

# Assessing the Role and Capacity of Civil Society Organisations in Holding Local Government Accountable in Uganda

**D J Fourie**

School of Public Management and Administration  
University of Pretoria

**U Kakumba**

College of Business and Management Sciences Kampala, Uganda

## ABSTRACT

*Decentralised local government is arguably the most direct mechanism of ensuring that the local leaders are accountable to the citizens, in form of downward accountability. Civil society participation is thus seen as a rationale to foster civic competence and empowerment that enables civil society to hold local governments to account. However, for the civil society to succeed in this critical role, they must have strong and viable institutional capacity and organisational arrangements, as well as the enabling legislative and operational environment.*

*This article presents results of a fieldwork and literature study conducted to evaluate the role and capacity of civil society in holding local governments (LGs) accountable in Uganda. The study revealed that the colonial/historical ills still cast a shadow over the current state and character of local civil society organisations (CSOs) in Uganda, as it heralds mixed fortunes. The capacity of CSOs to hold government to account is affected by, their inter-organisational deficiencies, the regulatory regime, the CSO elite-urban capture, the CSO-donor relations, and the desire by most CSOs to engage in business/profit contracts with government that makes it easier to *inter alia* complement the work of government than questioning it. The article reviews interventions and mechanisms to enhance the capacity of CSOs to promote accountability on the local government level in Uganda.*

## INTRODUCTION

Recurrent debate on governance and local development continues to laud the role of civil society in fostering accountability and performance of public agencies in service delivery. It is argued that, opening up the frontiers of the state and public bureaucracies to civil society



access and scrutiny heralds the imperatives of good governance; whereby the civil society organisations (CSOs) can monitor, probe and redirect government actions in spearheading the fight against abuse of public authority and resources (ADB 2005).

The doctrine of accountability places a liability and an obligation on public functionaries (elected political office bearers and appointed officials) to give satisfactory explanation to the public (tax payers) over the exercise of power, authority and resources entrusted to them. The *Local Governments Act, 1997* requires all LGs to publicise fiscal transfers they receive from the centre, and many of them have complied with this requirement. The districts have established units of management support services, which sometimes, incorporate CSOs, parish and village members to undertake monitoring and evaluation of service delivery to support downward accountability.

However, the accountability relationships and trends that exist in LGs favour upward control systems, as opposed to downward accountability to the citizenry (Kakumba 2010). The upward accountability trend is facilitated by the legislative and operational framework where the central government still determines the overall policy outlook and financial capacity of LGs through central grant transfers that account for 90% of local budgets. While the central government CG transfers to districts may not necessarily mean lack of local autonomy and accountability to the communities, the vulnerable financial state of LGs renders them mere appendages of the central government structures resulting in their allegiance being more inclined to the centre.

Local governments in Uganda are a subject of repeated controversy over the unending reported cases of malfeasance, abuse of public authority and resources (see reports: OAG 2007, 2008; IG 2007, 2009; NIS 2008). The National Integrity Survey (NIS 2008) reported increasing community unhappiness over high levels of corruption cases in LGs. The survey reported that local councillors spend so much money during election campaigns, which they must seek to recover, at all cost, when they get into power. The district tendering processes were particularly singled out as avenues through which local officials abuse their power. The community assessments suggested that the size of inducements paid to those awarding contracts – which can be as high as 50% of the contract price – could seriously undermine the capacity of the contractors to deliver quality service.

The above phenomena necessitated an assessment of the role and capacity of CSOs, which have been touted as vanguards of local accountability and development. CSOs in Uganda represent various agendas that include: human rights organisations; anti-corruption coalitions; gender-based groups; child-focussed groups; faith-based institutions; health, education, conflict and peace-building coalitions; and a number of national networks. These are primarily categorised as NGOs, trade unions, CBOs, community groups, and professional associations. The preoccupation of these CSOs involves aggregating the interests of their constituencies and bargaining with government and donors to facilitate the achievement of those interests. CSOs have umbrella networks and coalitions that provide such forums to their membership, where consensus is generated and expressed to policy makers to undertake policy priorities. Other roles undertaken by CSOs include charitable giving and collective community action through volunteering in building and maintenance of community facilities.

