NGOs, Poverty Reduction and Social Exclusion in Uganda

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I dedicate this thesis to

Ategeka Musinguzi and Tunanuke Muganzi

as inspiration for their future

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Abstract

The participation of Non Governmental Organsisations (NGOs) is regarded crucial in poverty reduction programmes and the new aid architecture. Increasingly some literature shows contradictions in the discussion on NGOs' added value to poverty reduction but rarely does it examine the multiple interests surrounding NGO participation. This study examines the role and interests of NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes amidst growing knowledge and evidence that these programmes may eventually not benefit the poor. It also analyses the mechanisms of how the poor are excluded in these programmes. Focusing on the Ugandan Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme, this qualitative study explains the roles and interests of NGOs in shaping poverty reduction policies, empowering the poor and increasing their inclusiveness.

The study found that NGOs are engaged in activities which have litle success in influencing poverty reduction policies, empowering the poor and increasing their inclusiveness other than paving way for actors multiple interests to thrive. The need to wield power entrenched in the current poverty reduction agenda makes NGOs to struggle to be recognised among the powerful policy makers and to protect their positions. Although poverty reduction programmes brought NGOs closer to government and donors, there is a weak link between NGOs and the people. NGOs are embedded in activities aimed at promoting market relations yet with no elaborate arrangement to create better linkages with people. There is also a paradox whereby empowerment programmes like NAADS, that emphasise efficiency and material outputs, do not necessarily lead to power shifts, especially not to relational power changes. NGOs appear to legitimise convergence over technocratic efficiency while farmers leadership structures are captured by local elites and politicians. Again, although the official poverty reduction programmes promises social inclusion of the poor and have tried to marry economic growth with poverty reduction policies, they are not explicit on

the social and political agenda. The NGOs expected to increase inclusion of the poor did not probe into deeper issues of existing inequalities, power and poverty as well as divisions inside communities.

Although NGOs caused incremental results on some aspects of poverty, incorporating them in the Ugandan official poverty reduction programmes has created tension and frustration among several actors. The thesis asserts that in seeking to understand the roles and interests of NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes, it is imperative to focus more on the normative agenda of NGOs as well as on their institutional survival interests, and and ongoing tensions and power struggles with other actors. Second, the analysis of the roles and interests of NGOs need to adopt a political economy perspective that views NGO participation through the lenses of aid instruments as well as locate it within the context of the broader political struggles in a given country. Thus the study raises further questions as to whether NGOs can offer an alternative political society while participating in official government poverty reduction programmes.

NGOs, Poverty Reduction and Social Exclusion in Uganda

Rose Bakenegura Namara

Samenvatting

Bij armoedebestrijdingsprogramma's en in de nieuwe hulpverlenings-structuur wordt de deelname van non-gouvernementele organisaties (ngo's) van cruciaal belang geacht. In de literatuur wordt in toenemende mate de toegevoegde waarde van ngo's bij de armoedebestrijding ter discussie gesteld, maar de diverse belangen die een rol spelen als ngo's betrokken zijn bij armoedebestrijdingsprogramma's worden zelden onderzocht. Dit onderzoek bestudeert de rol en de belangen van ngo's bij overheidsprogramma's voor armoedebestrijding. Er zijn steeds meer aanwijzingen dat deze programma's de positie van de armen uiteindelijk niet altijd verbeteren. Het onderzoek analyseert ook de mechanismen die deelname van de armen aan deze pro-gramma's verhinderen. Dit kwalitatieve onderzoek richt zich op de Ugandan Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) [Oegandese strategie voor armoede-bestrijding] en op de National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) [nationale landbouw adviesdienst]. Het verklaart de rol en de belangen van ngo's bij het ontwikkelen van een armoedebestrijdingsbeleid dat gericht is op empowerment en sociale insluiting van de armen.

Uit het onderzoek blijkt dat ngo's weinig invloed hebben op het armoedebestrijdingsbeleid en op empowerment en sociale insluiting van de armen, en dat ze er vooral aan bijdragen dat actoren hun diverse belangen behartigen. Binnen het huidige speelveld van de armoedebestrijding zien ngo's zich genoodzaakt hun positie als beleidsmaker te bevechten en te be-schermen. Armoedebestrijdingsprogramma's hebben de band van ngo's met de overheid en donoren versterkt, maar ngo's staan ver af van de bevolking. Ngo's zijn betrokken bij activiteiten om de banden met de markt te versterken, maar er worden geen maatregelen getroffen om de banden met

de bevolking te versterken. Het onderzoek brengt ook een paradox aan het licht. Empowerment-programma's zoals NAADS waarbij de nadruk ligt op efficiency en materiële opbrengsten leiden niet altijd tot een verschuiving in de machtsverhoudingen. De ngo's lijken een beleid gericht op techno-cratische efficiëntie te ondersteunen, terwijl de leiding van boeren-organisaties is overgenomen door de plaatselijke machthebbers en politici.

De overheidsprogramma's voor armoedebestrijding zijn officieel gericht op sociale insluiting van de armen en de overheid probeert economische groei aan armoedebestrijding te koppelen, maar er zijn geen expliciete sociale en politieke doelstellingen. Het was de bedoeling dat ngo's de sociale insluiting zouden bevorderen, maar ze hebben geen aandacht besteed aan onderliggende problemen op het gebied van ongelijkheid, macht en armoe-de en ook niet aan verdeeldheid binnen gemeenschappen.

Hoewel ngo's op sommige aspecten van armoedebestrijding een positieve invloed hebben gehad, heeft het opnemen van ngo's in overheids-programma's voor armoedebestrijding geleid tot spanningen en frustraties bij verschillende betrokken partijen. Uit dit onderzoek blijkt dat de rol van ngo's bij de armoedebestrijding niet los gezien kan worden van hun normatieve agenda en institutionele belangen en van de voortdurende machtsstrijd tussen de verschillende betrokken partijen. De rol en belangen van ngo's moeten vanuit politiek-economisch perspectief worden geanaly-seerd. Daarbij moeten ngo's niet alleen als hulpverleningsinstrument worden gezien, maar moet ook gekeken worden naar hun rol binnen de bredere context van de politieke strijd in een bepaald land. Volgens dit onderzoek is het dus de vraag of ngo's kunnen dienen als alternatieve politieke gemeenschap terwijl ze tegelijkertijd meewerken aan overheidsprogramma's voor armoedebestrijding.
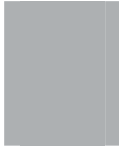
Acronyms

A2N	Africa 2000
ACFODE	Action for Development
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CARE	American Relief Organisation in Development
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CDRN	Community Development Resource Network
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DENIVA	Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations
DFID	Department for International Development
FID	Farmers' Institutional Development
FOWODE	Forum for Women in Democracy
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFRI	International Forensic Research Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISFG	Integrated Support Farmer Group
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
ITAD	Information Technology Assistance for Development
JSAN	Joint Staff Advisory Note
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry & Fisheries

MoFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning & Economic Development
MTEFs	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NAADS	National Agriculture Advisory Services
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIMES	National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System
PAF	Poverty Alleviation Fund
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PMA	Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Support Credit
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
QUaM	Quality Assurance Mechanism
SAPRI	Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of statistics
UDN	Uganda Debt Network
UJAS	Uganda Joint Assistance Strategy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project
VEDCO	Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns
WB	World Bank

1 Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

Despite the existence of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), Millennium Development Goals and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, about 316 million in Africa still live below the $1 dollar a day poverty line—as do 1.2 billion people worldwide (UNDP 2008: 18). The share of the world's poor living in Africa rose from 11 per cent in 1981 to 29 per cent in 2001 (Chen and Ravallion 2004: 19). There is acute vulnerability among classes of people like children and women and considerable inequality between rich and poor, across and within countries (UN 2005: 1). Uncertainty abounds as to the causes and processes of the current poverty situation amidst doubled foreign aid (Riddell 2007), global strategies and consorted efforts between governments, donors and NGOs to deal with poverty. Some scholars use economic determinants such as limited access to income, markets and employment (Ravallion 2003; Agenor et al. 2007); while others use structural factors such as ethnicity, gender (Kiado 2001) and capability deprivation (Sen 2000) to explain the poverty situation. However as much as insight into such economic and social explanations provide, poverty cannot satisfactorily be understood without analysing the roles and interests of actors in poverty reduction programmes. This is because poverty is a social-political issue whose reduction is negotiated among actors. The roles of these actors influence the choice of programmes that affect the lives of the poor. Thus, analysing these roles is critical in understanding poverty situations.

One of the key groups of actors in poverty reduction is nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). They have over time, purportedly created alternative models of social change, increased inclusion of the poor and

empowered communities. However, while NGO participation in official poverty reduction programmes has had some incremental success (Piron and Norton 2004), NGOs are largely said to have limited impact on policy and practice and ultimately on the lives of the poor (Court et al. 2006). This is because NGO participation is seen increasingly as consensual with the dominant poverty reduction agenda, thus unable to challenge systems that perpetuate poverty as well as discrimination (Molenaers and Renard 2006; Bebbington et al. 2007). In addition, there is increasing consensus that NGOs are now at a crossroads between working as alternatives to the main-stream development and embracing it (DENIVA 2006). Further, sugges-tions abound that there is a significant discrepancy between their mission and actual practices (Fowler 2005a). Literature shows contradictions in the discussion on NGOs' added value. However, does it mean that NGOs are useless to the poverty reduction agenda? Do the roles and interests of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes implicitly perpetuate exclusionary ele-ments?

Attempts to address these questions, directly or indirectly, resulted in a series of criticisms of the roles of NGOs. Some argue NGOs impose them-selves as representatives of the poor, yet work for the survival of the indi-viduals that form or run them (Dijkzeul 2006). They are also seen to work as agents of donors (Hearn 2007), providing an avenue for donors and gov-ernment to exercise their own agendas (Howell and Pearce 2001). Further-more, because NGOs struggle to secure funding for growth and institutional survival (Fowler 2005b; Edwards 2007), they have built-in limitations that prevent them from providing convincing alternative models of social change (Bebbington et al. 2007). These criticisms lay down some of the explana-tions as to why NGOs participate in poverty reduction programmes that may not benefit the poor.

Nevertheless, could there be other reasons why NGOs continue to en-gage in these programmes? The present research analyses why NGOs par-ticipate in official[1] poverty reduction programmes amidst growing knowl-edge and evidence that these programmes may not benefit the poor. It also analyses the mechanisms of social exclusion of the poor in these pro-grammes. The study uses the Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) formulation process and the implementation of the National Agri-

cultural Advisory Services (NAADS) as a medium to understand the roles and interests of NGOs.

