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Assessment of the Impact and Effectiveness of CSOs

and NGOs in Promoting Governance in Africa

A Parliamentary Document

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1. UNECA and African CSOs

African civil society organizations (CSOs) form a sector that has become increasingly important over the past few decades in terms of its participation in the development and governance processes as well in global policy processes. It has also made significant contributions to debate in such diverse areas as service delivery, public accountability and the rule of law.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) has spearheaded the effort to strengthen the role of civil society in the development process in Africa. In 1990, the ECA-led International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa took place, resulting in the African Charter for Popular Participation. This was in direct response to a call by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, of the United Nations General Assembly, on the mid-term review and assessment of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development (UN-PAAERD), due to the failure of the programme to achieve its objectives. This was the beginning of the debate on the role of civil society in Africa's development process, and of the ECA role in promotion of civil society participation in development.

In its consistent focus on promotion of civil society participation in development in Africa, ECA has sought to strengthen CSOs, to enable them to play a more meaningful role. The Commission, among other actions, has taken on the task of designing programmes to:

- Promote the visibility and understanding of civil society's participation in the development and governance process;
- Promote new and creative ways to facilitate interface between CSOs and governments, and among CSOs;
- Promote an enabling environment conducive to CSO participation; and
- Find ways to institutionalize the participatory process.

Success in participatory development is highly dependent on strong and vibrant CSOs and on interaction and partnership among development actors. In this regard, the framework for enhancing ECA-CSO relations is part of a broader effort to promote the participation of civil society in the development and governance process in Africa and to build the capacity required to help CSOs become effective players.

2. Purpose and Outline of the Report

The main purpose of this report is to highlight the impact and effectiveness of the participation of CSOs and NGOs in promoting development and governance in Africa. The report draws mainly from case studies in three African countries, namely, Mali, Senegal and Uganda. The report is divided into four sections: the first section provides a brief background on the relationship between ECA and the civil society sector in Africa. The second section discusses the general concept of civil society from ideological and classification stand points. It also attempts to highlight how the concept is interpreted and implemented in the African context. It then summarizes the assessment project including its rationale, analytical framework, and methodologies employed.

The third section provides a brief summary of the three case studies for which we currently have data, on Mali Senegal and Uganda. Each case study provides a general overview of the CSO sector in the respective country, a brief description of the focal CSO networks, and the preliminary findings from the initial data analysis. The fourth section outlines the focus of the Governance and Public Administration Division (GPAD) of ECA, which has a CSO section for enhancing civil society participation in improving good governance practices. Civil society participation is seen as essential for creating an enabling environment and building a strong foundation for peace and sustainable development in Africa.

2.1 Civil Society: Articulating the Concept and Understanding its Diversity

The term civil society is broadly used and has become the lingua franca among academia, donor agencies, and other international development organizations promoting various social, economical, and political initiatives around the world. Nevertheless, its meaning, applicability, and categorization are rooted in highly contextualized ideological debates of Tocqueville's liberal democracy and Gramsci's post-Marxist school of thought[1].

The liberal democratic ideology defines civil society as an autonomous voluntary institution acting as the intermediary body between the State and "the lowest unit of social life" [2] (i.e.), the individual or family. Civil society in this context is characterized with high social capital, trust and cooperation to foster political and economic democracy and to protect the individual from the overwhelming power of the State. Gramscian interpretation takes a more directly political stance and considers civil society as an instrument of resistance and activism that promotes the creation and strengthening of social movements to negotiate or challenge political, social, or economical hegemony[3].

Since the end of the East-West divide in 1989, the neo-liberal ideology of civil society has been dominant in the development discourse. However, there is a shift towards

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[1] Mcllwaine, 2007
[2] Rahmato, 2002, p. 104
[3] Ibid, 2007

Gramscian-based approaches in recent years especially when considering trans-boundary and global scales[4].

