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The Role of a Free Press in Good Governance a Papper Presented

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Introduction- It gives me joy and I am humbled to be given this rare privilege to be chosen amongst other most suitable and very much qualified persons and/or personalities to give this prestigious lecture by one of the most respected and valued professional/prestigious trade unions in the world (NUJ) Bayelsa Chapter. This is more so, when you consider the critical place the media or put differently the press plays in the society. It is in this context that, the topic of our discourse or paper is apt, particularly when considered from the perspective of the broad theme of this years' World Press Freedom Day (Media Freedom for Better Future: Shaping the Post 2015 Development Agenda).

To what extent does free and independent media contribute to good governance and what are the consequences for human development? What is the role of the free press in strengthening good governance, democracy and human development?

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THE ROLE OF A FREE PRESS IN GOOD GOVERNANCE A PAPER PRESENTED

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I. INTRODUCTION

It gives me joy and I am humbled to be given this rare privilege to be chosen amongst other most suitable and very much qualified persons and/or personalities to give this prestigious lecture by one of the most respected and valued professional/prestigious trade unions in the world (NUJ) Bayelsa Chapter. This is more so, when you consider the critical place the media or put differently the press plays in the society. It is in this context that, the topic of our discourse or paper is apt, particularly when considered from the perspective of the broad theme of this years' World Press Freedom Day (Media Freedom for Better Future: Shaping the Post 2015 Development Agenda).

To what extent does free and independent media contribute to good governance and what are the consequences for human development? What is the role of the free press in strengthening good governance, democracy and human development?

This lecture shall attempt to explore these issues with a view to provide some clear cut answers. In order to provide the answer to these questions, we shall define and discuss the following concepts: Media/Free-Press, Good Governance and Human Development.

Apart from this introduction, the rest part of this paper is structured into five sections. Section one deals with the meaning of media; section two discusses the role of free press in good governance and human development; section three highlights the concept of good governance; section four on its part analyzed the role of free press in strengthening good governance and human development; while section five concludes the paper, it also incorporates the bibliography.

a) The Meaning of the Media

The media or mass media is a basic source of news and entertainment. They are also means of carrying messages which could build communities into nations. They are sources of information. The media falls into three basic categories: print, electronics and photographs. This categorization differentiates the technology that produces them. John, (2001).

The primary print media sources are books, magazines, newspapers, electronic media sources are basically television, radio, sound recordings and the

web. The primary sources of the photographic medium are movies. There is the media source traditional to ancient societies, which is oral, beating of drum, lighting fire, making representation, drawing diagrams and the use of the town crier. John (2001, p. 6). This lecture will be more concentrated on the modern media sources.

The print media has the characteristics of binding, regularity of content and timeliness. The technological basis of the print media is the printing press, which dates back to the 1440s. John (2001, p. 6). The print media is a permanent source of reference. Martin Luther, King Jnr. Stated that:

"No other agency can penetrate so deeply, abide so persistently witness so daringly and influence so irresistibly as the printed pages". Ebisinte, (2007).

The electronic media which comprise television, radio, sound recording flash. Pioneering work on the electronic media began in 1800s but was however consolidated on the 20th century. Unlike print messages, television and radio messages disappear as soon as they are terminated, except they are stored in tapes and other devices.

The photographic media is both still and motion. It could be produced through chemical media could be stored in silver halide (negative) and photo album while digitally produced media could be stored in flash drive, diskettes, external hard drive, CD plates, etc.

Joseph R. Dominick defines the media thus:

In the broadcast sense of the word, medium is the channel through which a message travels from the course to the receiver,... sound and light waves are media of communication. Mass media are channels of communication which include not only the mechanical devices that transmit and sometimes store the message... but also the institutions that use these machines to transmit messages. When talk about the mass media of television, radio, news papers, magazines, sound recordings and films, we will be referring to the people, the polices, the organizations and the technology that go into producing and distributing mass communication. Dominick, (2002).

The implication in Dominick's understanding of the media includes the structural framework, the actors, personnel and the medium through which the information is derived (got), used and retained.

Wolvin in considering the influence of the media says this:

We are influenced by the media, radio, television, internet, magazine, news paper, film, etc. Radio and television play a role in the communication lives of almost every person. When you consider that the typical person spends four hour and fifteen minutes a day in front of a television set, you can appreciate the potential influence the media can have. Add to this, the popularity of the internet as a communication tool, and your awareness of the influence should increase even more. Wolvin, (1998).

The above excerpt demonstrates that the media has an influential potential in sharpening the way and manner of the thinking process and thought patterns of individual and groups. The media is capable of correcting certain believes and impressions the people hold in some matters. The media is an effective tool in modifying behaviour.

This era is assumed a media literate dispensation. It stands that people have developed the capacity to access information through the media, which essentially comprise the print, electronics, specifically the internet and general computer knowledge. Hybels, (2001).

The expansion of the media channels or courses as well as its input in fashioning the decision making process caught the interest of social scientist in 20th century such as Harold Laswell, who is cited in (Miller 2006; 258) said thus:

But when all allowances have been made and all extravagant estimates pared to the bone, the fact remains that propaganda is one of the most powerful instrumentalities in the modern world... in the great society it is no longer possible to fuse the waywardness of individuals in the furnace of the war dance; a newer and more subtler instrument must weld thousand and even millions of human beings into one amalgamated mass of hate and will and hope.... The name of this new hammer and anvil of social solidarity is propaganda. Miller, (2001).

Scholars have devised several theories and models in the study of the media. The theorists call the influence of the media in shaping the thoughts, opinions, attitudes and the general behaviour in the direction they prefer as the "magic bullet theory".

Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer and Emile Durkheim in their investigation commended that those who are predisposed to the influence of the mass media propaganda in society have the following peculiarities; they are psychological isolated, impersonal and relatively farther from informal social obligations.

