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Role of Civil Society in Health Systems

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Trained in Systematic Reviews
What is meant by civil society?

- Is the arena of collective action around shared interests, purposes and values
- It embraces a diversity of actors, institutional forms, power, and autonomy
- Often populated by organizations like public charities, foundation, NGOs, professional/business associations
- Autonomous
Origin and transitions

- The term originated with Adam Ferguson, an 18th century Scottish philosopher—there was no distinction between state and society.
- The 19th century German philosopher made this distinction.
- Elaboration of the concept of society as an autonomous sphere.
- Perspective of civic organization for democracy and good citizenship.
Functioning

- Act collectively in a public sphere
- Express interest, exchange information to achieve mutual goals
- Make demands on the state
- Protects rights of the social, political and economical organizations
- Fosters democracy
Three concepts by Michael Edwards

- Civil society as *associational life*
  - Criticisms; values and beliefs are fostered where we grow, thus family, school, workplaces are very important

- Civil society as the *good society*
  - Informed decision making is a challenge

- Civil society as the *public sphere*
  - Where citizens argue about issues and negotiate public interest
Other perspectives

- Civil society and state
- Civil society and voluntary spirit
- Civil society and democracy
- Civil society and globalization
Measuring civil society

- Several attempts made to measure the concept of civil society;
- Civicus, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation has established a survey instrument for national level use;
- Johns Hopkins University Centre for Civil Society developed another instrument.
Shared decision making of consumer groups for health care

- Traditionally physicians took sole responsibility
- Now, patients are involved in shared decisions
- Cultural and cognitive variability
- Decision aids are developed, used, evaluated
Community and informed choice

- Little is known
- Democratic or equal participation is challenging
- Effective partnership between different groups
  - Community people in Tanzania examined linkage between agricultural practices and malaria (Mlozi et al 2006)
  - Consumers contributed in rural West Africa designing health insurance schemes (Allegri et al 2006)
  - Shared decision making on contraceptive method use improved quality of care in Nicaragua (Meuwissen, 2006)
Different forms of involvement of the community groups (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995)

- **Contractual**: People are contracted into projects by the researchers to take part in experiments.
- **Consultative**: People are asked for their opinion and consulted before intervention.
- **Collaborative**: Researcher and community work together on project designing which is initiated and managed by the researchers.
- **Collegiate**: Scientific group and community work together with different skills to offer in a process of mutual learning when local people control over the process.
A community university partnership model with 3 generation of partnerships (Spath, 2007)

- **1st generation** - For this they hired and worked with local key persons (relevant to the targeted intervention group) who performed as coordinators and link persons between community and university.

- **2nd generation** - they knit group of local residents who helped with organization and implementation of the intervention but these groups did not function as core local groups.

- **3rd generation** - they incorporated local teams designed to be strategic with very focused intervention goals, expectation is these groups would select specific intervention from a range of possible evidence-based intervention options.
Way forward

Ensuring/creating pre-conditions for healthy civil society
  • giving people the means to be active citizens, more participation by political reforms, guaranteeing independence, structures of public communication

Strong institutional partnership

Networking, linkages with media

Making rooms for innovation
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Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
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Thanks
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- Journal Of Pregnancy And Child Birth
- Journal of Women's Health Care
- Gynaecology & Obstetrics
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