Aside from ideological differences on the concept, one needs to identify the distinctions within civil society and between civil society organizations in order to gain a better understanding of the topic. Civil society is often associated with NGOs. However, community mutual help organizations, trade unions, faith-based institutions, cooperatives, as well as professional and business associations are also incorporated under its label. Although much of the literature does not consider political groups and parties as civil societies[5], their significant role especially in the decolonization of Africa by mobilizing the indigenous mass and building resistance movements as illustrated in some of our case studies should not be undervalued. Another important distinction is between those CSOs that have a *formal* organizational structure and state recognition such as NGOs and those *informally* linked social movements, for instance, community-based voluntary and grassroots organizations that may not be recognized by the State. Considering the ideological differences and the diverse typologies of civil society, we define 'civil society' in this study as *a wide range of formal and informal non-state actors serving as intermediaries between the state and the household, and engaged in self-help, welfare, humanitarian, governance, socio-economic development, and advocacy activities for the common good of society.*

2.2 The Concept and Practice of Civil Society in the African Context

African perspectives on the concept of civil society are mixed: Some scholars are skeptical of its appropriateness in the African context and consider it as an imposition of a western construct. Oloka-Onyango and Barya (1997, 115) of Uganda described their cynicism over the adoption of the concept of civil society as "suspiciously like other alien imports of both convoluted pedigree and questionable validity."[6] Others argue that the concept is not new and has been an integral part of Africa all along, but the dominant westernized definition, categorization, and application as it currently exists, does not address the socio-cultural or political make-up and realities of the continent adequately[7].

This is mainly because the concept of civil society is mostly associated with the "transformation of western society and its economy in terms of capitalist modernization, urbanization, the communication revolution, and growth of literacy" or "dissolution of traditional bonds and decline of religious consciousness" [8]. Such interpretations do not make room for African "associational life" characterized by kinship based on religious beliefs, geographical proximity, ethnicity, cultural or class hierarchy or any other informal groupings that one can either join voluntarily or be born into.

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[4] Ibid, 2007
[5] Van Rooy, 2002
[6] Oloka-Onyango and Barya, as quoted by Mcllwaine, 2007
[7] Obadere, 2004
[8] Hutchful, as quoted by Obadere, 2004, p. 9

It also does not address the complexity of such groups that may be intertwined with the State, thus challenging the conventional definition[9]. In these cases, civil society groups have been co-opted by the State and other interest groups such as donors to maintain the status quo and not challenge the government[10]. Consequently, when referring to civil society in the African context, it is important to clearly indicate its diversity and complexity based on African realities, that is, "…the civil society that exists rather than what is presumed to exist"[11].

Civil society was introduced as an important component of African development around the end of the 1980s. Bi- and multi-lateral institutions began to integrate civil society into their policy framework in order to promote liberal democracy and participatory development. The 1990 African Charter for Popular Participation in Development in Africa adopted by the Organization for African Unity (OAU) was one of the important policy platforms that recognized the role of CSOs officially at a continental level[12]. Similarly, subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) or the Southern Africa Development Cooperation (SADC) have also recognized the vital role of CSOs, and have built the necessary partnership and commitment to strengthen the capacity of civil society groups to facilitate their complementary role in regional policy making.

CSOs are considered as more flexible, innovative, and cost effective than either government or aid agencies because they are poverty-oriented, grassroots focused, and are able to reach the most marginalized and affected segment of society easily[13]. Hence, with the new strategy of decentralization to improve governance and development, some of the functions of the State have been transferred to CSOs, particularly NGOs[14]. CSOs started to provide some essential services usually provided by the public sector, including but not limited to health, education, agriculture, water and sanitation, and natural resource management. They offered critical humanitarian services in the event of natural disasters or human-induced conflicts and war. They also became instrumental in advocacy for advancement of universal standards of human rights, peace and conflict resolution and prevention, and for anti-corruption and democratization measures, thus promoting good governance and social accountability. As will be seen in detail in the case studies below, the fledgling political democratization in many parts of Africa is also partly attributed to the active involvement of CSOs that are gaining strong support from the international community. Nevertheless, critics point out that enhancing the role of CSOs may come at the expense of African States, as the process reduces their capacity and valuable contributions to society drastically. These critics argue that the increasingly paternalistic

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[9] Ibid, 2004
[10] Hearn, 2001
[11] Ibid, 2007, p. 1254
[12] Nduwimana, 2004
[13] UNECA, 2001
[14] Ibid 2007

relationship of CSOs, particularly NGOs, with donors is maintaining the status quo of an under-development and dependency syndrome across the continent[15].