There are several other theories that explain the effect and outcome of the media. They put in to the right perspectives the media in relation to the behaviour of man. They are essentially, social cognitive theory, uses and gratification, media system dependency, etc. the social cognitive theory gives the relationship between

behaviour and the media presentation, some instances are media violence and crime among youths, media performance and indecent dressing in society. Some persons access the media because of the gratifying programmes. An example is the use and gratification, in the nationwide NTA show "who want to be a millionaire". The media, "system dependency theory" is a tripartite framework where the media audience and society depend on each other to actualize their objective.

Another analytical categorization of the media are the models, which include, hot-cool model, entertainment-information model, elitist populist model and the pull-push model. The hot-cool media is made of the print which makes up the "hot" of the model. This is because one requires high concentration to make meaning out of the model. The "cool" generally consist of radio, movies and television programmes which are often presented with light music at the background.

The second model is the entertainment-information. It tells that the media is for the purpose of entertainment and information.

The elitist-populist model explains the socio cultural tensions that have arisen in society which broad segments of the population what they want. These class interests are visible in virtually every sphere of human social existence. It ranges from music, books, clothing's romance etc.

Vivian John posits that:

At one end of the continuum is serious media content that appeals to people who can be called elitists because they believe that the mass media have a responsibility to contribute to a better society and a retirement of the culture, regardless of whether the media attract large audiences. At the other end of the continuum are populist, who are entirely oriented to the market place populists believe that the media are at their best when they give people what they want.

The mass media have historical significance in shaping socio-cultural values and any media committed to this cause has the likeliness to ignore the largest possible audience.

The pull-push model describes the media as both passive and active. Certain media programmes or items could be very inviting, therefore activates your interest in the media, e.g. "Super Stories" on NTA. "Second Chance" or "Focus Nigeria" in AIT and "Sunrise Daily" in channels TV. The pull could either make the audience turn their interest to or away from the media. Some programmes that are highly treasured by some audience are rather offensive to others. "African Magic" in cable television appeal to some audience, especially women, however sports channels seem more delightful to others especially men and youths.

Some media analysts have observed that the media is biased against the mass of the people in their reportage and presentation.

Accordingly Vivian posits the following:

People form opinion from the information and interpretations to which they are exposed, which means that even news coverage has an element of persuasion. The media attempts to persuade, however are usually in editorials and commentaries whose persuasive purpose are obvious. Most news media separate materials designed to persuade from news. News papers package their opinion articles in an editorial section commentary on television is introduced as opinion.

The media in a globalized world is to the peril of some societies and economic advantage of others. The media of the developed societies have exerted so much influence on the less developed countries of the world in the areas of culture integration, technology, values, commerce, etc. this obviously has truncated the national consciousness and development in the developing countries (Third world). What is then the role of free press in good governance, this is the subject of our discourse in the next section.

b) The Role of Free Press in Good Governance and Human Development

There exists a long tradition of liberal theorists from Milton through Locke and Madison to John Stuart Mill have argued that the existence of a unfettered and independent press within each nation is essential in the process of democratization by contributing towards the right of freedom of expression, thought and conscience, strengthening the responsiveness and accountability of governments to all citizens, and providing a pluralist platform and channel of political expression for a multiplicity of groups and interests. Shah, (1996); Amartya, (1999); Mc Quail, (2001) The guarantee of freedom of expression and information is recognized as a basic human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948, the European Convention on Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The positive relationship between the growth of the free press and the process of

democratization is thought to be reciprocal (Figure 1 displayed an analytical frame work).

The core claim is that, in the first stage, the initial transition from autocracy opens up the state control of the media to private ownership, diffuses access, and reduces official censorship and government control of information. The public thereby receives greater exposure to a wider variety of cultural products and ideas through access to multiple radio and TV channels, as well as the diffusion of new technologies such as the Internet and mobile telephones. Once media liberalization has commenced, in the second stage democratic consolidation and human development are strengthened where journalists in independent newspapers, radio and television stations facilitate greater transparency and accountability in governance, by serving in their watch-dog roles, as well as providing a civic forum for multiple voices in public debate, and highlighting social problems to inform the policy agenda. (Hyden; Leslie and Ogundimu, [eds] 2002).

Through this process, many observers emphasize that a free press is not just valuable for democracy, a matter widely acknowledged, but the final claim is that this process is also vital for human development. This perspective is exemplified by Amartya Sen's argument that political freedoms are linked to improved economic development outcomes and good governance in low- income countries by encouraging responsiveness to public concerns. The free press, Sen suggests, enhances the voice of poor people and generates more informed choices about economic needs. Amartya, (1999, pp. 629–640). James D. Wolfenson has earlier echoed these sentiments when he was the president of the World Bank: "A free press is not a luxury. A free press is at the absolute core of equitable development, because if you cannot enfranchise poor people, if they do not have a right to expression, if there is no searchlight on corruption and inequitable practices, you cannot build the public consensus needed to bring about change." Wolfeson, (1999, A39).

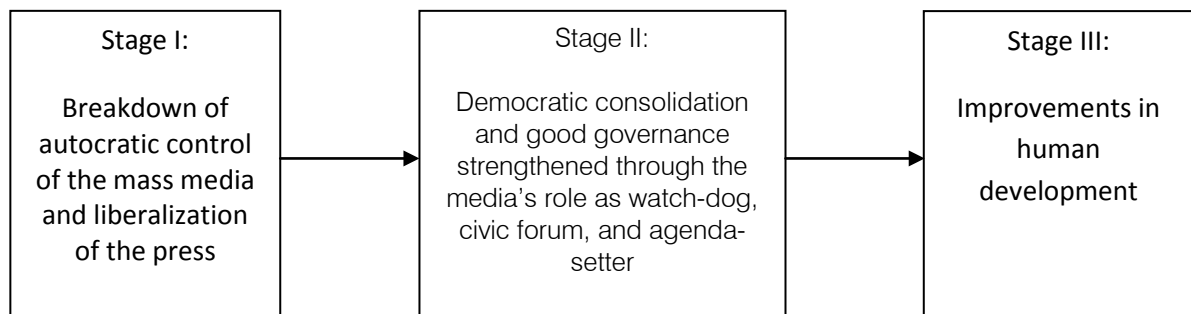


Figure 1 : Analytical framework

Source: Pippa Norris, May2006, pp12. (See also world Freedom Day) 4/19/2006 @ <http://www.undp.org/governance/>

More liberal media landscapes are therefore widely regarded as strengthening democratization and good governance directly, as well as human development indirectly. These claims are commonly heard among popular commentators, donor agencies, and the international community. But what systematic evidence supports these contentions? Despite historical case-studies focusing on the role of the press in specific countries and regions, it is somewhat surprising that relatively little comparative research has explored the systematic linkages in this process. Much existing research has also focused on assessing the impact of media access, such as the diffusion of newspaper readership or television viewership, rather than press freedom. Beyond paying lip service to the importance of political rights and civil liberties, work on democratic institutions has tended to emphasize constitutional arrangements, including the impact of electoral and party systems, federal or unitary states, and parliamentary or presidential executives, while neglecting to analyze comparable evidence for the role of the news media as part of the democratization process. Lijphart, (1999).

