



Graduate School of Development Studies

Civil Society Participation in the Peace Recovery  
and Development Plan (PRDP) in Gulu District of  
Northern Uganda: A Prospective study to analyse  
the Contribution of Civil Society Organisations.

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# Contents

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <i>List of Figures</i>  | <i>vi</i>   |
| <i>List of Acronyms</i>   | <i>vii</i>  |
| <i>Abstract</i>   | <i>viii</i> |
| <b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>   | <b>1</b>    |
| 1.1 Background  | 1           |
| 1.2 Overview of PRDP  | 2           |
| 1.3 Relevance and Justification   | 4           |
| 1.4 Research Problem  | 5           |
| 1.5 Research Objectives/ Aims   | 5           |
| General Objective   | 5           |
| Specific Objectives   | 5           |
| 1.6 Research Questions:   | 5           |
| 1.7 Research Methods and Strategy   | 6           |
| Research Methods, Sources and Data Collection   | 6           |
| Gulu District   | 6           |
| Selection of Civil Society Organisations  | 6           |
| 1.8 Limitations of this Study   | 7           |
| <b>Chapter 2 Civil Society in Uganda</b>  | <b>9</b>    |
| 2.1 Defining Civil Society  | 9           |
| 2.2 Different types of Civil Society in Uganda  | 10          |
| 2.3 Historical Context of Civil Society in Uganda   | 13          |
| <b>Chapter 3 Understanding Civil Society Participation in Policy Processes</b>                      | <b>16</b>   |
| 3.1 Underlying Assumptions behind Civil Society Participation in Policy Processes                   | 16          |
| 3.2 Conceptualising the key actors that Civil Society Organisations Engage with in Policy Processes | 17          |
| 3.3 Conceptualising and Analysing Civil Society Participation in PRDP                               | 19          |
| 3.4 The Ladder of Participation   | 20          |
| <b>Chapter 4 Presentation and Discussion of Findings</b>  | <b>24</b>   |
| 4.1 Process to Determine what Civil Society Participates in PRDP                                    | 24          |
| 4.2 Civil Society Participation in different aspects of PRDP  | 26          |
| PRDP Design and Formulation   | 26          |
| PRDP Implementation   | 29          |
| PRDP Monitoring   | 30          |

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 4.3 Why are Civil Society Organisations Participating in PRDP?            | 32        |
| 4.4 Reasons why Government Encourages Civil Society Participation in PRDP | 34        |
| <b>Chapter 5 Reflections and Conclusions</b>                              | <b>37</b> |
| 5.1 Important Reflections   | 37        |
| 5.2 Conclusions   | 38        |
| <b>List of references</b>   | <b>40</b> |

## List of Figures

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1 Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation according to Arnstein (1969) ..... | 21 |
|--|----|

## List of Acronyms

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| CAO               | Chief Administrative Officer  |
| CBOs              | Community Based Organisations   |
| CDRN              | Community Development Resource Centre                                 |
| CRS               | Catholic Relief Services  |
| CS                | Civil Society   |
| CSO               | Civil Society Organisation  |
| CSOPNU            | Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda              |
| DENIVA            | Development Network of Indigenous and Voluntary Associations.         |
| DfID              | Department for International Development                              |
| DPs               | Development Partners  |
| EHAP              | Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan                                    |
| GoU               | Government of Uganda  |
| IMF               | International Monetary Fund   |
| IMTC              | Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee                                 |
| INGOs             | International Non Government Organisations                            |
| KIDD              | Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Plan                  |
| LDCs              | Low Developing Country  |
| LG                | Local Government  |
| LRM/A             | Lord's Resistance Movement/Army                                       |
| MoU               | Memorandum of Understanding   |
| NAADS             | National Agriculture Advisory Services                                |
| NGOs              | Non-Governmental Organisation   |
| NRM               | National Resistance Movement  |
| NUREP             | Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme                              |
| NURP              | Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme                              |
| NUSAF             | Northern Uganda Social Action Fund                                    |
| OPM               | Office of the Prime   |
| PMC               | PRDP Monitoring Committee   |
| PRDP              | Peace Recovery and Development Plan                                   |
| UBOS              | Uganda Bureau Of Statistics   |
| UNICEF            | United Children's Fund  |
| UNOCHA<br>Affairs | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian<br>Affairs |
| USAID             | United States Agency for International Development                    |
| WB                | World Bank  |
| Isis-WICCE        | Women International Cross Cultural Exchange                           |

## **Abstract**

This paper presents analysis of issues related to civil society (CS) participation in the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda as conceptualised by the government of Uganda (GoU). This was a prospective study considering that PRDP implementation started in July 2009 and will be completed in 2011. Gulu District was selected because it is one of the districts that were largely affected by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict and it is assumed that CS activities have been at the centre of interventions to deal with the conflict and recovery. The study explores different ways in which civil society organisations (CSOs) have participated in the process of PRDP and analyses the underlying reasons behind CS participation in PRDP. I rely on Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation to analyse the different aspects of CS participation. This paper argues that CS participation in PRDP is narrow, greatly manipulated and controlled by the government and highly influenced by the major foreign donors' agendas it may not influence the process to have empowered communities in northern Uganda.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

Globally, CS participation in the development process is considered part and parcel of the development processes by different actors as noted in Stiles (2000:32). There are various discussions of the concept CS about what it means or does not mean as Burnell (2009:69). The role of CS in development process is another contested arena as this study will show. This study shall contribute to the current debates about participation of CSOs in the current main framework of development using PRDP in Gulu district of Uganda as a case study.

## **Keywords**

Civil Society, Participation, Government



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

According to Norad (2008:15) the centre north (Amuru, Gulu, Nwoya, Kitgum and Pader), the Lango region (Amolatar, Apac, Dokolo, Lira, Oyam, Otuke, Alebtong, Kole), the Teso region (Amuria, Bukedea, Kaberamaido, Katakwi, Kumi, and Soroti) and the north-western districts (Adjumani, Arua, Koboko, Maracha-Terego, Moyo, Nebbi and Yumbe) have experienced conflicts of LRA, and/or raids from Karimojong tribes for a long time. Tindifa (2006: 12-24) explains that the relative marginalisation of northern Uganda follows a history of militancy, ethnicity, and political marginalisation proliferation of small arms among other political and economic factors.

International Crisis Group (2010:21) writes that following the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between Government of Uganda (GoU) and LRA in August 2006, the GoU with support from the donor community embarked on a process to develop a comprehensive three year framework and master plan known as the National Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda. Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) (2007:29-32) emphasises that this framework that was launched in September 2007 is considered to be a guideline for all stakeholder interventions for recovery and development of northern Uganda. However, its implementation was delayed until 2009/2010 fiscal year due lack of funds committed specifically by the government for PRDP (Mao 2009, International Crisis Group 2010:21).

The government assumes to work with all stakeholders including civil society (CS), in the entire process of PRDP in order to attain the recovery and development of the Northern Region as shown in (OPM 2007:31-32). However, there have been numerous debates and questions about the kind of CS participation in the government of Uganda policy processes as noted in (Dicklitch 1998: 99-102, Hearn 1999:3-5, Robinson and Friedman 2005:17-19). In this study, therefore I analyse CS participation in PRDP from the process of formulation in 2005 to implementation 2010 to understand how CSOs have participated or are participating in a government-driven PRDP process and the possible implications therein.

### 1.1 Background

Gulu district is situated in the Northern part of Uganda and is bordered by districts of Amuru in the west, Nwoya in the south west, Pader in the east, Kitgum in the north, Lira in the south east, and Oyam in the south as noted from Ministry of Local Government (2010). According to UNOCHA (2010), Gulu consists of 1 Municipality with four divisions, two counties, 11 Sub-counties and 69 parishes in the rural sub-counties and 291 villages. It is part of the centre north Acholiland that is said to have been the epicentre of the armed conflict between the Lord's Resistance Movement/Army (LRM/A) and the ruling government, that is the National Resistance Movement (NRM) as found in (Oxfam 2008: 7, Norad 2008: 15).

Several reasons have been given for the Northern Uganda conflict. For example, Dolan (2009: 39-45) recounts the British colonial strategy of divide and rule that pitted the southerners against the northerner, perpetuated by the post colonial politics, as the genesis of the northern Uganda conflict. Tindifa (2006: 11-40) details the different factors that caused a long term armed conflict in the north since Ugandan independence in 1962, such as tribal and regional divisions in politics, armed rebellion as an accepted means to express political grievances and the deep grievance against the NRM government by northern Ugandans due to economic marginalisation.

International Crisis Group (2008:1) observes that, although the final peace agreement between the LRA and the GoU has not yet been achieved, and despite the fact that the rebels are still active in the neighbouring countries, there has been improved security in Northern Uganda and the humanitarian situation has improved and several people have returned to their homes from the internally displaced camps since the signing of cessation of hostilities agreement in August 2006. The International Crisis Group (2008:1) further states that making the most of the peace process requires a complementary initiative by different stakeholders who among others include the State and Civil society.

International Crisis Group (2010:21-22) reflects that CSOs have been continuously intervened in northern Uganda, before the LRA conflict, during the conflict, rehabilitation and recovery in terms of service delivery and relief services, and calling on the government and the LRA to negotiate peace. However, OPM (2007:21) clearly observes that there had been little coherence between different actors in the prior programmes and interventions of different actors; and therefore one of the major objectives of PRDP emphasised by the government, was coordination of all interventions in the region so as to avoid duplication of services by different actors. This paper analyses how CSOs and GoU coordinate in the PRDP process and the consequent implications to the reconstruction and recovery of Northern Uganda.

Previously, the GoU put in place a number of less successful measures such as the National Internally Displaced Peoples (IDP) policy in (2004), the Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan (EHAP) in (2006), Northern Uganda Reconstruction Programme (NURP) in (1992), and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) aimed at enhancing the protection of the civilian population and bringing the region to normalcy as noted by (Norad 2008: 16, Beyond Juba Project 2008: 2). OPM (2007:20-22) observes that the previous programmes had challenges due to inadequate resource flows; lack of coherence, poor coordination; absence of strong local government structures; poor accountability systems; and their short term nature among others. PRDP is said to have learnt from past mistakes of having top-down programmes and therefore ensured a participatory process involving all the stakeholders including CSOs as stated in (OPM-PRDP document 2007: 18-22).

## **1.2 Overview of PRDP**

PRDP is an important government 3 year programme for the reconstruction and development of Northern Uganda after a persistent conflict

that left civilians in Gulu and Northern Uganda at large devastated (OPM 2007: 17). Beyond Juba Project (2008: 2) observed that PRDP was launched to help northern Uganda transition from war to peace and the drafting process began in June 2005, until a complete plan was launched in October 2007. Peace Recovery and Development Plan (2007: 18-20) asserts that an Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee (IMTC) under the leadership of the head of the Public Service; chaired by the Office of the Prime Minister's Permanent Secretary was established that spearheaded a 9 months consultation process with all the stakeholders at district and national level resulting in the PRDP.