Section 1.2 presents a brief background to the study problem and 1.3 highlights the context for Ugandan poverty reduction. Section 1.4 presents the problem under investigation. Section 1.5 elaborates the study objectives. Justification and operationalisation of the key concepts and analytical framework occurs in section 1.6. From the discussions, research questions are developed and presented in section 1.7. Section 1.8 gives details of the methods used in data collection and analysis. Section 1.9 presents the limitations of the study and 1.10 states the organisation of the thesis.

1.2   Background to the Study

Since the late 1990s, donors and recipient countries (Renard and Molenaers 2003: 7) recognised poverty reduction as a top priority. This led directly to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) introduced at that time, which were designed to rectify the flaws of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Dewatcher 2005: 5), as well as to overcome the ineffectiveness of foreign aid. Additionally, they meant to address non-income aspects of poverty, as poverty was increasingly conceptualised as more than income-related and there were calls for adjustment with a human face (Alonso 2002). While the SAPs were criticised for being externally driven, focusing on macroeconomic growth and stability, the PRSPs were considered home grown and focused on pro-poor growth or growth that would reduce both social and income inequality and improve the living conditions of the poor population in absolute terms (Ansoms 2007:10).

The PRSPs emphasise the use of participatory approaches as well as the participation of many actors, including the World Bank, International Monitory Fund, United Nations agencies, the Group of Eight (G8) and other international bodies with established vertical linkages to governments in developing countries and NGOs. Most donors link their aid policies to the PRSP initiative (Cling et al. 2002:2). There is a strong view that everyone including the poor stands to gain if NGOs work together with government in such official poverty reduction programmes (Alonso 2002). This is because of the dominant view of PRSPs as a radical endeavour to focus policymaking on poverty. Thus in addition to the external forces of donors, the

assumption was that NGOs would facilitate the revolution from below. This was because of the view that NGOs are essential in organising marginalised communities to take action and ensure their freedoms (Gaventa 2005: 7). Even before the PRSPs, NGOs were a major vehicle for social change. Some regarded them as 'efficient and innovative in service delivery, and driven by moral concerns and solidarity' (Dijkzeul 2006: 1137). Thus, NGO involvement was good because it countered the inefficiencies of government and addressed the harsh effects of economic policies. Although there are indications that the enthusiasm and interests in NGOs is decreasing (Dijkzeul 2006), NGOs remain the preferred recipients and implementers of development assistance from the international donor community. NGOs, either through their direct programmes or through government, still access funding on behalf of the poor. As Riddell (2007:2) noted, in 2005, USD$ 100bn trickled down to poor countries for poverty reduction, much of it through NGOs. However, it is unclear whether the current practice, with the participation of several actors in PRSPs and particularly NGOs, actually benefits the poor.

Although PRSPs were introduced as a new approach to development aid, to reflect increased recognition of the importance of participation and recognition of poverty as multidimensional, PRSPs still hold on to economic growth as an effective means of poverty reduction. The PRSPs objective is to reach a level of economic growth that will produce maximum poverty reduction (Cabezas et al. 2005:11), and their focus on economic growth has made their performance unsatisfactory. As a result, PRSPs have been called (Cling et al. 2002: 1-15) 'old wine in new bottles' because of their strong resemblance to the old SAPs in content, formulation and ideological orientation. As with SAPS, they do not explain the linkage between economic growth and inequality. The evaluation studies of PRSPs in Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua show that PRSPs emphasise economic growth through enhanced competitiveness; thereby making the idea of pro-poor growth an illusion. They promise rural development, land distribution and property rights, but in practice, incentives are restricted to export farming and there is lack of land distribution. Thus, they continue to exclude the poor from gains that would come with such policies (Cabezas et al. 2005: 17).

The experience of PRSPs in Africa is diverse, but points to their inability to improve the lives of the poor. For instance in Rwanda, the PRSP implementation of 2002-2007 was associated with GDP growth averaging five per cent lower than the seven per cent growth of 1998-2002. The number of poor increased from 4.82 in 2001 to 5.38 million in 2005 (JSAN 2008: 2-3). In Benin, 'economic performance was weaker than envisaged and gains in poverty reduction remained limited' (JSANa 2007: 2), despite the PRSPs. Senegal faced a similar situation and while the Kenyan economy grew by three per cent in 2003 increasing to 5.8 per cent in 2005, this was accompanied by high gender and regional inequalities in accessing social services (JSANb 2007: 3-7). Thus, even Kenya's impressive economic growth did not translate into reduced inequalities and improved conditions for those living in absolute poverty (see Vos and Komives 2005: 18-19).

The increasing realisation that PRSPs may not benefit the poor leads to questioning the roles of their key players and more specifically that of NGOs in poverty reduction. Does the participation of NGOs in PRSP processes increase opportunities for the poor to benefit from the programmes? Who is perpetrating these deprivations upon the poor and how? Although NGOs occupied space at the poverty reduction, policymaking tables their participation is not the same as that of the poor. One argument states that to understand how the poor can benefit from poverty reduction programmes, requires analysing the space available for the poor to participate (Engberg-Pedersen and Webster 2002). As Piron and Evas (2004: 25) caution, it is not appropriate to consider NGO participation as 'a substitute for citizen participation.' This is because the NGOs may start acting as 'development brokers' (asking for rent) or as 'fronts' for the administration (Cling et al. 2002: 10).

Although NGOs occupy a central role in the poverty reduction process of different countries, the poor can gain power if they experience political justice rather than mere politics of representation (Hickey and Bracking 2005: 851). That is, if the poor have the opportunity to drive their own poverty reduction agenda. This shift in power implies working on the current exclusionary socioeconomic, political order towards the desired social change (Hickey and Bracking 2005: 851; Mitlin et al. 2007: 1701). While it is true that a new social order where the poor are in control is desirable, in

reality such a transformation involves several actors. Poverty reduction is subject to negotiation and is a result of ongoing relations within the broader framework of the roles of government, international donors, NGOs and the poor. Therefore, further analysis of the roles of NGOs and their interests would help capture mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion of the poor in programmes intended for them.

Thus, having acknowledged the current global poverty reduction agendas and practices, this thesis focuses on Uganda as a case in point.

1.3   Ugandan Context

Uganda is a relevant case for this poverty and NGO study for several reasons. First, long before the PRSPs, Uganda had significant economic growth of six per cent per year (Deininger and Okidi 2003: 489). Since 2002, the economic growth rate has been increasing at an average of 7.9 per cent (MoFPED 2008: 5). Compared to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, Uganda has performed better, thus it is described as a showcase of potential gains from the neoliberal economic reform agenda (Hickey 2003: 7). Second, since the early 1990s, the number of people living below the poverty line decreased, from 56 per cent in 1992/3 to 44 per cent in 1996/7 and to 35 per cent in 1999/2000 (Ellis and Freeman 2004: 6). The human development index improved from 0.449 in 2002 to 0.4888 in 2003. The human development index would have been much higher had it not been for the rise in the incidence of income poverty (UNDP 2005: 5).

However, trends reversed with the percentage of people living in income poverty increasing from 33.5 per cent in 2000 to 38.8 per cent in 2003. Although the current poverty figures indicate a positive decline in the income poverty rate, from 38 per cent in 2003 to 31 per cent in 2006, income alone is not an adequate measure of poverty reduction. For instance, 38.5 per cent of the population in Uganda will not survive beyond the age of 40; about 40 per cent of the people lack access to improved water and 23 per cent of children are underweight (UNDP 2008). In addition, there is a contradictory decline in the contribution of the agriculture sector, from 51 per cent in 1991 to 34 per cent in 2006, yet 70 per cent of the population draws their livelihood from agriculture (UNDP 2007: 48). This may in part explain why inequality has been increasing since 1997, with the Gini coefficient

measure rising from 0.35 in 1997/8, to 0.39 in 2000 and to 0.43 in 2003 with a marginal decline from 0.428 in 2003 to 0.408 in 2006 (UBOS 2006). In addition, 20 per cent of the population comprises the chronically poor who have not benefited from government welfare opportunities (Okidi and Mckay 2003: 7). Poverty is also about social deprivation. The poor still experience insecurity, poor quality education and receive fewer public services compared to other groups (MoFPED 2004: xvi). Despite Uganda being regarded as one of the rapidly growing economies, the World Bank acknowledged that 'Uganda is failing to close the gap on richer countries in per capita terms, and is falling behind other rapid growth economies' and 'the pace of poverty and inequality has widened' (Nyamugasira 2007: 1). The increasing income and social inequalities amidst steady economic growth shows that there are other factors, which thwart poverty reduction. The question to ask is what are the factors and processes of exclusion of the poor n Uganda (who, what, how and why exclusion takes place)? How does this relate to PRSPs and NGOs?

Uganda is the first country to develop a poverty-reduction action plan—known worldwide as the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP)—started in 1997. The aim of the PEAP was to reduce poverty from 44 per cent to ten per cent by 2017 (Ssewakiryanga 2005: 1). The goal of the PEAP was to redistribute growth and eventually eradicate poverty. The World Bank later modified and globalised it as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. Compared to the SAPs, the Poverty Eradication Action Plan/Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PEAP/PRSP) underwent formulation, revision (2000 and 2004) and implementation through collective forces between different actors. These actors include the government and donors such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and NGOs (national and international). Today, Uganda has about 7000 NGOs increasingly involved in policy advocacy. The NGOs are involved in participatory poverty assessments, policy formulation debates, monitoring the implementation and in actual delivery of poverty reduction programmes through subcontracting.

There have been a number of studies regarding the Uganda PEAP/PRSPs process. The analysis of PRSPs has mainly focused on poverty and programme-related variables rather than on the objectives of different actors, which inevitably influences the results of poverty programmes. For instance,

McGee et al. (2002) assessed participation in PRSPs among ten countries and suggests that Uganda presented one of the most comprehensive and country-owned participatory PRS processes where both government and NGOs were ready to enter a constructive dialogue. While Uganda is often hailed as one of the best PRSP performers, Canagarajah and Van Diesen (2006: 647-67) found that Uganda' PRSP performance in relation to their original principles of country ownership, partnership, long-term outlook and comprehensiveness were largely disappointing. They suggest that PRSPs did not enhance accountability, flexibility in resource allocation to meet local emerging issues and made participation an end in itself rather than a means to increase ownership. Piron and Evans (2004: 34) studied the implication of the kind of aid relationship promoted by PRSPs. Their study concluded that 'pro-poor change is possible but it is largely incremental.' It also suggested that donors still found it a challenge to reconcile PRSP areas traditionally unrelated to their funding preferences and yet remain national development priorities. Piron and Evans also suggest that NGOs had incremental results on PRS process and content. Although Piron and Evas focused on donor-government relations, the findings are relevant in understanding the context under which the NGOs operate. These studies signal a mixed conclusion about the relationships of actors within PEAP but do not fully explain the interests served by the tripartite engagement between government, donors and NGOs, leading to two important questions. What role do NGOs play in PRSPs? How have the poor been included or excluded in these programmes?