Accordingly, Mahatma Gandhi posits that:

One of the objects of a newspaper is to understand the popular feeling and give expression to it, another is to arouse among the people certain desirable sentiments; the third is fearlessly to expose popular defects. Yadav, (2001: 1-4)

The above quote explains the importance of media or press in upholding freedom, and in expanding education and social reforms and change. Media can inform people giving them the voice to be heard and heeded to. Democracy requires that people should have the right to know the activities of the government, especially the decision of the government that affects their life, liberty and property. Information is important for people to make choices regarding their participation in the State, the market and the civil society. Sufficient information helps people to decide rationally and take the right course of action beneficial to them. Media-both print and electronic-thus helps people to know what is happening around the world, socialize them with the values of pluralism and equip them with the elements of modernity. By publicizing information the media also make public services more responsive to the people. These in my opinion and those who share the same view with me should be the focus of the media or press in shaping the post 2015 development agenda both in Nigeria and across the world.

A responsible press or media equally helps in socialization of people into citizenship, democratization of the State and political society, institutionalization of civic culture through unfettered flow of information, and rationalized use of power in social relations. In a nascent

democracy like Nepal, media can also help voters with the contents of civic and political education and strengthen the culture of democracy. This is the reason political scientist Karl Deutsch has called that the system of communication proves a "nerve of the polity," and any breakdown of the nerve may cause dysfunctional impact in the performance of the polity causing governance decay. The Nigerian press is indeed very vibrant and has contributed immensely in the socialization process of the society, i.e. the June 12 Era, etc.

Realizing this the Article 16 of the Constitution of Nepal 1990 says:; every citizen shall have the right to demand and receive information on any matter of public importance". This implies that the right to information has become a human and constitutional right of the Nepalese people. The denial of this right can be contested under Article 23 of the constitution. The Supreme Court of Nepal under Article 88(2) holds tremendous power to enforce this right. This suggests that free access to information on matters of public importance has become a core of the governing process. In fact, the key element of good governance postulates three essential features: legitimacy; accountability and transparency-the last element being the core basis of media culture.

This article deals with three sections: The first section deals with the elements of good governance. The second section elaborates the right to information as a key to good governance in Nepal. The third one deals with the precondition for media freedom and media culture in Nepal. The last section draws a brief conclusion presenting a synthesis of the whole analysis.

Right to information as a key to good governance in Nepal as it is much more important in Nigeria today: Governance is conceived as the capacity of the state, the market and the civil society, media included, "to sustain itself under the constitutional setting" in order to move "towards avowed goals, reduce the inherent cleavages among social, cultural, ecological and political systems and communities, concert sound policies, mobilize resources and maintain the sufficient level of legitimacy, transparency, credibility and accountability before the public". A governance that steers in normative order to achieve its goals-law and order, human and national security, voice and participation and the promotion of public goods is called good governance. The World Bank defines: "Good governance is epitomized by predictable and enlightened policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law". "Transparency guarantees, including the right to disclosure, can thus be an important category of

instrumental freedom, limiting the powers of the State by providing the citizens the fundamental and human rights. Article 12 of the constitution guarantees the right to freedom. These freedoms include:

- Personal liberty under law of the land and abolition of capital punishment;
- Freedom of opinion and expression;
- Peaceful assembly;
- Freedom to form unions and organizations;
- Freedom to move and reside in any part of the country and
- Freedom to practice any occupation, profession, trade and industry.

But these freedoms do not limit the sovereignty of the State to legislate and act if they lead to chaos and anarchy and undermine:

- The sovereignty and integrity of the Kingdom of Nepal;
- Jeopardize social cohesion or harmony among the people;
- Facilitate into an act of sedition, defamation, contempt of court, instigation of offense, and
- Act contrary to decent public behavior or morality.

The State can formulate laws and acts to constitutionalize the behavior of citizen and help them in conforming to the ideals of constitutional patriotism implying a kind of balance between the public order and individual freedom. Similarly, Article 13 provides provisions for press and publication right so as to make the functioning of governance as transparent as possible. This is the way to bring the institutions of governance closer to the people and allowing them to make choices on public and political matters. Article 13-1 clearly stipulates that "*no news item, article or other reading material shall be censored*". Similarly, clause 2 and 3 provide that "no press should be closed or seized for printing any news item, article or other reading materials", and "the registration of a newspaper or periodical shall not be canceled merely for publishing any news item, article or other reading material."

These provisions suggest that there is freedom to the press and publication. But again they are subjected to the vision, spirit and principles of the constitution. The arrangement tries to set equilibrium between the sovereignty of the people to enjoy their press and public right and the sovereignty of the state to make laws so that citizens do not violate the sovereignty and integrity of Nepal, create disharmony in the society and disobey the laws of the land. This suggests that rights are tied with duties and accountabilities.

