

# The Contested Role of Civil Society in the Democratization of Uganda: Are State and Civil Society Organizations Bedfellows?

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## Abstract

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have played key roles in bringing about democratization in several countries in the world. Civil society organizations in Uganda largely operate around social spaces such as markets, churches, cooperative societies, common resources, and other social forms of organizations mainly because the formal economic sector is small. Civil society-state engagement in Uganda in the area of democratization is characterized by complacency and cohabitation. Like in many parts of Africa, authoritarian tendencies of the state have forced civil society to operate underground, further weakening this timid and feeble sector. A close examination of civil society in Uganda indicates that it has been active, championing the cause for the democratization process by engaging and monitoring state institutions. Nevertheless, CSOs-state relations remain unclear, suspicious and many times, antagonistic.

**Key Words:** Civil society; democratization; faith-based; policymaking; accountability

## Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have played key roles in bringing about democratization in several countries in the world. In industrialized countries, formal civil society such as workers' unions, professional, and voluntary associations have played a significant role in bringing down authoritarian

regimes. In Africa, a combined effort of formal and informal civil society organizations have championed the struggle for freedom and return to democracy. Some religious movements together with other social forces in society played a key role in democratization processes in South Africa, Kenya, Zambia

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and many other African countries. While some of these countries stand out, the role of faith-based CSOs in the democratization process in Africa cannot be generalized.<sup>1</sup> This article seeks a historical explanation, attempting to understand why civil society in Uganda appears complacent and timid in her engagement with the state on issues of democratization. CSOs directly impact people's lives and welfare. This article is interested to understand how CSOs have navigated limitations and utilized opportunities while engaging the state in matters of good governance. While faith-based civil society has been at the forefront of social service provision in Africa, there is little evidence that it has equally been engaged with the state on political matters. Examples of such an engagement are quite few.

Both colonial and postcolonial regimes that feared emergence of a strong society in Uganda, have generally curtailed its growth. In the postcolonial era, the authoritarian tendencies of the state forced the timid and fragmented civil society to operate underground, further weakening the sector. Not only did the emergence of the notorious regime of Idi Amin in the 1970s worsen the situation for free organization but also instilled perpetual fear in the population, characterized by rampant state inspired murders, insecurity, and poverty. However, over the past thirty years, there has been some tolerance of civil society under the current regime of the National Resistance Movement (NRM). Still,

CSOs are tolerated only when they supplement government efforts in service provision and mobilize the population to actively participate in decision-making. When it comes to politics, CSOs are regularly reminded by the state that politics is for politicians. CSOs are forced to wear a coat of indifference lest they face the full force of the state, including threats of deregistration. This, in a way, critically limits their contribution to the struggle for democratization. In addition, this also affects the functioning of the recently allowed multiparty politics, whereby, parties have failed to forge meaningful alliances with civil society organizations. It is not surprising that most civil society organizations including faith-based ones find it convenient to ally with the state and ruling party. In turn, government officials offers perks to religious leaders. This is a clear case of the state bribing religious leaders for loyalty. The key question for Uganda, therefore, is whether civil society organizations are in bed with the state or not. Second, whether or not faith-based civil society is playing a residual role in the democratization movement or it is suffering from opportunistic tendencies that seem to have plagued most civil society organizations in their role as agents of democratization. Third, whether or not the democratization process will be strong without an active role by faith-based organizations. In addressing these questions, we begin by conceptualizing the role civil

society plays in the democratization process broadly and later focus on the specific case study of a faith-based civil organization.

## A Broad Understanding of Civil Society

In this article, we take Harbeson's conceptualization that civil society is a critical factor in the advancement of "improved governance, viable state-society and state-economy relationships, and prevention of the kind of political decay that undermined new African governments a generation ago."<sup>2</sup> In the same vein, we understand the state as a hegemonic institution with power that authoritatively allocates value in society. The government of Uganda tends to undermine the work of civil society organizations because it perceives them as competitors rather than partners.<sup>3</sup> Civil society organizations and government in Uganda share a common objective of taking services closer to local beneficiaries, especially those marginalized and "locked" out of the market because of poverty. The key question that needs a critical examination is the extent to which both civil society organizations (specifically faith-based civil society organizations in our case) and government organize and promote good politics.<sup>4</sup>

Civil society is a wide and elusive normative term, however, for analytical purposes, civil society is defined as a realm of a structured social organization that is voluntary,

self-regulating, self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound together by a set of shared rules and values.<sup>5</sup> Functionally, civil society is conceived in terms of organized activities by groups to improve society, but is not part of the state or business.<sup>6</sup> Though conceptual clarity about civil society will remain a subject for debate, civil society is characterized among other elements by being that realm of society that is organized voluntarily without a motive for profit.<sup>7</sup> The immediate interest, of civil society, is not to secure political power but to mediate between political power-holders and to promote the interest of those they represent, besides their members and beneficiaries. In a nutshell, civil society is distinct from the state, society and business. Civil society is distinct from the state because when an organized civil society group joins or forms government it ceases to be part of civil society. It is also distinct from society because only that realm of society that is organized for a specific purpose, other than political, can be described as civil society. Civil society goes beyond individual interests for private gain; hence, it is not organized for profit-making business. Civil society has been described in a more comprehensive and analytical manner by Taylor thus, "...in a minimal sense civil society exists where there is tutelage of state power. In a stronger sense, civil society exists where society as a whole can structure itself and coordinate its actions through such associations. As

an alternative or supplement to the second sense, we can speak of civil society whenever the ensemble of associations influences the course of state policy.”<sup>8</sup>

This conceptualization is aptly relevant for our purposes for three reasons. First, it affirms the notion of free association by organizing outside the state. Secondly, it emphasizes the idea of engaging the state in order to influence the outcomes of state policy. Thirdly, it reveals continuous actions and activities, both within individual civil societies and between their variants. A composite outcome of all the three should mean a vibrant society or plural society, which is capable of taming the behaviour of the state, holding it accountable and keeping it within the rules of the game.

In respect of the market, civil society presses for fairness by playing a role on the side of those excluded by market forces. As Held asserts, the free vote and the free market are the key assumptions for guaranteeing that collective good is served.<sup>9</sup> With civil society mediating between these two essential processes in society, the liberal-democratic element is cemented in society as a whole. Whether one is contesting or confirming the potential of a liberal-democratic notion of the state in producing collective good, the essential element is a clear understanding of what civil society can or cannot achieve.

## Civil Society in Uganda

In Uganda as in many countries in the world, civil society organizations constitute what has come to be known as the “third sector,” playing an important role both at the level of advocacy (engaging with state policies) and at delivery of services. CSOs interact with the state at both the central and the local levels.

Civil society in Uganda falls within two categories: the first is the formally constituted, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The other category is widely known as community based organizations (CBOs). NGOs are registered with a statutory body known as the NGO Registration Board, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. CBOs on their part are either registered with the local government authorities or are operating more or less informally, without registration. Thus, the term civil society in Uganda is used to refer to both categories of voluntary organizations. The basic difference between NGOs and CBOs is their scale of operations and the size of membership. CBOs tend to be smaller – focused and geographically localized. On their part, NGOs are bigger in size of membership, more broadly focused and sometimes spatially spread out.