1.4   Statement of the Research Problem

Several studies on poverty and poverty reduction point to contradictory roles of NGOs in the mainstream development agenda (Mitlin et al. 2007; Court et al. 2006; Hickey and Bracking 2005; Piron and Norton 2004; Renard and Molenaers 2003). While some show that NGO participation added some value to the poverty reduction agenda (Larok 2005; McGee et al. 2002; Gariyo 2002), others criticise NGOs for maintaining the poor's status quo or worsening their situation (Bebbington et al. 2007; Edwards 2007; Molenaers and Renard 2006; DENIVA 2006; Piron and Norton 2004). These authors highlight varied challenges of NGO participation es-

pecially the *ad hoc* and consensual nature of participation. Others accuse NGOs of trading on the fate of the poor (Hearn 2007; Amutabi 2006; Chabal and Daloz 1999). Overall, the literature is grim about the roles and interests of NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes that may not benefit the poor. The present study attempts to analyse the roles of NGOs and their interests in poverty reduction programmes and to draw insights into mechanisms of exclusion of the poor.

1.5   Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the roles and interests of NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes in order, first, to analyse why NGOs participate in an official poverty reduction agenda given the knowledge that these programmes may not benefit the poor. Second, to analyse the mechanisms by which the poor are included in or excluded from official poverty reduction programmes.

NGOs engage in official poverty reduction programmes in Uganda despite the contradictory trends of income poverty as well as the increasing inequalities in the country as seen in section 1.3. The question is why NGOs want to be involved in poverty reduction programmes amidst evidence that these programmes are not working for the poor. Why do NGOs not question this paradox and its implication, as a way to improve the situation for the poor? The focus of this study is on the roles and interests of NGOs in the Poverty Reduction Strategy design process and in the NAADS implementation process. The researcher is aware of the roles of NGOs in the development process. NGOs are involved in democratisation of nations (Dagnino 2007), the new security agenda (Fowler 2007) and complementing government services as alternative actors, but this thesis is restricted to the roles and interests of NGOs within official poverty reduction programmes.

The study contributes significantly to the understanding of poverty reduction as a socio-political issue that is highly characterised by political choices among actors. It focuses on relational factors of the actors in the programme, as relationships are important in explaining certain trends in development not only on national, but also local levels. More so, it shows that there is a gap between NGOs and the people. This is because NGOs

engage as technocrats rather than as change agents thereby condoning social exclusion of the poor in poverty reduction programmes. The study shows that understanding of the roles of NGOs needs to reflect on the normative agenda of NGOs as well as their institutional imperatives and the ongoing tensions and struggles for wielding power. It shows a dilemma of incorporating NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes, which created tension and frustration among several actors because they could not achieve their goals. Given the political context of Uganda, the thesis concludes by raising further questions as to whether NGOs in Uganda are playing NGOism or other politics.

1.6   Research Concepts and Analytical Framework

In this study, the poor are those people deprived of the opportunity to participate in and benefit from poverty reduction programmes intended for them. This deprivation either can happen through including the poor in programmes that do not meet their needs or by not integrating them into programmes that meet their needs. Conceptually, the study focuses on NGO roles and interests in poverty reduction.

NGO roles and interests

NGOs are commonly defined as 'independent development actors existing apart of governments and corporations, operating on non-profit or for profit basis, with emphasis on some degree of voluntary involvement and pursues a mandate of providing development services, undertaking community development work or advocating on development issues' (Michael 2004: 3). This definition means NGOs embrace a number of types of organisations including international, national, community-based, religious, advocacy and service delivery. NGOs also engage in multiple roles, utilise various approaches and interact with several actors making it difficult to differentiate them. This study considers an NGO an intermediary, membership or non-membership, non-profit organisation, often utilising external funding to offer services and or advocacy for social change. The focus is on those NGOs involved in the formulation of PRSPs and subcontracting NAADS delivery in Uganda.

Ian Gary (1996) gives useful categories of NGOs based on their level of operation and funding. In it, the first type is the community-based organisation—these are small, intimate organisations run by members and relying on locally generated resources. The second comprises the intermediary service NGOs—with paid staff providing social services to individuals or community-based organisations. The third is the intermediary advocacy NGOs—these are the NGOs involved in policy advocacy. The fourth type is the international relief and development organisation, with a large professional staff, huge budgets and offices in many countries. Examples of such NGOs include Oxfam and CARE; they engage in offering social services and influencing national policies. Gary's categorisation of NGOs provides a context for understanding the characteristics of NGOs that participate in poverty reduction programmes. It is important to note that the second group, the intermediary service NGOs, receive their funding from northern donor organisations or governments. Since northern and southern NGOs often participate in policy debates regardless of their origin, this thesis assumes that they play similar roles irrespective of their differences. This thesis employs intermediary NGOs because international financial institutions chose them particularly among other actors to spearhead the poverty reduction agenda. Although some of the NGOs are local, they receive external funds. Such funding influences their operations and relationships with other actors.

Beneath the complexities in definitions and categorisations, there is a normative assumption that NGOs still mediate between governments and citizens and grease development processes for social change. Normatively, NGOs serve two broad objectives: empowerment and good governance (Lister and Nyamugasira 2003: 1). These objectives translate into relief, welfare service delivery, education, training and policy influence activities the NGOs initiate themselves or initiated by their donors or governments. Such roles are not static: NGOs can adopt different roles and some roles become more apparent at specific times than others are (as seen in the second chapter of this thesis). As seen in figure 1.1, the official poverty reduction agenda has ascribed varying roles to NGOs including participating in policy formulation at the national level, advocating pro-poor issues and demanding accountability, often through NGO networks (Brock et al. 2002) and subcon-

tracting service delivery as public contractors. Thus, NGOs are both welfare service providers and advocates.

However, the roles of NGOs are changing and so are their interests, and there is 'a general vague feeling that NGOs are no longer what they used to be' (Ondine and Michael 2001: 1). Implicitly, the agenda pursued by NGOs may not be limited to activities fitting neatly within the normative agenda. Some NGOs, especially in Africa, the story goes, do not to run their own businesses but rather run that of governments and or donors (Amutabi 2006) who determine what they can and cannot do (Hearn 2007). As Edwards (2007) argues that in addition to their development imperatives, NGOs also serve their institutional imperatives. The roles and interests of NGOs specifically in poverty reduction programmes are complex and intertwined with those of the government and donors (see figure 1.1). To agree with DeMars (2005: 32), the common theoretical distinctions may not determine NGOs' roles but rather local struggles to capture, deploy against others and neutralise the political impact to their work. However, the policy-oriented discourse often ignores this. It is therefore pertinent to question the NGO agenda within PRSPs, to identify and understand any forces in this area that thwart poverty reduction processes and objectives.

Poverty reduction and social exclusion

Different perspectives on poverty dictate the kind of policies/programmes put in place to address it. For example, it is possible to regard poverty as the individuals or households lack of income for consumption (UN 2005: 14). The solution to that kind of poverty is to increase economic growth that will trickle down, reduce state intervention to welfare activities and provide short-term employment to individuals. The advantage of this view is that those working within it provide measurable and comparable income data across counties. However, it gives a false impression that there is a universal poverty line and does not consider the undemocratic functioning of markets, which can increase peoples' vulnerability (Laderchi et al. 2003: 21). Poverty is more than income; it includes capability deprivation, and income can be seen simply as a means to enrich capabilities (Sen 2000). With this view in mind, the solution to poverty is to expand human capabilities such as knowledge, health and political freedom. However, while capability fail-

ure does lead to poverty, the capability model does not explain the initial deprivation of these capabilities that the poor experience. It may be, as argued by Chambers (1997) that poverty is a situation in which people do not participate in their development agenda (see also Laderchi et al. 2003: 23). With participation in PRSPs mainstreamed, less attention now goes to how the competing needs and interests of those who participate may influence the ability of PRSPs to cause the desired social change. Perhaps the best way to examine this is by using another useful perspective on poverty, one in which poverty is seen as a product of social exclusion.

Social exclusion

From this perspective, poverty is either a state of affair or a process of deprivation because of both individual and social structural forces (Wuyts 2004). Poverty is a product of social exclusion. The major focus is on distributional issues and outcomes rather than on the structural causes of social exclusion. This is because poverty reduction is a social-political process that involves numerous actors[2] whose roles and interests influence the inclusion or exclusion of the poor. The concept of social exclusion helps to focus on causal processes of becoming poor rooted in social relations (Saunders 2003: 6; Wuyts 2004: 14), on distributional issues pointing to the excluder, excluded, as well as outcomes (Laderchi 2003: 21). Social exclusion highlights the relational, process-oriented perspectives of deprivation. This concept has been criticised for its inability to define poverty or provide clear measurements for it and therefore makes it difficult to determine the extent or incidence of poverty. However, this limitation notwithstanding, the concept offers a method of examining which of the many needs of poor people can integrate well into poverty reduction policies, ways to include the poor in decision-making and how to shift power relations in favour of the poor. Furthermore, looking at poverty as social exclusion helps to understand institutions that accommodate various acts of exclusion and whether and how NGOs have confronted them. Methodologically, it is difficult to understand the roles and interests of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes that seem not to benefit the poor unless one views poverty as a process of deprivation.

Social exclusion is the dialectical other of participation and empowerment. Participation is ideally a process through which power inequalities can

shift to benefit the poor. 'The subjects of empowerment are those who normally are, or have been excluded from such decision making.' (Wils (2001: 8). Thus, the social inclusion process supposedly increases empowerment. As elaborated in chapter 6, the PRSPs promise social inclusion of the poor (Munck 2005: 35) and adopt participatory approaches to achieve this. The PRSPs brought on board other actors, especially NGOs, to increase inclusiveness of the poor. This study suggests the need to assess such NGO participation and interests in PRSPs to understand whom, and what is included or excluded, as well as the outcomes in terms of shifting power relations.