2.3 Assessing the Impacts and Effectiveness of CSO Networks in Africa

a) *The rationale*

There has been rapid growth in the number and diversity of CSOs in many African countries since the late 1990s. According to the African Civil Society Organizations Summit Report of 2007, in some countries, the NGO sector is bigger than the commercial and agricultural sectors combined, making significant contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)[16]. Nevertheless, in recent years, it has become widely recognized that such proliferation of CSOs is an inadequate and ineffective response to various development and governance-related challenges, because many CSOs tend to focus on a single-issue mode of operation, and "act at the margin"[17]. Their efforts are mostly localized undermining their ability to tackle the root causes of Africa's political and economic challenges. This is primarily because of two reasons:

- Individual CSOs in Africa generally have limited resources, scale, capacity and autonomy to bring about tangible development- and governance-related impacts on their own;
- African CSOs are particularly unable to influence international policy debates that affect their countries or constituents due to their lack of capacity to organize their national and transnational peers to take common positions on various issues.

Consequently, CSOs, with the help of donors and other international social movements, began to develop their competency, effectiveness and influence by mobilizing their resources and establishing bigger networks. They also moved to diversify their issues and objectives to make valuable impacts at local, national, as well as international scales. Much of the academic and development literature on development calls this process of increasing the impacts of grassroot organizations through networking "s*caling up",* which is also referred to by some as *"scaling out"* [18].

Although the implications of the new networking phenomenon are not well studied, some of the achievements of CSO networks seen so far have been encouraging. For instance, the signing and implementation of the "Responsibility to Protect"[19] by the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) [20] and its partners is one good example[21]. WACSOF and

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[15] Manji and O'Coill, 2002 as quoted by McIlwaine, 2007
[16] CSO Summit Report 2007, p. 4
[17] Uvin, 1995, p. 3
[18] Ibid
[19] A strategy designed by the UN Security Council to protect innocent civilians during armed conflict
[20] West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) is part of a region-wide human rights/democracy civil society activist's movement called Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA), which is part of the

other actors were successful not only for endorsement of the act, but were also instrumental in ensuring its implementation during the Togolese coup attempt in 2005[22].

This particular assessment has been undertaken with a view to enhancing the valuable contributions of the newly emerging CSO networks across the continent, by analyzing their impact and effectiveness in delivering good governance and social and economic development on the continent.

b) Analytical framework

The analytical framework for this assessment is multi-dimensional and is comprised of three main components. It involves differentiating CSO networks according to their networking strategies, analysing their historical background and governance, and ultimately, assessing their impact and effectiveness in the development and good governance of Africa.

- **Historical background and governance structures of the CSO networks**

 The second analytical focus is on the historical background, governance structures, and types of relationships that the case study's CSO networks built with their own constituents as well as with the State, donors, and private enterprises. Such elaborate analysis of the actors and factors behind the formation and operation of CSO networks will help articulate their roles and degree of influence on national or global policy debates. It also illustrates the dynamic state-society or donor-society relationships and the power brokering and shifting that occur regularly.

- **Differentiating the CSO networks according to their networking strategies**

This initial phase of the analysis helped us streamline the selected CSO networks into two categories based on their networking strategies. There were two main strategies of networking for scaling up the impact and influence of CSOs:

Horizontal networking is equivalent to quantitative scaling up by increasing the number of constituents or membership, expanding geographical coverage, or adding complementary services without changing the main objectives or focus of an operation. Such a networking strategy enables CSOs to develop stronger coalition and have broader influence at local, national, or transnational levels to enhance their impact in various sectors.

Vertical networking entails expansion of objectives and activities involving functional, organizational, and political scaling up regardless of size. Vertical networking strengthens the capacity of CSOs to innovate and enhance their autonomy and independence. Functional scaling up is a process of "intensification" through widening the scope of

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global network of Soros Foundation. WACSOF has national chapters in Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone   and Togo, and was created in 2003.

[21] Iheduru, 2007

[22] Ibid, 2007

objectives or replication of activities of an organization. For instance, an organization that specializes in agriculture can widen its services into multidisciplinary areas of health, nutrition, credit, as well as literacy. Organizational scaling up is a process of enhancing financial or human-resource capacity in order to provide efficient, effective, and sustainable activities[23]. This can be done by diversifying income generation as well as *integration*[24] and *aggregation*[25] of various initiatives and activities through strategic linkages with public and private enterprises. Political scaling up, on the other hand, is when organizations move beyond service giving towards the goals of empowerment, human rights, and political freedom in order to tackle the root causes of under development. In analysing the case studies, we will be looking at the historical evolution of each CSO network and the kinds of networking strategies it used to scale up its efforts.