According to OPM (2007: 32-34) PRDP is meant to be achieved through a set of coherent programmes in one organising framework that all stakeholders are required to adopt while implementing their programmes in the region. The prior programmes such as NUSAF, Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme (NUREP), Karamoja Integrated Disarmament and Development Plan (KIDD), National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS), among others are all realigned to PRDP objectives. The PRDP covers more than 40 districts from the initial 18 districts stretching from West Nile across Northern Uganda to Elgon Sub-region (Ministry of Local Government 2010). Given the large geographical coverage and limited resources, PPRD has been criticised by some for extending the NRM political agenda, and an ambitious plan but not necessarily fostering peace (International Crisis Group 2008:7, Oxfam 2008: 2).

According to OPM (2007: 32-34) PRDP is meant to be implemented under the following four strategic objectives and 14 programmes:

- *Consolidation of state authority:*

1. Facilitation of Peace Agreement Initiatives
2. Police Enhancement
3. Judicial Services Enhancement
4. Prisons enhancement
5. Restructuring Auxiliary Forces
6. Local Government Enhancement

- *Rebuilding and empowering communities:*

7. Emergency Assistance and Internally Displaced Persons
8. IDP return/Resttlement
9. Community Development Programme

- *Revitalization of the northern economy:*

10. Production and Marketing Enhancement
11. Infrastructure rehabilitation and urban improvement
12. Land, Environment and resource management

- *Peace building and reconciliation:*

13. Information Education and Communication and Counselling
14. Amnesty, Demobilisation, Reintegration of Reporters programme

OPM (2007: 103-105) shows the institutional framework of PRDP that includes the office of the Prime Minister (OPM) as the coordinator and manager of the framework, the Minister of State for Northern Uganda for the political supervision, policy and budget oversight is supposed to be done by the North-

ern Uganda Rehabilitation Committee, and a PRDP Monitoring Committee (PMC) under the leadership of OPM, in which stakeholders including all Development Partners (DPs) meet once every six months to discuss implementation of PRDP, as well as matters pertaining to the development of northern Uganda.

OPM (2007: 105) further shows that sector ministries and local governments are responsible for technical sector planning and coordination, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is responsible for the general management and coordination of the PRDP at the Local Government level and the CAO appoints the PRDP Liaison Officer whose task is to follow up on the implementation of the PRDP in close collaboration with all the stakeholders that are operating in the district. In Gulu district, the Town Clerk performs this task in close collaboration with the deputy CAO.

The GoU argues that extensive district consultations were carried out that incorporated local government, civil society organizations and key stakeholders in drawing up local development plans which fed into the PRDP and that the entire process was participatory in terms of decision making and; goals and realistic objective setting (OPM 2007:19-20). From the analysis of the framework, PRDP despite the emphasis on participation of all stakeholders is clearly a top-down plan. In this research I examined the different aspects of how CSOs are involved in PRDP to understand the power relations therein and I found that there is limited participation of CS as the findings will show.

### **1.3 Relevance and Justification**

There is a lot of emphasis on methodologies and mechanisms of participation and how they are supposed to work and less attention has been paid to what actually happens in practice, and to who takes part, on what basis, and with what resources-whether in terms of knowledge, material assets or social and political connections as noted by Cornwall (2002:2). Dagnino (2008: 57) observes that in most of the spaces that are open to the participation of CS in public policies, state actors are unwilling to share their decision making power with respect to the formulation of the public policies but instead prefer involving CSOs assume functions and responsibilities restricted to the implementation and execution of these policies, providing services, formerly considered to be duties of the state itself.

According to Burnell (2009:65-66) there is a deliberate concentration of support on 'modern' civil society-professionalized, non-governmental organisations involved in policy advocacy or lobby groups and service providers that resemble western exemplars at the expense of 'traditional' or informal groupings grounded in kinship or ethnic associations, clans, religious sects, and the wider fringes of social movements. This study aims at analysing what were the possible boundaries that defined what civil society to participate in PRDP, how they are participating and analyses the power relations involved in CS participation in PRD using Gulu district as a case study.

Tindifa (2006:4) purports that a multi-pronged political approach must be inclusive of all actors if reconstruction of northern Uganda is to be successful. The GoU agrees with the above view and further seems to support CS

and informal governance structures, such as traditional and religious leadership to demand more accountability, responsibility and transparency of local authority as found in OPM (2007:31-32). This was therefore a timely study to find out what was really happening in practice in terms of CS participation in PRDP and whether the CSOs are able to influence the process and to contribute to debates of civil society participation in the development process as a whole.

#### **1.4 Research Problem**

OPM (2007: 18-19) states that all levels of government, national, and international stakeholders including CS were consulted and the decisions were made in a participatory manner, and therefore, the plan was based on sound understanding of the needs of the population in the region and the perspectives of the stakeholders on the appropriate strategy to bring peace, rebuilding communities and revitalising the economy in the region. National Development Plan of the Republic of Uganda (2010: 66) acknowledges that participation of CS entails participation of the people; therefore the actions and plans of civil society should not be planned or dictated by the government.

This study focused on analyzing the participation of CS in a government plan (PRDP) which seemed to be top down, from the time of its design, formulation and implementation processes. The study intended to analyse the processes involved in civil society participation in PRDP to clearly examine whether the conceptualisation and practice of CS participation in the ways that it is done is likely to lead to a meaningful CS-GoU partnership for the recovery and reconstruction of Northern Uganda.

#### **1.5 Research Objectives/Aims**

##### ***General Objective***

The objective of this study was to analyse civil society participation in the PRDP process from 2005-2010 in Gulu District with the aim of critically examining participation from the conception of GoU in relation to development and peace recovery of northern Uganda with Gulu district as a case study.

##### ***Specific Objectives***

1. To examine how CS is participating or has participated in the process of PRDP
2. To explore the underlying purposes of CS participation in the PRDP process.

#### **1.6 Research Questions:**

1. What kind of CS formally involved in the PRDP processes?
2. How did/is government involving CS in PRDP?
3. What are the purposes of CS Participation in PRDP?

## **1.7 Research Methods and Strategy**

### ***Research Methods, Sources and Data Collection***

In order to understand and explain the participation of CS, a qualitative approach to the study was employed. This is because there is need to capture participation as a process; hence reveal the purposes, interests and civil society participation in the PRDP process. To achieve the objective, some of the interviewees' own words and quotations from documents are brought out in the analysis. Data was qualitatively gathered among various departments of Gulu district (CAO, PRDP Coordinating Office, Gulu District Planning office, Deputy CAO, and the district population office), some CSOs including Gulu District NGO Forum, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and Civil Society Organisations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) and the office of the commissioner in charge of PRDP northern region from the OPM in the months of July to August 2010.

As part of primary data a total of 10 in depth interviews with key informants were conducted among the 3 selected CSOs in Gulu to examine their understanding of CS participation in the PRDP. From the government side, I interviewed 5 respondents from the district local government and a commissioner in charge of PRDP from the office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to examine the central government aspects in PRDP as regards to CS participation. The interviews were carried out in the offices of the interviewees and normally in the morning hours after fixing the appointments. PRDP document and memorandums of understanding plus other relevant documents and reports were also reviewed.

In terms of secondary data, the study used different available published and unpublished reports that are focusing on the PRDP by the government from different sources. A review of policy documents, government reports, and speeches of political leaders was also done to understand different issues about PRDP, CS participation in policy processes generally and in PRDP specifically with Gulu district as my case study.

### ***Gulu District***

Gulu district was chosen because it is part of the Acholi Region that was said to be the epicentre of the LRA-Government conflict that lasted for over 20 years as noted by (Oxfam 2008: 7). Much as it is not easy to estimate specifically how many active CSOs are in Gulu, it is noted to have more than the other PRDP districts as found in (Concordia Volunteer n.d). Gulu district, like any other PRDP district, local government is directly responsible for the implementation of PRDP which involves tasks like planning, identification of activities, procurement, supervision, coordination, monitoring and accounting as stipulated in Peace Recovery and Development Plan (2007: 104-105) .

### ***Selection of Civil Society Organisations***

Much as this study conducted some interviews with some other CSOs like CSOPNU and CRS, most of its findings are hinged on my interactions

with Gulu District NGO Forum. This CSO was purposively selected for several reasons; among which is that it is one of the two CS representatives on the PMC and it has been active in the Peace and Recovery process such that it participated as a CS observer in the Juba Peace process (Gulu district NGO Forum Coordinator, personal communication 23 June 2010). Gulu District NGO Forum is also a network/umbrella organisation of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and national NGOs operating in the district and it does both service delivery but has a strong emphasis for lobbying and policy advocacy with local government; plus promoting information sharing among CSO fraternity including capacity building for member organisations (Gulu district NGO Forum Profile n.d).

I purposively selected CRS mainly because of the fact that it is different from Gulu District NGO Forum. CRS is an international faith-based NGO that has been working in Uganda since 1965, it initially provided emergency relief to Sudanese refugees and later to Ugandans displaced by the northern conflict, and now focuses efforts on helping communities to grow more food, increase incomes and improve overall health as depicted by (CRS history in Uganda n.d). In terms of philosophy, CRS views itself as a partner with government in service delivery and achieves its objects through international partners (mainly donors), national partners including other NGOs like Caritas, and CBOs that mainly used to implement projects and activities (CRS Gulu Contact person, personal interview in August 2010).

CSOPNU is an advocacy coalition that brings together 86 Ugandan and International CSOs/NGOs, of 86 CSOs working for just and lasting peace in Northern Uganda; based on critical analysis and articulation of underlying causes and effects of the conflict and was established in May 2002 out frustration of CSOs working in Northern Uganda realising limited impact of their intervention as a result of worsening security situation resulting from the conflict (CSOPNU n.d).

## **1.8 Limitations of this Study**

Reports and statistics like the number of CSOs in Gulu were not readily available because of inadequate record keeping especially from the OPM and district local government departments. As such a lot of information sought by the study could not be found in the documents as expected. However, I used different interpersonal interactions to gain some pertinent documents and reports.

Both, accessing documents and obtaining interviews from the OPM was quite complicated by a lot of bureaucracy, the busy schedules of the relevant officials, the political situation since the ruling regime was conducting party elections and some technical officials had resigned to contest in politics and I was always referred to the district for inform. Most of the documents I reviewed from OPM were attained from the district. However, with the help of the PRDP coordinating officer, the introductory letter from the International Institute of Social Studies and permission from the CAO, efforts were made to ensure that I get help.

There was limited time allowed for a detailed study involving more than the actors I selected and more so this is a prospective study given that PRDP is still being implemented.

In chapter 2, I focus on conceptualising CS in Uganda as the literature I studied depicts to bring out how CS is defined, the different types of CS and the historical context of CS in Uganda.



## Chapter 2

### Civil Society in Uganda

This chapter focuses on the common conceptions and definitions of CS plus the historical context of CS in Uganda. This is important because it determines what is invited and tolerated to be part of the policy processes by the different actors especially by the government. Conceptualising CS also determines how the CSOs are involved and what activities they do.

#### 2.1 Defining Civil Society

The concept of civil society raises significantly more complex considerations in terms of both what it precisely means as noted in (Howell and Pearce 2001:37-38, Edwards 2009: 9, Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997: 115-118, Ottaway 2008:167-169). Although contested for being too broad and vague by some people, there is a commonly cited general definition of CS by Hegel that refers CS to that realm between the state and family cited in Ottaway (2008:166). The fact that CS means different things to different people at different times in different places means that there are several definitions of CS. In Uganda, Oloka-Onyango and Barya (1997:115) observe that it is unfortunate that the contemporary manifestation of the concept of CS has been imported almost wholesale from the context of experiences of the early stages of de Tocquevillian liberal (Western) democracy.