Thus, the analytical framework (figure 1.1) shows that the goals of reducing poverty, including the poor and rebalancing unequal power relations are noble causes, but they need the cooperation of many actors, all with intrinsically linked roles and interests.

Figure 1.1
Actors, role and interests in poverty reduction
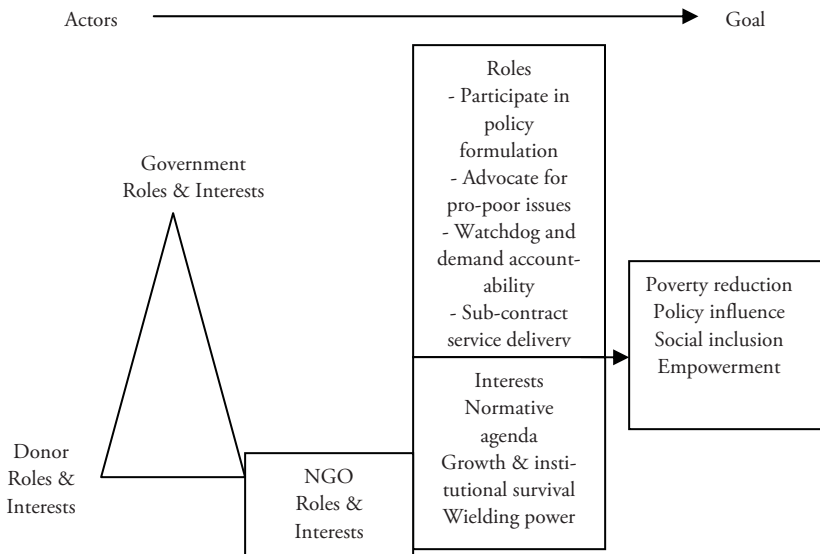
Source: The author for purposes of analysis

Different assumptions inform the different actors within the political economy of poverty reduction as discussed in chapter 2. Specifically NGOs are expected to 1) broaden the ownership of poverty reduction plans and processes; 2) defend the interests of the poor and increase pro-poor effectiveness; and 3) hold governments accountable to their population by holding them to their promises (Renard and Molenaers 2003: 8). The achievement of these outputs would influence poverty reduction policies and increase inclusiveness and empowerment of the poor, thus leading to poverty reduction. There is a general expectation that achievement will occur in cooperation with government and donors. International cooperation is seen as key to poverty reduction with funding as the lubricating medium. Funding nourishes actors, actions and interests and whether it stops the focus on poverty reduction or even improves, it remains an issue for debate.

The framework shows that NGOs operate between government and donors. Power relationships between actors hold it all together. Structurally this is what Igoe and Kelsall (2005) call 'between the rock and a hard place' because it presents power asymmetries between NGOs and other actors. In this case, the Ugandan government through the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, with support from donors especially the World Bank, prepares poverty reduction policies. Worldwide, NGOs assume four major roles participating in policy formulation sessions to bring out pro-poor policies, research and advocacy to make the voices of the poor heard, monitor policy implementation to exert pressure on government and subcontract delivery of public services. NGOs struggle to perform their ascribed roles as global political economy actors. However, less attention currently goes to NGOs roles and interests in influencing policies and practices. This issue comes out more fully in chapter 4 with a discussion of the realities of NGO participation in Uganda.

NGO interests inform their roles in PRSPs, which may not be representative of poor people's interests. These interests shape what NGOs eventually do, and can range from empowering communities (something consistent with their normative agenda), to accessing funding for their own growth and institutional survival and wielding power in the eyes of other members of the 'civilized world' within which they operate. As explained in chapter 2, the interests of NGOs often intertwine with those of donors and

sometimes of governments. Often the interaction of these actors may involve struggles and conflicts, negotiations and accommodations over multiple agendas and interests.

Therefore, it is impossible to explain NGO activities around poverty reduction separate from other actors' interests: the choices made regarding their interests influence poverty reduction trends and outcomes. The fact that NGOs participate in programmes that may not benefit the poor relates to the intricate relationship with the activities and interests of donors and governments driven by development funding for the poverty reduction agenda, as further examined in the thesis. The conceptual discussions in this chapter show that poverty and its reduction are a concern of several actors who engage with numerous interests. This realisation enables the thesis to address the following research questions.

1.7   Research Questions

The major research question: Why do NGOs participate in official poverty reduction programmes amidst growing knowledge and evidence that these programmes may not benefit the poor? Specifically the research considers:

- How the roles and interests of NGOs shaped the poverty reduction policy design and its content;
- How NGOs confronted and engaged the mechanisms of exclusion of the poor in poverty reduction programmes; and
- Who the socio-political and economic actors (including government) that thwart poverty reduction programmes are, and how NGOs have confronted them.

1.8   Research Approach and Data Collection

This study adopted a qualitative design to analyse why NGOs participate in poverty reduction programmes amidst growing evidence that these programmes may not benefit the poor. The researcher collected and analysed primary and secondary data on the roles and interests of NGOs and the mechanisms of social exclusion of the poor in official poverty reduction programmes. Methodologically, an explanatory design with a sociological and political science inclination was adopted to answer the how and why ques-

tions of the study and develop themes for analysis. The research involved extensive secondary research to explore relevant literature, identify knowledge gaps, operationalise research variables and set research boundaries, design sampling procedures and research tools.

Through extensive fieldwork, the researcher collected primary research data from different cases regarding the dependent variable (i.e. poverty reduction in terms of social inclusion and exclusion and empowerment of the poor) and the independent variables (i.e. NGO roles and interests) (see figure 1.1). This enabled the researcher to study different cases in their local setting. The study adopts Tellis' (1997) definition of a case as 'a system of actions undertaken by different actors.' Thus, data collection came from the intermediary NGOs and other actors deemed relevant for the study using various qualitative research methods. The analytical cases included the activities, strategies, assumptions and struggles of the NGOs reflected in the variables of the study. Collecting data regarding the same study variables at different times, places and with different participants including NGO employees, farmers, government officials and donors makes this a cross-sectional study. The research took place in three main phases: secondary research (review of relevant literature), primary research (fieldwork and analysis) and writing of the thesis. During the three phases, a number of papers[3] were developed and presented at different fora both in Uganda, the fieldwork location, and in The Hague. These papers highlight the key themes of the thesis and form a foundation for chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Study sample and sample characteristics

In a study of the roles of NGOs and interests in official poverty reduction programmes, the researcher relied on different categories of informants from NGOs, government, donors and communities that engage in poverty reduction policy formulation processes and the implementation of the NAADS programme. This allowed for defining the social groups in advance, leading to a sample structure of four fields: NGOs, government, donors and communities. As Flick (2002: 64) suggests, with known fields, the researcher can employ theoretical sampling to determine specific cases to participate in the study. Theoretical sampling emphasises selection of the cases 'according to the relevance of the cases instead of their representativeness' (Ibid: 66). It

helps to capture the principal themes and patterns (Patton 1990: 172; Glaser and Strauss 1967: 62) by selecting the units of sample based on certain characteristics that the researcher decides would serve the purpose of the study.

This study began with an exploratory desk study to understand the Ugandan PRSPs and NAADS processes and map out the key players. Thereafter, the research employs purposive sampling to select the specific, relevant cases to answer the research question. The number of cases also depended on the time and resources available for fieldwork.

NGOs: These included three advocacy NGOs, and two service-delivery NGOs. The advocacy NGOs were the Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA)[4], the Uganda NGO Forum[5] and Oxfam (an International NGO). Selection of the two NGO networks was because of their deep involvement in PRSP processes and being the biggest NGO networks in the country. Oxfam was later included because of the expected insights from their experience as a lead organisation in the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Exercise of 1990-early 2000 and as participants in the PEAP processes since 1997. The service delivery NGOs were the Africa 2000 Network (A2N)[6] and Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO)[7]. These NGOs worked with NAADS for more than three years, operating in more than one district. The researcher envisioned that selecting regional NGOs would present an opportunity for a comparison of NGO strategies in NAADS programmes in different districts. Although these NGOs presented appropriate cases to study, the roles and interests of NGOs and the selection of those with a regional focus did not bring out the much-anticipated differences because they implemented a standardised programme with specific guidelines.

Donors: These included the World Bank, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The World Bank was selected because of its role in the PRSPs. DFID was chosen because it has a programme on civil society organisation strengthening and funds some of the NGOs that were included in the study. IFAD was included because it mainly funds agricultural activities including NAADS.

Government: included the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), seven NAADS officials and six other local government officials. The researcher selected the MoFPED because of its strategic position in charge of poverty reduction programmes. Further, the researcher selected the MAAIF because it is responsible for policy and implementation of NAADS programmes. Selection of the NAADS secretariat, district production and NAADS officials was because they are responsible for NAADS implementation. Later, the community development officials were included because the group formation and strengthening role currently undertaken by NGOs in the NAADS programmes falls within their jurisdiction.

The Community: Selection of three farmer leaders and two non-NAADS farmer groups was intentional. However, the eight (8) NAADS farmer groups came from a random selection from the operational sites of the selected service delivery NGOs. This is because the emphasis was not on spatial selection but rather on the NGO as the unit of analysis. Thus, the researcher chose three districts, namely Tororo, Kabale and Luwero. In order to select the sub-counties, parishes and farmer groups, the researcher used a multi-staged random sampling. The process selected two parishes per sub-county and two farmer groups from each parish. The lists of sub-counties, parishes and groups per parish used by NGOs provided the sampling frames for selecting the farmer groups. The random sampling gave equal chances to groups in a sub-county to participate in the study.

The entire sample comprised 13 NGO representatives (i.e. four field officers, nine NGO managers), three donor representatives, 15 government officials (i.e. one MoFPED official, one MAAIF official, eight NAADS officials, two production officials and three community development officials) and three farmer leaders; eight NAADS farmer groups (comprising 77 men and 169 women) and two groups of non-NAADS farmers comprised of 13 participants.

Fieldwork and data collection

Fieldwork took 15 months to complete and occurred in three phases: March-July 2006, November 2006-April 2007 and July 2007-September 2007. The purpose behind the phased fieldwork was to enable the researcher

to combine analysis and data collection. Empirical data came from both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data collection included visiting local Ugandan libraries (DENIVA Library, NAADS Library, Centre for Basic Research, National Documentation Centre). Secondary research was useful in understanding the political economy of NGOs in Africa, the history of the NGO sector in Uganda, the PRSP processes and the NAADS policy. This guided the selection of cases for the primary data collection. The primary research was qualitative, conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews using interview guides and group interviews/discussions.

Semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews took place with 34 respondents including NGO network officials[8], donor representatives[9], international NGO representatives[10], service delivery NGO representatives[11], NAADS officials[12], other government officials[13] and farmer leaders[14]. While this method has a disadvantage of excluding some unknown categories of the population, it was valuable for gathering information on NGO roles, interests, the empowerment process of the poor and their inclusion in PRSPs and NAADS programmes. The key strategy was to confront interviewees with new information and opinions obtained from the previous interviews. Thus, the interviews began with advocacy NGOs in Kampala and the NAADS secretariat. The purpose of this was to further the researcher's understanding of the PRSP processes, the NAADS policy and to tease out the role of NGOs. Fieldwork in Kabale and Tororo districts followed, conducting interviews with the NGOs, NAADS officials, farmer leaders and other district officials. The second round of interviews took place with the same categories of respondents in Luwero district. Other interviewees included international NGO officials, NGO networks, service delivery officials and donor representatives. Although raising specific issues with respondents depending on their category, generally interviews concentrated on collecting data on NGO participation in poverty reduction programmes, how they confronted exclusionary elements in these programmes and the reasons for their continued participation. The aim of discussions with donors was triangulating the claim from NGOs that donors control the PRSPs and understanding their own perspectives on the roles of NGOs. Then, there was the third round of interviews, which included repeat interviews with one of the NGO network officials and one donor official to clarify

some issues from the previous interviews. It also included interviews with employees at the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) aimed at analysing the relationship between the Ministry and NAADS to understand fully the structural conflicts at the district level.

One of the advantages of semi-structured interviews is that the interviewee is more likely to express views in a relatively open interview situation than in a standardised questionnaire (Flick 200: 74). However, at one point during the fieldwork, a manager of an NGO, when asked why there were a number of gaps in their interaction with farmers stated that these were academic questions he would not want to answer. He particularly wanted to know which staff member was telling the researcher what. He also blamed what was not going well on government failures, corruption and mismanagement. The researcher suspected his answers were an attempt to protect the image of his organisation. This dilemma was resolved in two ways. First, the researcher had a duty to protect the identity of the informants and to minimise any risk that they might suffer due to participation in this study. Therefore, the researcher explained that it was unethical to reveal the names of respondents. Second, in order to continue the interview, the researcher chose to listen to his accusations directed towards the government; then, was able to interrupt him frequently by asking him to explain the role of his NGO in such situations. This enabled him to open up and give more information.

Another method used to collect data was group interviews/ discussions held with eight NAAD farmer groups and two non-NAAD farmer groups. Group leaders mobilised the groups one week before holding discussions. Groups ranging from six-to-ten farmers spent one hour delving deeper into their own experiences participating in NAADS programmes, their interactions with NGOs as service providers and their ability to influence programme decisions. The discussions with non-NAADS farmers focused on examining why they were not working with NAADS and their views on successes and failures of the programme. The researcher did not aggregate these groups in terms of class, gender, age or tribe, nor try to impose focus; at the same time, capturing data on the social characteristics of the group. The groups were of mixed gender, a group was naturally organised where members had already shared common activities. The researcher ensured that

members participated in the discussion through probing, open-ended questions. Group discussions showed how farmers talk about issues with their peers and help each other to remember certain events. It was possible to gain consensus on certain issues and crosscheck the validity with group members, which would have been impossible without group interaction. However, some groups did not exist in Kabale district. There were efforts made to re-sample, but together with the guide after three attempts, the researcher could not locate the physical address of some NAADS groups. Thus, the study settled on the eight existing groups, since the information gathered adequately answered the research questions. One challenge with group discussions was the inability to use the local language in one of the districts (in Tororo, the local language is Japadhola), which necessitated the use of a translator. This could have limited participant interaction with the researcher. However, two methods solved the challenge. First, tape recording group interviews and second, someone conversant in Japadhola translated and transcribed the interviews.

Data management, processing and analysis

The preliminary data analysis occurred during fieldwork, following daily interview transcription. This was sandwiched with reflection breaks during fieldwork to enable the researcher to have a feel for the data, explore trends in the data, think through the methodological dilemmas and detect gaps for follow-up. The in-depth analysis began with data cleaning, which included editing all the research transcripts captured during interviews with various participants. Data coding followed. The principles of content analysis guided the coding and general data analysis. The process of data analysis involved analysing texts, images, expressions from both the literature review and interview recording, and interpreting them for their meaning in the context of this study. According to Verschuren and Doorewaard (1999: 133), content analysis has two stages: preparing the data using exact or rough categorisation and analysing the data through either qualitative or quantitative methods. This study utilised rough categorisation and qualitative analysis. The rough categorisation was useful in developing themes for analysis and establishing linkages between different themes. It proved useful to develop a code sheet with a range of themes. Data from interviews and

group discussions went on to paper using open categories from which to extract points of interest for different themes. From the code sheets, came the development of flow chart diagrams or, mind maps per theme. This was effective in establishing inter-linkages between different themes on the code sheets, and in capturing enough information in terms of direct quotations to include in the thesis.

The analytical framework as explained above centred on a political economy perspective of the current official poverty reduction programmes, largely informed by international aid funding dynamics and cooperation of actors to satisfy their interests. However, at the same time, there exist unequal power relationships among actors and funding becomes a lubricant for these relationships.

1.9   Study Limitations

This study considered NGO participation in the PRSP processes rather than the NGOs' own-initiated projects that focus on poverty. This is because the researcher's interest was on NGO participation in official poverty reduction programmes. Therefore, the results of this study may not adequately explain the roles and interests of NGOs in the entire development process of Uganda.

Second, the study is not concerned with measuring NGO failures and successes. It is a behavioural qualitative study focused on relational aspects to understand NGO roles and interests in poverty reduction and their implications for social inclusion of the poor.

Third, the study focuses on policy analysis. It looks at both policymaking and implementation processes and the role of NGOs therein. It thus does not analyse what the poor themselves are doing to change their situations.

Fourth, the study concerns intermediary NGOs; therefore, it may not explain what happens with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) or any other non-governmental organisations like professional groups of lawyers and teachers, whose work may have a direct relationship with the official poverty reduction programmes and exclusion of the poor.

1.10   Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis uses a political economy perspective and data from Uganda to show the reasons why NGOs participate in official poverty reduction programmes that may not benefit the poor. The study shows that NGOs have limited influence on poverty reduction policies, empowering the poor and increasing their inclusiveness because they positioned themselves as technocrats rather than change agents. NGO technocratic positioning may not shift the exclusionary socioeconomic and political power relations to benefit the poor unless their participation leads to collective action towards poverty reduction. Although NGOs remain important actors with a relevant normative agenda, their institutional imperatives and the ongoing tensions and struggles for wielding power also inform their participation. Incorporating NGOs in the official poverty agenda is frustrating and the current theories on NGOism may not adequately explain it.

This chapter provided the background to the study, the research problem, objectives and research questions. It elaborated on the research path and scope of the study. Chapter 2 explains the roles of NGOs in development, with specific reference to their roles in poverty. It explains how the roles of NGOs have been theorised and researched. It adopts a political economy perspective to explain the research findings further. Chapter 3 explains the history of the NGO sector in Uganda. It introduces the Ugandan PRSPs and the NAADS programme. It brings out the relationship between the NGOs and other actors especially donors and the government. Chapter 4 is concerned with NGO participation in PRSPs. It shows the discrepancy between the ascribed roles for NGOs with the current practices. Chapter 5 explains the roles of NGOs in NAADS implementation. It discusses the empowerment paradox of the poor in the programme. Chapter 6 analyses how the NGO technocratic position influences the social inclusion of the poor at policy formulation and implementation levels. In chapter 7, the three main reasons for normative agenda, alternative source of income and power struggles are analysed to ascertain the reasons why NGOs are engaged in official poverty reduction programmes that may not benefit the poor. Chapter 8 recapitulates the main findings and concludes with a reflection on the NGO sector in a broader political economy of Uganda.

Notes

1   The official poverty reduction programmes in this study means, programmes managed by the government rather than NGOs own initiated programmes or alternatives. The researcher is aware of the alternative programmes, but this study focuses on NGOs within government programmes.

2   Actors range from international bodies like the United Nations, World Bank/International Monetary Fund, bilateral and multilateral donor, transnational corporations; national institutions such as central and local governments, politicians and administrative staff; national civil society organisations (trade unions, international NGOs, advocacy NGOs and networks) to more local actors such as local elites and community-based organisations.

3   Several papers were developed and presented and they include:
   - A paper on the relevance of NGOs in Uganda presented at the National Development Policy Forum in Uganda on 14 June 2006.
   - A paper entitled 'The New Realism of NGOs in Uganda amidst Competition' presented at the research in progress seminar at ISS on 11 October 2006 and at the Uganda Policy Development Forum on 5 November 2006.
   - A paper on the Political Economy of NGOs presented to the ISS 2006/2007 Masters students undertaking the NGO Management and Civil Society Building course in the months of April-May 2007.
   - A paper on the Paradox of Empowerment was presented at the 6th International Conference for Consortium for International Management, Policy and Development held at Hotel African 19-22 June 2007 and at the Ceres/EADI Summer Schools 10 June 2008, Amsterdam.
   - A paper on 'The NGO Policy Influence: Realities of NGO Participation in Uganda', presented at the Development Dialogue on 5-6 June 2008.

4   DEVIVA was organised in 1988 and has a membership of 700 organisations as of April 2008. Its mission is 'to be a Network of Indigenous voluntary associations influencing poverty reduction and good governance processes and strategies through mobilising diverse experiences, knowledge and skills of Civil Society Organisations in Uganda onto a common platform of action.' Its major activities include networking and information sharing, self-understanding and capacity-building, and policy research and advocacy. DENIVA draws its funding from both bilateral and international NGOs such as The Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation, Danish International

Development Assistance, Action Aid, Logo Link, MS Uganda, and the Ford Foundation. DENIVA runs three broadly related components—Networking and Information Sharing, the Self Understanding and Capacity-building, and the Policy Research and Advocacy. The first two components are historical activities and the latter is a more recent activity. The specific activities under each of these three components differ with the funding. The organisation has been participating in PEAP processes since 1997. In addition, it monitors PEAP implementation in the sectors of education, conflict, agriculture and trade. Conducts research, publishes on those sectors and engages in policy advocacy on issues in those sectors. There are different relationships established with different donors, government departments and other NGOs, *http://www.deniva.or.ug*.