Freedom of citizens, a free and responsible press, an independent judiciary and government's data information are the system which can be perceived to be the key to the enhancement of right to information and make the institutions of governance transparent and accountable. The right to information, guaranteed rights

and press and publication right are three vital means for establishing "open society" visualized by the Nepalese constitution. An information Act must be brought out as soon as possible both to help in the way of freedom of information, enforce the accountability of information as well as to endow substance and quality in democratic debates so that citizens can monitor the day to day functioning of public institutions and actors. The right to information is closely tied to the accountability mechanism, for monitoring every action of government which leads to good governance, places the dominant actors of governance—the state, the market and civil society in balance, and monitors their performance as per the boundaries for action defined for them. Media thus perform vital tasks of informing, socializing, communicating and articulating the power of the public and preparing them for social transformation and good governance. It is our believe and conviction that the freedom of information (FOI) bill which was recently passed by the National Assembly and signed into law by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria shall bridge the gap in this situation, so far there are still indications that this in reality is not the case.

c) *The Concept of Good Governance*

The increasing priority accorded the concept of Good Governance in international discourses, on politics and development across the globe has resulted in constant definitions and redefinitions as to what really constitutes Good Governance Doornbos, (2003); Suchitra, (2004); Gisselquist, (2012). In perusing various literatures on the Good Governance concept, one could identify three strands of argument: The first strand is proponents of the Good Governance agenda that sees it as a worthy goal and a means through which to impact economic growth and development. Their argument is aptly captured thus: Those in poorly governed countries, it is argued, corrupt bureaucrats and politicians baldly hinder development efforts by stealing aid contributions or misdirecting them into unproductive activities. Less obvious but equally pernicious, governments that are not accountable to their citizens and with inefficient bureaucracies and weak institutions are unwilling or unable to formulate and implement pro-growth and pro-poor policies Gisseltquist, (2012, p.1).

The second strand on the other hand is the opponents who raise strong challenges and argue the following points:

- i. Use of Good Governance criteria in the allocation of foreign aids effectively introduces political conditionality's and imposes Western liberal models of democracy Nanda, (2006); NEPAD, (2007, p.3-4).
- ii. Good Governance agenda is a poor guide for development policy. It is unrealistically long and not attuned to issues of sequencing and historical developments Grindle, (2004); Booths, (2011)



- iii. Good Governance ignores institutional variations across well governed states Pitchett, (2004), Andrews, (2008).

The third stream of research raises questions about the causal effect of the quality of governance on various outcomes especially economic growth (Kurtz & Schrank, 2007a, 2007b; Khan, 2009). It is instructive to point out that current body of literature (Gerring 2001; Goertz, 2005; Keefer, 2009; Shirley, 2010; Gisselquist, 2011) have argued that good governance is a poorly defined concept and that future research should rather focus on the disaggregated components of good governance. This in part informs the structure of the discourse of this work. A critical consideration of the conceived differences surrounding the concept goes to point out the increased significance attached to the concept in recent times and also underscores the utility of the good governance components in development index across the nations and in the aggregate well being of democratic governance of a country. But whether or not Nigeria falls into the category of good and better governance deserved to be explored. However, it is my candid opinion that Nigeria as it is currently requires a lot more to get there.

Despite the contentions surrounding the concept, Good Governance has assumed an entrenched position as an indicator for measuring the development progress of any nation as well as a central factor for development. As Oburota (2003) argued "Politically, people may disagree about the best means of achieving good governance, but they quite agreed that Good Governance is absolutely imperative for social and economic progress". That is why many nations are striving to be seen to offer good governance to its citizenry. All these provoke the question what then is Good Governance? To adjudge governance as good or bad we have to first of all define the concept of governance itself. Governance has been variously defined as "the management of society by the people" Albrow, (2001, p.151), and "the exercise of authority or control to manage a country's affairs and resources" Schneider, (1999, p. 7). See also Ibaba, & Okolo, (2009); Etekpe, & Okolo, (2011); Okolo & Inokoba (2014); Okolo & Akpikighe, (2014) respectively.

A synthesis of current definitions from monetary agencies such as World Bank, International development agencies such as United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and multilateral donors yields a more complex definition, which is set out in a 1997 UNDP policy document entitled "Governance for Sustainable Human Development" this way: The exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises of the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. – UNDP.

Governance within the context of this paper refers primarily to government in domestic politics and is simply defined as the manner in which power is exercised by governments in the management and distribution of a country's social and economic resources.

This suggests that governance can be good or bad depending on the method of the management of a country's resources. So what is Good Governance? We are going to first take the definition of the concept by World Bank, as the chief engineer of the Good Governance agenda. How does World Bank define this concept believed to be capable of engendering sustainable development and democracy in countries such as Nigeria? To the World Bank, Good Governance consists of a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable, and an administration that is accountable to the public (1989, 60). Accordingly, the key components of Good Governance include effectiveness and efficiency in public sector management, accountability and responsiveness of public officials to citizenry, rule of law and public access to information and transparency (World Bank, 1989, 1992, viii). Other International Monetary Agents defined the concept in similar way as World Bank did (See the definitions of ADB, 2008; EBRD, 2010; IADB, 2010). These definitions from the monetary agencies adopted the economic and management focused approach, whereas Multilateral Donor Agencies such as the UNDP (OECD, UNN, UNESCO) and others adopted political issues approach in their definitions. The definitions of these Donor Agencies are expertly captured in this United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP, 2002) definition of Good Governance as striving for: Rule of law, transparency, participation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision in the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority.(UNDP, 2002, p.2). See also Dunu, (2013, Pp. 178 – 184).

This definition more than the previous definitions captured what has become identified by scholars as the elements or components of Good Governance .These components of Good Governance are; participation, consensus oriented, rule of law, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness. These elements are also eloquently captured in this definition of the concept by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). According to OECD, Good Governance has eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making (OECD, 2000). All these attributes are instruments of effective governance in the sense that

they provide necessary anchor for the act of governance.

The Nigerian constitution in Section 16 (2) acknowledged that the essence of the Nigerian state is to promote the common good. The implication of this is clearly explained by Eboh (2003) this way; "The common good stands in opposition to the good of rulers or of a ruling group. It implies that every individual, no matter how high or low, has a duty to share in promoting the welfare of the community as well as a right to benefit from that welfare". Common implies that the "good" is all inclusive. In essence, the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population. If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participating in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good, Eboh, (2003).