Ottaway (2008: 169-170) rightly observes that in practice, CS is defined by the policies of bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, by the governments of countries receiving democracy assistance, and by civil society organisations themselves. It is asserted by some observers that foreign donors or aid agencies focus on the narrow aspects of CS (elite controlled, urban-based, professionalized, formal organisations, donor driven) as analysed from (Hearn 1999: 4, Ottaway 2008: 169-170). Several authors note that such considerations freeze out other informal networks that are an important aspect of CS especially in Africa as observed by (DENIVA 2006: 2, Howell and Pearce 2000:80, Howell 2002: 124-125, Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997: 118). This research found that foreign donor agencies have such requirements for CSOs.

In other cases, governments define CS by imposing registration requirements, which are sometimes very strict and used to prevent the formation of antagonistic organisations and sometimes also try to limit the access to donor funding as found in (Ottaway 2008: 169-170). Robinson and Friedman (2005:10) expressed that the cost of registration can be prohibitive for organisations of the poor and thus limit their access to opportunities of foreign funding and tax benefits. In Uganda, such registration requirements exist for CSOs and even the membership organisations and networks require their member organisations not only to be registered with the NGO Registration Board but also pay membership and subscription fees in their networks (Gulu District NGO Forum Projects n.d; DENIVA 2002: vi, Uganda National NGO Forum n.d).

There is no official definition of CS in Uganda but instead the government lumps together non-state actors that are non-profit oriented as CS or NGOs as reflected in some of its policy documents (OPM 2007:18-19, National Development Plan of the Republic of Uganda 2010:66). I found that the GoU seems to use the same lenses as those of most foreign donors in defining CS be national and international NGOs, faith-based organisations, CBOs, professional associations, trade unions, and membership organisations that must register with the NGO Registration Board and assumes that such organisations promote the common good of society cited in the Non Governmental Organisations Registration (Amendment) Act (2006). However, this research found that in practice the government concentrates on the national and international NGOs in terms of considering CS participation in policy processes as the findings will clearly show.

This study did not directly focus on the important conceptual debate of what is and what is not CS but used the conceptualisation by the government actors both at local government and central government levels to analyse CS participation and left it for the reader to analyse the boundaries of CS definition in PRDP process.

## **2.2 Different types of Civil Society in Uganda**

There is a noted great controversy especially among donors on whether Africa has CS since what is perceived as CS lacks the characteristics of CS in the developed western countries as noted by (Howell 2002: 126-128, Ottaway 2008: 171-172). Yet in Africa, the population relies largely on CS networks that are beyond family and not state led for survival as noted by Ottaway (2008:171-172).

It is observed that CS in Africa assumes a different character from that in most Western liberal democracies due to marked differences in social, economic conditions, and the particular historical and political circumstances of individual countries, prevailing ethnic and kinship structures, and the colonial legacy noted by (DENIVA 2006:2, Howell 2002:124, Robinson and Friedman 2005: 7). Such observers implicitly or explicitly try to show that the characteristics of CS are contextual rather than universal.

DENIVA (2006:2) cautions that due to Uganda's history of civil strife and repressive regimes, there is a dearth of activist political involvement by CS and more citizen participation appears to be very extensive through mutual help groups which are socially inclusive. Some authors refer to this aspect of CS as informal, or traditional or grass root based; and most of them may not be registered with government (Ottaway 2008: 171-174, Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda 2009:53). This study found out that such mutual help groups are to a large extent disregarded in policy processes including PRDP as the findings will show; and in some cases they are being mainstreamed by participatory approaches of the international organisations that are formalising self groups in order to support their projects as noted in the NUSAF Vulnerable groups support (World Bank 2009:4).

More recently, CS has been dominated by formal organisations or groups of CSOs including NGOs, networks and coalitions, trade unions and

other forms mostly urban-based forms of collaborative undertakings, such as professional associations referred to modern CS by Ottaway (2008:171-172). These appear to be donor dependant part of CS, with staff, vehicles and projects and agendas that ordinary people do not always associate with, or feel close to and is formal by registering with the government institutions as cited from DENIVA (2006:2). In this research I found that all the CSOs that government considers to participate in PRDP processes fall under this category.

Another helpful way of categorising CS especially the formal is considering their geographical coverage (Berg 1987:35) and this study considered international, national and community based. In this research I found that most of the international CS has its origins in the developed countries, have their head offices outside Uganda and play different roles in the policy processes and PRDP in particular. However, the most active aspect of this part of CS in PRDP are the international NGOs like Care International, World Vision, CRS, Caritas, Save the Children, Oxfam, Horizont 3000, among others (as depicted by the PRDP coordinator, and the Deputy CAO Gulu District in personal interviews in August 2010).

Many researchers have analysed the implications of International NGOs in the policy processes in developing countries for example (Cornwall 2002, Cornwall and Robinson 2005, Hearn 1999). Padrón cited in Nelson (1995: 39-40) notes that many international NGOs have reduced their direct operational roles and instead support the national and local NGOs as mobilisers of funds and advocates and educators for their southern partners. Kupcu, et.al quoted in Foreign Policy (2008) follow the same observation by arguing that in many countries, international NGOs have replaced traditional western donors and absentee states' influence by providing services that are traditionally the responsibility of donor governments since western countries prefer to route donor funds through international NGOs rather than national governments which are perceived as corrupt, bureaucratic and incompetent.

In Uganda Zakumumpa (2009) observes that USAID channels millions of dollars through NGOs such as Care and Britain through organisations such as Oxfam or Save the Children and further notes that in 2006, only 1/3 of the aid from OECD countries came directly from governments; the rest came from non-state actors principally international NGOs.

The GoU strongly considers international NGOs to participate in the policy processes as reflected in their policy frameworks like Poverty Eradication Assessment Plan (PEAP) processes and most of them work through CBOs to implement their activities noted in (Gariyo 2002: 24-25). However, some observers note several problems in such arrangements. For example, Hickey and Mohan (2004:244) note that NGOs have a confused status between civic, public and private institutional spheres and therefore they interact with people only as clients, that most NGOs that receive support under the 'civil society' agenda tend to support the neo-liberal development project, the focus on upward accountability vis-à-vis downward accountability and the possibility of patron-client relations in cases where international/national NGOs are working with CBOs as partners as also challenged by (Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997: 132).

The national level CS like its international counterpart is made up of mainly CSOs that have origins, operate and have headquarters in Uganda. It includes umbrella organisations and networks, women's groups, NGOs, religious groups, labour unions, professional associations, trade unions and tribal groups (Non Governmental Organizations Registration Amendment Act 2006). In Uganda, in practice, the aspect of this CS that is recognised by donor agencies and government in policy processes are those registered with the NGO Registration Board, have a strong resource base financially and in terms of human resource as depicted by (Gulu district planner, PRDP coordinator, Commissioner in charge of PRDP from OPM in personal interviews in August 2010).

It is noted that the GoU seems to be more comfortable working with service oriented NGOs than advocacy oriented ones as noted by (Dicklitch 1998:24-26, Oloka-Onyago and Barya 1997: 121). In terms of PRDP participation, I found out that the government considers them important in the different process with emphasis on implementation and creating awareness about PRDP to the communities. Examples of national CSOs operating in Gulu include Gulu District NGO Forum, Human Rights Focus, DENIVA, Anaka Foundation, among others. Like the international, this aspect of CS is donor dependent and sometimes partners with the international NGOs and CS to gain funding for their programmes (Dicklitch 1998: 28-29, Robinson and Freidman 2005:28-39, and some of them work through community based organisations to implement their programmes as noted by profiles of several national NGOs.

The other lower category of CS is CBOs are less formal usually concerned about local development focusing on self help. According to Non Governmental Organizations Registration (Amendment) Act (2006) a CBO is an organization "operating at a sub county level and below, whose objective is to promote and advance the well being of its members or the community" and further describes CBOs as typically formed to accomplish one specific purpose and are relatively small compared to national and international CSOs.

In this study I found that the government considers this aspect of CS to be lacking capacity to be strongly involved in the policy processes, for example, they are not part of the formal direct participation with the government except that the international and national NGOs use them as their implementing partners.

It is hard to differentiate CSOs and NGOs in Uganda and therefore the number of CSOs is normally referred to that of formal CS or even NGOs. Ssewakiryanga (2009) notes the growing NGO sector in Uganda since the take over by the current regime from the estimate of less than 200 NGOs in 1986 to 3,500 in 2000, 4,700 in 2003, 5,500 by end of 2005 and approximately 8,000 registered NGOs by 2009. However, a study by Barr et.al (2003:5) suggested the sector could in fact be a lot smaller as only a few of the NGOs that register go operational and that some NGOs operate without registering with the NGO Board.

## 2.3 Historical Context of Civil Society in Uganda

Much as there is a deficiency of literature on CS pre-colonial period in Uganda and Africa as a whole, it can be deduced that communities were tied together commonly through clans, extended family and traditional administrative systems; and these played the roles of social protection for the vulnerable members of the community as noted in (Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda 2009:53). Robinson and Friedman (2005:7) notes that the emergence of formal civil associations representing organised collective interests first took place under colonial to struggle for independence through nationalistic movements, despite efforts by the colonial authorities to control and regulate their activities. Community Development Resource Network (CRDN) 2002:2) notes how the colonial state used its regulatory arm and forged a relationship with the most active formal CSOs in Uganda at the time which were the cooperative unions and trade unions; and later putting the cooperative under government control after the second world war and banning nation-wide trade unions were banned from 1952.

Although it is noted by (CDRN 2002:2, Robinson and Friedman 2005:7)) that immediately after Ugandan independence in 1962 many new organisations such as cooperative movements and trade unions representing different interests were formed, the military regimes and colonial legacy that marked 1960s up to early 1980s, devised intense efforts to co-opt independent organisations in order to limit their autonomy and as a result CS was confined to deliver relief and service delivery as gap filler for the state especially due to the repressive regimes at that time and state break down.

Oloka-Onyango and Barya (1997:120-122), assert that since the current regime's ascendancy to power in Uganda, civil society activity has virtually exploded due to the weakened state; a greater degree of confidence among civil society actors that their activities will be tolerated by the state; and the enhanced interest of donor community in such activities. CDRN (2002:4) refers to the immediate period after the National Resistance Movement (NRM) take over as 'laissez-faire' for CS, as long as there was no 'overt' political agenda.

It is against such background that NGO explosion has been primarily in the area of social and economic welfare or gap filling since such organisations objectives are considered to complement those of government as noted by (Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997:121-122, Robinson and Friedman 2005:9) noted that African regimes are selective in their attitude towards different types of CSOs. The study analyses the aspects of PRDP, where civil society was largely instrumental in working with the government.