[5]   The NGO Forum is a network of both local and international NGOs and individual civil society members. It started in 1997 to bring together NGOs working in areas of advocacy and lobbying to engage effectively on public policies. It had 400 members as of December 2007. Its mission is to be a leading apex body and collective voice for civil society organisations operating in Uganda, to influence the policies, programmes and practices of government, bilateral and multilateral bodies, other development partners and the private sector effectively for equitable development through dialogue, partnership development, research, lobbying, advocacy, networking, information exchange, monitoring and evaluation. Its activities include poverty policy engagement, networking and capacity building for civil society organisations, research and information exchange, and creation of a vibrant learning, democratic organisation with predictable resource base. The organisation gets its funding from bilateral organisations and international NGOs such as DFID Uganda, Oxfam (GB), Veco-Uganda, Action Aid Uganda, WB, UNDP, European Union, World Learning Inc, Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network, and European Network on Debt and Development/ Economic Policy Empowerment Programme. The organisation led the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review, and it is the lead agency for the periodic revision of the national Poverty Eradication Action Plan. In addition, it is the lead coordinating agency for civil society organisations participation in the annual Government-Donor Consultative Group meeting, *http://www.ngoforum.or.ug/*.

[6]   The A2N-Uganda started in 1990 as a UNDP project and in January 2001, and registered as an independent Ugandan NGO. Its mission is to alleviate

poverty by supporting smallholder farmer groups to undertake initiatives geared towards livelihood improvement and natural resource regeneration and conservation. A2N activities include capacity-building for farmer groups, agriculture extension for food security and household income generation, low cost agricultural and processing technologies; agricultural research, enterprise development and marketing of farmers' produce; energy conservation; water harvesting; HIV/AIDS and health awareness; networking and information sharing. Funding comes from several bilateral and international NGOs such as the Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid, Christian Children's Fund, European Union, Food and Agriculture Organisation, GEF- Small Grants Programme (SGP), International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, Austrian Organisation for Development Cooperation, local governments in Uganda, MacArthur Foundation through the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, McKnight Foundation, Plan International Uganda, Rockefeller Foundation, UNDP, and DFID Crop Post Harvest Research Programme. A2N implemented NAADS as a subcontractor in 2001.

[7] VEDCO began in 1986 in response to the effects of military conflicts of 1980-1986 in Luweero district. It began as a self-help organisation, working with other relief organisations. Its mission is to empower small/medium holder farmers for food and nutrition security, agricultural trade and institutional development. Its major activities include food and nutrition security, documentation, communication and advocacy, Agricultural Trade Development, Institutional Development, gender mainstreaming, HIV/AIDS mainstreaming, the school project and environmental protection. VEDCO gets funding from both bilateral and international NGOs such as European Union, McKnight, Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation, Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, African Development Foundation, Farm Africa, The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Concern International, Plan International, Oxfam and European Development Fund. VEDCO implemented NAADS activities as a subcontractor in 2002, *http://www.vedcouganda.org/*.

[8] NGO Network Officials: Interviews aimed at understanding their participation in policy advocacy. Network officials were among the first respondents in the second phase of fieldwork. The researcher had a second interview with one official (ED-NGO4.1) to triangulate some of the issues that arose from the donor and international NGO interviews. Data collected broadly included

NGO roles and motives in PRSPs, their experiences on a discussion table, funding mechanisms of the NGO sector, perceptions of NGO networks towards the NGO sector and towards the subcontracting of NAADS activities.

9   Donor Officials: Interviews aimed at understanding funding for NGOs and its contribution to NGO behaviour and decisions. Interviews came after the first seven months of fieldwork with the understanding that NGO work and some forces that influence their behaviour including funding realities and forces that dictate its utilisation. DO2 was interviewed twice to clarify issues of competitive open tendering raised in the first interview. Data collected regarding donor policy focus, reason for funding NGOs, funding strategies, perception of roles and interests of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes and their own assessment of the NAADS programme and poverty situation in the country.

10   International NGOs Officials: These were among the last respondents interviewed. This was because originally they were not part of the design for this study. Data collected included their roles and experiences with PRSPs, their funding mechanisms, views regarding the donors' roles in poverty reduction, their roles in NAADS programmes and their relationships with local NGOs.

11   Service Delivery NGO Officials: Interviews with NGO officials aimed at understanding NGO roles and interests in implementation of the poverty reduction programmes. The researcher first held group discussions with farmers in one area. Then interviewed NGO extension workers and ended with the programme managers. This approach proved useful because discussions with farmers would then feed into discussions with NGO officials. Data collected broadly included their participation, their roles and motives in subcontracting NAADS activities, empowerment of farmers, their funding mechanisms and management of their organisations.

12   NAADS Officials: Interviews aimed at understanding NAADS design and implementation, to capture the views of NAADS officials on the roles of NGOs in the programme and understand the empowerment process of farmers. The national level interviews came before the district and sub-county interviews. The national level interviews helped the researcher understand that NGOs are more involved in Farmer Institutional Development than in Extension Service Delivery. This helped to adjust the original research tool to focus on capacity-building questions and eliminated questions on extension/advisory services. The local level interviews with NAADS officials in most cases were held after discussions with the farmer groups; however, before the farmer leaders. Data collected

broadly included the NAADS policy, farmer participation in decision-making, and the roles and interests of NGOs in the programme.

[13]   Other Government Officials: Interviews with MoFPED officials intended to understand the PRSP process and the government perspective on participation of NGOs. The interviews with the MAAIF officials aimed at analysing the relationship between the Ministry and NAADS. Interviews with District Production and Community Development officials intended to increase understanding of how NAADS relates to other government departments and their views on NGO participation in NAADS programmes.

[14]   Farmer Leaders: Interviews took place to triangulate the findings from the group discussions and interviews with NAADS officials at different levels. Of interest was their perception of NGO roles in NAADS, assessment of NAADS implementation processes and their own roles in empowering farmers.

Roles of NGOs in Poverty Reduction: An Exploration

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines current and historical theories and research pertaining to the roles of NGOs in poverty reduction. There is disagreement about the availability of specific theories to explain the roles of NGOs in poverty reduction because they often intertwine with those of other actors. Yet other scholars provide an analysis, claiming to unmask realities of NGO work. The roles of NGOs are not static; they can be self-initiated or ascribed and performed concurrently with some roles more pronounced at specific times than others are. NGOs' normative agenda remains that of social change although their roles are changing to accommodate demands of development approaches such as modernisation and development for security (Fowler 2007: 112). This chapter seeks to answer the following questions: What roles do NGOs play in poverty reduction? Under what assumptions do NGOs operate?

Available studies show a broadly held belief that NGOs perform one or more of three related poverty reduction roles. The first view is that NGOs are complementary actors, highly philanthropic, often bridging the gaps left by the government and the market (Tvedt 1998). The second view is rooted in liberal pluralistic thinking, which perceives NGOs as 'civic actors', substitutes of the government and part of civil society (Fowler 2000; Mitlin et al. 2007). A global political economy perspective, which treats NGOs as agents of donors and of their own agenda, informs the third view (Hanlon 1997; Amutabi 2006; Hearn 2007). Although the three broad categories reflect what NGOs do, it may be necessary to adopt the political economy perspective to examine the roles of NGOs further, amidst growing evidence that PRSPs may not benefit the poor. This chapter explores assumptions, activi-

ties and strategies of NGOs in the three broad perspectives highlighted above with an aim to describe and analyse the role of NGOs in poverty reduction. Chapter 2 presents arguments that while the normative agenda of NGOs remains the same, there may be increased linkages between their roles and their interests and changes in the global political economy. In analysing what NGOs do in poverty reduction programmes, there is also discussion of the roles and interests of other actors especially the government and donors. The reason for this is the sense that actors, through international cooperation and development funding either facilitate or constrain the work of NGOs (Bebbington et al. 2007: 4). The reasons behind these different actors' relational interactions are vital to understanding NGOs' roles within official poverty reduction strategies.

Section 2.2 focuses on discussing the roles of NGOs as complementary actors. Section 2.3 discusses NGOs as substitutes of the government while section 2.4 elaborates on NGO roles as agents of donors and their own personal agenda, while section 2.5 provides some concluding remarks.

2.2   NGOs as Complementary Actors to the Government

Generally, the perception of NGOs is that they play a complementary role in response to government and market failures to reach the poor. Tvedt (1998: 41) calls this the functionalist explanation of the roles of NGOs where they naturally respond to filling the gaps left by the two other actors. This is the dominant view of NGOs, as philanthropic actors, value-based and guided by altruism. This altruism is often reflected in NGO mission statements with concepts such as, we live to struggle for liberation, to talk for the voiceless, to care for the uncared for, and to improve livelihoods. For instance, Oxfam International's mission is 'to overcome poverty, injustices and suffering around the world.'[1] In this context, NGOs work as charities to do good acts. Salih (2002: 2), referring to Islamic NGOs maintains that, they are inspired to perform good deeds and guided by the voluntarism inherent in the Quran. Thus, the constant assumption of NGOs is that they look out for the poor and extend welfare and empowerment services to them.

However, this perspective portrays government negatively and maintains the image of NGOs as good. Since NGOs are socially constructed, they can

be either good or bad. Abdelrahman (2001: 54) notes that this perspective portrays NGOs as functionally efficient yet overlooks their weaknesses. Amutabi (2007: xxiv) argues that the NGO agenda in Africa is much more 'sinister and sweeping' than previous studies have shown. This is because NGOs have continued to add various development omissions under their 'philanthrocracy', continued to mirror the interests of their masters, causing cultural imperialism by attacking local traditions aggressively and some are corrupt, manipulative and inequitable in their operations. Although the philanthropic ideals still inform some NGO growth, work and their funding, the increasing failure to eliminate poverty leads to scepticism as to whether NGOs could lead to desired change. How do we explain the inequalities worldwide and the number of people living in absolute poverty amidst growing numbers of NGOs playing a complementary role?

In this complementary view, NGOs have concurrently undertaken service delivery and empowerment activities. Service delivery including relief work is an historical role of NGOs, since the post World War II period of the 1940s. NGOs provide key services like health, education, water supply, education and other development-oriented activities like micro-finance aimed at improving conditions of the poor. While Amutabi is critical about the role of NGOs in Africa, she too recognised that NGOs have made a positive contribution and their impact continues to be large.

> They have provided a place to feel at home for some, by providing meals and textbooks to school children…this has minimized malnutrition, improved attendance and raised test scores among nomadic pastoralists in northern Kenya. They have provided shelters to girls rescued from early marriages and battered women from abusive relationships (2006: xxx).