- **Assessing the effectiveness and impact of the CSO networks**

In this third dimension of the assessment, Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was carried out for each of the CSO networks to determine: their effectiveness in delivering good governance and socio-economic development; and what type of impacts i.e. (long-term and sustainable, unanticipated, catalytic, or negative changes) were created in the process. For some aspects of economic development, we have looked at issues of employment, income generation, human resource development, trade and investment, environmental health, and food and nutrition security.

With regard to good governance, we have focused on factors such as social accountability and transparency, decentralization and proximity of decision-making processes to local stakeholders, the intermediary space between the State and citizens, press and speech freedom, conflict resolution and peace building, as well as the strategic empowerment of women.

c) Methodology

This study was carried out through a qualitative case-study methodology and used diverse data-collection methods that enabled triangulation of the data. Findings were presented through strategic comparison analysis of the three case studies. The relevant literature was reviewed from online resources as well as publications produced by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Dakar, Senegal. We were also able to gather relevant technical and financial documents from each of the CSO networks and partner organizations including annual reports,

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[23] Ibid,

1995

[24] According to Uvin, 1995, p. 12, "integration is a process where an NGO program is taken over by government structures after it has demonstrated its potential. Integration can come about as a result of demand by the NGO, which persuades a government agency to take over a successful program it launched."

[25] Aggregation is defined by Uvin, 1995, p. 15, as "the coordination and sharing of certain functions of previously independent organizations".

conference proceedings, strategic plans and evaluation reports. We have carried out in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions with representatives of CSO networks and member organizations. Where the situation permitted, government and donor representatives were also included in the focus groups. The primary data gathered through the review of documents, personal interviews, and focus-group discussions were triangulated and analysed using the framework detailed above.

3. Appraisal of Civil Society Networks of Africa

In this section, we look at a summary of the case studies of Mali, Senegal and Uganda. Each case study comprises three sections, illustrating an overall view of the CSO sector in the particular country, brief profile of the selected CSO network, and some of the preliminary findings on networking strategies and effectiveness and impact analysis.

3.1 Mali: overview of the CSO sector

CSOs in Mali have a long track record. After the Second World War ended in 1945, Mali had seen the flourishing of civil society in the forms of rebel political groups and cultural associations serving as resistance counterweights to the colonial power. After its independence in 1960, the political pluralism that once existed in the country disappeared. A new constitution was made official in 1974, leading the country towards a one-party state and civilian rule.

Although multi-party democracy stagnated until around 1991, diverse social movements included political parties and student movements operating underground and challenging the Government in the form of rebellion. The uprisings of 1958, 1963, and 1990 of some ethnic groups in Mali and their repression by the State are a few examples. The only civil society structure that was tolerated at the time was the National Union of Workers in Mali (UNTM) which had close affiliation with the political party in power.

During the drought of 1973-1974, Mali started receiving foreign aid, and this period opened the way for the first wave of international humanitarian and development assistance organizations to enter the country. During the second drought in 1983-1984, the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and expansion of the private sector occurred parallel to the weakening of the once dominant and authoritarian State. This also increased the demand for multi-party democracy and a new constitution, which eventually led to creation of various political parties and adoption of a new constitution in 1992.

After years of authoritarian rule, Mali has been making efforts to implement effective strategies towards improved governance and decentralization. This has led to re-emergence of a powerful civil society. Malian civil society is mainly composed of traditional leaders, community-based and religious organizations, NGOs, trade unions, business associations, cooperatives, independent media, and student associations.

The legal and political environment created a viable environment for establishment of over 900 NGOs operating in Mali at the current time[26]. The CSO sector in Mali has played diverse roles including but not limited to advocacy to protect the interests of the people, delivery of basic services such as health and education, and supervisory oversight of the government's efforts with the decentralization and development processes.

3.2 Case study of CSO networks

Three CSO networks were studied in Mali. We have tried to show the diversity of CSO networks by looking at formal NGOs and informal social movement networks.

a. West Africa Network for Peace Building (WANEP), Mali
WANEP is a formal trans-regional network of peace organizations established in 1998 with its headquarters in Ghana. Its main purposes are strengthening the capacity of peace-building institutions, enhancing the local culture of peace, promoting effective social, economic and political structures, and developing conflict-prevention networks and mechanisms. The branch in Mali is at its formation stage and is an informal network of 11 indigenous and international organizations created by the Women in Peace Building Programme (WIPNET) in 2003. The group informally met in 2006 to write their strategic plan, which has not been endorsed by the regional office of WANEP. Some of the organizations that met in 2006 were the Northern Mali Citizens' Action Group, Centre for Research and Strengthening of Analysis and Advocacy Capacities, Amnesty International-Mali, and the Malian Red Cross. Their main objectives were associated with early warning and prevention of conflict, and peace building in Northern Mali.