This article, *firstly*, provides insights into the historical orientation of civil society movement in Uganda, which have shaped the nature and character of the civil society organisation in contemporary times. This is followed *secondly* by examining the CSOs operational

environment to explore the factors that impinge on the CSO's capacity and role of *holding the local governments to account*. The interface between CSOs and external control agencies of the Office of Auditor-General and Inspectorate of Government was examined to establish how far the external interventions could have built the CSO capacity to enforce accountability.

## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The colonial era in Uganda dictated that the state was the overall provider of social services within the setup of an export-oriented economy based on small-holder agricultural producers. A limited but highly regulated number of people organised in groups were encouraged, with CSOs mainly consisting of cooperative unions of export crop growers, trade associations, mission-founded schools and hospital associations, and other, basically charitable organisations. The period following World War II, as was the case elsewhere in colonised territories saw heightened nationalistic struggles against colonial rule. In Uganda such civil society groups promptly positioned themselves as agents of political agitation for independence. Some CSOs indeed gave rise to pre-independence political parties (De Coninck 2004; Oloka-Onyanggo and Barya 1997).

After independence in 1962, the peasant cooperative societies and trade union were taken over as government bureaucracies – enmeshing the *state* and *civil society* – and consequently making the distinction between the civil society and government rather blurred (DENIVA 2006:19). The Obote regime (1966-71) and Idd Amin's (1971-79) integrated mission-founded schools within the state system; banned political parties and other forms of political dissent; abolished traditional kingdoms; and henceforth confined CSO activity to charity, health service delivery and other welfare services. The second Obote regime (1980-85) tightened the grip on civil society activities as the ensuing political turmoil only weakened civil society, which was either cowed by state supervision, politicised, or remained complacent in accordance with a non-confrontational relationship with the state (De Coninck 2004).

The relative freedom and reconstruction ushered in by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government after 1986 witnessed the emergence of a high number of indigenous CSOs. The neo-liberal framework of structural adjustment programme (SAP) spearheaded by the IMF/World Bank in 1980s and 90s worked in tandem to emphasise decentralised structures and citizen participation, under which civil society advocacy gained great momentum. This followed strong donor support for public sector reforms and later preference for the donors to channel their financial support directly to NGOs, because they were considered *less corrupt*, more efficient and closer to the community (DENIVA 2006:20). The establishment of the village-based local councils (LCs) after 1986 suited the renewed CSO activity, as the subsequent decentralisation policy, launched in 1992, enabled the CSO's the ability to impose some pressure on the state authorities, especially at the local level.

What can be learned from this historical background is that:

- the highly discriminative system of colonial rule set the pace for CSOs to be seen as vanguards of societal action against any forms of marginalisation inflicted by the state;
- the political leaderships in the newly independent state (which ironically grew out of CSO action) could not trust CSOs, as they were seen as potential political opposition groups, and were, thus subjected to major restrictions in their operations;



- the historical episodes set the precedence for undemocratic orientations that have seen CSOs being distrusted and highly restricted by the subsequent regimes in Uganda;
- a large number of NGOs have developed due to the available donor funds – in a bid to have a *bite* on a typical *donor bonanza* – more than the need to pursue the socio-economic wellbeing of their constituencies.