There are also considerable inconsistencies in the legal framework as Muhumuza (2010:4) notes that although the constitution of Uganda recognises political and civil rights and information and press freedom, the political environment is not conducive to government-CSO cooperation. In addition, the Non-Governmental Organisations Registration Amendment Act (2006) puts a lot of restrictions such as makes NGOs and their directors legally liable for mistakes committed in their operations on CSOs and registration and periodical renewal of registration. Therefore, there has been a lot of mistrust by government especially with regard to those CSOs that are involved in empowering

people to fight for their rights, advocacy, and anti-corruption policies and hold it accountable as noted in (Dicklitch 1998:100-105, Nyakairu 2006). It can therefore be argued that space for political activism for CSOs in Uganda has been susceptible to political manipulation.

Currently, NGOs are fighting to loosen the restrictions guiding their operations in the Constitutional Court in 2007 protesting the amendments in the NGOs' Act that sets deadlines of their registration, acquiring permits from the RDC to access rural communities and annual renewal of their operating licences and contest the composition of the NGO Board which is made up of mostly security agencies with the government having the mandate to appoint three representatives to the board as written by Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (WICCE) (n.d).

However, the historical context of formal/modern CS in Uganda cannot entirely be detached from the global and international context. Edwards (2009:10-12), observes that, after the world war II up to the mid 1970s, was the era of the welfare state in the North and Centralised planning in the South; from the late 1970s to 1990s saw the focus on market based solutions and structural adjustments in the South and with the failure of both these models in human development required a new approach that addressed the consequences of both the state and market failure and thus the strategy by different development actors to promote CS participation in development.

In the 1980s CS came to be narrowed to NGOs as Howell and Pearce (2001:17) observes. This could be due to the turn of interest by the major players of the time in the development discourse. For example, Berg (1987:25-26) purports that the WB endorsed the idea that NGOs deserve key roles in its Africa programme and even financed some NGOs, as well as in other poverty strategies and also noted that individual United Nations (UN) agencies beefed up their links with NGOs in the 1980s. Donors' support and interest in NGOs has been cited by several analysts as one of the factors that led to increased growth of NGOs and formal CSOs in Uganda (Berg 1987: 2-11, CDRN 2002:4-5, Dicklitch 1998:14, Hearn 2001:51, Muhumuza 2010:1, Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997:121).

Howell and Pearce (2000:75-83) show how the major donors such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Plan, the Inter-American development Bank embraced civil society and enthusiastically supported strengthening the components of civil society and NGO units soon became civil society units, the neat equation leading to the later conceptual confusion around the scope of CS and narrowing their support on some aspects of CS in the developing world. The donor focus on CS in the development processes and discourse marked the increased emphasis of CS participation in the main stream development and Ottaway (2008: 166-167) detects that the popularisation of the concept of civil society led to a blurring of its meaning.

In Uganda, CDRN (2002:4) rightly asserts that this was the time when the term CS began being closely narrowed to NGOs especially by donors and the structural adjustment programmes and retrenchment had further undermined trade unions and cooperatives in Uganda. However, (Muhumuza 2010: 1, Gariyo 2002:4) both observe that while some CSOs existed in Uganda in the past and engaged in the development process, their formal engagement with

the state is a recent phenomenon that took serious effect in the 1990s when the NRM government invited some CSOs like the Uganda Debt Network (UDN), OXFAM GB and DENIVA among others to a meeting to discuss Uganda's comprehensive framework for poverty reduction, known as PEAP. This formal engagement between CSOs and the government is said to have been a brain child of the foreign donors including the World Bank, the Western governments with United States as the strongest supporter of this arrangement (Hearn 1999:1, 5-6). However, there are several debates about the invited participation of CS in policy processes such as the danger of cooption and the power relations involved which this study analyses and tries to understand.

The next chapter looks at the assumptions behind CS participation in state policy processes, the different actors that CSOs interact with plus their possible interests and analyses the power relations involved in such interactions, and ends with the ladder of participation that shall be helpful in analysing participation of CS in PRDP.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Understanding Civil Society Participation in Policy Processes**

This chapter presents the underlying assumptions of emphasising CS Participation in policy processes in Uganda. It also uses a framework to the approach of understanding and analysing CS participation in PRDP. The framework and assumptions were therefore used to frame the research problem and to guide investigation and analysis to answer the questions of the study.

### **3.1 Underlying Assumptions behind Civil Society Participation in Policy Processes**

Howell and Pearce (2000:75) states that the concept of CS occupies a centre stage in the development discourse and practice, as reflected in the triadic conceptual unity of the state, market, and civil society. In this research I found that separation of political, economic and civil society is problematic and is sometimes capitalised on by some states like Uganda to muzzle the voice of part of CS society that tries to challenge government policies and actions. Edwards (2009: 13-15), reminds us that CS is important in three interrelated areas: economic (filling in the gaps caused by state and market failure, and nurturing enabling conditions for useful market economies); political (involves being a check and balance to states and corporate power and promoting good governance); and social (source of social capital to enhance collective action for a common good).

As previously noted in chapter 2, the idea of CS participation in state policy processes has been highly promoted in the donor recipient states like Uganda by the major donors like the WB and most developed western states with general assumptions. For example, the assumptions that CS participation promotes democratic tendencies in the process of policy making (Edwards 2009: 13-15, Muhumuza 2010: 2, Putman 1995: 6). CS is viewed as a check and balance for the corrupt, unresponsive state that is full of partisan interests (Berg 1987:2, 7, 10-11). An upshot view is that civil society is virtually dedicated to giving citizens especially the poor and marginalised a voice in the policy processes; while the state is power hungry, self interested, and considerably less honest (Cornwall 2004:79, Ottaway 2008: 169).

Upon such assumptions, major donors are determined to facilitate the capacity of CSOs to work with different stakeholders especially the governments in developing countries as noted by (Hearn 1999:1, Nelson 1995:65, Robinson and Friedman 2005:2). However, Howell and Pearce 2001:182 state that the extent to which CSOs perform the ascribed functions is contested. And Hearn (1999:1, 2001:43) cautions that foreign donors influence CS not to focus on changing important national development issues but to help maintain policies that may not be good for the common good of societies. Although this research did not go into the details of the agendas of different donors in sup-



porting CSOs, I found that in PRDP CSOs mainly focus on the economic and some social functions but the political is highly curtailed by different measures put in place by the government.

### **3.2 Conceptualising the key actors that Civil Society Organisations Engage with in Policy Processes**

Although the focus of my study was CS participation in a government driven framework, in reality, the environment in which CSOs operate involves several actors and the situation is highly convoluted and not as obvious as it seems on paper (Edwards 2000:3-4). Even the actors are not homogenous and their interests may vary from time to time, analysing different actors helps in understanding the motivations of CSOs and GoU in working together under the PRDP process as Howell (2002: 124-128) argues.

Understanding the different actors that CS interacts with helps in showing the sources of power in driving participation Higgott et.al (2000: 35). In this research I found that CSOs mainly interact with the donors, the government, other CSOs, people at the grassroots, and the private for profit; and the different actors interact with each other differently depending on their interests. However, the government and donors have more influence than the other actors; and the private for profit seems not to have a direct leverage on whether they should participate in policy processes or define their activities as the other actors.

CSOs in Uganda are largely dependent on donor funding for their activities (Hearn 2000:44, Muhumuza 2010: 6, Nabacwa 2010:398, Robinson and Friedman 2005: 29). Higgott et.al (2000: 35) note that different donors have different interests and motivations in supporting CSOs. Major donors for CSOs in Uganda include multi-lateral organizations like the WB, International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Union, United Nations Agencies; bilateral agencies and States like the Netherlands, USA, United Kingdom, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, among others; International NGOs that work with their partners in Uganda; private foundations like the Gates Foundation and Ford Foundation (Zakumumpa 2009). In this research the CSOs that I studied and those involved in PRDP processes as a whole largely depend on foreign donors.

Over reliance on foreign donors may have several implications for CSOs participation in policy processes, for example, donors significantly influence the agendas and impact of CSOs as found in (Hearn 2001: 43) and loss of independence and autonomy as noted by (Robinson and Friedman 2005: 29). There is also the disregard of informal CS as donors prefer to support formal organisations as emphasised by (Hearn 1999: 4-5, Nelson 1995: 167-168). Nabacwa (2010: 402) warns that GoU sometimes uses this fact of being donor dependent to delegitimize and attack CSOs agenda as foreign and elitist thus undermining CSOs to be based at and representing grassroots in the policy processes.

It is observed that donors not only have power over CSOs but also influence donor recipient state policies (Hearn 2001:50, Higgott et.al 2000:35). Nelson (1995:118-119) states that some donors like the WB influence other

donors. IMF and WB gained power since the introduction of structural adjustments (SAPs) in the early 1980s, and entered into policy-based lending as explained in (Higgott et.al 2000: 37, 35, 40, Scholte 2000: 260). In some cases like-minded foreign donors have formed concerted units, for example in Uganda, the WB, the European Commission and the governments of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany (KfW), Ireland, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom fall under the Joint Budget Support (JBS) whereby they make related demands on the government policy processes as noted in (JBS Development Partners 2010).

With the failure of SAPs, the WB and allies fronted the New Policy Agenda and in the late 1990s demanded donor recipient countries to formally involve CSOs in poverty reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as found in Cornwall (2002:12). Nelson (1995:115-122) reminds us that donors derive their power on the CSOs and donor recipient states not only from financial resources and donor conditionality but also from expertise and informal relations and working with influential key ministries.

However, Robinson and Friedman (2005: 38-39) encourages that CSOs dependence on donor funding does not necessarily produce deleterious effects especially when used effectively and strategically. And the donors do not have all the power as Nabacwa (2010: 396) observes that few NGOs are passive recipients of aid, or mere implementers of donor or government agendas in Uganda. The interactions of CSOs and donor agencies are not deeply explored by this study apart from appreciating that donors are part and parcel of CS-GoU relations.

Higgott et.al (2000: 35) summarizes the interests of a government receiving donor funding and working with CSOs as domestic stability, domestic influence, attraction of funds, political legitimacy; resources. Oloka-Onyango and Barya (1997: 121) interestingly emphasize that even a weak state is concerned about the nature and trend of development activities taking place within its midst. However, donor recipient states like Uganda do not have absolute power especially in relation to donors and inter-governmental organisations. Stiles (2000: 36) specifically points out that the period 1982-1992 had various events that increasingly tilted state autonomy relative to donor and Inter-Governmental Organisations, and generally weakened state sovereignty norms in the short term relative to civil society actors.

Third world states are largely influenced by major donors' interests who fund most of their development projects as noted in (Nelson 1995: 112, Hearn 1999:3). In this research I found that currently, donors fund almost 30% of the state budget as depicted by (JBS Development 2010) and as regards to PRDP the government is expected to fund only 30% of the budget and the 70% is expected from the Development Partners (International Crisis Group 2010: 22). So given the state reliance on donor funding, it may take up participation of CSOs in the policy process as a window dressing mechanism to the donors. However, there seems to be some consensus that the GoU and the major donors like the World Bank and IMF are willing partners in some aspects especially as regards to the new development paradigm as argued by (Nabacwa 2010: 398, Hearn 2001: 50, Nelson 1995: 45) and therefore they bring CSOs on board according to their own unattractive terms.

Higgott et.al (2000: 35) argues that even when government does not provide funds; it has leverage to determine how to relate with CSOs in several ways. For example, in Uganda GoU uses restrictive legislation governing CS activity as a source of power to control non-state actors as noted by (Nabacwa 2010:397, Oloka-Onyango and Barya 1997:121, Robinson and Friedman 2005:23, 25).