b.   Coalition of the African Alternatives Debt and Development (CAD)—Mali
CAD is part of a chain of social movements that was created during the 1998 launching of the Jubilee 2000 Campaign, a social movement present in 40 countries world wide, with the aim of advocating cancellation of the development-based debts. CAD-Mali is recognized as an official member of the World Social Forum, representing Mali. Its main purpose is to analyse the neo-liberal policies of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, the European Union's Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

CAD also educates both government and the public using various forums and media outlets to raise awareness on the impacts of neo-liberal policies. CAD-Mali attends the World Social Forum and organizes the Forum of the Populations in Mali annually to gather Malian and similar social movements from around the continent to exchange ideas and information about neo-liberal development policies and their impacts.

c.   Federation of the Action Groups of NGOs (FECONG)

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[26] Source: Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Territoriales (Ministry of Regional and Local Administration and Authorities).

FECONG is an umbrella organization that began operation in 2003 and which now represents 15 Action Groups that are formally networked NGOs and CBOs focusing on health, education, gender, and the environment. FECONG is thus a network of networks of NGOs and CBOs. These previously networked action groups used to be represented at the regional level by the Council of Consultations and Support to NGOs (CCA-ONG). However, some of the action groups including CCA-ONG itself wanted to scale up their political influence and impact at the national level and established a bigger umbrella called FECONG.

3.3 Preliminary findings

The initial analysis is of the networking strategies of the three CSO networks, as illustrated below:

- The preliminary analysis indicates that WANEP-Mali has horizontal networking strategies, while CAD Mali and FECONG exhibit both horizontal and vertical networking to scale up their impact and influence. In the case of WANEP-Mali, the networking is primarily to increase membership with institutions that share similar objectives of conflict prevention and peace building. Such networking is expected to increase their influence particularly in the international policy arenas. For instance, one of WANEP-Mali's initiatives is to increase its own capacity of partnership so it can be part of the United Nations Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).

- CAD-Mali is horizontally networked because it gathers some of the best practices and lessons learned from various partner social movements and organizations in other countries to adopt and replicate them in the Malian context. It has also vertically (i.e.) functionally scaled up because its objectives have changed over time. Its objectives initially were to raise awareness of the negative impacts of development-based debt programmes, but it has now shifted its focus to include research and development around the overall policies of development assistance programmes.

- FECONG began vertical networking at its initiation, when it began its operations by having loosely defined and numerous multi-disciplinary objectives encompassing clusters of social development and governance issues such as health, environment, education, development assistance, and gender. Since its inception, FECONG has also been horizontally scaling up by expanding its geographical coverage to have a nation-wide representation. Its ultimate aim is to network and scale up politically to enhance its advocacy and advisory roles and its representation at the national policy-making level on behalf of local, regional and national NGOs, CSOs, and other similar networks.

3.4 Senegal: overview of the CSO sector

During the colonial period, civil society played a major role in opposing the colonial authority. Regular uprisings took place, often in the rural areas. With the formation of a literate middle class, more sophisticated urban-based civil society movements came into the struggle for independence. After independence in 1960, the civil society sector faced numerous challenges because of the authoritarian regime that took over the political power. In the 1970s, NGOs, women's groups, human rights organizations, as well as cooperatives for tourist lodges started to emerge. In the 1980-1990 period, many CSOs began to develop their organizational structure and financial capacity to scale up their size and influence to become powerful lobbyists in policy making.

3.5 Case study of CSO networks:

Three CSO networks were chosen for this study. WANEP Senegal was particularly chosen in order to do a comparative analysis with its regional partner, WANEP-Mali, to better understand the impact and effectiveness of trans-regional CSO networks.

a. West African Peace Network in Senegal – WANEP Senegal
WANEP was formed in 2003 and was officially recognized in 2005. Its mission was to contribute to the emergence of a society of justice and peace in Senegal through conflict prevention, resolution, and peace building. It has carried out its mission and objectives through activities of research, awareness raising, and networking with similar peace-building organizations as well as with the media. Its current activities are strategically located in Zinguinchor in southern Senegal. The area is experiencing ethnic conflict and the activities bring visible impact at the ground level.