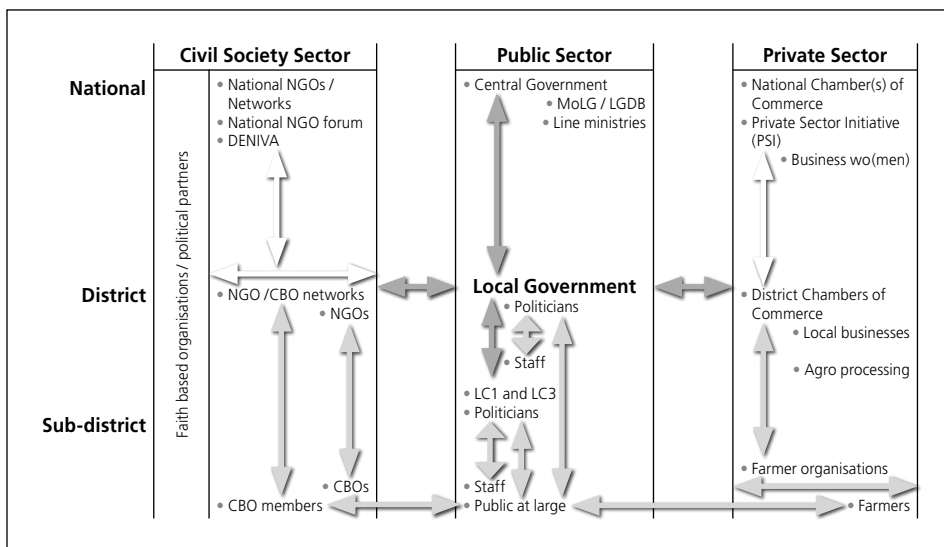
## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CSOs play a two-dimensional role in local government. On one hand CSOs, particularly NGOs and CBOs are often involved in the implementation of programmes funded by government; and on the other hand, they form a countervailing force that is necessary in providing checks and balances to public sector agencies. Other than the conventional service areas such as health, education and community development, CSOs in Uganda are increasingly getting involved in advocacy roles and oversight of local government.

The Poverty Action Fund (PAF) monitoring committees that have been established in several districts to oversee poverty eradication expenditures, have enlisted civil society groups in ensuring that effective resource utilisation is adhered to. The formation of health and education management committees, farmers’ forums and water resource committees are part of the effort to enlist civil society participation and to procure a strong accountability relationship between service providers and users within the framework of decentralisation.

The nature of the relationship between the civil society, the public sector and the private sector has a bearing on establishing accountability and sustainability of quality service delivery. The illustrative model of local government presupposes that communities are represented by CSOs, who in conjunction with the elected political representatives oversee public sector performance and other private sector agencies contracted to satisfy the local

**Figure 1 Illustrative Model of Local Governance**



Source JARD, 2004 Ministry of Local Government

community needs and priorities. The relationship between the civil society and other stakeholders is described in the model in Figure 1.

Figure 1 defines relationships within and across each of the pillars – the civil society sector (i.e. NGOs, CBOs, the faith based organisations and political parties), the public sector and the private sector. It shows a crucial positioning of local governments between central government and the population, while interacting, at the district level, with the CSO sector on the one hand, and the private sector on the other (see bold vertical and horizontal arrows). It also shows that for each of the three pillars, different levels can be clearly distinguished within the pillar, i.e. central government level, the district (LC-5) level and the sub district levels (LC-4 to LC-1 and finally the households that make up the population).

With regard to the position of NGOs and CBOs, the figure shows that the constituent units of LGs form the membership of the civil society organisations, and that the CSOs have the possibility of direct contact with LGs at the HLG-level, but also the indirect channel of influencing local government performance, i.e. through their members and their relation to the elected local representatives.

A mixed picture emerges when examining the role and character of Uganda's civil society. On one hand, the increased number and membership to various forms of community and mutual help groups across the rural life in a largely agrarian country implies a prevalent socially inclusive arrangement with extensive civil society participation. Yet, on the other hand, as echoed by members of the national Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) Forum, such participation does not necessarily mean active involvement in policy decision-making, nor does it enable the ability to influence state action and programmes to represent the vast citizen interest (interview, NGO Forum, March 2010). This impasse is often highlighted as a major weakness of Uganda's civil society and the inability to effectively check the state and public sector excesses. It has also been linked to the country's history of civil strife and repressive regimes. The low political activism of CSOs in Uganda is attributed to the high restrictions imposed on them during the colonial era, which have provided a precedent in design that confines CSO work to largely social welfare and service delivery.

The *Civil Society Index (CSI)* Report for Uganda, 2006 indicated an environment that is *disabling* rather than *enabling*, after analysing the overall political, social, economic and legal environment under which the civil society exists and operates (DENIVA 2006). While fundamental freedoms were enshrined in the Constitution of Uganda (1995), the CSI established that political and civil rights, information rights and press freedom were not always respected, as the opening up of political competition to allow multi-party politics during 2005 constitutional amendment is a recent phenomenon, marred by intolerance and uncertainties.

## OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND CHALLENGES OF CSOS

It should be noted that the rationale for devolving political power and responsibility to the local governments in Uganda was to empower the population through their popularly elected local councils. Thus they could effectively participate in the governance of their areas. Over time, however, this cardinal goal of decentralisation seems to be elusive. According to the JARD (2006:11),



*there has been considerably less community grip on the civil society's role in raising resources for development, demanding accountability from the leaders, participating in planning and budgeting and taking charge of choice of their leaders without expecting monetary and other rewards at the time of elections.*

Whereas the processes of policy formulation, planning, and implementation have been opened up to civil society to participate at the district and lower levels of local government, there has hardly been active involvement of civil society in the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of monitoring information in service delivery (JARD 2004:3). As a result, the practical arrangements of civil society participation were reported to be less responsive to the needs and rights of, especially the poor community members. There are several operational challenges that have affected CSOs' ability to *hold the government to account*, which are explored below.

## **Regulatory environment**

The legal and regulatory environment for civil society was reported to be disabling due to the rather cumbersome and elaborate procedures for registering CSOs, which, according to the umbrella CSO agency, might even soon be tightened. The CSO representatives interviewed reported that the *space* within which they operate was continuously being restricted by government agencies. Controlling space is reportedly done by demanding multiple registrations and accreditation of CSOs at various levels, which make their operations costly in terms of money and time. Registration can be denied or delayed, as it was reportedly in the case for the National NGO Forum, whose registration took four years and the reasons were never made clear. This is coupled with the tax requirements imposed on CSOs.

An earlier report by DENIVA (2006) described the regulatory restrictions in the form of "government's ambivalent attitude on what constitutes allowable advocacy activities for CSOs, especially when they stray into what it considers the political arena". As a result, most CSO activity concentrates on service delivery and citizens' economic and social welfarism – a sphere of operation where the state feels little challenged – as opposed to the CSO advocacy role and holding government accountable, where the government's image can apparently be *dent*ed by reports that implicate government officials of impropriety.

## **Enmeshing civil society with the state**

The engagement of CSOs by local government agencies, especially in contracting service delivery is reported to have closely *enmeshed* the civil society with the state, thereby making the demarcation between civil society and government rather blurred. Lister and Nyamugasira (2003:96) pointed out that "the boundaries between public and private, legal and illegal, even state and society, are vague" and as a consequence there are high levels of corruption and an elevated importance for personal contacts and networks in relation between civil society and state organs. This explains why CSOs are often praised by the state agencies, not necessarily for acting as instruments for checking the latter's excesses and accountability, but for their *facilitative role* in alleviating poverty, improving conditions of health and education.

Whereas there is some engagement of CSOs by government in policy processes, the basis on which it takes place was reported to be unclear or contradictory. The district officials and CSO representatives interviewed related that there is little discussion or no clarity regarding which groups constitute legitimate participants in policy processes. It was reported that inclusion in policy process is very unpredictable and civil society often relates with government agencies through patronage and clientelism means. This revelation collaborates with the earlier findings of Lister and Nyamugasira (2003), who conclude that participation in the policy processes is by invitation from government officials, who often choose to exclude those CSOs known to be critical in policy formulation process.

## **Business/pecuniary interests**

The pursuit of business interests through contracting-out of service delivery continues to undermine the conventional focus of CSOs that is based on non-profit orientation. This culture is prompted by the desire on the part of CSOs to complement the work of government, rather than questioning it, mainly because they find it beneficial when they win contracts from government for service delivery work. CSOs are scared to challenge government agencies and risk cultivating an adversarial relationship in fear of “biting the hand that feeds” them (interview, NGO Forum, March 2010). According to De Coninck (2004) many individuals have turned to creating CSOs as a means of employment. “CSOs, thus have in effect taken a dual mandate: that of ensuring the leader’s/founder’s own personal survival (and that of their extended families) as well as that of alleviating poverty in their respective communities” (De Coninck 2004).

