

# **The current procedures and policies dominating the disbursement of aid: are they building strong relationships and enabling NGOs to meet their stated aims?**

**A report on research carried out in Uganda between 2000-2004.**

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## **Chapter 2: The context for the research**

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### **Overview of context for NGOs in Uganda: donor, government and NGO roles and perspectives**

Uganda was in an advanced state of collapse when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) under Museveni took power in 1986, following years of instability, conflict and political isolation. Income levels were very low and there had been a large scale 'retreat into subsistence'. Social capital was seriously eroded in many areas after ten years of conflict, and the provision of education and health by the Government – essential for building human capital – was almost non-existent; private provision was patchy and inaccessible to the poor. Uganda was faced with the rising AIDS/HIV pandemic, while the political process and government institutions were deeply damaged and traumatised from a prolonged period of authoritarian rule and civil war (Twaddle and Hanson, 1988). The physical infrastructure was in an advanced state of decay; the country faced a huge rehabilitation challenge.

Since 1986 Uganda has undergone rapid change in many areas, although war and conflicts internally and externally continued to take their toll through the 1990s and up to the present day. Structural adjustment programmes were introduced soon after the new government came to power and over the years the government has met almost all of the IMF conditions; this has been recognised in debt negotiations and Uganda was the first country in Africa to receive limited debt relief. The country has performed well in macroeconomic stabilisation and growth; the liberalisation of the exchange rate, control of public expenditure, and some trade liberalisation together with a relatively stable political environment have contributed to a good economic performance.

International donors through much of the 1990s defined Uganda as a star economic adjuster and performer. From 1986-96 growth averaged 3% while for much of the rest of Africa it was only .8%. How well this economic performance has translated into reducing the poverty of the majority of the population remains a matter for debate. The issues around the collection and analysis of the poverty data in Uganda and elsewhere are the subject of extensive research and the shortcomings of some of the poverty data are documented elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

There have certainly been improvements on some of the human development indicators though they remain low, and Uganda remains in the bottom 10% of countries worldwide on the HDI index. The household surveys (which measure only one poverty indicator, consumption) showed a decrease in poverty from 56% to 46% over a three-year period in the late 1990s, though these figures were not confirmed by the national accounts<sup>2</sup>. The quantitative and qualitative data suggest that poverty for the bottom 20% (now called the chronically poor by some researchers<sup>3</sup>) has worsened in Uganda. Poverty remains predominantly a rural phenomenon, where over 80% of the population still live; it is worse in the east and the north of the country, which have been especially affected by conflict. Gender and HIV/AIDS status are two other factors that are linked with poverty, along with other factors of social difference such as disability and ethnicity.

The human development indicators, though somewhat improved, remain low. The figures are unfortunately often inconsistent and variable between different sources, however. For example, infant mortality figures from the World Bank figures show a major drop, while some analysts suggest a much smaller improvement. Malnutrition and stunting remain a serious problem with 38% of children being stunted according to some, and 41% of pre-school children being malnourished, even in the context of rising farm gate prices (Elson, 1997). There is very limited use of contraception and high fertility rates, with 6–7 children per female being the average. While vaccination rates have improved, the AIDS epidemic has had a serious negative impact on all aspects of health in Uganda.

The education enrolment figures have improved dramatically since the introduction of UPE in 1997, when student enrolment numbers more than doubled. Prior to that enrolment rates were only 41% and in 1994 the literacy

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Simon Appleton of the Centre for the Study of African Economies, Howard White at IDS, Sussex and a large poverty study headed by Francis Stuart, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University. The issues were also discussed at length in the poverty study done for DFID in Uganda, by staff at International Development Department, Birmingham University. Tina Wallace headed the team researching the impact of UK overseas aid on poverty in Uganda for DFID.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed analysis of the figures by Enzo Caputo, a macro-economist for the DFID poverty study revealed discrepancies in the different data sources around the impact of growth on poverty reduction.

<sup>3</sup> The problems of those who remain long term poor are currently the subject of DFID funded research at the Centre for Chronic Poverty at Manchester University. The directors are David Hulme of IDPM at Manchester and Andrew Shepherd of ODI, London. The issues of growth, redistribution, safety nets, welfare measures are all being analysed by the researchers and Uganda is one of the case study countries.

rate was only 56% compared to 67% for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 1994). In spite of UPE there remain serious and continuing problems with quality at all levels of the education system and the primary sub-sector especially has been characterised by a high level of untrained teachers, large classes of often over 100 children and lack of books and other resources. There is a lack of well-trained teachers at all levels of education and many schools have poor facilities, lack of materials and high rates of absenteeism. Attendance figures vary by gender, region and social class, with the highest proportion attending secondary school being male, urban and in the southern half of the country. Dropout rates remain high.