Similarly, Salih (2002: 1-7) noted that in sub-Saharan Africa, NGOs played a critical role in addressing persistent rural, agricultural and environmental crises, drought, humanitarian assistance, governance and economic issues. In southern Asia, NGOs like Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee play significant roles in micro-credit, education, training and policy advocacy. There is no exact figure of the numbers of poor served by NGOs and their location. However, Fowler (2005b: 18) estimates that NGOs reach roughly more than 20 per cent of the poor in the world.

Despite the well-reported success stories, the complementary role of NGOs has been criticised. Many argue that NGOs may not help the poor meet their needs. For instance, Fowler (2005b) refers to the service delivery activities of NGOs as 'overt' and 'employed to shield more critical intentions of civic mobilization.' Implicitly the limited civic energies towards social change may not help the poor to attain their preference. Moreover, some accuse NGOs of causing duplication of services rather than serving the deserving poor (Leopold 2001: 96). Leopold attributed this to the failure to develop projects based on local realities, local knowledge, donor insistence on logical frameworks and short-term outputs rather than sustainable changes. However, why would NGOs focus on technical outputs? Bebbington et al. (2007) attributed it to the donor-poverty impact agenda that funds activities with measurable impacts rather than social changes. Often NGOs are donor dependent and therefore are likely to drive donor interests in achieving in the material dimension of poverty. While this may sound ironic to those NGOs involved in programmes like water, construction and relief programmes intended to help the poor, some NGO evaluations show that even those people helped by successful NGO projects may remain poor. The question addressed in chapter 6 of this thesis, is how does the technocratic position of the NGO role in service delivery influence the inclusion of the poor in poverty reduction programmes?

The complementary view is also associated with empowerment activities such as training, education and awareness creation aimed at changing socio-economic power dynamics in society. Empowerment is about gaining strength and attempting to rebalance the power relations in favour of the poor. Empowerment leads to social transformation if the underlying structural causes of disempowerment are addressed (Luttrell et al. 2007: 2). The empowerment agenda became prominent in the 1970-1990s leading to the rapid growth of southern NGOs. This agenda attracted funding for NGOs because of the assumption that NGOs would enable the poor to run their own development. NGO funding continued to flow through northern NGOs to southern NGOs thereby shifting the northern NGO role to that of donor and southern NGOs to subsidiary agents (Bebbington et al. 2007: 11-18; Hearn 2007: 1101-7). Although NGOs received funding for empowerment activities from northern governments, donor ideologies and

practices pass to southern NGOs through the same channel. At the same time, this kind of funding shifted NGO orientation from practical welfare service organisations to talking organisations. This not only narrows the cause of poverty to lack of knowledge, but also leads to questions of whether knowledge alone would rebalance the power relations in society.

As noted by Oakley (2001: 39), a few scholars may denounce empowerment as being irrelevant to poverty reduction strategies. However, some scholars have been critical about the shift from hard/physical welfare deliveries to soft/education deliveries of NGOs. Barr et al. (2003) maintained that the talking phenomenon gained status among donors because it reinforces the quick fix agenda of donors and overrides the slowly constructed, painstaking process that poverty reduction requires. Although NGOs may appreciate the painstaking process of poverty reduction, determining the actual delivery of services is more a function of funding and the interests of donors. Sogge (2007: 13-14) concluded that with a few exceptions, donor agencies and their funding to NGOs is 'irrelevant to citizen empowerment.' This is because the global flows and macroeconomic dynamics such as globalisation processes, competition, international cooperation and continued donor influence (Edwards 2007: 38-52) may frustrate the basis of citizen empowerment. Others, like Cornwall and Brock (2005), note that empowerment may not guarantee a world free of poverty because actors are practicing it as a neutral phenomenon to legitimise the global social order rather than challenge social inequalities. Although through empowerment activities some of the poor may gain knowledge of their poverty context, the available studies suggest that what is happening in practice is different from theory. Amidst these criticisms, the question addressed in chapter 5 of this thesis is how are the poor denied power in empowerment programmes?

In terms of strategies, NGO activities as complementary actors are associated with participatory approaches. For instance, NGOs like BRAC were regarded as close to the people and willing to live in remote rural areas. BRAC for instance involved parents in school programmes run by the organisation. In such cases, NGOs have a comparative advantage over government. Most consider them efficient, flexible and grassroots oriented (Tvedt 1998: 135). Conversely, NGOs receive criticism for being inefficient, working with strict budgets and programmes, and for failure to cause

bottom up participatory processes (Leopold 2001). Sometimes they employ participation as a technical means rather than a political end (Mitlin et al. 2007: 1700). Even when participation is intended to increase efficiency, this is not always realised. NGOs often offer services to or through CBOs to increase efficiency, but they create another layer of players with new power dynamics. Being complementary actors is not synonymous with efficient participation because it may depend on other factors and actors especially given that the government manages the current poverty reduction programmes.

The discussions so far show that perceiving NGOs as complementary actors alone does not recognise that the NGO terrain is changing with the changes in development aid. Throughout the world, NGOs have grown in number, adopted different approaches, organisational structures, networks, levels of operation and cooperation with other actors. Although Dicklitch (2001) argues that NGOs are largely gap fillers even under the current neoliberal policy agenda, the reality is that NGO roles are leaning more towards advocacy. The major assumption underlying the complementary role is that NGOs are good, altruistic and close to the people, thus they undertake relief, welfare, empowerment and development-related activities often through participation. This logic helped gain NGOs recognition as key players in poverty reduction prior even, to programmes like SAPs and PRSPs becoming prevalent. However, the view of NGOs as complementary agents is not necessarily adequate in explaining the roles of NGOs in the current poverty reduction strategy, formulation and implementation because partly, some processes and practices hold NGOs in different perspectives.

2.3   NGOs as Substitute Actors of the Government

Since the 1980s, NGOs shifted from being theorised as complementary agents to a rediscovery of de Tocquevillen civil society[2] theory. Civil society emerged in Europe as an arena for challenging state power and for reflecting critically on the way economic and political life is organised (Howell and Pearce 2001: 118). Civil society was a way of challenging governments seen as neither representative of the poor nor implementers of policies that were good for growth or poverty reduction. In addition, governments increasingly became bureaucratic, inefficient and oppressive through rent seeking.

Therefore, the dominant view of civil society is, as a force of 'excellence, symbolizing freedom, anti-statism and defence of democracy' (Howell and Pearce 2001: 4). In this context, many see NGOs as substitutes of the government, assumed to take over many of the governmental roles, despite the fact that they are interested in influencing governments, limiting government power and holding them accountable. There is a perspective of NGOs as, 'a vehicle for empowerment, democratisation and development' (Dicklitch 1998: ix). Because of the consensus that they are less corrupt, there was an overall expectation that they would deliver services more effectively.

The assumption that NGOs would take over government roles has been criticised because of its potential to create a situation where NGOs are often antagonistic with the government (Abdelrahman 2001). In reality, NGO roles do not always have to be anti-state. NGOs can collaborate, cooperate, support and reach consensus with governments. Although there was a paradigmatic shift of donor funding, which emphasised increased funding for NGOs rather than the governments, NGOs tend towards limited political mandates from the population compared to governments. The anti-statist crusade helped NGOs regain recognition and increase their funding from international financiers as governments were losing support.[3] However, Amutabi (2006) maintains that NGOs in Africa often get their mandate from donors who fund them. While it may not be accurate to attribute all NGO activities to the failure of government, NGO activities often reflect the socioeconomic problems they seek to solve and the broader macroeconomic environment within which they operate.

The insistence on NGOs taking over government roles coincided with the socioeconomic crisis including Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), recurrent droughts, for instance on the African continent and civil war in countries like Uganda, Angola and Sudan (Salih 2002: 5). These events did not only lead to the growth of local NGOs, but also increased the influence of northern NGOs in developing countries. For instance in Africa, the political elites including government officials created NGOs for employment and extra income. NGOs became survival strategies for individuals too. Direct funding for NGO activities saw northern NGOs taking on the role of capacity builders and NGOs being equated with civil society (Hearn 2007: 1102). The equating of NGOs with civil society made Mitlin

et al. (2007) refer to northern NGOs as agents of neoliberal governmentalism, controlling local organisations and populations much in the same way development has done in the past. Therefore, since the southern NGOs in Africa are a duplicate of their northern counterparts, northern controlling ideologies dominate their roles (Amutabi 2006: xiii). NGOs in Africa, for instance, became a source and a channel of foreign aid. The governments could 'market the suffering of the population' to ensure that NGOs receive funding (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 22-4). Thus, besides the assumption that NGOs would take over government roles, NGOs offered employment and provided a fallback position to those affected by SAPs.

The insistence on civil society as the primary engine of the development process as well as in the creation of democratic systems brought new dynamics in the roles of NGOs. NGOs were theorised as vanguards of donor agendas on civil society and democratisations (Mitlin et al. 2007: 1700). Donors made good governance issues, human rights, democracy and accountability conditions for funding. Therefore, there is an expectation of NGOs to make government policies and programmes participatory, transparent, accountable, inclusive and free of corruption while following the rule of law.[4] The civic role of NGOs (Fowler 2005b) coincided with the call for people's participation in development with a human face and for alternative development by scholars like Chambers and Sen. In addition, the governance crisis (corruption and general economic mismanagement) and the economic and livelihood crisis in some countries (like the genocide in Rwanda) necessitated socioeconomic interventions (Salih 2002). In this context, there remained an expectation for NGOs to substitute government but in practice, NGOs undertake to mobilise the population, lobby government and international organisations to create democratic institutions, which would protect freedoms and ensure participation in development processes. Some NGOs organised people around issues of citizens and political rights like gender, environment and political participation, others engaged in civic education, while others experimented with a range of other new options like debt relief and HIV/AIDS. These activities tended to be more of advocacy rather than actually taking over government roles.

With respect to democratisation, Biekart (1999) shows that in Latin America, NGOs have been sources of grassroots opposition in Brazil and a

voice of democratic change in Chile. Likewise, Amutabi (2006) shows that NGOs in Kenya have been at the forefront of the democratisation process in the country. NGO activities emphasise human rights and civic education. However, there is an increasing view of NGOs as having limitations to drive good governance. Often, they face accusations of distracting more indigenous civil society efforts to re-emerge (Mitlin et al. 2007). This is because NGOs are positioning themselves as civil society and are unable to conduct grassroots mobilisation (Dicklitch 2001). Similarly, Ndegwa (1996: 1) argued that NGOs in Africa have two faces when it comes to their contribution to the democratisation process. He gives an example that one NGO in Kenya can actively 'advocate for political pluralism' and yet another NGO in the same circumstances 'remains politically obtuse.' Ndegwa (1996: 1) indicates that NGO involvement in democratisation processes in Kenya is highly dependent on organisation, resources, alliances and political opportunity available to the NGO and above all at the discretion of NGO leadership. The roles of NGOs in the democratisation process also link with institutional survival. NGOs engage in good governance activities in trying 'to find a new role for survival rather than being concerned with the higher order questions' (Mitlin et al. 2007). These are some of the reasons for the apparent limited success of NGOs to facilitate the democratisation process, especially in Africa. Thus, there may be kernels of truth in the prescribed theories on the roles of NGOs, but NGOs will adopt different roles and positions altogether to suit changes in their funding.