Historically, the NGO sector in Uganda used to be small and largely dominated by religious groups engaged in charity and provision of some social services. This picture

changed in the 1990s when the NGO sector expanded rapidly. For example, a study of NGOs in Uganda revealed that there were 3,499 NGOs registered with the NGO Board in 2000.<sup>10</sup> This number has increased to over 15,000 by 2017. The number of CBOs in the country, is unknown, despite the important roles they play in the country. In addition, whereas the number of NGOs has proliferated in recent years, what they do, how they do it, with what means, is not well documented. Fourie and Kakumba<sup>11</sup> have noted that the greatest weakness of Ugandan CSOs is their overdependence on foreign funding. This is also a main source of suspicion by the state of civil society as evidenced by Uganda police raids on NGOs<sup>12</sup>. It has been conceded by some directors of these NGOs that government is weary that some NGOs have strong grassroots networks and much more money than opposition parties, hence could pose a challenge to government.<sup>13</sup>

This, notwithstanding, there is a widespread consensus at government policy level that civil society plays a significant role in the development process. It is noted, for example, that: "In a country as poor as Uganda with limited government capacity and profound social needs, it is urgent to expand partnerships in a decentralized framework in order to reach the poor and to offer interventions that are meaningful to their lives."<sup>14</sup> However, as Fourie and Kakumba have asserted, the capacity of civil society organizations based in Uganda to hold

government accountable has been affected by organizational deficiencies and their desire to do business with government. Moreover, CSOs have gotten themselves conscripted to state patronage and clientelism.<sup>15</sup>

Further observation shows that civil society possesses a special comparative advantage, relative to government in that they are innovative in their activities, and spontaneous in their operations, they enhance local popular participation and reach the needy more easily than the bureaucratic structures of government.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Uganda government acknowledges that NGOs and CBOs have "filled the considerable void left as a result of government incapacities."<sup>17</sup> For example, by 1994 the contribution of the voluntary sector to the national economy was estimated to be United States Dollars 125 million, a figure that was equivalent to 30 per cent of total financial aid to the country that year.<sup>18</sup> Besides, in the health sector, the voluntary sector provided one third of hospital beds.<sup>19</sup> Most of the main health care facilities were established by Christian churches, and have been followed by their Muslim colleagues in the more recent past.

This is one example that demonstrates the extent to which NGOs and CBOs are crucial to service delivery. This informs the position of the Uganda government thus: "Rather than perceiving the voluntary sector as a substitute for the public sector, or NGOs as contractors for government, it will be preferable to pay attention to the characteristics

that give them their strengths and weaknesses, and encourage them to exploit their comparative advantage wherever it may lie.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, the government of Uganda considers the voluntary sector as a key strategic partner in the development process.<sup>21</sup> In policy terms, therefore, the government encourages the work of the voluntary sector by extension of selective tax exemptions on materials donated to NGOs. The position of the government is that whereas this is not a right, it is justifiable because it should be seen as “a government contribution to the relief and development” that NGOs provide.<sup>22</sup> Based on this principle, NGOs in Uganda are selectively exempted from corporate taxes since their activities do not involve profit-making.

Despite government’s recognition of the role played by civil society organizations in the development process, we have little evidence of how civil society and the state relate in reality. This raises the question of whether the two are “partners,” “adversaries,” or “competitors” in service delivery. Equally important is the question of whether civil society organizations are internally democratic and what they play in the democratization process. The pertinent question then is, first, to what extent are civil society organizations engaging the state to democratize society? Second, are CSOs and the state bedfellows, that is, collaborators? If they are, who checks the other? How does that facilitate or hinder accountability to the people?

## **The Framework for Civil Society and State Engagement in Uganda**

The pre-1986 state in Uganda was hegemonic and violent, which discouraged formation of active CSOs, except those that were engaged in “economic survival” activities for their membership.<sup>23</sup> With full entry of international non-governmental organizations, as well as the mushrooming of local ones, the social space that had hitherto, been threatened by a violent state was opened. In the 1970s and 1980s, Western donors and international NGOs mistrusted the state and ended up channeling significant amounts of the much-needed aid through the voluntary sector. In the process, the voluntary sector grew exponentially, to the extent that registered NGOs that were estimated well over one hundred in 1987 grew into the thousands.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from the exponential growth of the NGO sector, the neo-liberal economic reforms in Uganda have had both positive and negative effects on society that required the intervention of CSOs. On the one hand, economic reforms engineered recovery of the economy with an estimated average growth rate of 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) per annum since 1992. This has resulted in government’s increased investment in infrastructure and services such as roads, safe water, primary health care, and primary schools. On the other hand, however, the social costs

of adjustment had its toll on some sections of society. Restructuring and downsizing of the public service sector, which took place in the first half of the 1990s, left thousands of Ugandans without jobs.<sup>25</sup> Equally, the privatisation of parastatals (state-owned companies) had similar negative effects on employment when thousands of workers lost their jobs.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) advised the government of Uganda to impose a ban on the expansion of employment in public institutions. Salaries, which were slightly increased in 1996, though continuously adjusted, have not matched the rate of price inflation.

The neoliberal policies also encouraged liberalization of trade since they allowed free flow of imports and exports. The main effects of this trade regime was the dominance of imports on the market, which encourages speculative business behaviour rather than investment in productive sectors. This partly explains why despite the statistical recovery of the economy, the industrial sector still constitutes only 7 per cent of GDP. Little expansion of the industrial sector has also meant little expansion of formal employment. This possibly explains two dominant tendencies in the formal employment sector in Uganda, the NGO sector seems to provide most jobs to university graduates because the formal sector has not expanded over the years, and yet the informal sector, such as, trade

is the more dominant part of the economy. .

Whereas statistics show that the incidence of poverty reduced from 56 per cent, in 1992 to 38 per cent in 2000,<sup>27</sup> and further down to 19 per cent in 2015, real poverty persists. For example, one study has observed: “The paradox of the fast growing economy and the perception among a cross section of the population that their situation has not changed, and in some cases has become worse, raises an important question.”<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, some research shows that most of the benefits from poverty reduction strategies went to the top 10 per cent of the urban rich, or more than double the extent it benefited the poorest people. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its assessment of Uganda’s poverty reduction efforts shares this concern. IMF/IDA Joint Staff Assessment in 2001 observed that although the government’s efforts at reducing poverty have been good, the consumption of the richest increased by 20 per cent while that of the poorest increased only by 8 per cent.<sup>29</sup> The issue therefore, is that the benefits of poverty reduction have not trickled down to the poorest of the poor, who remain marginalized and vulnerable.

The willingness of donors, international NGOs, and encouragement of government have contributed to the tremendous growth of the local voluntary sector. The main characteristics of local NGOs is that they are formed with the aim

of addressing local issues but also, targeting to be funded by either foreign governments or international NGOs, which act as conduits of international finance to the local beneficiaries. This empowers them financially but also stifles independent decision-making. As some commentators have observed, local NGOs in Uganda suffer from a dependency syndrome and lack independent means of self-sustenance.<sup>30</sup> This has sometimes been attributed to the nature of the economic classes that exist in Uganda, that is, most people are poor and the middle class is economically weak.