The majority of the population still work in agriculture and live in rural areas. During the 1980s Uganda's agricultural production slumped, cash crops almost disappeared, the agricultural infrastructure for providing inputs and extensions advice, credit, and access to markets all collapsed. Even now access to new improved seeds is restricted for many farmers and Uganda had the lowest use of fertiliser in the world in the 1990s. Agricultural technology is basic, largely relying on hand-held tools; even in the east where animal traction was the norm the loss of cattle means that the opening of land, planting, weeding and harvesting is now done by hand, much of it by women. Women provide the majority of labour in agriculture in Uganda across all regions, and rely almost entirely on hand power. There is little technological innovation, nor much access to new ideas and inputs.

The government has introduced a modernisation of agriculture plan and land reform is underway. The Land Bill, which was originally intended to release land for sale through the extension of private property titles and rights to extend the free market in land, enabling commercial farmers to expand, was criticised and subsequently modified. Concerns about security for poor farmers across Uganda and the need to protect women's access to land were issues GOU was asked to address. The position and condition of small farmers, many of whom are women, are critical in addressing poverty in Uganda.

Even before the war some analysts argued that the marginalisation of small farmers in Ugandan government policy was a key cause of poverty in the country:

small farmers have dominated export and food production in Uganda ... their position deteriorated sharply in the post-colonial period. Crop marketing monopolies had favoured processors over growers since 1920s ... from 1972 state control over crop marketing, processing, taxation, and the exchange rate was used to reduce prices to growers to non-sustainable levels ... thus small farmers generated most of the government revenue, but were starved of resources for technical change, and continued to use an iron age technology. (Brett, 1998: 4)

Fifty-six per cent of women and 53% of rural men are engaged in agriculture; about two thirds of food produced is for home use. Women provide most of the labour in all three categories of agriculture: food for consumption,

traditional exports and non-traditional agricultural exports such as fish, maize and beans. 'Agricultural production is a female labour intensive activity, control of production decisions and of the income generated in agriculture is male intensive; the social and physical infrastructure which support agriculture is more easily accessed by men than women' (Elson, 1997: 7). There has been a lack of recognition of the constraints facing women farmers, especially their time constraints, posing a serious barrier to much agricultural improvement in Uganda.

The lack of a clear link between economic growth and effective poverty reduction was a cause of concern to the World Bank and the Government of Uganda (GOU) in the late 1990s. There was a shift in thinking from only focusing on growth with the expectation of trickle down to poor people, to the need for clear and deliberate pro-poor policies to ensure the poor benefited properly from the new economic growth. The Government adopted a Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) to address poverty issues head-on, even before poverty focused plans became a major and compulsory international aid instrument, first for receiving HIPC money (debt relief), and later for receiving budget support from donors to impoverished governments in sub-Saharan Africa. The PEAP led to the development of the second poverty plan, in line with the now almost universally used PRSPs. The World Bank undertook research with NGOs (the SAPRI project) to look at how to make the links between growth and poverty reduction stronger in order to address poverty in Uganda more strenuously. At the level of policy it was agreed in the late 1990s that there was a weak understanding of the causes of poverty in Uganda, and more work was needed to find the best way to ensure that economic growth translated into real long term benefits for poor people.

The GOU was committed- when it took power- to embed democracy in Ugandan society, to prevent the continuing cycle of coups and counter-coups that marked the years since independence. The political structure of the original local resistance councils, established after the war at every level from the village to the national, evolved into a representative political structure whereby officials are elected for council office at every level from the village upwards. There are regular elections at every level and there has been some work on voter education in the country. The pace of decentralisation has accelerated, with devolved budgets and decision making about allocations being made increasingly at the district level. There are regular elections at this level and all the levels down to the villages. There are many issues around the decentralisation process, including the evaporation of funds as they move from the centre outwards, and the degree to which policies at the district level are still centrally controlled<sup>4</sup>. There are also major issues of capacity, especially in the newer districts. However the commitment to bring planning and implementation closer to the people is evident in this rapid and wide-ranging decentralisation agenda.

The Uganda constitution was developed after widespread consultation, showing an early commitment to involving ordinary Ugandans in the political

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<sup>4</sup> The problem of the 'evaporation of funds' was highlighted by a World Bank study in the late 1990s, which tracked funds from the central Ministry to the districts.

life of the country. The constitution enshrines many important rights, especially for women, and has been an example used by other countries in Africa.

The fact that there were no political parties in Uganda by 1997 was an issue for the international community but did not really affect their support for the GOU until the second round of presidential elections. Elections up to now have been held with people standing as individuals belonging to the national movement rather than as party members, because of the deeply divisive nature of party politics in Uganda in the past. The situation was reviewed by the GOU, especially as it was becoming an increasing cause of discontent among sections of the Ugandan population, as well as the donors. In 2003 the President agreed to move to multi-party democracy, with all the opportunities and dangers inherent in such a process.