CSOs need financial stability, policy influence, and comparative achievement, maintain confidence of private/public donors, membership services, access to policy circles, membership representation, as some of their important interest as noted by Higgott et.al (2000: 35) The problem is that these interests are in most cases not compatible; for example, CSOs have multiple actors to account to as Robinson and Friedman (2005: 28) note and in the process, they have been criticized for focusing on upward accountability vis-à-vis downward accountability as reflected in (Dicklitch 1998: 28, Fisher 1997:454, Keynote 2006: 3-4, Mamdani 1996:94, Muhumuza 2010:4). Berg (1987:27) observes that CSOs would like some donor and government policies to change and yet, they would also like increase in their funding and therefore face a dilemma.

As a result, for most part NGOs influence is limited to implementing a component of a project designed and negotiated by donors like WB and government officials as observed in (Nelson 1995: 177). Scholte (2000: 260) observes that in the struggle to maintain autonomy in an environment that is mired with power relations, CS adopt different strategies; conformism (accept the institutions' approach and existing premises, policy frameworks and operating procedures), reformism (believe that the existing status quo can be reconstructed), and radicalism (believe that any collaboration is recipe for cooptation). But Robinson and Friedman (2005: 24) state that distance from the state does not directly mean that CSOs are autonomous from state influence.

CSOs interact with people at grassroots whose interests are mainly focused attaining good services and having power to make demands on the policy makers to make good policies as noted by (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001:6). Like noted earlier, CSOs tend to focus less on these actors because they have limited power to influence their work and policies. The grassroots people are disadvantaged further in demanding accountability from service delivery CSOs since they view them as benevolent well wishers out to rescue them as reported in Uganda by (Barr et.al 2003:9).

### **3.3 Conceptualising and Analysing Civil Society Participation in PRDP**

Arnestein (1969; 216-221) views participation as the redistribution of power that enables the presently excluded from the political and economic processes and she further warns that participation without redistribution of power is an empty process and frustrating to the powerless since it maintains the status quo and is manipulative since it allows the power holders to claim that all sides were considered.

Pretty (1995:1251) state that there are two overlapping views on participation: one view that is based on the ownership argument and considers

participation as a mechanism to increase efficiency with the central notion of involving people so that they can agree with and support the new development or service, and the second view that considers participation a fundamental right, in which the main aim is to initiate mobilization for collective action, empowerment and institution building.

Nelson (1995:167-168) refers to Pretty's first view as the narrow or instrumental view of participation or planned participation (valued and encouraged by the WB whereby participation is not a process of joint planning and accountability but a measure to mobilise those whom the projects' planners aim to benefit to promote local ownership), more so, he notes that such participation aims at 'full commitment' instead of broader participation that is supposed to seek for people's views, priorities and wishes. In my research I found that CSOs participation in PRDP hinged more on the instrumentalist view.

It is observed that participation of different actors in the development process can have numerous benefits but only under certain conditions (Cornwall 2002:2, Gaventa 2004: 30). Cornwall (2002:24-25) reminds us that effective participation in a deliberative process may come to depend on being able to play by the rules; being able to articulate a position, mount an argument, define a view. And this in turn depends on having the prospect of being listened to and taken seriously.

However, authors such as (Arnstein 1969: 217-221, Cooke 2004: 42-53, Pretty 1995:1251) relate how the term has been misused and abused by the powerful actors to forward their agenda. Pretty (1995: 1251) interestingly points out the dialectic nature of the term 'participation' as it has been used to justify the extension of control of the state as well as to build local capacity and self reliance, or in some cases it has been used to justify the external decisions as well as to devolve power and decision making away from external agencies. In terms of CSOs participation in PRDP, the GoU and the donors had more power in deciding the terms of participation.

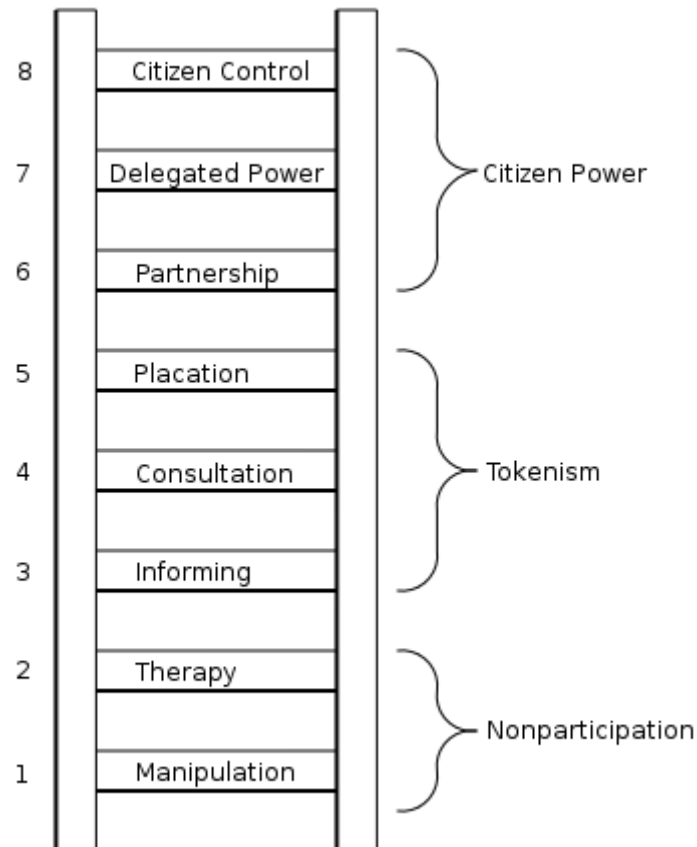
### **3.4 The Ladder of Participation**

I relied on Arnstein's (1969), ladder of participation to analyse how civil society organisations have participated in the process of PRDP in Gulu District. Arnstein's ladder brings out important aspects about participation, like power relations that are embedded in the process of participation; it also shows how participation can be manipulated and misused by the powerful to entrench their power against the weak and this model is relevant because it is not fatalistic in terms of the weak actors trying to gain more power.

Though the ladder originally focused on citizen participation in community development processes; it is relevant in analysing CS participation in a state driven framework because the underlying issues are essentially similar where CSOs are trying to negotiate and manoeuvre power relations with the powerful actors who include the state. What Arnstein's ladder of participation helps us to do is to understand that there is a danger of participation being manipulated to make the situation worse for those who have no power.

I am aware that CS in Uganda is not a homogenous block as the framework may seem to suggest as Cornwall (2002: 21) warns; and the rungs are not definitely cut from each other. Nevertheless, this framework is very generally helpful in analysing and questioning participation in development processes. According to Arnstein, participation can be analysed using the 8 rung ladder.

**Figure 1**  
**Eight rungs on the ladder of citizen participation according to Arnstein (1969)**



Source: Arnstein (1969:217)

In terms of manipulation, representatives from CSOs are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees or boards for purposes of ‘educating’ them or engineering their support without full relevant information to hold the power holders accountable and the purpose is public relations by the power holders (Arnstein 1969: 217). In the context of PRDP, the government uses this kind of participation to prove that CSOs participated in the PRDP process.

In therapy, CSOs are brought together to help them adjust their attitudes, work plans and activities to fit in the PRDP and with these ground rules, all CSOs are diverted from dealing other important matters unless they are fitting in the PRDP ( as adopted from Arnstein 1969: 218).

In line with Arnstein (1969: 219) third rung, it involves informing CSOs of their rights, responsibilities and options, but the information is one

way and superficial, from the government to CSOs with no channel for negotiation or feedback, discouraging questions, or giving irrelevant answer and sometimes CSOs are intimidated with lengthy technical explanations and prestige of the officials, among others and therefore CSOs have little opportunity to influence the processes to their benefit.

Consulting entails inviting CSOs' opinions though there is no guarantee that CSOs' concerns and ideas will be taken into account, participation is measured primarily by how many people from CS attend the meetings as evidence that CSOs are participating and this rung characterises window dressing type of participation. I found that consulting was very common as regards to CS participation in PRDP as reflected by the interviews (adopted from Arnstein 1969: 219-220).

The main purpose of placation is to appease and therefore representatives of CS are placed on advisory boards and committees to share views with the power holders, advise the government and have some degree of influence although this depends on the quality of technical capacity CS representatives have to articulate their priorities, the extent to which they are organised to press for those priorities and yet the rights and responsibilities of the several of the boards and committees are not usually defined and are ambiguous (in line with Arnstein 1969: 220-221). In this research I found some level of placation whereby some representatives of CSOs were put on committees like the PMC but the power belongs to the GoU to decide and in the event that CSOs are supposed to make contributions to the policy process, they are not given enough time to enable them to generate meaningful contribution as the findings will show.

Partnership level involves redistribution of power through negotiation between the power-holders and the CSOs whereby they agree to share planning and decision making responsibilities through structures such as joint policy boards, planning committees, mechanisms for resolving conflict, and have some power to review government plans despite the GoU having legal powers as adopted from (Arnstein 1969: 221-222).

In terms of delegated power, Arnstein (1969: 222-223) CSOs have dominant authority over particular plans or programmes and there is muscle to ensure accountability of the programmes to them but the state has the final veto powers even when the CSOs have the majority of seats in the committees and boards and sometimes the state may sub-contract the CSOs to plan and implement programmes. This rung was largely missing in terms of CS participation in PRDP.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> rung of participation, CS actors are in full control of their programmes in terms of policy and managerial aspects and are able to negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" may change them though it may never be possible to attain such participation as noted by (Arnstein 1969:223).

In my research I found that CS participation in PRDP processes is dominantly from rungs 1-5 as the findings will show. Some analysts like Hart (1992; 8-10) call the lower rungs of the ladder as non-participation. There was some semblance of partnership but this depends on the CSOs as well as the local government in place; otherwise the GoU controls CSOs and the major donors seem to be silent or even cooperating with the government. This study

looks at CSOs as the have-nots in the context of policy processes vis-à-vis the state and donor agencies. This analytical framework suggests that the term ‘participation’ should not be accepted without qualifying it appropriately especially by reference to the types of participation.

The next chapter focuses on discussing and presenting the findings of this study to understand CS participation in PRDP with a specific case of Gulu district.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

In this chapter, I focus on presenting and discussing the findings from the investigations carried out in the field and the relevant documents that I studied to answer the three research questions of this study. It discusses the processes of participation that involve CS in the PRDP in Gulu, the purposes why CS participate in PRDP from both the CS and government perspectives. These findings help me to come out with conclusions about CS participation in PRDP Gulu district. All the three CSOs claim to be directly or indirectly contributing to PRDP but there are mixed feelings on how they view their contribution to the out come of the policy engagement through formal engagement provided by the government. There is also a marked contrast between service delivery oriented CSOs and advocacy oriented CSOs in terms of relating with the government.