## **Urban-elite capture**

While there have been attempts to encourage especially the NGOs to enlist the less well-off communities, they are reported to be dominated by the elite and urban middle class. This has increased doubts as to whether such organisations can effectively represent a society that is predominantly agrarian. The DENIVA (2006) study reiterated several researches that found the “upper class” to be dominating the leadership of many CSOs, especially the NGOs. The NGO survey carried out in 2003 showed that, within the district local governments, NGOs were urban-based or urban-oriented, and one fifth was located in Kampala (DENIVA 2006:31). This ambivalence was earlier, aptly put by Mamdani (1996) as reflected in Oloka-Onyango and Barya (1997:121), with particular reference to NGOs:

*NGOs, in my opinion, are a mixed blessing whose main effect is to worsen our dilemma. On the positive side, the proliferation of hundreds of NGOs has liberated middle class entrepreneurial talent; but on the negative side, it has left NGOs wholly unaccountable to the people at home. An NGO is not like a cooperative. In a cooperative, members have the right to hold their leaders accountable. The intended beneficiaries of an NGO are not its members. They receive a charity, not a right. An NGO is accountable not to the people it intends to benefit, but to those who finance it, the overseas donors.*

From the above observations, one could offer salutation to the growth of CSOs in Uganda, but with some caution, if not outright trepidation. Rugambwa (2004) argues that CSOs’



weak internal structure and lack of broad representation of the *popular* voice often make them susceptible to manipulation and renders their position rather superficial in pursuing accountability. Evidently, this orientation cannot suit the CSOs expected role of pulling forth accountability from others, when they do not exercise the virtue themselves.

## Donor drive

The donor factor looms over the mushrooming numbers of CSOs across the country, and particularly in hitherto no-go areas of societal interest. The growth of civil society action on issues such as environment, women, population, and governance have over time, been a response to the donor interest in those areas and the funding that follows it. This means that a number of CSOs have sprung up, not under the conviction that they could play a genuine role in enforcing better performance from public sector agencies, but for the sake of *clinching a piece* from the *donor prize*. Respondents from DENIVA reported that, NGOs must depend on foreign funds for over 80% of their activities, to which local contributions can only cover a paltry 2,5%.

Foreign aid has been at the centre of not only defining the activism and methodology of CSO activities in Uganda, but has also been responsible for the factional differences and conflicts within CSOs. For example, in the Poverty Reduction Strategic Papers (PRSP) framework which facilitated donor support through a sector-wide approach (SWAP), donors required CSOs to play sub-contracted agents of government, in order to access donor funds through sectoral ministries to provide services to communities. While this architecture of aid recognised the role of CSOs in procuring accountability, they (CSOs) acted primarily as sub-contractors of government who could provide services to community (Lister and Nyamugasira 2003).

The above issues form the operational environment and factors that affect the CSOs capacity to *hold the government accountable*. Therefore, they are unable to effectively play their anticipated role of promoting accountability in local government.

## Coordination and networking

Poor coordination and networking arrangements of most CSO activities create some confusion and make it difficult for external agencies to work with the CSOs. Often, individual CSOs trade accusations and counter accusations with their umbrella bodies whom they accuse of poor communication and coordination. However, the umbrella bodies like the NGO Forum and DENIVA also allege that some individual CSO member groups, sometimes, make unrealistic demands of material expectations from their network bodies. As a result, some CSOs are unwilling to join networks or abandon them for lack of benefits, duplication of work, and dominance by powerful members (DENIVA 2006). Such episodes display unnecessary competition and bickering amongst the CSOs, which undermine their credibility in the eyes of the different stakeholders in the fight against public sector wastefulness.

## Financing difficulties

The financing difficulties of CSOs render them dependant on sources that increase their vulnerability to compromise the rather good virtues that they stand for. *Firstly*, the looming



levels of poverty make it difficult for the CSOs to raise meaningful membership fees from their folks, and hence a high degree of donor dependence and accountability towards them, rather than to the members. *Secondly*, the need to stay afloat has sent many CSOs to seek handouts from governmental bodies like the district local governments, whom they are ironically supposed to monitor and demand accountability on behalf of the citizenry. *Thirdly*, CSO's engagement in contracting-out of service delivery, whatever its worth, makes them pursuers of business interests and appendages of the local government establishment, with less enthusiasm in promoting strong bonds with the community and downward accountability.