Many elements of 'good governance' have been put in place, though there are growing concerns within and outside Uganda about the continuing conflicts especially in the north of the country, and the problems caused by corruption.

## **NGOs**

The NGO sector started with the end of the civil war and has been fast growing since then in Uganda:

Foreign and indigenous NGOs have flooded Uganda since the National Resistance army stormed Kampala in 1986. The invasion of NGOs has impacted on almost every sector of Ugandan life and every region of Uganda, although some districts have higher concentrations of NGOs such as Rakai (badly hit by the AIDS virus), Luwero and Kampala. The flood of NGOs and NGO activities has produced varying degrees of both cynicism and optimism. (S. Dicklich, 1994, p2)

That sense of both enthusiasm and confidence in NGOs, and cynicism, was evident through the 1990s. NGOs were seen by many to be critical in service provision, in a context where many services have broken down and limited funds prevented GOU from making adequate provision; this is a role GOU wanted NGOs to fulfil. However, alongside NGOs working hard in service provision many 'briefcase NGOs' sprang up, usually in response to donor funding, promoting a degree of cynicism about the sector. It is seen by some as a place where educated but unemployed people, especially civil servants made redundant or are struggling to make a living wage, can make a career regardless of their skills and commitment.

The pressure from most donors and GOU during the 1990s was for NGOs to fill the gaps in government provision of health, education, water. A few NGOs went beyond this and entered the arena around rights, e.g. rights for women, land rights, lobbying to cancel the debt, and involvement in civic education. They started lobbying on these issues; the GOU was much more cautious about these roles for NGOs:

to a certain extent, years of war have created a culture of suspicion and fear, which has even placed NGO motives and activities under public scrutiny. Consequently many NGOs especially those that can be considered 'political' in any way, are regarded as having ulterior motives and objectives. The state is also very suspicious of NGO activities, especially those considered to be 'political'. Although the Resistance Council system has helped to re-politicise Ugandans, there seems to be a hesitancy among Ugandans to embrace organisations that may somehow alienate or confront the regime. (Dicklich, p.6)

The ambivalence of GOU towards NGOs was well illustrated by the following experience. In 1989 under the NGO Registration Statute the NGO Registration Board was set up under the aegis of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (rather than Planning and Economic development) implying a security concern around NGOs. Several conditions are placed on NGO work and the NRM has made attempts to integrate NGO work into the national plans. Even though in practice the GOU lacks the resources to adequately monitor and control NGO work, it attempts this through the NGO co-ordinating office in the office of the Prime Minister. The existence of this office initially led the Government to refuse to register the NGO forum, an umbrella body set up by the NGOs in Uganda, as it was seen as a potential rival to the NGO office. One reason for the refusal appeared to be the leading role played by international NGOs in promoting this forum, something the GOU felt uneasy about.

Most local and many international NGOs in Uganda are Kampala based, raising questions about their ability and commitment to work with and represent the grassroots in the countryside. There are few NGOs working in the conflict ridden and poorest areas of the country, the North and East. Many NGOs in Uganda are not rooted in the rural areas where the bulk of the population lives and there is uncertainty about how far they can legitimately claim to reach or represent the poorest in Uganda. The international NGOs remain dominant and the most vocal, probably because they have more experience and far more resources than local NGOs. While some work closely with local NGOs in funding partnerships and work on capacity building, other international NGOs remain operational and work directly with communities in rural and urban areas. Much of the lobbying work was initiated and done by these international NGOs, who also hold much of the funding for lobbying work.

In the 1990s the sector was somewhat fragmented, largely focused on delivering services, with international NGOs dominating many lobbying forums. Over time NGOs had become significant players in development and relief work in Uganda, something which aroused both enthusiasm and also suspicion in government and donors who were concerned about what role NGOs should be playing and how well they are able to perform:

Given the degree of co-ordination, competition, dependence on foreign funding for survival, the relative youth and apolitical focus of most NGOs in Uganda, the NGO sector does not presently present a strong vehicle for the

development of a democratic civil society capable of pressuring the state and keeping it accountable. (Dicklich, 1994, p16)

Things were changing during the period of the research in a number of ways. The advocacy and lobbying agenda was becoming much more important to international NGOs and to donors, who were changing their funding roles vis a vis the Uganda government. As many bi- and multi-lateral donors moved away from implementing projects, to supporting sector wide approaches and later to full budget support, so they wanted NGOs to play different roles.

On the one hand they wanted local NGOs to support local governments at the district level, in their delivery on their plans in health, education, water and so on. NGOs were to continue to support services, but through and with local government, accessing funds devolved to the district by GOU for spending against local priorities. The overall thrust of the plans was on addressing poverty in Uganda, an agenda close to the hearts of many NGOs. NGOs would, in future, access more funding locally, through government officials, to support the meeting of district targets around poverty reduction through the provision of key services. This proposal will radically change the relationships between NGOs and government, but the implications of these changes were only just being grasped when the research ended.