b. Réseau Sénégalais sur les Armes Légères (Senegalese Network on Light Weapons) – RESAL
Although it began its operation in 2003, RESAL is still not officially recognized by the Government. Its main mission has been to create a coordinated partnership between NGOs and national associations working towards peace and security in Senegal. This is done through sharing experiences and exchanging information within the network on issues of Light Weapons of Small Calibre (LWSC) as well as land mines. RESAL plans to be an organization of early warning to prevent violent conflicts, and to coordinate effective responses along with relevant institutions in the event that a conflict arises.

c. Conseil des ONG d'Appui au Développement (Council of NGOs Supporting Development) – CONGAD
CONGAD began operation in 1982, working with both domestic and international organizations. Its mission was to strengthen civil society capacity for a sustainable human development. CONGAD's main purpose has been to do research on a wide range of local and international governance topics related to reform of the United Nations (UN), the multilateral cooperation system, African regional integration, and governance of Official

Development Assistance (ODA). They also facilitate learning exchanges between local CSOs to build their capacities on issues of good governance, democracy, human rights and gender equity.

3.6 Preliminary findings

- WANEP-Senegal, as it stands, has scaled up horizontally by expanding its geographical coverage to include CSOs in neighbouring Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, which allows it to form a trans-national alliance. There is also a possibility for vertical scaling up as WANEP-Senegal plans to add advocacy and fundraising to its objectives and to move its office to Dakar, the capital city.

- One of the challenges that were observed in the WANEP-Senegal operations was the lack of financial capacity. This deterred it from providing long-term, sustainable services. It received seed funding from the regional WANEP to initiate its programmes once it was officially recognized. However, the Senegal network was not able to raise adequate financial resources on its own and might need a capacity-development intervention on fundraising.

- Despite financial hardships, WANEP-Senegal was able to produce long-term, sustainable impacts on enhancing the role of women in the conflict-resolution and peace-building processes. For instance, the awareness-raising activities included a radio programme on resolution 13.25 of the UN Security Council entitled 'Women, Peace and Security'. This programme enabled one of the local women organizations named Kabonketor, which means *Forgiveness,* to produce an important document on peace building that is officially recognized by the state chief, and the group is now a stakeholder in the peace-negotiation process.

- Although RESAL is still at an informal stage and has not been recognized by the Government, it was able to build positive collaboration with the State. As a consequence of this strong relationship and its effective advocacy and lobbying campaigns, the Government of Senegal was able to sign the Moratorium of Abuja against Arms Trade. Senegal also became the fifth country to sign, ratify, and adapt the International Convention on Arms Trade.

- CONGAD was able to make substantial impacts in diverse policy- oriented and political areas. As part of its efforts to make the State more transparent and accountable to its people, CONGAD, along with other civil society sectors, organized a presidential candidates' forum at its headquarters prior to the March 2007 presidential election. This enhanced the public interest in the political process. CONGAD shows its policy-oriented stands and advocates for its priorities through campaigns it carries out in partnership with faith-based organization. For instance, the campaign towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to which the Government and development partners are committed, became successful with the consistent lobbying and advocacy work that CONGAD carried out.

- CONGAD's research and development activities were used to inform West African countries about the negative impacts of the recent EPAs with EU, which has the potential to reduce import benefits drastically through the elimination of trade barriers or tariffs. This has resulted in some countries in West Africa refusing to sign the EPA agreement in December of 2007. CONGAD was also able to successfully advocate for western African countries to delegate the ECOWAS framework to negotiate the EPA issues on their behalf.

3.7 Uganda: overview of the CSO sector

Uganda's civil society sector is comprised of formal and informal groups such as NGOs, faith-based organizations, youth and student associations, women's self-help groups, and strong media and press associations and outlets. After its independence from Britain in 1962, much of Uganda's early political history has been characterized by prolonged civil wars, violation of human rights, and dictatorial regimes. When Yoweri Museveni took power in 1986, Uganda began experiencing relative stability and democratic atmosphere opening up the doors for the emergence of the formal civil society sector.

Even though the formal CSO sectors, particularly NGOs, are relatively young and are characterized by a narrow social base and small geographical coverage, the informal civil society has a long and vibrant history and extensive coverage[27]. This is because the majority of the population that lives in rural areas are members of various community-based, mutual-help groups where volunteering one's time and resources is a norm of the social life activities[28].