### **Civil Society and Policymaking in Uganda**

One aspect of civil society in Uganda that has skipped the attention of most policy observers (e.g. academics and policy analysts) is the increasing role of civil society in the making of public policy. Most observers have paid attention to what CSOs do or what they do not do in their “autonomous world”. Analysts have tended to focus on the question of CSOs engaging the state through lobbying. However, there is an increasing trend towards CSOs working together with the state either at the central or at the local level.<sup>31</sup> At the national level, state-CSO have engaged in joint policy dialogues and partnership in shaping economic policies. At the local level, the state has been decentralized by a framework of governance that is underpinned by devolution of powers, responsibilities and fiscal resources to the local level.

At this level, policy framework has created opportunities for civil society to play its role of advocacy and service provision.

At the national level, the increasing role of CSOs has been triggered off in recent years by a number of factors. It is important to note that there has been a change of donor attitudes especially within the World Bank towards the role of the state in Uganda. Most World Bank reports praise the Uganda government (and President Yoweri Museveni) as a success story of the Bank’s economic reforms in Africa. In other words, the World Bank and other donors seem to have been enthusiastic to showcase Uganda as its “brand mark” of the much criticized structural adjustment policies. In a bid to stave off the “noise” from the independent civil society organizations, CSOs were gradually “incorporated” into the economic policy making process. The under-resourced NGOs have been more willing than not, to “cooperate” with these two powerful actors – the donors and the state. The invitation by the donors and the government is irresistible to CSOs because not only does participation in policy dialogues of donors and the state give a CSO visibility, it also gives CSOs an opportunity to reach top policy makers to put their side issues on the “table.”<sup>32</sup> The interest of the state as well as the donors is to bring the CSOs on board so that they can claim that policy came out of broad consultations with a wide

spectrum of stakeholders making their contribution to the policy.. This would thus lend legitimacy to the donor-driven policymaking process. Critical views however have emerged within the CSO sector that indeed, there is a “conspiracy” between the state and the World Bank to use such consultations with CSOs so as to claim that their policies enjoy popular consensus or they are homegrown to the extent that if they fail to bear fruits they do not carry the blame alone.

Evidence of CSO participation in economic policymaking partnership with the state began in 1997 when the government carried out its first Uganda participatory poverty assessment project (UPAP). Several NGOs were invited to participate in these assessment activities. NGOs seconded personnel to carry out research and to participate in the analysis and discussion of findings. UPAP findings were translated into the first draft of what came to be known as Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP).<sup>33</sup> The first PEAP was prepared in 1998. In 1999, however the World Bank and IMF required, as a condition, for lending that the government should revise PEAP according to their new framework known as Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).<sup>34</sup> While the principles and guidelines were drawn up by the World Bank and IMF, the government was required to consult as many stakeholders as possible. This process again saw extensive consultations with CSOs. Thus, whereas the World

Bank wanted its new framework for lending to be guided by its new policies under PRSP, and the Uganda government wanted World Bank’s money, CSOs were called in to “assist” in a process that was already agreed upon by the two main actors, that is the donors and the government. Moreover, although such a process of consultations helped the CSOs to get information on what the government and the donor planned to do, many of them viewed their role as ad hoc and ill-prepared. For example, it is noted: . . . along with the benefits, CSO involvement in formulation of Uganda PRSP also had a number of problems. For example, during the process it was clear that most CSOs lacked staff capacity to engage donors and policy planners in meaningful dialogue about macro economic issues. This remains a problem at both national and local levels. In Uganda only a few CSOs have the capacity to influence policy planning. As a result, there is a danger that CSOs might endorse positions about which they have little knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

These views show the picture, which mirrors the weakness embedded in the engagement between CSO-donor-state tripartite, where CSOs join probably not as equals but as just junior partners both in perception and capacity. Thus, to conceive CSOs as equal partners may seem to be misplaced. Besides, the participation of CSOs begins and ends at contributing to policy processes. There is no evidence that at implementation stage either the donors or the government consults CSOs. In this regard, the attitude

of government officials tends to shun certain positions that CSOs find difficult to accept, for example, one of the key leading participants in these dialogues noted: “Some government officials still regard CSO participation merely as an exercise to legitimize the government agenda. They still view criticism from CSOs with suspicion.”<sup>36</sup>

This raises even a more pertinent question, of accountability. By officials of CSOs participating in these policy dialogues: are they representing the interests of their membership or they are representing their interests and views? Evidence indicates that such officials or their representatives collect data, analyze it and take part in discussing findings. One thing is true; the participants drawn from CSOs are paid for their input. There is no evidence that payment to individual participants ever trickles down to CSOs, rather it benefits the individuals involved. How then can such individuals from CSOs challenge the government on similar issues originating from meetings to which they contributed? Is it possible that those individuals drawn from CSOs to participate in policy dialogues with government would compromise the agenda of their own CSOs? As one observer has noted:

The extent to which civil society participate is both positioned between and “manufactured” by the government and international development actors, is an important feature of invited spaces and the power

dynamics that surrounded them. Such a position results in civil society actors being largely reactive, responding to resources offered for a particular range of activities and functions. This in turn limits their capacity to develop autonomous agendas and raises questions about where their accountability lies.<sup>37</sup>

The critical observation is indeed apt, considering the extent to which donors and government have “incorporated” CSOs in their agenda. For example, in 2005 the World Bank released United States \$374,000 to the Ministry of Finance for purposes of “strengthening” the partnership between civil society and the government in monitoring public expenditure. Instead of CSOs questioning the rationale for such a project or assessing the impact it could have on their own agendas, they responded by commending it as “a good starting point, if only it can be beefed up with more funds to have appreciable impact.”<sup>38</sup> They however assert, perhaps consciously, thus:

It is also the view of civil society organizations that for them to be able to carry out effective monitoring of public expenditure they need to be in full charge of the resources set aside for this purpose. They need to apply monitoring tools they have developed, and not to be straightjacketed into adopting tools developed elsewhere by people who are not familiar with our local situation.<sup>39</sup>

Implied in this quotation is the idea that CSOs still have a conscious

mind that tells them that they have to account to their constituencies, and not to give in to whatever the World Bank and government tell them. For example, some NGOs under the umbrella of DENIVA a local NGO network organization met in Kampala on 16 March 2005 to devise their own code of conduct, which was an attempt to defy a proposal by some donor organizations to impose their own on local NGOs. The move of this kind on the part of the CSOs appears to be a move towards reflecting on the reasons for their own existence, and accountability within themselves and to their constituencies. However, most of them seem to account to donors and lately, to government; a process that has undermined their independence and autonomy.<sup>40</sup> This partly explains why most CSOs are engaged with development issues rather than holding the state to account or pushing it to expand democratic space.