On the other hand donors especially wanted NGOs to contribute to the building of a strong civil society. They want them to learn to hold government to account against their new budgets, freed from direct donor control (though many donors have key personnel in Ministries as part of a process of capacity building and checking budget spending). NGOs were to get involved in raising public awareness, building strong local civil society organisations, and monitoring the government and undertaking lobbying and advocacy on behalf of the poor.

Some Ugandan NGOs were already doing work around the policy and advocacy agenda and these new roles suited their own agendas. Many others have been pushed into undertaking work that they are ill suited and ill prepared for. At the same time the government of Uganda has introduced an NGO bill, which is a cause of major concern to the NGO sector, because it threatens growing government regulation through e.g. annual registration procedures and increased control of their activities.

There are thus many conflicting pressures and influences on the NGO sector at the start of the new millennium. The government wants them to become an integral part of the fight against poverty, through support to service delivery at the district level. They should be integrated into the district plans, their budgets declared and their work is to complement that of government offices. Many donors want them to become monitors of government spending and behaviour and to call them to account for the use of these new untied budgets. Others want them to become active in the policy making forums, especially representing and working with the wider civil society on issues such as poverty assessments and development the poverty reduction strategy papers. Some local and international NGOs have their own agendas, which

include examining and questioning donor as well as government behaviour. It is against this fast changing and complex set of agendas, requirements, roles and responsibilities that this research took place.

Most NGOs, both local and international, are still based in Kampala and their work is clustered in the central and southern areas of the country. Only a few are located in the northern and eastern areas of the country, areas seriously affected by continuing conflict and extreme poverty. While there is evidence of GOU willingness to open up political processes to ordinary people, they have been wary about the role of NGOs in Uganda and tried to keep them in the role of service providers. They have not welcomed NGO involvement in, for example, civic education and have not found many ways to work in co-operation with the sector in Uganda's development programme.

### **Quantitative analysis of Uganda NGOs**

The analysis provided in this report is based on the information contained in a quantitative survey initiated by Crispin Kintu of the Centre for Basic Research at the start of the research project, and provides tabulated information about NGOs in Uganda. The survey was based on NGO registration data held in the Office of the Prime Minister and provides information on the registration status of NGOs; the country of origin; the sponsors/funders of the NGOs; the sectors they work in; their addresses and districts of operation in Uganda. For this study, a detailed analysis was made of the countries of origin of all the registered NGOs, while a random sample of 354 NGOs was taken to analyse the key activities of the NGOs.

A full analysis of geographical location and sectoral spread was done for all the NGOs to ascertain the numbers of NGOs operating in the different districts and regions of Uganda and the reasons/ factors influencing NGO operations in particular areas. It was difficult to make a comprehensive analysis of the sectors of intervention, however, because most activities were recorded descriptively, rather than being categorised into thematic or sectoral areas. The researchers developed specific themes/sectoral categories under which the various activities were classified. These included evangelism, agriculture and food security, education, health, water and sanitation, research, environment, emergency and relief and shelter programmes. Allocating NGOs to each category was sometimes difficult because of the paucity of information on their activities, and it was not possible to identify those working on issues such as gender, participation, representation and advocacy from the registration data.

It is important to recognise that ***these data provide only a snapshot of one point in time***. Many local NGOs come and go, and overall the numbers are increasing all the time. Many are unstable and do not stay open for very long, while others are well-established and long term. The numbers of registered NGOs was 2655 in 2000, but over 3000 by 2002, 4000 in 2003 and still growing; some that were listed in 2000 were defunct by 2002, others that

were operating had not yet completed their registration. The numbers of CBOs is of course much higher.

The situation is fluid, many CBOs and NGOs are transient, often responding to an immediate need or short term available funding. This was highlighted in a World Bank study in 2002, which talked of 'sector nomadism' whereby NGOs suddenly switch sector or focus in response to availability of resources and changes in funding priorities.<sup>5</sup> This research team found that some NGOs die off and some exist only in name. However, the figures provide some useful pegs to help to map out the NGO terrain in Uganda, and some interesting issues emerged from this study, which are applicable beyond the 'snapshot'.

### ***Overview of NGO database in Uganda***

In 2000 there were 2655 registered NGOs working in Uganda; the majority were local NGOs, (southern NGOs) some describing themselves as operating countrywide (working in several districts of the country) while others are more local working in only one district, and often in only in county. Others are Community Based Organisations (CBOs) working solely in one location addressing the specific needs of their constituents. This number has now risen to around 4000; the sector is fast growing.

