent Peace Force who have also had success bolstering local initiatives to handle conflict in a more peaceful way.

And we heard the story about female factory workers in Cambodia who were ready to set fire to their factory for the inhumane treatment they were receiving in addition to extremely low wages. Instead, they were encouraged to take on their employer in negotiations, and did so successfully with some help, negotiating better treatment and better wages.



Initiatives of Change

These stories are encouraging, but there are, of course, many challenges to promoting just governance practices. For example:

- a lack of transparency within governments leads to corruption and undermines institutions;
- there may be external actors who may influence the political, social, or economic climate within a country, or "spoilers" who seek to derail a just government;
- another challenge is the consequences that will continue to arise from climate change and poor resource management;
- and lastly, political will.

This last point is perhaps the most challenging of all. In one discussion, we were presented with some staggering statistics regarding the proliferation of arms. It was said that \$40-60 billion in arms deals are made per year; two-thirds of those arms are sent to developing countries, and 80% of those arms comes from the five permanent members of the security council. Keeping in mind that these are the same five countries who ultimately decide such things as humanitarian intervention, it is very disconcerting to see such a drastic disconnect between rhetoric and policy.

So what does this mean for us?

First, the link between peacebuilding and the involvement of civil society is clear. This means holding governments accountable, taking a stand against corruption as Dr. Musheshe did bravely in Uganda, and moving forward with the implementation of the concept of "the responsibility to protect".

Coordination and synergy also need to happen between and among the different levels of civil society and peace building initiatives. This task may involve the development of new computer applications, networking sites, or other uses of information technology to advance current practices of early warning systems, and the prevention of violence and maintenance of peace and stability projects in specific areas.

Also important is the promotion of value-based leadership, to set an example and a precedent for future actions. These values must also be sought within our own communities and promoted within our institutions.

From following the just governance stream, we feel well-versed in the challenges that just governance faces around the world, but also what needs to be done. Above all, civil society has a major role to play in promoting just governance practices, and all people must take part and accept responsibility for affecting change.