#### **4.1 Process to Determine what Civil Society Participates in PRDP**

According to the Non Governmental Organizations Registration (Amendment) Act (2006), all CSOs/NGOs should register with the NGO Registration Board in Kampala before they can be recognised by the government. This implies that any self help groups or organised actions that are not registered with the NGO Board cannot expect to be part of the formally invited spaces. This limits what is referred to as CS and what is not as was clearly expressed by one of the respondents who said that, ‘all that is in the minds of government when you are talking about CSO are NGOs’, (CSOPNU Coordinator 2010, personal interview).

This research found that most of the CS participation that is directly targeted by government in PRDP; in terms of consultations and information sharing largely dwells on national and international NGOs. For example during the formulation of PRDP, there were no formal and organised interactions with CBOs with the assumption that the national and international NGOs would represent the voice of CS. The district PRDP focal person made an explicit comment that:

‘CBOs were not involved because they do not have capacity; -these CBOs have no capacity in terms of human capacity to seriously appreciate this important document. I guess you know what CBOs are; - community based in rural areas, most of the memberships are different and they just pump arrange their documents when they are bringing them here. But we used Gulu district NGO Forum which is an umbrella body for them (CBOs), so indirectly they were represented by Gulu NGO Forum which stands for them. And we also did not need a very big gathering for NGOs; the CBOs had been consulted at the community level before the first draft came out’, (Gulu district PRDP coordinator August 2010, personal interview).



Most CS representatives interviewed had a varying view from the above because they argued that CBOs are better placed in terms of sharing information because they are at the grassroots as expressed by the following statement

‘Some of the assumptions are very pretentious; what I believe is that, we unfortunately live in very different worlds with our own communities. For example, we assume that grassroots people are not bright because they do not speak English; they are not wise and cannot contribute anything. Yet, they know their situations and needs better than CS or government. We have always planned for them, and plans that have wasted resources in this country, and plans that have not transformed lives. Our argument is not for the civil society to formally participate, but formal mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the very people, who were encamped and affected by the war, should be the main participants’, (Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

I found in this research the process of determining what CSOs to work with in PRDP is totally dependant on the GoU moreover with the assumption that national and International NGOs can represent CS in Uganda which has varying implications that have been reflected in chapters 2 and 3. In the same line, government policy processes that involve CS clearly indicate in practice, GoU treats CS as a homogenous stakeholder (OPM-PRDP Document 2007, National Development Plan of the Republic of Uganda 2010), and yet there are several underlying issues and CS is made up of different entities with different interests and goals. Such aspects reflect the extent to which CSOs are powerless in determining the process and involvement of different CSOs in PRDP.

In line with the above observation, there is another fuzzy situation whereby CS interactions with both the central government and local governments are lumped together as development partners including UN Agencies like UNICEF, foreign state agencies like Department for International Development (DfID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and European Union. For example, some interviewees did not consider a clear difference between CS and such agencies as they listed them as part of CS. One of them succinctly said that ‘anything that is not government is CS’, (Gulu district population officer August 2010, personal interview). Such framing of CSOs is likely to have serious implications on participation by different players with different interests.

For the purpose of PRDP, any CSOs that have interventions in any given PRDP district must sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the district and integrate their work plans in the district sectoral/departmental plans, stating for a year/two what they are going to do and in what thematic area as reflected by (all respondents from central government representatives, Gulu district local government, and CSOs interviewees in August 2010, personal interviews, National NGO Policy 2008: 17-18).

I also found out in this research that district departments in Gulu are supposed to guide CSOs during their project designs on what they should do and in what geographical areas as regards to PRDP participation. For example,

the district planner explained how the district guides CSOs in PRDP their interventions when he said that

‘We may have different actors in education but we say to them, in education, yours is this or your geographical area is this and any partner who does the contrary is bound to be disciplined’, (Gulu district planner August 2010, personal interview).

Signing a MoU is a requirement from OPM that mandates each district to do so as indicated by (CAO Gulu district in August 2010, personal interview). In Gulu district, this aspect was taken very seriously, the focal person in charge of coordinating PRDP activities and programmes had this to say about the importance of signing a MoU,

‘We engage all our Development partners who include CS here through a MoU and define our rules of engagement, who should do what, where, and how we should relate in the process. In the MoU, there must be thematic areas; you must tell us that you are going to do something in water, or education, or health or livelihoods. And definitely whatever we are doing here is PRDP, nothing short; the government is only funding 30%. The rest should come from ‘them’. So we know who is doing what here through a MoU!’, (Interview, Gulu District PRDP Coordinator).

However, much as all the CSOs having their programmes in Gulu were required to sign a MoU and follow whatever they have agreed on with the district and report frequently, there is an indication that there are some that have in some ways not complied as was expressed by the different interviewees from Gulu district local government (personal interviews). It was not possible to get such organisations by name as they did not have records of which organisation have not complied. This means that there could be some CSOs that could get away with this requirement; however, all the CSOs I interacted with had signed the MoU and regularly reported about their activities.

The reasons why most CSOs comply with the conditions of the government seem to go beyond the implications of penalties from the government such as accessing funding from most foreign donors and development agencies that require CSOs to get approval from relevant government institutions like the NGO Registration Board.

Therefore, in terms of the ladder of participation, the process of determining CS participation in PRDP largely falls under non-participation or the lowest rungs of the ladder for CSOs as reflected in the above findings.

## **4.2 Civil Society Participation in different aspects of PRDP**

### ***PRDP Design and Formulation***

From the documents I studied and interviews I conducted, the major role that CS did in the design and formulation of PRDP was to give some views through consultations that were done by the OPM and district to come out with the PRDP objectives and programmes of action. I could not access the list of attendances or reports from both OPM and the district to clarify this; but during interviews what came out specifically clear was that some na-

tional and international NGOs represented CS in the consultation processes. For example, the Gulu district planner explicitly said that

‘We consulted the lower levels and submitted to the central government. They came up with the first draft and we invited some of the members of CS but not CBOs; we invited NGOs both international and national, and UN agencies to consider the various sectors, we gave our input. We participated satisfactorily and we did this with the stakeholders like CS. Some of the CSOs we consulted include: Care International, Human Rights Focus, World Vision, Save the Children, Caritas, among others’, (Gulu district planner August 2010, personal interview).

However, I noted different views and mixed feelings among the CSOs on their participation in the formulation and design of PRDP. There seems to be some pessimism about the consultations done by the government specifically among respondents from the advocacy CSOs like Gulu District NGO Forum and CSOPNU and yet there is a noted good feeling some CSOs especially those that are largely service delivery oriented like Catholic Relief Services (CRS). For example, the following quotes clearly bring out the pessimist feeling

‘Structurally, PRDP formulation was supposed to be participatory and today, people will tell you that PRDP was participatory from the institutional point of view; however, the ordinary people were not consulted and never took part in the discussions at any point and yet they were the ones affected and supposed to go back home. There was no provision for them to be consulted. What happened was that some semblance of consultations were conducted whereby some leaders like sub-county leaders and CS representatives were involved in a centralised meeting. But as government things are, structurally, they are very complicated. When one looks at PRDP, it may look simple; but when one considers even only implementation structures, one needs more than a day/two, to understand it’, (Assistant Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

Another official from the same organisation expresses how the consultations were meaningless since the inputs from CS were rarely put into consideration.

‘Generally government says CS participates, but in practice most of the time, CS participation in government programmes is just in name. But even when we participate either through their invitations or our own mechanisms, we are rarely listened to. For example, in many recommendations that we made to them about PRDP, only one was considered’, (PRDP project coordinator from Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

Some respondents also have negative views considering the process in which the consultations were conducted reflecting how the government manipulated and limited CSOs’ meaningful contribution to the process. For example one of the respondents agitates that

‘Government has very ridiculous methods of consulting CS; they will send you invitation letters to a meeting on the last day, sometimes you get it when the meeting has ended. OPM is the biggest suspect in this case. Sometimes they are already in the district council hall consulting about very important issues, then, they call you and ask; am I speaking to so and so from Gulu Dis-

trict NGO Forum? Yes. Well, by the way we have a consultation meeting to-day in the district council hall; When? By the way it is starting right now; is it possible to send someone to represent NGO Forum? And this will be counted for consultation!?', (Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal Interview).

In the same line with the process of consultations, the same respondent refers to an example of how the government limits CSOs to make meaningful contribution

'Last week, there was consultation about a partnership policy, and the OPM sent us the Policy draft on the 19th of July and the closing date for submission of views was the 20th July. National NGO Forum requested them for at least an extra day which was the 21st of July. Can you imagine reviewing a policy document and making relevant and necessary in puts in a day, what kind of consultation is that?'; and for a policy document? What kind of consultation is that?', (Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

Such statements from a network of CSOs seem to clearly indicate that the design and formulation process of PRDP was rarely participatory for CS. CSOPNU (2008:1) agrees that the final PRDP does not adequately reflect a true consultative process; particularly with lack of meaningful input from CS and lack of substantive input from communities who have been affected by the long-running conflict in the North. In other words it is on the whole a top-down approach to planning.

The above expressed views are related to what Arnstein (1969: 217-220) referred to rungs (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. Where CSOs are given an opportunity to hear and be heard by power holders but under these conditions they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. There seems to be clear impression that the consultations by the government were not carried out for genuine purposes of getting the views of CS but for other reasons that will be discussed later.

However, some representatives of CSOs felt that the consultations both by the district and OPM were satisfactory. For example, the CRS contact person in Gulu said that, 'We had a lot of district meetings and consultation during the formulation process of PRDP; we were selected even at national level. and the out come document reflects what we had discussed', (CRS Contact Person Gulu Office August 2010, personal interview).

The mixed reactions and feelings about consultations during the formulation process could be explained by the arguments that have been put forward by different analysts that the GoU finds it easier to interact with service oriented CSOs than with those that focus on advocacy as earlier explained in chapters 2 and 3.

Apart from holding formal consultations, the PRDP document declares that the process of considering the recovery and reconstruction focus made reference to the district development plans and reviewed plans for the different national and international stakeholders intervening in northern Uganda (OPM 2007: 18-19). However, one of the interviewees said that

‘There was claim that one of the reference documents was the CS Return Plan Documents, I think this was just a mere claim, we can only concretely observe evidence from the PRDP document in line with the Return Plan which shows the contrary’, (CSOPNU Coordinator August 2010, personal interview).

This study did not consider comparing different CSO recovery plans with the final PRDP document given the limited time, and therefore this controversy was not analysed further. However, there seems a possibility the PRDP consultation process may have referred to district plans and some CS aspirations as will be discussed later that most interviewees felt that the PRDP objectives and strategic plans reflected the needs of Gulu district. But, it is clear that this process was largely a placation strategy whereby CSOs shared their views but the government had the power to decide. For example, the director of Gulu District NGO Forum shared that they jointly prepared a workshop with Horizont 3000 and invited representatives from government and other CSOs and they identified so many issues to be considered and proposed so many actions to be taken, but only one was put into consideration and in some cases all their issues are never listened to (Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

### ***PRDP Implementation***

This study was interested in finding out the different ways in which CSOs are involved in PRDP Implementation. It was clear from policy documents and interviews that PRDP is the guiding framework for all interventions in Gulu district for both government and non-government actors. This means that all development partners must show how their interventions fit in the PRDP. For example the following statement from the CAO Gulu district reflects this position very clearly

‘Coming to implementation, they (CSOs) are fully involved; PRDP is not a project, it is not a programme, but it is just a framework/plan which gives us what we should do. PRDP is our corridor, for all of us, so we should all move; we must all be in this corridor, NGOs, UN agencies and Government all together’, (CAO Gulu district August 2010, personal interview).