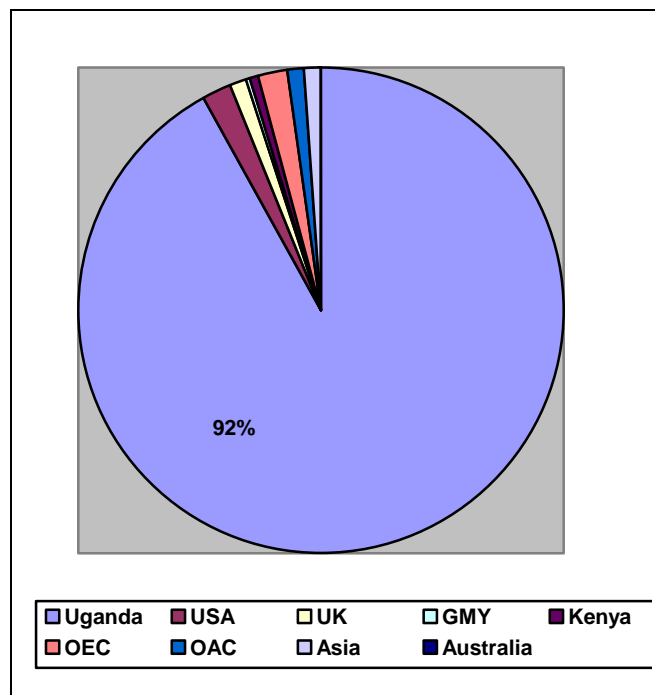
There are also international NGOs (northern NGOs) working in Uganda, mainly from Europe or North America. These NGOs have operations in many other countries of the world. Some have field offices in Uganda, others work directly from their home base with local partners in Uganda. Some who have bases in Uganda work operationally, and provide services and support directly to local communities, others work only through partners; some do both.

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<sup>5</sup> These data were presented to the NGO sector and donors on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2003, by the World Bank research team, at the Hotel Equatoria.

## Countries of origin of NGOs working in Uganda

An analysis of the countries of origin of NGOs in Uganda indicates that NGOs come from diverse areas of the world. It also provides a basis for their classification into two broad categories; Southern and Northern NGOs. The southern NGOs include those whose foundation bodies are based in Uganda, while the northern NGOs are founded in the western developed countries especially in western Europe and north America. The following diagram shows the countries of origin of NGOs registered in Uganda.



It is interesting to note that the overwhelming majority of NGOs in Uganda (over 90 percent of all registered NGOs) are of Ugandan origin. This number includes a wide range of local NGOs including church organisations, community-based organisations, community groups and a significant number of associations. A significant number of local NGOs are religiously based, predominantly from the Christian faith, and are actively involved in promoting evangelism.

This is important for the research because the focus is on the international sector and those they fund in the local NGO sector. It is only a small part of the whole sector, but our hypothesis is that it has a wide-ranging and significant influence across the work of NGOs in Uganda.

### Sources of funding

Funding for local NGOs generated within Uganda is limited. It ranges from membership fees and subscription fees, grants, donations and government

subventions for most CBOs and local NGOs. Some organisations do have access to donor funding from international NGOs, bilateral or multilateral funding, and from International Financial Institutions (IFIs) like the World Bank. These are a minority of Ugandan NGOs, but they are the largest and probably the most significant players; some also have extensive relations with a wide range of smaller NGOs whom they, in turn, fund.

International NGOs have a range of funding sources and strategies, ranging from child sponsorship, through to shops and other forms of public fundraising. They also have access to project and programme funding from their governments and multi-lateral organisations.

It is very important to stress that this research project did not explore the issues of development funding, policies and procedures of small Ugandan NGOs who do not receive any funding from outside Uganda. These, however, form the bulk of the NGO sector in Uganda and are very under-researched; researchers, government and the international NGO sector little understand their strategies and behaviour.

### **Geographical spread**

While the socio-economic indicators of Uganda indicate that the northern and eastern parts of the country are the poorest and therefore require more support from non-governmental organisations, the analysis indicates that the majority of NGOs operate in the central region<sup>1</sup> with Kampala hosting over 550 NGOs, about 18 percent of the total NGOs registered in Uganda. The eastern region<sup>2</sup> hosts the second biggest number of NGOs (about 520) with the majority of them operating in Mbale, Jinja and Iganga districts respectively.

Although the study did not explore reasons for the concentration of NGOs in particular areas in Uganda, there are reasons that can be advanced for this scenario. In the central region there has been peace and stability for a relatively long time now, and many parts of the region are well served by infrastructure including communications. Regarding the eastern region, Mbale is a big commercial centre with well-developed infrastructure like power, telecommunication, road infrastructure and reasonable office accommodation that are necessary for the efficient and effective operations of NGOs. The availability of these services is also important for keeping the operational costs of NGOs low. Urban centres with good infrastructure do certainly attract NGOs to establish their offices in such areas.