## Low civic competence

Whereas decentralisation has increased civic awareness and popular political participation of the masses in electing local leaders, there is still a lack of a vibrant civil society when it comes to demanding accountability for service delivery from local government officials (Kakumba 2010). In Uganda for example, cases of low civic competence, is exacerbated by widespread poverty and illiteracy in the countryside. More confusion is created by the existence and proliferation of too many, too small and sharply divided CSOs with *pseudo* pro-people agendas, which often makes it difficult for the public to know who is capable of handling their interests effectively.

## Social perceptions

What has come out from the community appraisals undertaken by the IG survey is that, there is a tendency by various sections in the civil society to regard bribes, as a form of *gratification* and *appreciation of a good gesture* extended to them by public officials (NIS 2008). Indeed society has lived with the maladies of public sector wastefulness for a long time and somehow seems to have accepted it, probably as a way of life. The long history of repression, deprivation, and centralised regimes in poor countries reinforce the stereotype that society views public service provision as a *favour* to the community. Likewise, some cultural practices that view the extension of tributes to those elevated in leadership positions and status as a sign of *respect* and *good manners*, only serve to support the reluctance to condemn certain acts of corruption.

## INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY

One of the major factors constraining community participation in Uganda's local government is the lack of civic competence caused by low levels of awareness (Kakumba 2010). This makes the public unable to demand quality services and to hold their leaders accountable in local government. Building capacity for civic competence, thus, requires civil society to be sensitised about their rights and role, and empowered through participation in policy decision-making.

Several intervention mechanisms have been undertaken by the Inspectorate of Government (IG) to promote awareness and civic competence among the public (civil society). In particular



the IG has a duty to foster the elimination of corruption, abuse of authority and of public office (Constitution of Uganda, 1995 [Art. 225]). Some of the interventions made by the IG include: media awareness programmes, integrity surveys, monitoring and evaluation, inter-agency forum, and sensitisation workshops.

## **Public awareness programmes**

Public awareness programmes have been undertaken by the IG through: radio and television programmes; publication of booklets and flyers; and newspaper inserts advertisements, to educate the public about the nature and evils of corruption. During 2005-2008, the public awareness programmes were funded by the African Development Bank through the Institutional Support Project for Good Governance. Another form of public awareness that targets the youth in academic institutions has given rise to the formation of integrity clubs, especially at universities, and whose launching is fully supported by the Inspectorate of Government (IG-Report 2009).

These programmes continue to encourage the public to report corrupt practices and to create dialogue and interaction with the IG in promoting public sector accountability. Representatives from civil society reported that these media programmes have indeed made a positive impact on informing the civil society about its role in promoting accountability and effective service delivery.

Although the public awareness programmes have indeed increased IG intervention, several district respondents noted that their visibility and accessibility are still very low, especially in upcountry localities. Gregory and Giddings (2000:5) argue that “a complaint handling mechanism is likely to be useless if potential complainants are unaware of its existence and ignorant of its functions; and it can be of equally less value if it is difficult to reach”. Thus the IG, which operates as Uganda’s Ombudsman, must strive to be understood and be accessible to various communities, if it is to expedite its arbitration role in the public realm effectively.

## **Community/Household surveys, monitoring and evaluation**

Community/household surveys undertaken by the IG under the national integrity survey are perhaps the most significant of the external control interventions towards building the capacity of civil society in Uganda. It is an important mechanism of engaging civil society in monitoring and evaluation, and combating corruption in the country. The surveys that were carried out in 1998, 2003 and 2008 have helped to gauge the public perception about corruption, which has formed the basis for identifying and dealing with the gaps that undermine accountability and effective resource utilisation. Public perceptions were generated on issues like bribery, nepotism, forms and causes of corruption, quality of service delivery.