The above explanations capture the view of Ogundiya (2010) in his analysis of Good Governance as he maintains that Governance is good provided it is able to achieve the desired end of the state defined in terms of justice, equity, protection of life and property, enhanced participation, preservation of the rule of law and improved living standard of the population. Similarly, Nigeria's Vision 2020 document defined Good Governance as a means of accountability in all its ramifications. It also means the rule of law and an unfettered judiciary; that is freedom of expression and choice in political association. Good governance means transparency, equity and honesty in public office.

What is deducible from this plethora of definitions is that Good Governance, as a concept, is applicable to all sections of society such as the government, legislature, judiciary, media/press, private sector, corporate sector, trade unions (NUJ) and of course non-government organizations (NGOs). The implication here is that, it is only when all these and other various sections of society conduct their affairs in a socially responsible manner that the objective of achieving larger good of the largest number of people in society can be achieved, Madhav, (2007). See also Okolo, & Inokoba, (2014). In this regards the free and unfettered press becomes increasingly and absolutely pivotal.

Remarkably, it is only when we appraise the manner in which the affairs of a country are run that we can discern which government is good or bad or which has been a success or failure. Failure of governance implies that those in political control have not properly managed the economy and other social institutions. According to World Bank (1992) bad governance has many features, among which are: failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behaviour in a manner that is

conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws; excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, etc, which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking; priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessively narrow base for, or non-transparencies, decision-making.

However, looking at the rate of unemployment, diversion of resources by public officials, escalating rate of corruption (Nigeria continues to be reported among the most corrupt countries of the world), tribal cum ethnic clashes, abuse of office by public officials, looting of public finances, kidnapping, increased rate of cybercrimes and other types of crimes there is every reason to believe that Good Governance is still a mirage as far as the Nigerian polity is concerned. Ogundiya (2010) expressed similar views as he emphasizes that, the problem of Nigerian development is both a symptom and consequence of the absence of Good Governance. Since Good Governance implies the exercise of power in a responsible and responsive manner that will ensure greater good, how can the media contribute, and why is the media seen as a critical sector in this regard? See Okolo, (2014, Pp. 91 - 99).

d) *The Role of Free Press in Strengthening Good Governance and Human Development*

The important role free press or media plays in fostering an environment of good governance needs hardly be emphasized. As the watchdog and interpreter of public issues and events, the media has a special role in every society. In our information-based society the media has a disproportionately visible and influential role.

Democracy cannot exist in the absence of a free press. This is because democracy is based on popular will and popular opinion depends on the public's awareness and knowledge. It is the mass media that brings up, promotes and propagates public awareness.

The main responsibility of the press is to provide comprehensive, analytical and factual news and opinion to the people on everyday issues and events of popular concern. To fulfill its duty and responsibility, the press must work according to the fundamental principles of professional ethics, as well as norms and values of journalism.

➤ *Press freedom*

Democracy can neither be sustainable nor strong without a free press. On the other hand, press freedom will not be possible without democracy. Therefore, the mass media and journalists must be committed to democracy. For this, the press must be perpetually involved in the establishment and promotion of a democratic culture.

➤ *Right to information and freedom of expression*

The press must remain ever vigilant to protect and enforce people's freedom of thought and expression and citizens' right to all information relating to the various aspects of their life and future. The fact that access to information is a citizen's right must be taken to heart, and information must be presented in a simple and palatable manner. Right to information is inherent in democratic functioning and a pre-condition for good governance and the realization of all other human rights, including education and health care. The main objectives should be the promotion of transparency and accountability in governance so as to minimize corruption and inefficiency in public office and to ensure the public's participation in governance and decision making.

➤ *Accuracy and objectivity*

Media must be credible and trustworthy. Trust is the most valuable asset for any media. Once lost, it cannot be earned back. It is for this reason that all media must uphold their principles to provide accurate and factual news and other programmes.

➤ *Impartiality and diversity of opinion*

It is not enough that news presented by the media is factual. It must also be impartial, covering a diversity of opinions. Both sides of the argument must get due consideration. Voices and opinions of all the groups, ethnicities, languages, political and religious beliefs within the society must be included.

➤ *Fairness*

Broadcasters must not harbour any prejudices for or against any individual that is mentioned in the news item. Hidden recording can be carried out without permission only if there is adequate basis in the public interest to do so.

➤ *Violence, crime and anti-social behaviour*

Broadcast organizations must protect the society from crime, criminals and criminal activities. Any material that promotes violence and ethnic, religious, linguistic and other kinds of hatred must not be broadcast. Programmes that glorify violence and crime, or turning criminals into heroes, must not be allowed. However, programmes that clearly spell out the consequences of violence and provide moral education should be encouraged. News and other programmes that promote ethnic, religious, regional and cultural goodwill in the society should also be encouraged.

➤ *Protection of the underprivileged*

Issues, opinions and expressions regarding women, minority communities, neglected groups, elderly people, disabled and backward classes must be given the opportunity to be aired. To guarantee the rights and interests of the marginalized and underprivileged communities, content should be rights-oriented.

➤ *Political impartiality*

Broadcasters must understand the difference between politics in general and party politics. Media should not be a vehicle, or used as an advocate for any political party or ideology. Public and political issues should be clearly understood, analyzed and presented in an impartial manner.

➤ *Elections*

During elections / political campaigns, equal time slots or opportunity must be allocated to each of the legitimate political parties and candidates. In the course of elections, messages that encourage goodwill and harmony among all the ethnic groups, religions, genders, cultures, languages, regions and communities should be broadcast.

Media plays the role of watch-dog in reporting corruption, complacency and negligence. In a changing, competitive landscape, compliance to good governance has never been taken so seriously, as people demand more transparency from both the government and private sectors. Responsible practices from government, universal principles on human rights and the fight against corruption have assumed great importance. A flourishing media sector enables people to make informed decisions, becoming more effective participants in society's development.

In a developing country like Nepal, the relatively low level of literacy, the variations in topography and limited access to electricity all make radio the most suitable medium to satisfy the information needs of the masses. A robust, independent and pluralistic media environment is crucial for good governance and the overall development of the country. Freedom of expression, free flow of information and fair reporting without government and commercial influences are accelerators of development.