Non-governmental organisations that registered as operating countrywide were about 420 constituting about 14 percent of the total NGOs registered in Uganda. The study however, did not explore whether these NGOs were

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this analysis, the central region covered the districts of Kampala, Mpigi, Luwero, Wakiso, Masaka, Mukono, Kayunga, Kalangala and ssembabule .

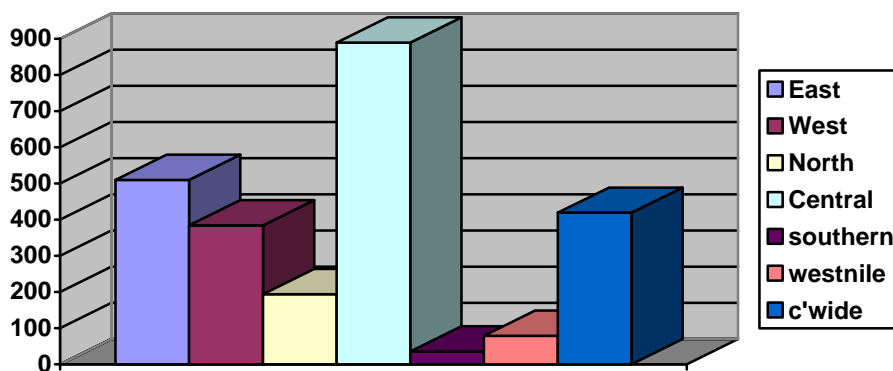
<sup>2</sup> Eastern Region covers the districts of : Jinja, Iganga, Kamuli, Tororo, Pallisa, Mbale, Busia, Kumi, Soroti, Katakwi, Kaberamaido, Kotido, Moroto and Nakapiripiriti.

actually operating on the ground in all the districts that they indicated as their operational areas.

The poorest regions in Uganda are the northern<sup>3</sup> and eastern. These regions however, are served by far fewer NGOs. Several reasons can be advanced for this scenario: firstly, throughout the late 1970s to the mid- 1980s, Uganda was experiencing war and resultant political instability and insecurity, especially in the northern and the eastern parts of the country. In the mid - 1990s, there was a lull of peace in the north and the eastern parts of Uganda. This period saw an upsurge in the number of NGOs registering to work in the north and the eastern regions mainly involved in relief and rehabilitation activities. Rebel activities however, have continued to linger on especially in the north and West Nile regions which has checked the operations of NGOs in those areas due to insecurity, poor roads, telecommunication and a general breakdown of the overall socio-economic infrastructure. The few that operate in these insecure districts are mainly international and seek assurance from government for the protection/security of their staff working in those insecure districts, which protection cannot equally be extended to local NGO and CBO staff. Also, there are few NGOs, especially local NGOs, that have skills, experience and knowledge in the emergency, relief and rehabilitation programmes that are needed in areas of conflict and insecurity.

The southern region of Uganda, which for the purposes of this study includes the extreme southern districts of Kisoro and Kabale, is generally a better off area with good agricultural potential, tourist attractions and with a relatively well-developed socio-economic infrastructure. This area hosts the least number of NGOs. The following chart illustrates the coverage of NGOs in Uganda by region.

**NGO Coverage by Region**



The spread of NGOs in Uganda follows patterns noted elsewhere, and which has been graphically described by Robert Chambers as 'ribbon or roadside' development. Most local NGOs tend to be clustered in areas where security and accessibility are good, and where basic services and communications are in operation; there are, of course, notable exceptions. Many are urban based.

<sup>3</sup> Northern Region covers the districts of Gulu, Apac, Lira, Kitgum and Pader districts

Some international NGOs work in the more remote and conflict affected areas, but they are very few and their focus is on humanitarian and emergency aid. These NGOs, however, tend to be well facilitated with communication services like mobile radios and/or satellite telephones and use heavy top of the range four wheel drive vehicles that most local NGOs cannot afford.

### **Sectoral Interventions by NGOs in Uganda**

In view of the large number of NGOs covered by the study, it was deemed fit to take only a random sample from the database to get a representative picture of NGOs operations in Uganda. In this regard, a sample was taken of every fifteenth NGO and the activities of every fifteenth NGO were recorded to represent a sample of activities. Accordingly, a sample size of 354 was used to analyse the sectoral intervention of NGOs in Uganda.

The following sectors were identified: education, evangelism, health, income generating activities (IGA), advocacy, training and capacity building, special programmes for women and youths, water and sanitation, research, environment, emergency and relief, HIV/AIDS, agriculture, and shelter.

Of the 354 NGOs, the study found out that 52 of them are engaged in evangelism (about 15 percent). 43 were in agriculture (about 12 percent), 42 in special programmes for women and youths (about 12 percent). 41 NGOs were involved in micro finance or income generating activities constituting about 12 percent of the total NGO. 32 were engaged in environmental protection programmes (about 9 percent) with a focus on land management and agro-forestry, 30 were in education (about 9 percent) and 27 were involved in health related programmes (eight percent).