CSOs play significant role in the country's social, economic, and political issues. Historically, religious groups have supported political parties and have influenced political debates. For instance, there were strong relationships between the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party, and Protestant churches and the Uganda People's Congress (UPC)[29]. However, this also created a challenge for faith-based organizations as their close ties with the State has the potential to undermine their advocacy and critical roles on controversial social policy issues such as the acceptance of structural adjustment packages, land reform, or press freedom[30].

The NGO sector on the other hand played a key role in providing basic services in the 1980-1990s, to fill the gaps created by the reduction in the size of government as a result

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[27] Thue et al. 2002; DENIVA, 2006

[28] Ibid, 2006

[29] http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/dfidwork/workwithcs/cs-how-to-work-uganda.asp

[30] Kassimir, 1998 as referenced by http://www.dfid.gov.uk/aboutdfid/dfidwork/workwithcs/cs-how-to-work-uganda.asp

of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programme[31]. However, in the 1990s, the role of CSOs shifted, to monitor accountability in the activities of the State. Hence, much of the humanitarian aid and development assistance was directed to the government, while NGOs began serving as external monitors to ensure that poverty-reduction programmes were being implemented in a transparent and accountable manner. However, such monitoring service by CSOs was not accepted by the Government, which used the term "cadre of complainers" to describe them[32]. Hence, donors had to create a strategy to bring CSOs in close collaboration with the State which threatened their autonomy and hindered their ability to criticize[33].

Other strong and vocal elements of civil society in Uganda are the youth and student organizations. In the 1995 constitution, the youth were guaranteed representation at national and local levels[34]. Many youth organizations today are closely linked with the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government[35]. In the 1980s, the student associations were strong enough to confront the NRM government's introduction of IMF/World Bank-sponsored structural adjustment programmes and their impact on higher education. However, their protests led to fierce repression and constitutional reform along with changes in the financing of students that seriously weakened the student organizations[36].

Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) have also been some of the strongest civil society groups. They contributed to the functioning of the school system when the State collapsed in Uganda[37]. They still contribute as much as two-thirds to three-quarters of school operational and teacher salary costs[38]. These strong PTAs increased local interest in high-quality education, enhanced accountability and reduced corruption.

3.8 Case study of CSO networks
We looked at two CSO networks in Uganda. They are both umbrella organizations for national and international NGOs and CBOs to better coordinate their efforts.

a. Ugandan National NGO Forum (UNNF)
UNNF is a national membership organization and NGO umbrella body established in 1997. It was formed to strengthen civil society efforts through capacity building, and to advocate for an improved enabling environment (legal, policy and otherwise) which would help "unleash the potential of CSOs in Uganda by bringing them together to act as a united force on issues of common interest"[39]. It began with an initial membership of 100

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[31] Hearn 2001

[32] Ibid, 2001, p. 51

[33] Ibid, 2001

[34] Ibid.

[35] Barya, 1998 as quoted by DFID

[36] Bazaara, 1998 as quoted by DFID

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ablo and Reinikka, 1998 as cited by DFID

[39] Ibid, 2005/2006, p. 6

NGOs and by 2006, had a membership of 400 organizations comprising local, district, regional, national and international NGOs pursuing a wide range of interests and varied activities in development[40].

b. The Development Networks of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA)
DENIVA was formed in 1988 when 21 local and international NGOs and CBOs joined together to form a network to coordinate their efforts. It is now a membership organization with 600 members under its umbrella. The main purpose for creating such a network has been to provide a platform for collective action on poverty eradication and good governance policies that favour the poor and marginalized. It has also advocated for a conducive environment for NGOs and facilitated effective management capacity building of local NGOs and CBOs through skills and knowledge development, information management, and networking.

Their focal constituents are poor and marginalized groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, as well as persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. DENIVA collaborates with other networks such as the District NGO networks, local, regional and international CSOs, government, donors at all levels, private businesses, academic institutions, and multilateral agencies.

Its programme focus is comprised of four diverse components: governance, poverty eradication and livelihood programme (PELIP), climate change, and the NGO operating environment and information, communication and technology (ICT).

3.9 Preliminary findings

- In Uganda, 72 per cent of the registered NGOs in the country are already networked with an umbrella organization[41]. While the majority of individual NGOs in Uganda are focused on service delivery, most of the networks were established not for joint service provision but for advocacy, capacity building, and information sharing. Similar to individual NGOs, networks are also dependent on donor funding so many of them are more accountable to their donors than to their member constituents.