The rapid growth of private independent radio and TV broadcasters and the changing role of the state broadcasters are creating a more congenial atmosphere for the effective functioning of the media as a major player in good governance. Nepal has gone through phases of armed conflict, struggle for democracy, abolition of the monarchy and the tumultuous events leading to the declaration of a Federal Democratic Republic, and the media has been a vital player at every juncture. The issue of good governance assumes the highest priority in an atmosphere of chaos, instability, insecurity and lack of accountability. These are also characteristics of the absence of a legitimate, democratically elected government. During times of political upheaval when attempts were made to stifle press freedom, the media has stood up and played the role of watch-dog and ombudsman, upholding "public interest" above everything else.

The roles of the media, including the social media, in promoting Good Governance are being

recognized by the governments and policy-makers in various countries. In the UK, a “Survey of Policy Opinion on Governance and the Media” published by BBC (2009) reveals that although the emphasis on Good Governance in the development agenda is questionable, “there seems to be increasing recognition of the media’s role in governance in the development community. There are also some indicators that media are being more recognized by the policy-makers as having a central role in development.” The role of the media in promoting Good Governance is obvious. All aspects of Good Governance are facilitated by the existence of a strong, pluralistic and independent media within the society (UNESCO, 2005). Fortunately, the Nigerian press/media terrain to a large extent could be adjudged to qualify.

The significance of the press/media in how well or not governance can be executed in the society is best captured in this more than a century argument by Joseph Pulitzer, in 1904. Pulitzer summarized his views thus: Our Republic and its press will rise or fall together. An able, disinterested, public-spirited press, with trained intelligence to know the right and courage to do it, can preserve that public virtue without which popular government is a sham and a mockery. A cynical, mercenary, demagogic press will produce in time a people as base as itself. The power to mould the future of the Republic will be in the hands of the journalists of future generations (1904).

What Pulitzer was essentially saying here is that the press/media can make or break a society by the way and manner it functions. In our information-based society the media has a disproportionately visible and influential role in fostering an environment where Good Governance will flourish. As the watchdog, agenda setter of public discourses and interpreter of public issues and events, the media have a special role in governance.

The main responsibility of the press/media as is widely acknowledged is to provide comprehensive, analytical and factual news and opinion to the people on everyday issues and events of popular concern. Indeed this is the critical link between the functioning of the media and Good Governance. The press/media are the only institution with the capacity to allow and facilitate regular checks and assessment by the population of the activities of government and assist in bringing public concern and voices into the open by providing a platform for public discussion. In fact the nature and character of the media greatly impacts on the governance process in any society. For it is only when the media report, monitor, investigate and criticize the public administration's policies and actions as well as inform and educate the citizens can good governance be enthroned. We are now going to examine the concrete ways the media can contribute to good governance within the ambit of the eight elements of good governance identified earlier in this paper.

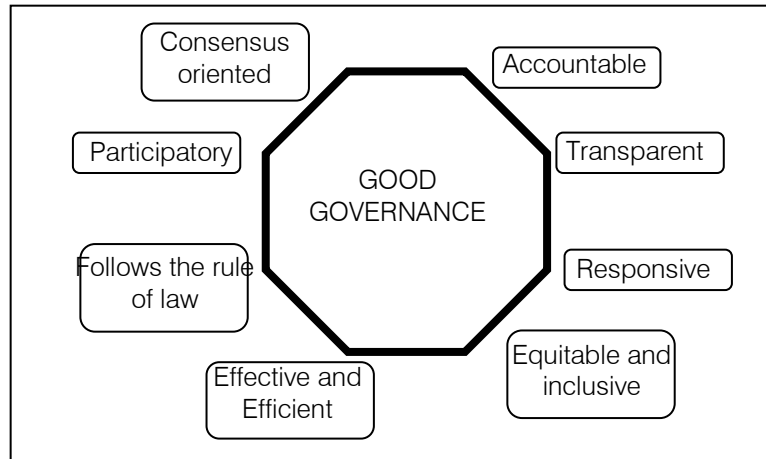


Figure 2 : Elements Of Good Governance And Media's Role

Source: UNESCO, 2005 Adapted and modified by Okolo, 20014 (see also Dunu I. 2013, pp. 185)

As was discussed earlier, there are eight commonly identified elements of Good Governance; it is within these elements and others that I shall now interrogate the relationship between press/media and Good Governance as displayed in Figure 2.

➤ *Transparency*

Transparency is often regarded as the openness of institutions, that is, the degree to which outsiders can monitor and evaluate the actions of

insiders. The purpose of transparency is to allow citizens, to hold institutions, governments and markets accountable for their policies and performances. Transparency is also defined as official business conducted in such a way that substantive and procedural information is available to and broadly understandable by, people and groups in society, subject to reasonable limits protecting security and privacy Bellver & Kaufmann, (2005). Radio can play an

active role in promoting transparency in governance. By reporting on issues with adequate research and objectivity, radio ensures that citizens are well informed and that their right to information is protected.

➤ *Participation*

The issue of inclusiveness has featured in many debates and discussions. One of the causes of the Maoist insurgency was inadequate representation of the marginalized groups in the decision making process. Radio can ensure the greater participation of marginalized groups, ethnic communities, language minorities and the underprivileged. Nepal has witnessed the greater participation of such groups through a process of empowerment brought about by responsible media.

Participation as an element of Good Governance implies the wide involvement of ordinary citizens in decision making and governance. According to UNESCO (2005) document, participation is a crucial element for Good Governance in two ways: Participation by citizens in decision making process allows greater transparency and can help ensure that political decisions are adapted to the needs of the people and affected by them. Second, participation is important for democratic legitimacy, which depends on the investment people have as citizens in their own governing. Citizen participation in the act of governance is engendered by the media and other intermediate institutions. However as widely acknowledged, the role of the media in fostering participation is vital as the media reports on aspects of the decision making process and give stakeholders a voice in the process. The media enables participation in two ways; as a facilitator providing platforms for the citizens to have accurate and sufficient information that help citizens make rational and informed decisions and take the right course of action beneficial to them: As a feedback mechanism, the media provide the means for the citizens to register their feelings and express their assent and dissent concerning issues. The media as the primary intermediaries of information supply the information that other sectors of the society need to participate effectively.

