

Civil Society and Local Governance

Editorial Notes

Local Autonomy College of Japan (LAC or *Jichi Daigakko*) is a training arm of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. The college provides a variety of public management courses to Japanese local government officials. With varied curricula and of varied duration, these courses are quite popular and sought after by local level government officials in the country.

In addition, since its inception in 1960, the LAC has housed the EROPA (Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration) Local Government Center. Similar to the LAC courses, the EROPA Center invites visiting local government officials from the Asia and Pacific regions, and exposes these trainees to different concepts and practices of public administration and management.

In the last few years, trainees have been coming also from countries beyond EROPA's jurisdiction, including areas as far away as Africa and Latin America. These new recruits usually take several practical courses at LAC, and study public administration along with trainees from the EROPA regions.

As well, the EROPA Local Government Center has been involved in an important publication project, making available manuscripts under the general title of *Comparative Public Administration*. Each issue is published with a unified thematic consideration in mind, and true to this tradition, the present volume, 9th in the series, is concerned with a central topic, *Civil Society and Local Governance*.

In both Europe and North America, the concept of Civil Society has become very topical, with many critics arguing that Civil Society should become the major agent for the delivery of social services, and the role and function of government reduced to a minimum. Many experts hold this view because they feel that government performance in this capacity has often been ineffective, inefficient, and uneconomical. These people wish Civil Society to eventually take over this traditional function of government, and that the major portion of social services be transferred to Civil Society.

Unlike the situation in Europe and North America, the whole concept of Civil Society has been underdeveloped in the EROPA region. Central and local governments in the area often view Civil Society organizations with suspicion and alarm. In fact, in some countries, they are seen as agents of foreign interests. Similarly, NGOs are often not indigenous, and are frequently perceived as the political arm of neo-imperialism.

Nonetheless, in a growing number of EROPA countries, some indications are pointing to the emergence of Civil Society. As the following chapters testify, both NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) and NPOs (Non Profit Organizations) have been playing an increasingly important role as agents of social services

delivery in Nepal, the Philippines, and India. Even in China, a harbinger of Civil Society appears to be evident. This new trend seems inescapable, given fiscal retrenchments being made by many governments. In times of decreased revenues, governments tend to cut down on social services, leaving NGOs and NPOs to fill the void. Civil Society components have thus come to carry out important social functions.

It is against this background that the current volume has been organized. For this 9th volume, EROPA Local Government Center decided for the first time to invite a prominent scholar and active EROPA member to act as a guest editor. Alex B. Brillantes Jr. is Professor and Dean at National College of Public Administration and Governance in the University of the Philippines. Both Local Autonomy College of Japan and EROPA Local Government Center are extremely fortunate that Professor Brillantes agreed to serve as a guest editor for this volume, contacting various authors and soliciting their contributions.

As has been noted in the past, editing a publication takes a lot of time and effort, and Mr. Masao Kikuchi, a Research Assistant at Meiji University with a major in public administration, has been heavily involved in this current issue. Even while working on his doctoral dissertation, Kikuchi spared an enormous amount of his time to finish this volume. Without his dedication and effort, the current issue would not be available. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to both Alex and Masao.

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