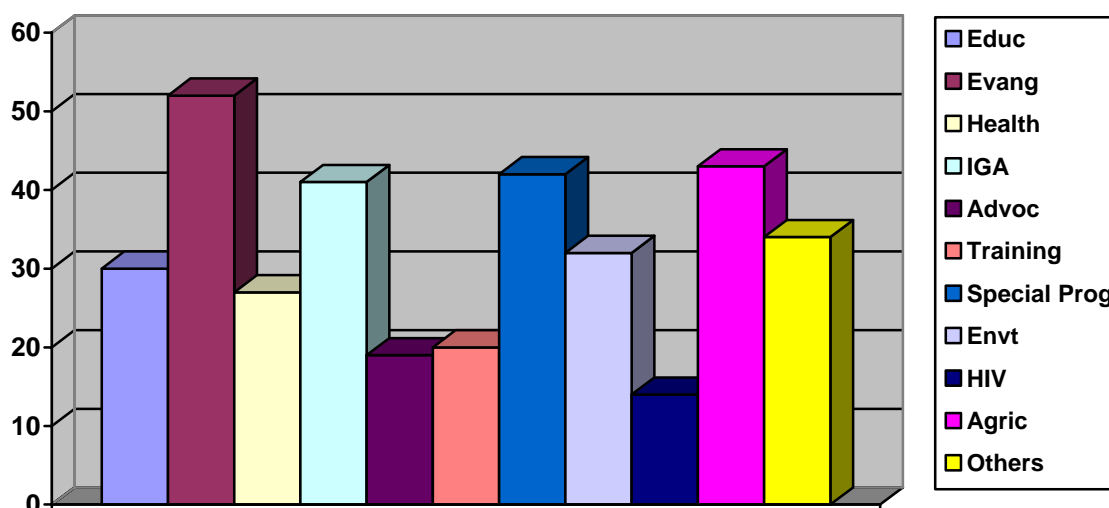
Twenty NGOs were implementing training and capacity building initiatives (six percent) while 19 were engaged in advocacy activities constituting six percent. Fourteen were involved in HIV/AIDS programmes with a percentage of four percent and 34 were engaged in other activities such as water and sanitation, research, relief and emergency and shelter. The above trend indicates that more NGOs are involved in evangelism related activities that include preaching, education through the church than in any other activity.

This can possibly be explained by the recent (within the past 10 years), establishment of many Charismatic/born again churches with foreign foundation backing, especially from the United States of America. Though how many are funded from abroad, through churches as well as official donors and INGOs, is not known at this time. There are some, but far fewer, Islamic founded NGOs.

Although the analysis did not analyse exactly the number of NGOs that are involved in more than one sector, the available data indicate that quite a number of NGOs are actually involved in more than one sector. In many cases, NGOs that are involved in health and or education activities tend to also address HIV/AIDS related issues. Similarly those dealing with

agricultural related activities also address health related issues and HIV/AIDS. The complex nature of NGO activities are highlighted later in the case studies

**Key Sectoral Interventions by NGOs in Uganda (listing NGOs by their major activities)**



A further sectoral analysis indicates that almost equal numbers of NGOs were involved in agriculture, youths and women activities each constituting 12 percent. This percentage is higher than for the NGOs involved in direct sectoral activities such as education, health and water. It can also be argued that most women and youth programmes have a micro finance component as well as agricultural related activities. Such activities are important for promoting the empowerment of women and the youths.

NGOs involved in education and health registered a lower percentage (eight percent) than for example evangelism. This can be explained, perhaps, by the fact that over the past 10 years, international and some local NGOs in Uganda have been changing their methodologies and strategies. There has been a shift from direct service delivery and implementation of activities to building the capacities of local NGOs and CBOs to take charge of the development process. Others have adopted the approach of working through partners. In addition, following the first phase of the foreign debt cancellation and the most recent enhanced debt relief (HIPC), as conditionality, all debt relief funds have to be invested by government in the social sectors. These are especially education and health, as well as support to the agricultural sector through the plan for modernisation of agriculture. The availability of funds from government to invest in these social sectors, especially in physical infrastructure development that was a realm of some of the NGOs in the past, compelled NGOs to change their strategies. Some now focus more on the software aspects of the social sectors( for example capacity building of the government staff for better service delivery, policy advocacy and promoting the rights agenda as a basis for more accountability and transparency)

rather than investing in social infrastructure development. Though some NGOs are still doing service delivery and now try to access funds for this work through the district plans and budgets, rendering them less independent from government funding.

A relatively large number of NGOs were support programmes for the disadvantaged women and youths. They undertake wide-ranging activities such as caring for orphans, the disabled, widow and youths, Skills training in middle manpower schemes such as tailoring, carpentry, masonry, weaving, brick-making etc were among the key activities. Almost all the NGOs were seen to have incorporated an income generating activity into their operations, mostly in the area of micro finance or revolving loan schemes.