### **Civil Society and its Relations with the Political Regime**

The civil society-state engagement in Uganda in the area of democratization is characterized by complacency and cohabitation. Whereas CSOs have been the engine of change in authoritarian states in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and elsewhere, this has not been the case in Uganda.<sup>41</sup> For example, Singh argues that conceptualization of civil society's role in the democratization debate cannot be divorced from the way the

state is conceptualized, but rather we can add that the nature of struggles that civil society engages in is largely shaped by the nature of the state, and its responses to such struggles.<sup>42</sup> The state has been the dominant player on Uganda's socio-political space. When the present government of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) came to power in 1986, its strategy for retaining power was to incorporate as many socio-political groups as possible into an arrangement it termed as "broad based" administration. It also restricted the activities of political parties, which by law were forbidden from sponsoring candidates for elections, addressing political rallies, displaying party colors, holding delegates conferences, restricting them to their headquarters. The NRM improvised an arena of "corporatist" politics in which it created space for various interest groups – women, the disabled persons, trade union, the army, political parties, among others by giving them slots in parliament and other public institutions. Because of the past violent and unstable politics that prevailed before the reign of the NRM, these groups joined the government willingly and unsuspecting of the NRM agenda.

This "coalition politics" has over the last three decades, had a critical impact on the growth and operations of civil society in the country. First, because civil society organizations have been largely represented in state structures, they were assumed to be part of government policy making

process. Secondly, the groups that are represented find it difficult to go around opposing government policies, which they have helped to shape. Thirdly, because of the “coalition” politics, civil society organizations perceive the state as a “partner” in governance. At most of their functions, a senior government official is more often than not invited to preside. CSOs in Uganda conceptualize the NRM government as a benevolent “partner” in whatever work they do. We contend that the effects of such tendencies have undermined the capacity of CSOs to engage the state on critical issues of corruption, accountability and democratization, to the extent that most CSOs refrain from active criticism of the state. CSOs also distance themselves from associating with opposition politics fearing for the cancellation of their registration certificates. Thus, a combination of government control over the activities of political parties and “coalition” politics with CSOs has left a free reign for the ruling NRM to do, unchecked, whatever it desires. Where the CSOs have attempted to bring up an agenda that contradicts NRM policies, the government has had a tendency to ignore them.

Despite limited space and engagement that CSOs have had with the state in the arena of democratization at the centre, a few CSOs have played an active role in holding the state to account. For example, the Uganda Debt Network

(UDN) has consistently pressed the state to deal with questions of foreign debt, and querying public officials on corruption and misuse of public funds. Human Rights CSOs notably, Foundations for Human Rights Initiatives (FHRI) have been vocal and critical of the government’s handling of human rights issues. Those CSOs that deal directly with political issues, such as the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) engage in dissemination of research findings and civic education, especially during elections, including election monitoring. However, UJCC also avoid a confrontational approach in their engagement with the state. Similarly, women’s CSOs primarily deal with issues of gender, which is also a key state policy. For example, a number of women CSOs have been vocal on issue of equality when the Land Act was being debated in parliament, and engaged parliament on draft legislation of the Domestic Relations Bill. Moreover, the government itself created its own voluntary organizations such as the national women’s council, youth councils, and student’s union. The government uses such organizations to mobilize specific sections of society. At the same time, it would be misleading to call them NGOs since they are funded by the state and champion state agenda. In one way or the other, there has been a tendency by the NRM government to create a corporatist organization of the state with a desire to co-opt every organized group.

These policy orientations have had the effect of promoting and perpetuating monopoly politics. Monopoly politics essentially refers to a situation where the ruling state-party prefers to discourage or to destroy autonomous civil society.<sup>43</sup> Under the no-party system of NRM in Uganda up to 2005, the ruling movement (now registered as a political organization) tended either to undermine independent civil society groups such as farmers' cooperative societies or attempt to broaden its support by "cohabiting" with CSOs, thus minimizing the space for independent civil society activity. Undoubtedly, therefore, the state and the ruling movement (party) are indistinguishable, almost in every aspect. This kind of political dispensation has taught CSOs either to "censor" themselves or face the wrath of the law if they act otherwise.

### **The Context of Church and State Engagement in Uganda**

In Uganda, the formal economic sector is small while civil society is largely fragmented around social spaces such as markets, churches, cooperative societies, common resources and other social forms of organizations. To understand the role of faith-based civil society in Uganda, one needs to appreciate the history and political economy of the country. There was terror and social deprivation after independence, especially under Amin's regime, when freedom to organize was severely

restricted and denied. Amin's reign of terror was a tragedy because it survived on instilling fear. The horrendous murder of Archbishop Janan Luwum of the Anglican Church of Uganda marked a wave of retreat of faith-based civil society in engaging the state.

The common argument within state circles in Uganda is that faith-based organizations should not engage in matters of the state. It is a contradiction because state appointments tend to follow religious considerations. This is supposedly meant to neutralize the vigilance and activism of the religious organizations or the so-called "balancing game" given the fact that faith organizations have mass followings. Each regime in Uganda has tended to depend on faith-based organizations for survival, for instance, Amin is alleged to have depended on Muslims and Obote on Anglicans. When Benedict Kiwanuka (Uganda's first Prime Minister) led the first self-government in early 1960s, his brief sojourn in power was interpreted as "time for Catholics." Today, Museveni's regime has depended on appeasement and manipulation of various religious groups. To stress this point, it is common for President Museveni to hold *Idd* parties for Muslims and to give four-wheel drive cars to religious leaders on ascending to higher leadership positions, such as office of bishop; the most recent was a car donation to the Archbishop of the Adventist Church on 16 September 2017.<sup>44</sup>

The government in Uganda continues to feel uneasy whenever

religious leaders engage in issues that are governance related. For example, on 22 September 2009 the editorial in *The New Vision*, a government controlled newspaper, rubbished the Catholic Bishop of Masaka for talking about the return of Buganda Kingdom properties. He had also been reported to have said that government should abandon a regional tier system and the Land Amendment Bill 2007. The editorial argued that it is wrong for a religious leader to engage in partisan politics.<sup>45</sup> The paper's argument was that a religious leader should transcend his ethnic group and defend the good of all Ugandans. The other was that a man (*sizi*) of God should not be seen defending interests of a small group people (a reference to the Buganda establishment at Mengo, the kingdom's headquarters) which is not elected and not accountable and should rather, advocate for the basic values of democracy, which are fundamentally, Christian values: justice, equality and accountability. Third, the argument was that by the nature of his mandate, a religious leader should defend the interests of the poor, the vulnerable and the underprivileged. Here, we submit that the editorial shot itself in the foot because most of the issues raised were legitimate concerns that the clergyman should ordinarily focus on in executing his work.

In discussing the role of faith-based civil society organizations in the democratization process, we use the Uganda Joint Christian Council

(UJCC), as a case study to examine how faith-based civil society organizations have related to government. We seek to understand how they have engaged the state in various ways, such as human rights observance, freedom of assembly, speech, and association and election management. This is an important subject for study because most scholars on the issue of state and religion in Uganda have concentrated on the negative side of the relationship between religious organizations and the political development of Uganda.<sup>46</sup>

## **A Historical Context of Religious Organizations in Uganda**

The early missionary period was characterized by constant feuding between different religious organizations on one hand and the state on the other and whichever religious group won became the standard state religion. Understandably, this era was also distorted by the scramble for Africa by European powers and the arrival of the first Christian missionaries.<sup>47</sup> The struggle by European for power and influence in Uganda in 1880s and 1890s manifested in inter-religious conflicts that have plagued the nation's politics and state and church relationship to date. Since Uganda became a British protectorate in 1894, the colonial government constantly favored the Anglican leaning religious organizations and establishment in social, economic, and political and administrative setup. This soon posed

the problem of how to define the relationship between the missionary group (the church) and the colonial authority.