➤ *Accountability*

Media also ensures accountability through adherence to generally accepted standards. While giving a voice to the voiceless, the media has also played its role in holding those in power accountable for their actions. Accountability is a key requirement of Good Governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Who is accountable to whom varies, depending on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general government is accountable to the society.

Accountability points to the responsibility of judging the practices of public administrators to determine their effectiveness in the execution of their public functions. It is a process of taking responsibility for decisions and actions by government and public service organizations, private sector companies, civil society institutions and organizations and by the individuals working in these institutions, firms and organizations. Accountability also includes how these individuals and institutions are managing public funds, and whether there is fairness and performance in all aspects in accordance with agreed rules, contracts, standards and fair and accurate reporting on performance results vis-à-vis mandated roles and/or plans Jobarteh, (2012). One of the strengths of accountability is that it reduces the possibility of corruption in the polity to an almost zero level by reducing abuse of power by the State Accountability includes various kinds of internal and external mechanism of scrutiny.

The free press/media represent one of the major mechanisms of accountability. Holding government accountable therefore is a constitutional requirement of the Nigerian media. Access to information is the cornerstone of accountability. It is only when the public are provided with the relevant and adequate information can they hold those in authority accountable for their actions and inactions. As the main purveyor of information the media owe a sacred duty to the public to provide them with truthful and regular information. It is in recognition of this significant role of the media that the Nigerian government passed the FOI bill into law. As a recent study eloquently puts it, "Without information, there is no accountability. Information is power and the more people who possess it, the more power is distributed. The degree to which a media is independent is the degree to which it can perform an effective public watchdog function of "Public Affairs". Pope, (2000, p.119-120). For the media to facilitate accountability in governance journalists should know the four fundamental questions about accountability:

- i. Who has an obligation?
- ii. What commitments or standards are supposed to be met?
- iii. What will show whether the commitments and standards have been met?
- iv. What are the consequences for misconduct or poor performance? Jobarteh, (2012).

Accountability and transparency have been identified as twin concepts that are necessary pre-conditions for just governance and democracy which helps to ensure that government power is exercised according to the will of the citizenry. Given the above explanations, when can we say that there is just or fair governance in a country such a Nigeria? Answer to this question, could be viewed from these four perspectives:

- When the State uses investments and scarce resources reasonably for the benefit of all citizens, and most especially for the most disadvantaged.
- When the State operates by a clear set of rules, which are considered just and fair by most citizens.
- When the State treats citizens with respect and inform citizens about what it is doing or not doing
- When the State allows citizens to choose who leads them and have a say about what they need and want from government Jobarteh, (2012; paraphrased).

➤ *Stability*

Radio serves as a unifying force by providing a forum for informed debates in times of political conflict. Informed and responsible citizens contribute to the stability of the country.

➤ *Fairness*

The essential quality of the press is to be fair and just. Radio in Nepal has always attempted to be fair in reporting events during times of upheaval and political uncertainty.

➤ *Human rights*

Respect for human rights is the hallmark of every democracy. In a country like Nepal, there have been instances of violation of human rights by opposing sides in a conflict. Radio has been quick to report on human rights violations on numerous occasions. Ensuring human rights leads to good governance. Radio is the most effective tool to draw the attention of the concerned authorities as well as the international community to human rights issues. All the above contribute to ensuring effective government, and radio lies at the heart of good governance. Observance of the requirements for neutrality, upholding balance and impartiality, educating the public on governance issues and exposing malpractices should be the guiding principles for radio broadcasters.

There have been times when the media in Nepal resorted to sensationalism in reporting crime and criminal activities. Reporting ethnic or religious riots must be undertaken with caution, always keeping ethical values in mind. It is the duty of the media to be balanced and also to ensure that the consequences of the reporting do not disturb law and order or ferment unrest. Desperate attempts by competing media to win audiences through sensational reporting should not be encouraged.

In conclusion, I wish to stress the need for radio to evolve in order to fulfill its function to ensure good governance. Radio must promote and help enforce human rights more assertively. It must strive to maintain its role as a public watchdog. The media should neither doctor facts nor resort to reporting along partisan lines. It cannot be expected to report anything but the truth. It is precisely this role -- and the responsibility that comes

with it -- which radio needs to assume. It is a development which the government needs to accept, and further facilitate.

➤ *Rule of law*

The rule of law is the foundation of Good Governance. Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. The rule of law can be understood both as a set of practices which allow the law to perform a mediating role between various stake holders in society and as a normative standard invoked by members of society that demonstrate their assent to this principle (UNESCO, 2005). Indeed the obvious demonstration of absence of Good Governance is the presence of arbitrariness and disregard for the rule of law. The rule of law is best seen as an ideal where impartial enforcement of laws is enthroned in every sector of the society. In the enforcement of the rule of law the media again plays a crucial role as the sector of the society most able to promote vigilance towards the rule of law, through fostering investigative journalism, promoting the openness of all the institutions that are relevant in ensuring that the rule of law is respected in the society. Citizens must understand for instance that the rule of law consists of a set of institutions, laws and practices that are established to prevent the arbitrary exercise of power.

➤ *Responsiveness*

Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe, by responding to the grievances, needs and aspirations of the citizens. As we mentioned earlier, the media act as a feedback mechanism where the public's are given the opportunity to bring their plight to the notice of the State. Often times than not the media do this through various media campaigns that serve to remind the State of their obligations to the public. The vigilance and capacity of the media are particularly important in tracking the availability and accessibility of services to various segments of the public

➤ *Consensus oriented*

There are several actors as well as many view points in a given society. Good Governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community. It is in this area that the core functions of the media are experienced- The provision of information, education and enlightenment to the citizenry; so that they can

effectively make informed decisions and take actions resulting thereof in the good of the society.