A World Bank study of NGOs undertaken in 2002 found that education, health, micro finance were the most popular sectors, with work in advocacy, HIV/AIDS, water and other sectors also emerging as key intervention areas. There was a lot of duplication found, and not all NGOs they studied had a good grasp of issues such as advocacy and lobbying. They ranged in the degree of competence they had in their sectoral specialisation, their structures and mechanisms for planning, implementation and reporting, as well as budgeting. It is a very diverse and uneven sector, which includes unstructured, small organisations as well as those well able to plan and implement development work.

The range of local NGO activities is very diverse and depends mainly on the problems and needs of the people in their areas of operation as well as the different agendas of the funding institutions, agencies and/or governments. Whereas NGOs working in the northern and the eastern parts of Uganda are mainly involved in relief, war trauma counselling, rehabilitation, resettlement and recovery work, NGOs in the central, western and southern areas of Uganda are involved in a diversity of development programmes. Many NGOs are also actively involved in general capacity building activities that are directed towards building and enhancing the capacities of community based organisations to take charge of the development process.

During the last seven years since the promulgation of the 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda, many NGOs have got actively involved in promoting gender and children's rights. The enabling legal and policy framework provided by the constitution of the Republic of Uganda and the many women network organisations that continuously advocate for gender equity and women's rights, partly explain this recent trend in NGO activities.

An interesting observation from the study is that NGOs from the north who work directly with poor people (and not through partners), especially those from the US and UK, are involved in funding high capital investment projects and programmes such as construction of schools and health centres, roads, bridges and promoting livelihood enhancing activities like agriculture. They are also involved in supporting micro finance schemes and/or small-scale income generating schemes. Southern NGOs especially indigenous local NGOs are engaged in promoting, training and middle manpower skills programmes, HIV/AIDS activities, advocacy, evangelism and agriculture and

food security programmes and projects.

Whereas NGOs in southern Uganda have tended to focus on environmental protection activities and promoting livelihood enhancing programmes, the NGOs in the north focus on resettlement of refugees, food security and shelter programmes, peace and reconciliation, education activities particularly adult literacy programmes, and HIV/AIDS.

### **An overview of NGOs and their activities in Uganda**

Several issues emerge from this quantitative analysis of the registered data on NGOs and a first attempt to analyse the reasons for the findings. These provide a backdrop for the research that follows.

It is clear that the bulk of the NGO sector in Uganda is made up of local NGOs, working from the national right down to the community level. They vary significantly in their purposes, their reach, their activities, their staffing and their funding. Many other researchers have developed a range of typologies of NGOs, focusing on different critical dimensions of their organisation and work.<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this research the typologies were somewhat crude and there has been no attempt to disaggregate the local NGO sector into a neat categorisation of NGOs by key criteria.

The key issues guiding this research became: distinguishing between locally based and internationally based NGOs. Within the locally based NGOs the focus was on differences according to size, location and sources of funding. Within the international NGOs the important criteria became their size; whether they had field offices or not; and whether they worked through partners or directly with local communities.

The data were not used then to develop typologies, but rather to set a context against which to focus down on some sub-sections of the NGO sector and its activities. Some of the broad findings from the database reviews and associated discussions were that:

- 1. The sector is dynamic and growing**, in a context where although there are some issues between NGOs and GOU there is a constitutional and legal framework for addressing the rights of women and children, for improving services for poor people, and for working on burning issues such as HIV/AIDS, peace and reconciliation.
- 2. The bulk of the sector is made up of local NGOs**
- 3. The sector has grown, and continues to grow, very fast**
- 4. Many local NGOs are engaged in evangelism** something that is often not included within the development NGO sector activities at the international level. However the lines between evangelism and service are often very porous for faith based agencies worldwide.
- 5. Local NGOs may have very short life spans, others are well established.** The sector is fluid and responsive to all kinds of external

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<sup>6</sup> References for important work on typologies includes Thomas Carroll, Alan Fowler

factors including conflict, community needs and demands, availability of funding

6. **Local NGOs are very diverse in their coverage, location, size and focus** though the majority are based in the central region, with parts of the north and east of Uganda being very poorly served.
7. **The funding sources for NGOs are also very diverse**
8. **There are significant numbers of international NGOs working in Uganda**, many have been there since the start of the Museveni government, and others are more recent. They too have a range of mandates and operations, and they vary significantly in their size and the scale of their funding in Uganda.
9. **Some local and international NGOs are involved in advocacy and policy work and in addressing rights**, as well as working on service provision and community mobilisation.
10. **It is hard from the available data to track international or national funding flows or the size of different agencies and who funds them.** This work has to be done through case studies, because the data are simply not available to describe the funding to the NGO sector in Uganda.