At the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the British colonial administrators concluded an agreement, henceforth called, the Buganda Agreement, which defined how the administration would relate to local chiefs and kings and land division and management. Among the many clauses of the 1900 Buganda Agreement, land became a defining factor on how the state (both colonial and postcolonial) related to the people of Uganda (Buganda) and the church. For clarity, the Anglican, Catholic, and Muslim religious institutions benefited from the land division. Hansen writes that all land was divided into two types; one half was made Crown land and the other half allocated to the royal family and about one thousand chiefs as freehold tenure, adding that the latter was called “mailo land” because it was apportioned out to individuals concerned in square miles.<sup>48</sup> In so doing, the chiefs became landowners, and took the responsibility to collect land taxes in form of land rent from their subjects. This practice was in total disregard of the fact that there was no developed commercial land use, such as agriculture and industry.

The main religious groups in the colonial era were the Catholic White Mill Hill Fathers and the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS). Captain Lugard with his Imperial British East Africa Company later joined the British missionary groups

to consolidate British colonial rule on Uganda. The CMS at the time sought to be independent of political influence through proclaiming the right to plan and extend its work without any prior reference to the secular authorities in accordance with the principle of missionary freedom and the right for tax exemption.<sup>49</sup> The claim by the then state for secular status was reinforced by attempts to make mission groups pay taxes and grant them permission to operate in new places.

To keep the church separate from the state, church groups insisted that nobody could be a chief and a clergy at the same time. The main purpose here was to guarantee missionaries autonomy and avoid mixing religion and politics. The inclusion of the church in the 1900 Buganda Agreement was an endorsement of some sort to the role of missionaries. Second, the chiefs continued to donate land as gifts to the church as a way to cement their role and power in society. For example, both Catholic and Anglican Church missions were granted 52 square miles of land in the 1900 agreement. Similarly, in most cases, the church guaranteed a chief a special seat in church. This shows how the church had stakes in the conclusion of the agreement and shared interests with the chiefly aristocracy.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, by looking back at church and state relationship in the period of the last two centuries, we are able to show how the relationship between the two has intensified

conflicts in Ugandan society. This period acts as an important backdrop to the connections between the church and state, especially the Anglican Church.<sup>51</sup> In addition, most church based organizations took interest in some of the activities traditionally reserved for the state, such as delivery of health care and access to education. In fact, most schools in Uganda were founded and still operate under the influence of Catholic, Anglican or Muslim.

The question that remains unanswered is whether the role of faith-based organizations in the contemporary Uganda continues to be performed by their founding bodies or not? Second, whether faith-based organizations such as the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) and the Uganda Muslim Youth Assembly (UMYA), play significant roles in the democratization process in Uganda or not? In presenting this analysis, we used documentary review of UJCC documents, including web-based resources and key informant interviews of resource persons.

### **The Case of Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC)**

The Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), started shortly after independence in 1963 to counter a situation where political parties wanted to use the church to influence the followers. There was also a lot of bitterness and rivalry among the folks based on the historical religious differences resulting from the colonial era. The three main Christian church

leaders, i.e. the Catholic, the Anglican (i.e. Protestant or Church of Uganda) and the Orthodox Church, started UJCC to address the social and economic justice for their followers. In addition, there was need to achieve and working together relationship among the different followers of the respective faith.

### ***The Vision, Mission and Aims of UJCC***<sup>52</sup>

The vision of UJCC is to: ‘Improved quality of life through harmonious co-existence’ based on the principle of abundant life. The mission is to promote consensus among men and women in member churches to uphold Christian values and address issues of economic and social justice.<sup>53</sup> The main aims of the churches in establishing UJCC were as follows: first, working towards greater mutual understanding and unity among the member churches and second, to work with member churches to fulfill the great commission of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world and make disciples of all nations. Third aim is to achieve cooperation by means of consultation, coordination, and action on practical matters of common interest among member churches. Fourth, to constructively engage with member churches, government, and other organizations to resolve conflict, enhance harmonious co-existence and uphold human dignity. Fifth, to make consultative recommendations to member churches and appropriate bodies for action on issues and matters

agreed upon and finally, to enhance the capacity of member churches to pursue these aims.

### **Objectives**

The objectives that make UJCC unique in society at large are to enhance peace and consensus building, promote democracy and good governance, promote economic and social rights, strengthen the capacity of UJCC Secretariat and other ecumenical organs below it, and promote joint Christian educational action and other social programs.

### **UJCC Episodic Relationship with the State**

The most difficult period for UJCC was during the Idi Amin era where religious freedom was most affected, including the murder of the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda Janani Luwum for his advocacy on the protection of human rights. In the 1960s, Bishop Kiwanuka of the Catholic Church was pronounced against the excesses of the government. Under Museveni's rule, UJCC got involved mostly in election monitoring beginning with the 1994 Constituent Assembly (CA) elections. UJCC has since broadened its focus to key strategic areas, such as democracy and governance, citizen participation for transparent and accountable governance, and democracy monitoring.

## **UJCC Strategic Programs**

### **Democracy and Governance**

Activities under the Department of Democracy and Governance

include *parliamentary liaison program*. Historically, the church was struggling to talk to leaders about the laws passed by the legislature that affect the citizens. UJCC argued that some of the laws passed were not pro-poor. At the same time, amendments to correct 'bad' laws require a lot of goodwill on the part of leaders at different levels. Thus, from 2001, UJCC has engaged parliament to influence legislation.

UJCC's achievements so far include recognition by the parliament, through invitations for consultations on most parliamentary bills. A good number of laws passed by parliament have had input from UJCC, including those that are still pending debate such as the Domestic Relations Bill. The Acts consulted on include the Uganda Peoples Defense Forces – UPDF Act and The Constitutional Amendment Bill 2005. UJCC consulted widely on articles that concerned most citizens in the country, especially the removal of presidential term limits, and made a memorandum to parliament. Other bills included The Domestic Violence Bill, The Telecommunication Interception and Tapping Bill, The Land Amendment Bill 2007, The Education Act 2008, among others. In 2017, UJCC and its partners in the Inter-religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) gave their position on the presidential term limits Bill, telling government not to amend Article 102 (b) unless mandated by the people.

One of the major objectives of UJCC has been to bridge the gap between Members of Parliament (MPs) and religious leaders. UJCC

organized a forum to welcome the Eight Parliament. At that meeting, each MP received a booklet entitled, “*Breaking Ground for the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament*” reflecting on the performance of the Seventh Parliament and the expectations from the Eighth Parliament.<sup>54</sup>

UJCC had two staff members attached to parliament to monitor the proceeding and liaise with members of parliament on the agenda for legislation. The constitutional mandate for UJCC is provided for under Article 38(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 as amended, which states that, “... every Ugandan citizen has the right to participate in the affairs of government, individually or through his or her representatives in accordance with the law.” Sub article (2) provides that “... every Ugandan has a right to participate in peaceful activities to influence the policies of government through civic organizations” (UJCC 2006).