According to the community survey of 2008, the proportion of those who admitted to have paid bribes in the course of their contacts with government service providers was small, but conversely, over 80% of respondents admitted to the general view that bribery was a common occurrence (NIS 2008). It implies that respondents were reluctant to admit to having paid bribes, but were quick to acknowledge its existence in general terms. This fact was reinforced by the admission from respondents that they only, but occasionally received receipts in respect of payments made to local authorities. Such surveys that give opportunity

for engagement between the external control agencies and civil society have created a critical informative exchange that strengthens civil society awareness of the dilemmas of public service provision and the available options of dealing with them.

## Inter-agency forum

The inter-agency forums spearheaded by the external control agencies of the IG and OAG present an important intervention and avenue through which representatives of civil society groups are enlisted in combating public resource wastefulness. The most notable CSO coalitions in these forums include the Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda (ACCU), Transparency Uganda Chapter, and the Uganda Debt Network. These forums facilitate interaction and dialogue among the various stakeholder agencies in the fight against graft. They often pass resolutions that either pronounce public condemnation of any act of public resource abuse, or make demands and recommendations that influence policy-decision making and reform.

One notable example of the inter-agency resolutions that has informed policy is the establishment of the special Anti-corruption Court, which was inaugurated in 2010. The other influence of this forum on policy was the demand to banish the highly corrupt District Tender Boards (DTB), upon which a new legal instrument was recently established to replace them with *contracts committees*. The committees currently constitute the top civil servants and technical officials, as opposed to the earlier arrangement where local politicians nominated their cronies on DTBs to extend clienteles and perpetuate shady business deals. The civil servants are bound by the Public Service Standing Orders and a wide range of disciplinary measures if they did not act properly, unlike local politicians who would usually walk scot-free, after being implicated in tendering scandals.

## Training and capacity building

A number of external agencies including international organisations, consultancy firms and academic institutions carry out capacity-building programmes for CSOs. However, there is a concern that most of these initiatives are limited to the urban-based and elite NGOs. This explains why the regional survey respondents gave a low score when asked about the existing infrastructure for supporting CSOs in capacity building in Uganda, with 57% said it was very limited, 30% indicated moderate, and only 13% indicated that the existing infrastructure was at least significant enough to provide capacity building (DENIVA, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

The above presentation and discussion have revealed far-reaching operational dilemmas associated with the civil society in Uganda. These include the enmeshing and control of CSO activity within the state-governmental framework; the dependence of CSOs on donor support, coupled with their proliferation sometimes based on the drive for donor funding; lack of coordination between them; their pursuit of short term rather than long term perspectives; and significant questions relating to their internal democracy, accountability



and transparency. These factors create doubt on their capability to foster accountability in the public sector. It also creates suspicion and difficulty for CSOs to be trusted and supported by other external control agencies and stakeholders in the struggle against public sector decadence. The evaluation has nonetheless indicated promising interventions, especially from the external agencies of the IG and OAG that have undertaken awareness programmes, training and capacity building, community surveys, which should be enhanced to support civil society capacity and civic competence.

Society has lived with the maladies of public sector wastefulness for a long time, they somehow, seem to have accepted it probably as a way of life, the challenge therefore, remains on how to enlist and sustain all stakeholder support, especially the civil society in the fight against abuse of public authority and resource misuse. It remains an equally big question as to whether civil society in Uganda should confine itself to a somewhat docile role, focusing on service delivery and sub-contracting from government, or whether it will reorient its capacity to quell the socio-economic and political make-up of Uganda, to restate its position as a vanguard of accountability in local government.

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## Focus Group Discussion

National NGO Forum, March 2010 at Forum offices, Muyenga-Kabalagala, Kampala.

## AUTHORS' CONTACT DETAILS

Prof. D J Fourie

E-mail: [prof.djfourie@up.ac.za](mailto:prof.djfourie@up.ac.za)

Prof. U Kakumba

E-mail: [ukakumba@fema.mak.ac.ug](mailto:ukakumba@fema.mak.ac.ug)  
[umarkakumba@yahoo.com](mailto:umarkakumba@yahoo.com)