I looked at several work plans and reports from CSOs outlining plans in reference to PRDP in the Gulu district PRDP coordinating office and Gulu district planner (August 2010, personal interview) said that these plans are integrated in the district work plans such that tracking progress of PRDP in the district, is done on the basis of an integrated plan; and from the interviews it was clear that CSOs made different contributions in the communities and used PRDP as their reference. Some of them were working with CBOs as their development partners to implement programmes and activities while others offered PRDP grants to small community groups to pull themselves away from their bad situations. For example, CRS works with the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative and the Anglican Church to implement their programmes (CRS HIV/AIDS Project Coordinator August 2010, personal interview). Gulu district NGO Forum has different projects on enhancing incomes of the poor (Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

CSOs in Gulu viewed themselves as part of the implementing partners with the other stakeholders in various ways; as gap fillers, awareness creation about PRDP to the local communities, advocacy, monitoring, and resource mobilisers. However, the main focus of CSOs participating in PRDP was gap filling. The CRS Gulu contact person shows this in her statements

‘Unlike Government which is intervening under PRDP as an additional support to Northern Uganda, CS intervention is not an additional. For Government there is normal grant and PRDP is described as an additional on top of the normal grant to the local governments, for Civil Society that segregation is not there, we are gap fillers and that’s all.’ They identify areas to intervene in and they cannot segregate and say this is normal, this is beyond normal, this is over and above; this is not like that. And that is a big problem to integrate programmes of civil society and government.’ (CRS Contact Person Gulu Office August 2011, personal interview).

It was very clear that much as CSOs in Gulu were playing several roles in implementation of PRDP, there are mainly gap fillers and given the framework under which they are operating it seems to be clear that they are similar to an external department of government that gets funding from other sources (donors) other than from public coffers. This raises questions of how independent and autonomous are such CSOs. This level of participation has aspects of partnership since CSOs can make their own project plans and submit them to the district and OPM; but it is not the full partnership as there is no sharing of power, the government does not involve CSOs in setting rules and regulations; and aims at controlling the activities of CSOs.

### ***PRDP Monitoring***

One of the cardinal arguments put forward by proponents of government–CS partnership is that it helps in ensuring accountability through the continuous monitoring. There are several ways in which the government ensures CS participates in monitoring of PRDP.

As a district, Gulu annually holds a budget conference where all the stakeholders and development partners from all sections and at all levels including CSOs are invited to participate; this is a requirement from the Ministry of Local Government as Budgeting and Financing Regulations (2007). During the budget conference, the district puts out to them what it has and the CSOs lay before the district what they have to integrate together and see how the district and the different stakeholders can monitor and evaluate programmes in the district together (Gulu District Planner August 2010, personal interview). However, CSOs participation at this level is limited to the first three rungs of participation since this process is mainly one direction from the local government to CSOs.

During PRDP formulation, to ensure that CS were formally part of monitoring, the PRDP structure put in place the PMC with two members from the CS (Gulu District NGO Forum and Uganda Joint Christian Council) but this seems to be problematic since the process of selecting the CSOs to be part of the PMC was not participatory in that it did not involve CS rep-

representatives were hand picked by the OPM) as this was declared by (Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

In terms how the monitoring was done the PMC sits once in 6 months to follow the progress of PRDP by different actors. However, one of the CS actors had the following to say about PMC monitoring

‘PMC to which I also sit is frustrating; Gulu District NGO Forum was chosen by OPM plus UJCC on the basis that they were networks of CS and because Gulu District NGO Forum was supporting the north and UJCC the Eastern region including Karamoja. We go after every six months and sit there and listen to reports; but it is not any monitoring committee at all by what I know of monitoring, it does not qualify to be called a monitoring committee. We merely sit there and listen to various reports of the progress of PRDP and that’s it’, (Director Gulu District NGO Forum August 2010, personal interview).

Actually, the idea that CSO should be part of PMC does not sit well with some observers from CS and CSOs do not feel that they have to be invited by government in order to monitor PRDP or any government programmes. For example CSOPNU declined such invitation to be one of the two CSOs on the JMC which was the predecessor of PMC, for various reasons, including the fear that it would not have an adequate voice on the JMC to be able to significantly influence the final decisions that would be made, although it continued to review and comment on JMC and PRDP deliberations, mainly by coordinating with other CSOs, discussions with government bodies, and liaison with donor representatives on the JMC, (CSOPNU 2008: 1). The Director NGO Forum alludes to the same sentiments,

‘As NGO Forum, we do not care to be invited or not in order to hold anybody accountable. Sometimes we advise them and they (GoU) ignores us, but when they go ahead and fail, they fall back to us and agree with us. That is why you realise that in PRDP, they acknowledge that the previous programmes failed. During NUSAF I, we made our interests very clear, we told them the way things were, the money was going to be misused. We advised them to first create awareness among the grassroots and involve CS in that before implementation, we also advised them to concentrate on community infrastructure instead of giving vulnerable support to vulnerable groups. Towards the end they acknowledged that we were right’, (Director Gulu District NGO August 2010, personal interview).

CSOPNU (2008: 1) expresses concern about the ability of the PMC to keep track of the funds that will be allocated to the PRDP since the government did not share information about where these funds would come from, how they would be disbursed and reported, and how value for money would be assured was not clear within the PRDP framework. Such feelings seem to suggest that the formal participation of CSOs in PRDP monitoring is not a big deal on whether it will improve the implementation and monitoring of PRDP or not but is meant to ensure that CSOs participate for manipulative reasons.

The following sections will try to analyse why government and CS involve themselves in such dispensations when there is a feeling that they are not effective in improving policy processes.

### **4.3 Why are Civil Society Organisations Participating in PRDP?**

There are given and implied reasons as to why CS engages in invited spaces to participate in PRDP. There seems to be a situation that CSOs are cornered into participating in the invited spaces rather than doing it for the sake of improving the PRDP implementation and for the sustainable development and recovery of northern Uganda. This is because of the conditions under which the process of participation is taking place and how it is done. However, I was interested in finding out why CSOs are participating in such government spaces in PRDP even when some of them feel frustrated.

All the respondents from the CSOs I interviewed felt that to some extent, PRDP strategic objectives somewhat cover the needs of the region, though it depends on the interpretation and that PRDP provides some guidance to CSO and other stakeholders, some respondents expressed that it would be completely disaster if there was no guiding framework at all. This view is complemented by the philosophy of most CSOs viewing their role in PRDP as that of complementing GoU efforts. The contact person of CRS Gulu put it explicitly in an interview;

‘We are all part of the government only in different capacities and stakeholders, so we have to support each other as stakeholders in the process of peace building under PRDP. We do not give Gulu district support in terms of money but we draw our projects in line with the PRDP and keep our doors open to other stakeholders to do whatever we can’, (CRS Contact Person Gulu Office August 2010, personal interview).

One of the fundamental focuses of CS I noticed is creating community awareness about PRDP; all the CSOs I interacted with in terms of primary or secondary data collection felt that this was very necessary. This was hinged on the fact that PRDP took off when people were not aware what it was about. For instance, (CSOPNU, 2008: 1) says that in order to help the process of empowering local citizens and communities, CSOPNU undertook to summarize, simplify and also translate the PRDP document in major local languages of the PRDP region so that it is a manageable size and can be easily read and understood by more people in Northern Uganda.

The major argument for creating awareness about PRDP is that citizens have a right to know what the actual document says as CSOPNU (2008:1) states. The PRDP Project Director from the Gulu District NGO Forum reiterates this in an interview when he says

‘We analysed and realised that, if we did not create awareness about PRDP, then nobody would know about PRDP. Even if people never contributed to the formulation of PRDP, it was a binding document whether you said anything or not, so we did it on our own initiative. Everybody deserves to know



what is binding and it was their right', (Gulu District NGO Forum PRDP project coordinator 2010, personal interview).

On the other hand, it is very clear that CSOs participation is also ensured under duress mechanisms by the laws, MoU, donor conditionality, and in some instances powerful politicians make threatens in their speeches. For example, the president of Uganda, Mr. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, while in his meeting with various NGOs that operate in war-torn northern Uganda, is quoted to having said that 'if you are not ready to work with government you should simply go away' and advised NGOs to coordinate their activities with the government especially OPM, Ministry of Health and Uganda Patriotic Defence Forces (UPDF-the GoU Army) (Nyakairu 2006).

Besides such chilling comments, recently the ruling regime brought about various laws such as the Non Governmental Organizations Registration (Amendment) Act (2006) and the Sedition Act (Media Centre 2010) that can easily be used to clamp down on dissenting voices of or those that challenge some of the practices of government. The dual liability clause in the Non Governmental Organizations Registration (Amendment) Act (2006) is the most disheartening since in addition to the organisation having legal entity, even the individual directors/officers of the organisation who are held responsible for the offence are also liable and would suffer terms of imprisonment or fine as the case may be. There is a considerable fear of repercussions of being de-registered by the government in case the government decides that their activities are illegal as Muhumuza (2010:4) notes and therefore CSOs are participating in PRDP largely on the terms of the GoU or non-participation considering the research findings.

There is the other aspect of donor financing that requires CSOs to work with government at least by registering with the NGO Registration Board and with the district in PRDP implementation for example, CSO receiving funds from foreign governments and agencies that have signed the Paris Declaration (2005: 3) and Accra Agenda (2008: 4) are under obligation to complement their activities with those of the GoU since these instruments place a duty on such donors to demand so. In my research I found out that most of the CSOs including those participating in PRDP drew their resources from the signatories of these instruments and all the CSOs I interacted with were drawing most of their funds from foreign donations (personal interviews 2010). The situation is worsened by the fact that local financing is hard to come by and the CSOs employees have to consider securing their salaries and thus securing grants at all cost is their predominant focus as noted by Robinson and Friedman (2005: 29)

However, this is not to suggest that all CSOs are completely powerless in relating with the GoU and donors as some are constantly negotiating and manoeuvring their ways around. For example, CSOPNU declined to be part of the JMC in 2006 as earlier noted and I also found in this study that CSOs are increasingly forming networks and forums although the extent to which these networks are challenging the power relations needs to be examined.

#### **4.4 Reasons why Government Encourages Civil Society Participation in PRDP**

There are several implied and explicit reasons as to why the GoU invites CSOs to work with them in the PRDP and other policy processes. However, a deeper analysis is necessary of what is given on paper or by words and what is done in practice to come up with the clear reasons.

The government considers CSOs as their complementary partners in development as long as they are not political and respect the MoU that they sign with the district and the OPM. For example, both the Gulu district planner and the Gulu district PRDP coordinator were in agreement that CSOs are part and parcel of Gulu district as stakeholders who are really helping the district in carrying out development activities and therefore anything the district does cannot go without involving them (Gulu district planner and Gulu district PRDP coordinator August 2010, personal interviews).

The PRDP Commissioner from the OPM emphasised that some CSOs including Gulu District NGO Forum represented CS in the Juba Peace Talks as observers and also did a lot of side shows and giving technical support to the cultural and religious leaders in addition to having been instrumental in service delivery during the conflict and therefore it is only reasonable to work with them during the recovery and reconstruction (PRDP Commissioner OPM August 2010, personal interview).