UJCC also actively participated in an interactive meeting with MPs and religious leaders by first; highlighting the high level of absenteeism both in plenary and at committee level, and second, by exposing the fate and operational mechanisms of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Through consultation with citizens, UJCC realized that the population was not satisfied with the manner in which the CDF was used, its accountability, and benefits. In addition to the two engagements with parliamentarians, UJCC recognized

that the Eighth Parliament was the first multi-party parliament under the new constitution and with it came independent MPs, who did not belong to either the ruling party or the opposition.<sup>55</sup> UJCC organized a workshop for independent MPs intended to empower them to effectively participate free from intimidation or suffer lack of identity. UJCC also raised the issue of multiplication of districts by the executive, an issue the constitution allocates to the legislature.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Uganda have not had a smooth ride dealing with the government. The most common problem is lack of coordination among CSOs. UJCC has taken up the role of coordinating many activities of the civil society organizations in relation to democracy and governance in terms of focus and activities. Since UJCC has had the experience of working with parliament, it has been easy to obtain appointments from most parliamentary committees. The most important piece of legislation that UJCC participated in was the Education Act 2008 where it advocated for the formalization of the role of religious foundation bodies in the management of schools under the control of government. In the past, government had not considered and provided a formal role to founding bodies, such as the Church of Uganda, the Catholic Church, and the Muslim community when proposing the bill. Instead, the bill proposed ‘other stakeholders’ ignoring the foundation bodies.

### **Democracy Monitoring**

The second major program implemented by UJCC is monitoring the progress of democracy in Uganda. Among the UJCC activities under its democracy monitoring program was to ensure free and fair elections through election monitoring. Monitoring elections serves two main purposes. The first objective is to inform the citizens, the electoral commission, and political parties about the democratization process. Second, is to deter any election malpractices that can thwart the democratization process. UJCC has on several occasions, got accreditation from the Electoral Commission (EC) to participate in election monitoring and has produced reports at the end of the exercise. However, the problem is that whenever the report is critical of some government inefficiencies, UJCC is usually asked to tone it down. UJCC has worked together with Action for Development (ACFODE), a local women's non-governmental organization (NGO) and Uganda Journalists Safety Committee (UJSC) toward electoral reforms in Uganda. Together under DemGroup, UJCC advocated for a transparent ballot box, which is currently in use and revision of the Results Declaration Form (RDF). The original Results Declaration Form provided space for entry of polled results in figures only; there was no space provided for the same in words.<sup>56</sup> Capturing results in figures only is a loophole that could easily be exploited to the advantage of one candidate against others

during transmission of results to the tallying center. This has since changed to include declarations both in words and in figures.

UJCC also vehemently spoke against injustices committed by politicians and decision-makers, working in areas of peace and conflict resolution. In addition, other governance and democracy issues include monitoring institutions mandated to deliver and guarantee democracy, such as parliament, security agencies, the judiciary, Electoral Commission -the ruling party (National Resistance Movement), and other political parties. In fulfilling its mandate to ensure a fair, just and democratic society, UJCC continues to highlight the gaps and constraints to governance that require amending the law. This is commonly done through annual reports that are shared with the concerned parties of government and partner CSOs. For instance, UJCC produced a pamphlet entitled, *"The Uganda we Want: Nurturing Uganda's Multiparty Democracy."*<sup>57</sup> This report highlights the challenges of consolidating multiparty democracy in Uganda, such as women and decision-making processes, civil and political rights, and media coverage of civil and political rights. In addition, UJCC has been part of the consultations on electoral reforms in the country, focusing mainly on composition of the electoral commission. To date, UJCC works with ACFODE and Transparency International (TI) to continue with the mission, vision, and mandate to monitor democratic governance.

### **Citizen Participation for Transparent and Accountable Governance Program**

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda is very clear on roles, duties and responsibilities of a citizen but these rights will be enjoyed if there is no conducive environment within which citizens can exercise those rights. For instance, in northern Uganda, it is not clear how many people know about their rights and responsibilities given that people have been in a situation of conflict for a long time. Even in other parts of the country, the citizens have very limited access to information to enable them make informed political choices. In terms of transparency and accountability, district and sub-county budgets are supposed to be public documents that should be freely available to the public by, for example, pinning them up on public notice boards. However, this is rarely done. Thus, UJCC aims to empower people on community development, fighting corruption, and make citizens proactively interested and involved in governance activities. UJCC also reminds leaders of what they are supposed to do, based on the Local Government Act 1997 as amended. UJCC educated ordinary people to form development associations or societies. It further helped the people to hold leaders accountable on the effective use of resources, locally raised or advanced by higher government authorities. UJCC organized public seminars at the local level.

While UJCC has been doing a lot of advocacy work, the organization has realized that many people are disempowered, that is, there is a wide gap between the people and the leaders in terms of expectations and policy outcomes. Majority of the people are in a situation of, “I have given up!” and yet on polling day, people go and line up to vote and thereafter, nothing happens to improve their lives.<sup>58</sup> UJCC has since moved in to help empower citizens so that people can hold their leaders accountable by asking their leaders as to why they do not have boreholes or why a borehole is failing in their village or why there are no teachers in universal primary education (UPE) schools. In an interview with a UJCC official, a case was noted in Mityana District where UJCC questioned district leaders why a certain school registered with about 650 pupils had only three teachers, including the head teacher. Due to UJCC’s intervention, teachers were posted to that school.<sup>59</sup> The citizens’ participation for transparent and accountable governance program is implemented as a pilot project in Iganga, Mityana, Pader, Abim, Dokolo, and Kabiramaido districts. A similar program on strengthening decentralization is also being implemented in the Karamoja region (in the districts of Moroto, Kabong, and Kotido).<sup>60</sup> The program helps to address governance issues at a local level rather than only at the national levels. Among the many activities in this program are creating awareness

among citizens in the communities, using faith-based community leaders. UJCC has provided a copy of the constitution, Local Government Act, among others, so that while undertaking faith-based activities, local leaders can also help enlighten the citizens about their rights and obligations.

The program also aims to form *Citizen's Forums*. These are forums formed by UJCC to enable citizens and leaders to interface at parish level. UJCC's basic argument is that leaders should tell their communities where they have failed and why, rather than only highlighting the successes or even keeping quiet. Majority of the people feel powerless and cannot demand explanations from their leaders and even when they do, those demands are altered in the process to the extent that by the time they reach the final stage, they have lost meaning. This can partly be attributed to high levels of ignorance amongst Uganda's rural population of their rights, duties, and entitlements. This is mainly a result of politicking that usually leaves people confused and disempowered. It was revealed that at the time of political campaigns, politicians vying for elective positions at local and national levels, do not only make wild promises, but they also bribe the voters with money and other material things. The campaign to introduce suggestion boxes and public notice boards in Mityana and Iganga districts are two other methods through which people are being encouraged to participate and demand

for accountability and feedback from leaders. Suggestion boxes will provide a channel through which people will make proposals to the leadership while notice boards will provide a means through which the leadership will communicate important messages and announcements affecting people. One of the concerns of UJCC is that the church should be relevant to the people in terms of health and human rights rather than only being on the pulpit. Thus, the UJCC sees empowerment of church leaders as one of their major roles. By giving copies of the Constitution, the Education Act, the Local Government Act, and other laws to church leaders, the UJCC equips to do oversight duties at the district level. UJCC also encourages local church leaders to attend council meetings as a way of empowering them to demand accountability by getting to know what the district plans are, what projects are under implementations, and so on.