- The Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNF), along with its national and transnational peers, was able to effectively monitor the governance trends of Uganda through the Governance Monitoring Programme (UGMP) that it established in 2004. This programme has systematically monitored and reported on governance issues annually, based on four benchmarks, namely, human rights, transparency and accountability, democratization, and conflict resolution. In addition, the network was instrumental in critiquing the political manifestos of all the candidates who were running for the presidential elections of 2006. These reports were also published in the public newspapers so that the populace would be aware of them. The monitoring

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[40] The Ugandan National NGO Forum, 2005/2006
[41] Barr et. al., 2003

programmes are expected to ensure that political parties and their leaders are held accountable for their political and development commitments[42].

- Both UNNF and DENIVA have effectively addressed the social accountability of the CSO sector itself through the creation of codes of conduct and quality-assurance mechanisms. UNNF in consultation with other CSOs produced the NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QUAM). Such a certification programme outlines the ethical standards and operational norms required in order for an NGO to receive a certificate[43]. Similarly, DENIVA established its own code of conduct for its member organizations setting the principles and standards of behaviour for responsible practice.

4. UNECA-CSO relations

The UNECA/GPAD CSO focus is to strengthen civil society participation in improving good governance practices, for creating an enabling environment and building a strong foundation for peace and sustainable development in Africa. This focus constitutes the following four core functions:

- ❏ Strengthening institutional relations through information management, which includes virtual and physical communication and facilitating accreditation procedures;

- ❏ Assistance to CSOs to strengthen their capacity to support the ECA work programme by bringing their input at the policy level through the activities of the Committee on Governance and Popular Participation, various capacity-building initiatives, and by playing an advocacy role;

- ❏ Revival of the African Centre for Civil Society (ACCS) to ensure empowerment of African CSOs and to promote and strengthen their greater participation in sustainable development and the governance agenda;

- ❏ Delivery of advisory services on the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) upon request from CSOs, governments and various stakeholders, to strengthen good governance practices;

- ❏ Organizing subregional meetings and workshops for umbrella CSOs to promote good governance in the respective African regions and countries.

Initiated in 1997 by ECA, ACCS was intended to serves as a key actor in understanding and strengthening the contribution of African civil society development as well as in

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[42] Ibid, 2004/2006
[43] The NGO QUAM Working Group, 2006

facilitating its interface with the UN system. The centre undertook studies and inquiries on the nature, role and future prospects of the African CSO communities; produced and disseminated information on lessons learned and best practices; worked to enhance relations between government and civil society; and promoted networking among African CSOs and between African CSOs and their Northern partner institutions.

The UNECA/GPADs civil society activities include holding national,
subregional and regional consultations with civil society, working with such organizations, and publishing and disseminating studies, technical manuals, newsletters and other publications on the role of CSOs in development and governance.

The GPAD civil society programme works with member States, CSOs and international partner institutions in promoting and strengthening the role of CSOs in the development and governance of African countries.

UNECA has been consistent in its dedication to strengthening civil society in its breadth and depth, and has facilitated the participation of diverse expressions of civil society in development in Africa. During the past decade, the Commission has been incrementally building on its work in promoting civil society participation in development and in strengthening CSOs so they are able to play a meaningful role. ECA has taken on the task of, among other things, executing the following activities:

- Promote the visibility and understanding of civil society's participation in the development and governance process;
- Promote new, creative ways to facilitate interface between CSOs and governments and among CSOs;
- Promote an enabling environment conducive to CSO participation; and
- Institutionalize the participatory process.

Africa's civil society has proved itself a useful force in many areas. Throughout the continent, community and civic organizations are playing active roles in helping to carry out development activities. The participation of civil society has been a very positive and effective force in helping to shape ideas, build consensus across sectors and to share perspectives. Dating back to pre-independence, CSOs have been a vital part of the liberation struggles and the efforts to ensure that democracy in Africa truly becomes deep rooted. They have been effective in opening debate on policies, vigilance on actions, public accountability and insistence on the rule of law.

Changes in both African and the international political situations and the emphasis on African integration and on harmonization of the donor-supported agenda are re-defining the content and landscape of governance and development effectiveness. These changes are evoking new strategic practices and processes that are used to redefine and reinvigorate the basic role of African States and their civil societies. Furthermore, the twin processes of globalization and liberalization have brought new challenges and opportunities that require a renewal of strategic alliances and partnerships involving

government, CSOs and the African private sector, for managing and capturing the new opportunities while guarding against new threats to historic gains.