Both the Gulu District local government and the Central Government insist that the major reasons as to why they involve CSOs in PRDP is to ensure coordination of the process and avoid duplication of activities and misuse of resources. For example, the Gulu district planner had this to say about working with CSOs

'CSOs submit their work plans to us which is also a requirement of OPM which is the PRDP Secretariat; we forward their plans to Kampala. This makes them account. And we receive their progress reports showing what they have done. So when a sector is making plans, it includes interventions of their sectors. We meet together, coordinate our activities together and address our challenges together. This is a contextual situation for Gulu district, I do not know about the other districts', (Gulu District Planner August 2010, personal interview).

In this research I found that all the government officials I interviewed put forward the above reason, however, CSO representatives from Gulu district NGO Forum and CSOPNU were concerned that there is a thin line between coordination of CSOs and control since the legal instruments like the Non Governmental Organisations Act are open to different interpretations (Director Gulu District NGO Forum and Contact person CSOPNU August 2010, personal interviews). This could be true given the nature and mechanisms that CSOs have to go through. Some government officials explicitly view CSOs as actors in the PRDP process to be controlled and guided. For example, the Gulu District PRDP coordinator succinctly put it this way;

‘The word non-government makes them feel that they are independent of government and parallel to the government. They also feel they are non-state actors-and one has to always be alert and on top in order to control them. Help them to know that that is just a name but not implied by law. Because in Uganda they are regulated by the NGO Act and the Act recognises their independence but still puts them under the overall coordination and guidance by government. And at district level we have the Local Government Act that mandates the LGs to be responsible for the coordination of both the government and non-government agencies. So you always have to be alert and have the relevant laws at your finger tips so that when you are discussing you are able to guide especially the new entrants who are coming from outside Uganda and are new in our the system’, (Gulu District PRDP coordinator August 2010, personal interview).

However, I found that even though the view of most officials in government was to ensure control of CSOs, it would be a mistake to generalise as there were some officials who thought that working with CSOs does not only mean agreeing on everything but managing the differences. For example, Gulu District Chairman in one of the stakeholder meetings emphasised the importance of understanding disagreements in order to develop trust and confidence between the district and partners since it is not possible to agree on everything in (Nobert Mao 2009).

There seems to be other embedded aspects of public relations to both the local communities in the PRDP region and to the donors. I cannot rule out the fact that the ruling regime involves CSOs in PRDP to impress the voters at the grassroots who do not have enough information about PRDP that something is being done about their plight. For example the following comments are telling on this issue:

‘Much as what CSOs are doing is contributing to PRDP, they are doing that through their normal activities; for example World Vision, AVSI, Care International, ARC among others, have always constructed water points; they are all involved in infrastructural rehabilitation and development. At the end of the day, their activities of what they have done are combined as contribution towards PRDP’, (PRDP Commissioner OPM August 2010, personal interview).

‘Everything is considered to be PRDP; the government is saying that NAADS is also contributing to PRDP, so it is very hard to know where PRDP begins and where it ends. Even NUSAF II, is contributing to PRDP, for example the livelihood support system, community infrastructure rehabilitation, school teachers’ accommodation rehabilitation, among others’, (Gulu District Planner August 2010, personal interview).

It was clear for me in this research that CS participation in PRDP largely aimed at mobilising resources from donors who support the government directly and through the CSOs. One of the people I interviewed lamented at the irony of having the GoU contributing 30% of the PRDP budget and yet it considers itself as the principle in the framework; and leaving the development partners to contribute 70% in (CSOPNU contact person August 2010, personal interview).

In the same vein, USAID (2009) refers to GoU PRDP funding as a supplement to donor funds and goes ahead to inform the lack of progress by the GoU in implementing the PRDP had left the police under-resourced. It therefore seems that the GoU interests are not directly in line with participation that aims at giving power to the citizens, it manipulates CS participation to the extent of the government encouraging and ensuring participation of international and national agencies vis-à-vis the CBOs that have less opportunity to mobilise financial resources from foreign donors. A comment from the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Gulu district points to this direction;

‘When we are talking about CS participation we are largely talking about NGOs and UN agencies; the CBOs are used as implementation partners by non-operational international agencies or northern NGOs who are here with their money in the pocket and willing to fund CBOs. We have big projects being implemented by CBOs in the sub-counties and we get progress reports through the funding organisation. The CBOs apply through the LG and submit their applications through us and they are sub-granted, for example, USAID funded projects like SPRING, Care International works through some women groups in different sub-counties among others’, (Gulu Deputy CAO August 2010, personal interview).

It should be remembered that Uganda is among the donor dependent states (OECD 2009); and currently the donors support around 25% of the budget (Media Centre 2010). Most of the donors who support the government budget emphasise country ownership of policies and programmes and both the donors and GoU believe that this can be achieved through CS participation (Accra Agenda 2008: 15-16, Paris Declaration 2007: 3, National Development Plan of the Government of Uganda 2010: 66, OPM 2007: 18-19). However, the GoU is mindful about overly critical CSOs and therefore manipulates the process to meet the obligations of donors as noted earlier.

It would be futile to generalise the conditions of CSOs as it varies in districts and the activities in which they are involved. I found out that Gulu district is doing well in coordinating CSOs as compared to most PRDP districts from the interviews and therefore the findings should not be entirely generalised for all the PRDP districts but as regards to central government policy issues the findings can be generalised to a great extent.

In the next section I put forward my major reflections and conclusions on CS participation in PRDP.

## Chapter 5

### Reflections and Conclusions

This chapter focuses on answering the research questions from the data I collected and reflects on the importance of understanding such partnerships in policy processes not only in Gulu district and Uganda but even beyond since the state-CS partnership framework is a common phenomenon in several developing countries. The chapter also makes conclusions about CS participation in PRDP in Gulu District.

#### 5.1 Important Reflections

There is so much confusion about the difference between NGOs and the autonomous CSOs in Uganda. However, it should be noted that CS participation in PRDP according to the government is largely limited to big formal and professional NGOs that are operating at national and international levels in Uganda. In my view, such a focus is not only narrow but disempowering to the local communities that have suffered and emerged from conflict situations with the greatest desire to return to peace and to rebuild their communities as some respondents from CSOs have observed (August 2010 personal interviews).

In this research I found that there was also inadequate knowledge about CS, and PRDP. Some government officials viewed foreign state institutions and intergovernmental agencies like USAID and The Children Fund (UNICEF) as part of CSOs. This could be attributed to the fact that these agencies worked closely with most of the large NGOs to implement their projects. It was also surprising to find that a government official referring to a government programme (NUREP) as part of CS (Gulu District Population office August 2010, personal interview). This confusion in terms of what is part of CS and what is clearly not part of CS reflects a gap in what is practised in terms of formal CS participation not only in PRDP but other state-CS partnership in Gulu district.

I noted the danger of homogenising CS as actors in not only in PRDP but in policy processes in Uganda and this is done not only by the government but by also by donors and to some extent some powerful CSOs. For example in the PRDP document, CS is reflected as single entity, and in practice, the GoU considers NGOs at national and International level as representatives of CS. This is dangerous as it assumes homogeneity of CS disregarding the reality that CS in Uganda is made up of different aspects; informal and formal; international and national NGOs, CBOs, Networks, professional associations, trade unions, think tanks, among others, with rarely a shared vision and philosophy as DENIVA (2003: 8) cautioned.

With the GoU contributing only 30% of the PRDP budget and 70% coming from the development partners, it would be interesting for further research to analyse the extent to which service users in the PRDP districts in Uganda are empowered and have the leverage to demand accountability from

CSOs since the state in principle should account to voters, while the people view CSOs services as charity or voluntary and may have limited opportunities to demand accountability.

Even with the limitations of the framing of CS participation in PRDP, it is imperative to note that some good is attributed to the tokenism offered to CS participation by government. For example, as a development and reconstruction process, the PRDP process was largely silent about gender issues and they were only brought on board after being pressurised by some gender advocacy CSOs like the Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (WICCE). CSOs have also helped greatly in ensuring that at least the communities are aware of the content in the PRDP document as the findings have shown.

## 5.2 Conclusions

The process of PRDP is highly top down with tokenistic and manipulative involvement of some CSOs that are highly donor dependant and focus more on upward accountability to the donors and government than the lower grassroots organisations. The informal grassroots CS and CBOs are left out in the formal policy processes and taken for granted on face value that they do not have capacity to make meaningful contribution to policy processes. I think it is very important for new research to examine how the local people at grassroots are contesting or adjusting to this discourse as regards not only to PRDP but to also other policy making processes in Uganda in which they are left out.

Ideally, CSOs are supposed to participate in policy making at different levels with the aim of increasing influence, voice and responsiveness. My main conclusion is that it is difficult or impossible to determine exactly the degree to which CSOs have affected government behaviour. Yet it is largely clear that CS participation in the PRDP process is highly manipulated by the government as a strategy to attain political leverage from the masses and to appease the foreign donors so as to gain more access to financial resources both through the CSOs and as direct loans and grants so as to remain in power. The problems with CS participation as used in the current framework of PRDP in Uganda is that it is likely not to have any or limited positive impact on the policy process for the reconstruction and recovery of northern Uganda. As a result of vested interests by the government, major foreign donors' agendas (WB, USAID, DfID, and European Commission, among others) and some CSOs, most CSOs are gap-fillers or service provision oriented. Even the advocacy oriented CSOs like the Gulu District NGO Forum fear to be too political and critical of the regime since there are possible repercussions like being deregistered or failing to renew their contract from the NGO Board.

According to neo-Tocquevillian tradition that propels the protection of individual liberties from the state by collective voluntary actions and the Hegel-Karl Marx traditions that recognise that the inequalities and economic conflicts with CS require constant surveillance by the state in order to maintain the 'civil' aspects (Ottaway: 173-182), both the state and CS are supposed to watch each other for the good of the community. However, in the current PRDP framework, the state with the largely silent nod of donors is watching or con-

trolling CS participation by determining which CSOs should be part and parcel of the process, restricting their activities through laws and MoUs and demanding that they streamline their activities within the PRDP framework.

The major foreign donors are not ignorant about how participation of CS is manipulated by the state, but it seems to be clear that they are silent about and in some ways the promoters of the framework possibly because it does not threaten their objectives. Major donors like the World Bank's approach and that of the most Western states like USA and UK is to ensure that CSOs are in line with the government's policies. In this research I found that donors are regularly involved in trilateral meetings with government and CSOs on major policy priorities. It will be interesting to study how the major donors will adjust to the changing environment with China increasingly offering "no conditional aid to countries like Uganda".

In line with Arnstein's ladder of participation CS participation in PRDP largely falls under non-participation in the framework. The government has power and is determined to hang on even more and the ways in which the government is engaging CSOs now is very disempowering and cosmetic. In fact CSOs participation in government processes serves to legitimise the status quo, not to challenge it; and decisions are depicted to be the result of joint efforts of CSOs and government, which obviously makes it even harder for CSOs to criticise the government. I found that the government is more concerned with increasing showing that there is CS participation and decreasing the power of critical actors in the policy making process.

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