In doing this, the media help to mobilize the citizen to achieve development programmes of the country. The mass media's role in mobilizing Nigerians for the 2006 census could be seen as a good case in point. The census took place between 21st and 27th of March, 2006. The media's role was apparent before, during and after the head count. The National Population Census (NPC) collaborated with the mass media to "ensure a full-scale participation in the census exercise" Ojete, (2008). One way the media provided meaningful information and education on the census is via editorials, news, headlines and other journalistic genres (Ojete, Ibid).

➤ *Equity and inclusiveness*

A society's well being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and not excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, particularly the most vulnerable, to have opportunities to improve and/or maintain their well being. The media's role in this regard is very simple-giving balanced and fair coverage to all issues in a manner that diverse voices and opinions will be represented. It is perhaps in this function that the Nigerian media have been greatly faulted. The Nigerian media have been accused of prejudice in reporting and treating issues of public concern.

➤ *Effectiveness and efficiency*

Good Governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of Good Governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment. Effectiveness and efficiency means that state institutions are functioning optimally according to the rule of law, thus tremendously enhancing the overall effectiveness of government. Although the media cannot in themselves alone ensure effectiveness and efficiency of all the institution in the society. However, the media can help keep the different institutions and administrators on their toes by readily and regularly reporting cases of inefficiency and other related vices in the system. This way inefficiency in public institutions, organizations and government will be greatly reduced. The media through development of media campaigns, documentaries, editorial comments and other platforms of criticism can spotlight institutions and practices that are inefficient and unproductive.

This lecture has demonstrated how the Nigerian press/media have contributed in trying to enthrone Good Governance in the country. Critics of the media/press points to the gaps and areas of weakness which this paper acknowledged, however it is the

submission of this paper that the media/press plays an indispensable role in ensuring good governance in any society and that the Nigerian press/media in this regard could be adjudged as having performed fairly well even though there are still gaps which other researchers are encouraged to fill.

e) *Concluding Remarks*

Despite acknowledging the various ways the Nigerian press/media have attempted to foster good governance, the fact remains that there are still critical issues that the Nigerian press/media need to deal with. Some of the more obvious and vital once will be highlighted. Nigerian journalists, oftentimes tend to over censor themselves for fear of reprisals, particularly the public media. This leads to factual inexactitude. A situation where information are often incomplete or deliberately down played or some facts missing. Some of the other challenges for the Nigerian media/press include: the issue of poor remuneration for the journalists; the polarization of the media along North - South divide that pervades Nigerian politics; ownership influence that affects media stand on issues, the private media, as well as the public media have often been accused of reflecting the ideological and political considerations of the proprietors ;the issue of protocol journalism in which highly placed public officials are deliberately shielded from embarrassing questions and investigations from the media in return for some consideration for the media Jibo, (2003); extreme commercialization of news; partisan, biased or ethnic reporting of events Olukotun, (2000) and the practice of black mail journalism. See Dunu, (2013).

To what extent does free and independent media contribute to good governance and what are the consequences for human development? This lecture examined the results of a cross-sectional comparison analysing the impact of press freedom on multiple indicators of democracy and good governance. The paper seeks to explain and argue that, where the media/press functions effectively as a watch-dog, a civic forum and an agenda-setter, it helps to promote democracy, good governance and thus human development. Findings support claims that the free press is important, both intrinsically and instrumentally, as a major component of democracy, good governance and human development.

The growth of the free press and the process of democratization are thought to enhance each other. It is claimed that:

- i. The transition from autocracy opens up the media to private ownership, broadens access to the media, and reduces government control of information;
- ii. The media then directly contributes to democratization and governance by serving as a watch-dog (promoting accountability and

- transparency), a civic forum (allowing multiple voices to be heard) and an agenda-setter (highlighting social problems);
- iii. Political freedoms and a free press contribute indirectly to human development by encouraging government responsiveness to public concerns. There is however a lack of evidence and relatively little comparative research to support these claims. Furthermore, most existing research focuses on the impact of media access, rather than on that of press freedom.

The paper finds that the free press is significantly associated with levels of democracy, irrespective of the indicator of democracy used. (The impact of media/press liberalization was the most consistent predictor of democracy, and was even stronger than wealth.) Further, countries where much of the public has access to the free press usually have greater political stability, rule of law, government efficiency in the policy process, regulatory quality, and the least corruption. Other findings relate to the global distribution of press freedom includes:

- There are significant regional variations, with the highest levels of press freedom found in industrialized nations (including the most affluent economies and longest-standing democracies). Latin America and South-East Asia enjoy relatively high levels of press freedom, while Arab states appear to have the lowest levels.
- There are also considerable variations within Latin America, Africa and Asia. Some countries with low levels of economic development have high levels of press freedom such as Benin and Mali. See Noris, (2006, Pp 1 – 26).

A free and independent media is integral to the process of democratisation and good governance and ultimately to human development. This lecture attempted to highlight both the direct and indirect benefits of the free press on human development, other studies indicate the plausibility of the assumption that improvements in democracy and good governance contribute indirectly to poverty alleviation by making governments more accountable and responsive to need.

Good Governance requires the understanding and participation of every member of the society. However, it has been observed that for governance to be just and democratic, leaders more than any other sector of the society need to use their power responsibly and for the greater good. Systems and procedures need to be in place that impose restraints on power and encourage government officials to act in the public's best interests. The media/press, their roles, channels and contents, are considered powerful enough to make this achievement a reality. The Nigerian media/press as exemplified by the NUJ have been in the vanguard for

the promotion and sustenance of the democracy we now have in the country, even the struggle for independence was pioneered and fought for by the Nigerian media/press. But a great number of existing media channels in the country need to take up the responsibility of adequately engendering better governance in our democratic polity. As the institution mandated to hold those in governance accountable, the Nigerian media/press can effectively achieve this if they apply the basic principles of patriotism, accountability, transparency and objectivity in the discharge of their duties as well as uphold the sanctity of truth and fairness at all times.

I thank you all, once again for given the opportunity to share ideas with you and may God bless you for your kind attention please.

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