### **UJCC Advocacy**

The UJCC does advocacy work in form of pastoral letters that are usually sent to political leaders urging them to adhere to the principles of justice but also highlighting the injustices committed against citizens. For example, the UJCC plenary resolutions 2005 (UJCC 2005) issued a statement urging the government not to amend Article 105 of the constitution of Uganda that limited presidential terms to two.<sup>61</sup> The statement called upon the executive,

first, to desist from using unethical methods, including the use of money to influence or manipulate the political transition process that was expected. Second, UJCC asked parliament to guard its integrity and objectivity and not be undermined and manipulated by the executive. Third, UJCC urged government to outlaw paramilitary organizations, such as the Kalangala Action Plan (a group) linked to the NRM party and the youth brigades associated with other political parties. Fourth, UJCC asked the Electoral Commission to design appropriate election materials and put in place necessary mechanisms to implement the civic education in preparation for the 2006 election. However, President Museveni's reaction to these resolutions was: "*Stay on the pulpit and baptize rather than engage with what the state does.*" In another development, the president wrote to the chairperson of UJCC about the peace talks in northern Uganda. In one instance of harassment to the UJCC chairperson, the prime minister asked whether the UJCC chairperson wanted to join politics or not. In a meeting at which CSOs got together to welcome a new Secretary General of the UJCC, the prime minister said: "*I hope you will act differently from your predecessor.*"<sup>62</sup>

The UJCC has realized a lot of success, some of the key achievements include monitoring of internally displaced persons' (IDP) camps in Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Lira, Apac, Katakwi, Soroti and Kaberamaido. UJCC produced and disseminated widely a number of reports on the

economic and social conditions in these camps. These reports contributed greatly to highlighting the plight of people in those camps. UJCC was active in the peace talks on the conflict in northern Uganda. It advocated for a peaceful resolution of the prolonged conflict.<sup>63</sup>

## Conclusion

The civil society sector is an important player in the democratization process in Uganda. One way in which CSOs affect people's lives is through the key role they have played in bringing about democratization in several countries in the world. In Uganda, state-civil society engagement has been tenuous. While civil society groups have played key roles in socio-economic development of the country, they have not been at the forefront of democratizing the state and society through transforming politics. The authoritarian character of the Ugandan state has tended to undermine, in a serious manner, the political activism of civil society. In fact, when it comes to the state of politics, politicians have regularly reminded CSOs that politics is for politicians. Alava & Ssentongo (2017) have offered perspectives on the authoritarian tendencies of the Ugandan state that have served to de-politicize public political spaces.<sup>64</sup> The aforementioned authors aptly observe, as we do above, that the capacity of religious leaders and their organizations to check excesses of the Ugandan state is crippled by three factors – patronage, intimidation, and

ethnicity. This needs little emphasis. A clear case can be seen in a recent statement by religious leaders under their other umbrella organization – the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) on 18 September 2017, to the effect that political leaders should go slow on amending the constitution to remove the upper cap of 75 years on the eligibility for presidential candidates. In a very combative rebuttal, Hajji Nadduli, the Minister without portfolio stated: “Don’t shout for us (sic). Go to the bush and fight if you can. No one sent us to the bush...We didn’t shout for people like these ones (sic).” Nadduli added: “Why don’t they refuse the cars that Museveni gives them? This is their chance to talk about politics but they shouldn’t forget that Janan Luwum was killed.<sup>65</sup>” Indeed, in this veiled threat, and reminder of the terrible political circumstances under which the late Archbishop Luwum was assassinated, he is telling the clergy that the ugly face of the of the state can still do harm to them. Nadduli also highlights the nature of the Ugandan patron-client state and the opportunistic tendencies of religious leaders. However, the real extent to which these tendencies affect the work of faith-based CSOs is probably It not surprising that most civil society organizations in Uganda, including faith-based ones find it convenient to ally with the state and ruling party – confining themselves to the ‘spiritual’ and ‘social’ arenas. One of the key conclusions is that most CSOs are ‘bedfellows’ with

the state, since they rely heavily on its handouts, including benefiting from free cars and tax exemptions on materials donated to them. The fundamental point to make here is that civil society in Uganda is weak, not because it is starved of resources but rather it lacks capacity for its own self-assessment. It is dominated by self-seeking leaders, looks out and not inside itself for its direction; hence invites the state for a few handouts that compromise its independence and rigor in its attempt to hold the state to account. This way, CSOs are not strong enough to stand up and counter excesses of state power. Fourie and Kakumba make a similar observation, however, they also add that formal civil society in Uganda is largely elitist and urban-based.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the government’s recognition of the role played by CSOs in the development process, especially the provision of social services, there is evidence that civil society rarely interferes with the state in the sphere of democratization. As a faith-based civil society, UJCC has helped run the intricate paths that CSOs go through to engage the state, especially on human rights observance, freedom of assembly, speech, association, and election management. UJCC usually encourages constructive engagement with government and other organizations to resolve conflicts, enhance harmonious co-existence, and uphold human dignity. Hence, UJCC ‘political’ activism is a unique contribution to issues of governance in the country; several CSOs seem

unprepared undertake the risks UJCC has shouldered. This shows that despite a the tenuous nature of the CSOs-state engagement, there is hope that some civil society organizations could be able to break through the wall of resistance by government in order to further the struggle for good political governance of the country.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Hofer's discussion of the public role of a new type of Christian mission in sub-Saharan Africa, i.e. the evangelical Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), in "The role of Evangelical NGOs in International Development: a comparative case study of Kenya and Uganda" *Afrika Spectrum*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2003):375-398.
- <sup>2</sup> John W. Harbeson, "Civil Society and Political Renaissance in Africa" in John W. Harbeson, D. Rothchild and N. Chazan, *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994, p.2.
- <sup>3</sup> Abigail Barr, M. Fafchamps and T. Owens, "Non - Governmental Organizations in Uganda: A Report to the Government of Uganda" Oxford University, Centre for Study of African Economics, Decentralization 2003.
- <sup>4</sup> See for example, Hofer, "The role of Evangelical NGOs in International Development: A comparative case study of Kenya and Uganda." *Afrika Spectrum*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2003):375-398.
- <sup>5</sup> Harbeson, *ibid*.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>8</sup> Taylor, Charles, 1997, "Involving Civil Society" in Goodin, R.E. and Philip Pettit, *Contemporary Practical Philosophy: An Anthology*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- <sup>9</sup> David Held, 1995, *Democracy and Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*, Polity Press/Stanford University Press.
- <sup>10</sup> Abigail Barr, M. Fafchamps and T. Owens, "Resources and Governance of Non-Governmental Organisations in Uganda," Oxford Centre for the Study of African Economics, Working Paper Series 2004/6
- <sup>11</sup> See, D.J. Fourie and U. Kakumba, 2011, "Assessing the Role and Capacity of Civil Society Organisations in holding Local Government Accountable in Uganda" *Africa Journal of Political Affairs*, Vol.4, No.2, 2011.
- <sup>12</sup> In recent times, the Ugandan state has increasingly become suspicious of NGOs, for example, police raided the offices of Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies and Action Aid. Government froze their bank accounts. See Sulaiman Kakaire, "Why Police raided NGOs" in *Observer*, 23 September 2017.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, Government believes that in the wake of the presidential age limit debate, the NGOs received about USD 500 million to fund public protests against the constitutional amendment Bill.
- <sup>14</sup> World Bank (1994)
- <sup>15</sup> Op. cit., Fourie and Kakumba (2011).
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, World Bank (1994)
- <sup>17</sup> Uganda Government, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, "Realizing the Development Potential of NGOs in Uganda," Report of a Workshop in Kampala, 9-10 February 1994, p. 10.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 25.
- <sup>23</sup> Nelson Kasfir, "Strategies of Accumulation and Civil Society in Bushenyi, Uganda: How Dairy Farmers Responded to a Weakened State" in John W. Harbeson, D. Rothchild and N. Chazan, *Civil Society and the State in Africa*
- <sup>24</sup> Silvia Angey and Christina Nilson, Financial Sustainability of Ugandan NGOs: Are we better than Government? CDRN Report, Kampala 2004 report that there were only 160 registered NGO in Uganda in 1987, which had grown to 4700 by 2003.
- <sup>25</sup> Public servants were retrenched. The number of civil servants was reduced from 300,000 to 130,000
- <sup>26</sup> As a policy, most of the parastatal organizations were sold.
- <sup>27</sup> Diego Angemi, 2003, "An Overview of the national economy, in view of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan Revision," Discussion Paper No.7, MOFPED, November 14, 2003.
- <sup>28</sup> Nanssozi K. Muwanga, Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI): The Differences in Perceptions of Poverty" Paper written for Uganda NGO Forum, Kampala.
- <sup>29</sup> IMF/IDA, "Uganda Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper; Progress Report Joint Staff Report Assessment, 9 March 2001 (www.inf.org) See also Sam Hickey, "The Politics of Staying Poor: Exploring Political Space for Poverty Reduction in Uganda" *World Development*, Vol.33, No.6,2005
- <sup>30</sup> Abigail Barr et al., 2003, op cit.
- <sup>31</sup> William Muhumuza, "Unfulfilled Promises? NGOs Micro-Credit Programs and Poverty Reeducation in Uganda," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol.2, No.3, 2005
- <sup>32</sup> Sewakiryanga, op cit.
- <sup>33</sup> PEAP was initially prepared to last three years.
- <sup>34</sup> PRSP were prepared for the purpose of getting the much needed HIPC funds for poverty reduction.
- <sup>35</sup> Zie Gariyo, "Participatory Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers: The PRSP Process in Uganda" *Uganda Debt Network*, Discussion Paper No.5 Kampala, 2002, p.31.
- <sup>36</sup> Zie Gariyo, *ibid*. p33.

- <sup>37</sup> Keren Brock, "Uganda Civil Society in the Policy Process: Challenging Orthodox narratives" in K Brock, R. McGee and J. Javenta (ibid.) 2004 p.100.
- <sup>38</sup> Uganda Debt Network (Newsletter) March 2005, p.1.
- <sup>39</sup> Uganda Debt Network (Newsletter) p.1.
- <sup>40</sup> Silvia Angey and Christine Nilsson, 2004, Financial Sustainability of Uganda NGOs: Are we no better than Government? CRDN, Paper No.7 Kampala.
- <sup>41</sup> Michael Bratton, "Civil Society and Political Transitions in Africa," in J.W. Herbst, D. Rothchild and N. Chazan, *Civil Society and the State in Africa*.
- <sup>42</sup> Mala Singh, "The role of Civil Society in Promoting Democratic Development: Some aspects of the South African Debate" in Ann McKinstry Micou and Birgit Landsnaes, *The Role of Voluntary Organizations in Emerging Democracies* Danish Centre for Human Rights 1993.
- <sup>43</sup> cf Issa Shivji, "The Democracy Debate in Africa: Tanzania" in *Review of African Political Economy* No.50, 1991
- <sup>44</sup> Comparatively, there has been a trend of religious leaders moving to join politics. For example, Aluanga argues that in Kenya, there are many people moving away from the pulpit into politics and yet many years ago, most politicians, intellectuals and clerics assumed religion was becoming marginal in public life (Aluanga Lillian. "Kenya: Linking Religion and Politics." *The East African Standard*, Nairobi, December 23, 2007).
- <sup>45</sup> The New Vision Editorial, "Uganda: Church Should Stay Out of Partisan Politics" Tuesday September 22, 2009.
- <sup>46</sup> See, for example, Juma Okuku, "Civil Society and the Democratization Processes in Kenya and Uganda: A Comparative Analysis of the Contribution of the Church and NGOs." *African Journal of Political Science* 7, no. 2, 2002.
- <sup>47</sup> See Hansen, H. B. "Church and State in Early Colonial Uganda." *African Affairs* Vol. 85, No. 338 (1986): 55-74
- <sup>48</sup> Hansen ibid., 1986, p.57.
- <sup>49</sup> Hansen ibid., 1986
- <sup>50</sup> Hansen ibid., 1986, p.59.
- <sup>51</sup> See Dan Mudoola's argument about the dominance of the protestant church, especially in Busoga, in "Religion and Politics in Uganda: The Case of Busoga, 1900-1962." *African Affairs* Vol. 77(306): 22-35
- <sup>52</sup> <http://www.ujcc.org/index.php?option=displaypage&Itemid=55&andop=page&SubMenu>  
= Accessed Friday 20 November 2009.
- <sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Z. Kasiigha (Deputy Executive Secretary, UJCC) in discussion with authors, 16 November 2009.
- <sup>54</sup> Kasiigha, interview with authors, 16 November 2009.
- <sup>55</sup> Independent Members of Parliament are legislators who do not belong to any political party or were not elected on any political party platform.
- <sup>56</sup> Kasiigha, interview with authors, 16 November 2009.
- <sup>57</sup> Uganda Joint Christian Council, "The Uganda We Want: Nurturing Uganda's Multiparty Democracy." A Report by Uganda Joint Christian Council: Beyond the 2006 Elections. Kampala, December 2006.
- <sup>58</sup> Kasiigha, interview with authors, 16 November 2009.
- <sup>59</sup> Kasiigha, interview with authors, 16 November 2009.
- <sup>60</sup> Kasiigha, interview with authors, 16 November 2009.
- <sup>61</sup> Uganda Joint Christian Council's Plenary meets once a year and brings together representatives from each diocese of the member Churches. The Plenary sets policies, receives reports, assesses work, identifies challenges and sets policies.
- <sup>62</sup> Kasiigha, interview with authors, 16 November 2009.
- <sup>63</sup> See a statement issued in 2006 by UJCC on the Uganda Government and the Lord's Resistance Army peace talks in the north <http://www.ujcc.org/index.php?option=newsandtask=viewarticle&andisid=17> (accessed Saturday 21 November 2009).
- <sup>64</sup> See Henni Alava and Jimmy Spire Ssentongo (2017), Religious (de) politicization in Uganda's 2016 elections, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol.10, Issue 4 (special Issue), pp 677-692.
- <sup>65</sup> See David Lumu (2017), "Go slow on Age Limit Debate, Nadduli warns Clergy" *The New Vision*, September, 19, 2017.

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## Note

- <sup>66</sup> See, op. cit., Fourie and Kakumba (2011).