Among the strategies to enable NGOs to undertake the role of substituting governments and, of building a strong civil society has been investment in capacity-building. There are also several programmes like CIVICUS, aimed at civil society strengthening. However, does capacity-building lead to good governance? While capacity-building may increase competencies and material benefits for NGOs, some scholars (Hanlon 1991; Abdelrahman 2001) criticise investments in capacity-building for NGOs. Abdelrahman (2001: 42) argues that investing in capacity-building is a false conception because it is not the same as shifting social and political inequalities. Similarly, the typical view of NGOs in Africa is as new structures with which Africans can seek to establish a profitable position in the existing system rather than creation of good governance. The roles of NGOs may lead to

hijacking of development aid by political elites (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 22). A related concern echoed by Hanlon (1997:37) suggests that donors will invest in NGO capacity-building and create alternative structures to those of government as long as it provides employment to external consultants. In reality, NGOs are not substitutes. NGOs have limitations in providing alternative models of development and overtaking government roles (Bebbington et al. 2007). Simply because NGOs undertake certain roles towards democratic governance does not make them substitutes for government.

To conclude with Molenaers and Renard's (2006) argument, democracy is not the direct aim of poverty reduction. Poverty reduction includes transforming power relations into a new social order. As Edwards and Sen (2000: 607) noted, social change is a process of transforming the current exclusionary social, economic, political order into a different framework of power relations, better set of outcomes especially for the vulnerable categories of society and new social order. The use of good governance as a platform to attain poverty reduction is rather ambitious, but that does not mean that it cannot achieve other interests.

2.4   NGOs as Agents of Donors and of their Own

NGOs continue to undertake poverty reduction activities including advocacy to influence policies, welfare services or even good governance related activities. However, their development funding agenda and their own interests have a much greater influence. Against the risk of over generalisation, especially given that NGOs have different reasons for existence, the thesis further utilises this view to explain the continued participation of NGOs in official poverty reduction that may not benefit the poor. This view is appropriate because it highlights the dynamics of NGO participation in relation to other actors in the global poverty reduction agenda that emphasises cooperation and funding for impact. Furthermore, the view of NGOs as complementary actors or as substitutes may not adequately help to understand the contemporary problems of social exclusion of the poor in programmes intended for them. Thus, this view helps to analyse the interests of NGOs, their position in the poverty reduction agenda and its implication for attaining their normative goal of social change.

Although ideally, aid contributes to development objectives of gap filling and human development (Riddell 2007: 10), its chain is characterised by power inequalities. A number of scholars (Browne 2006; Igoe and Kelsall 2005; Riddell 2007) assert that the real reason for giving aid is the need for strategic, political, commercial, military and security influence. Therefore, there exists a view of NGOs as facilitators of the northern effort to maintain its influence and control over the south. Looking at the role of NGOs from a historical perspective suggests that even during colonial and missionary days, NGOs served the interests of their donors. The colonial masters organised their colonies for proper administration and utilised northern NGOs to deliver aid to their colonies (Hearn 2007: 1100). The northern NGOs established collaborative ties with southern NGOs thereby making them intermediary agents (Bebbington et al. 2007: 11-18). Although the African elites established organisations to resist directives from colonial masters leading to the independence of some African states (Salih 2002: 4), others embraced donor ideologies like Christianity and received funding to undertake charity work. While the missionary work in education and health provided an alternative model of service delivery to that of government, it also increased legitimacy for colonialists. It is therefore, not surprising that many scholars are critical of the roles of NGOs in the colonial and missionary eras.

Consistent with the above view, Amutabi (2006: xiv) argues that 'NGOs are not neutral or innocent bystanders in the great development drama unfolding in Africa but integral to the neo-colonial and neoliberal projects of western imperialism that have done so much to disempower the populations and distort development across the continent.' Equally, Hanlon (1997) maintains that NGOs are the agents of northern domination and local managers of foreign aid money, not managers of local development processes. Hearn (2007) echoed a similar view, arguing that African NGOs are the new compradors used to re-colonise Africa with a likelihood of causing class inequalities in society.

With interventions like the SAPs and PRSPs, NGOs are increasingly interacting with the dominant ideas and rules that travel with development finance (Mitlin et al. 2007: 1703). Donors insist on international cooperation to reduce poverty. There is a shift in development funding to focus on

government managed poverty reduction with NGOs acting as representatives of the poor, public contractors and agents of security and conflict resolution. The expectations of PRSPs were that they develop in close dialogue with other actors including NGOs to make the poverty reduction process not only pro-poor but also participatory and transparent. Different actors received specific interrelated activities whereby the performance of these roles would lead to poverty reduction. Generally, the assumption was that donor agencies would surrender control to the recipient government. Thus, the roles for donors include 1) participating in policy formulation sessions to ensure that policies guarantee macroeconomic stability and are of high quality; 2) monitor progress through joint donor meetings for purposes of holding the state accountable; and 3) offer coordinated funding through budget support to increase efficiency in funding.

The roles of government on the other hand relate to management of the poverty reduction agenda. These roles include 1) organising seminars and workshops for policy design and consultation with different stakeholders; 2) directing and controlling resource allocation and monitoring poverty reduction programmes; 3) accounting to the donors and to the population with pressure from NGOs; and 4) contracting out delivery of services to NGOs.

NGOs are expected to 1) broaden the ownership of the poverty reduction plans and processes; 2) defend the interests of the poor and increase pro-poor effectiveness; and 3) hold the government accountable to their population by holding them to their promises (Renard and Molenaers 2003: 8). NGO roles include participating in the poverty-reduction policy formulation process to propose pro-poor policies; monitor the implementation of policies and demand for accountability from government and subcontract service delivery to increase efficiency. In spite of these well-defined roles, it is unclear how cooperation from these actors, especially NGOs leads to poverty reduction. Dewatcher (2007: 4-18), based on data from Honduran NGOs, argues that NGO contributions to poverty reduction depends on the kind of input in the form of NGO resources (financial, time, education), engagement (political efficacy, political ideology), recruitment to participate (invited or not invited) and the age of the NGO determines the kind of output in terms of poverty reduction. While Dewatcher's analysis focuses on the NGO side of the story, NGO roles do not take place in isola-

tion from those of government and donors. Furthermore, there remains inadequate handling of the actual contribution in terms of achieving the expected results. Therefore, it remains important that the discussions and assessments of NGO participation towards achieving their expected outcomes encompass how other actors influence NGO activities and be contextualised within a particular policy framework.

Within the PRSPs, NGO participation created more space for NGOs to engage with government (Hickey 2005). For instance, Dewachter (2007: 17) shows that in the Honduran setting, the participatory meetings are open access activities as are other forms of participation like letter writing and protests. In a desk study among ten countries (Bolivia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia), McGee et al. (2002: vii-x) show that NGO participation has 1) provided 'holistic, better quality approach' to participation than would have been expected from policymakers; 2) 'widened public awareness' about PRSPs through seminars and workshops; and 3) in all the countries, participation of NGOs led to 'broadening and diversification of actors' who engage in poverty discourse and policy formulation processes. However, maintaining NGO centrality in PRSPs has been criticised. Vincent (2004: 113) likens NGOs to 'surrogates' of the poor yet the 'right people' have not participated in the PRSPs (Oxfam International 2004: 5). Alanso (2002: 15-18) maintains that 'just like governments, NGOs are likely to be heavily biased towards representing the non poor.' Although NGO representativeness of the poor is in doubt, the overall perception is that NGOs gained access to policy tables more than ever before. NGO participation is not accidental, not only is there an expectation that NGOs will attain defined results, but also contribute to turning around the criticisms waged on development aid. Thus, it is important for the discussion on NGO participation to acknowledge that their participation is, to some extent, in response to criticism of the failure of the donor-driven, top down development process.

NGOs engage in consultations with the communities, participatory poverty assessment exercises, research, attendance at technical meetings, presentation of papers and media campaigns. With reference to Uganda, McGee et al. (2002: viii) show that NGO participation drew attention to PRSP content on issues of marginalisation, regional poverty differences and impover-

ishment due to corruption and poor governance. Furthermore, in countries like Malawi and Uganda, NGO participation affected the poverty discourse positively, especially the adoption of multidimensional understanding of poverty although McGee et al. (2002) would not wholly tag the change in discourse to NGO participation. Largely, NGO participation had an incremental influence on the PRSP content rather than serving as a radical challenge to the dominant model of poverty reduction (Piron and Evans 2004: 1). This is because participation has been left to urban-based umbrellas of NGOs, which have advocacy experience and connection with policy circles, but do not represent alternative political views (Piron and Evas 2004: 16). NGOs seem to position themselves as power brokers, consensus builders and legitimise the roles of donors. Their participation is 'consensual' with the dominant models (Molenaers and Renard 2006: 3). NGOs have not been able to propose acceptable alternative models of poverty reduction.

Similarly, Bebbington et al. (2007: 5) notes that NGOs tend to identify themselves more with 'alternative forms of interventions within the capitalist world' than with more 'systemic changes.' Why would NGOs ally with models they intend to challenge? Cornwall and Brock (2005) maintain that the concepts of participation, empowerment and poverty reduction have been depoliticised. The dominant models of development have adopted these concepts, thus NGOs find it easy to ally with the capitalist world because they speak a similar language. There could be other reasons why NGOs ally with dominant ideas, but the assessment of NGO participation in PRSPs needs to establish how they negotiate the depoliticisation processes to create social change. Of course, the participation of NGOs in PRSPs is not accidental, the different strategies NGOs adopt including alliances with government or donors serves multiple agendas and interests vested in NGO participation. The position and strategies NGOs adopt in engaging policymakers affect their contribution to pro-poor effectiveness.

The interaction of these actors often involves struggles and conflicts, negotiations and accommodations over different interests. While NGOs may cause some changes in policy sometimes, powerful actors may compromise them. For instance, NGOs engage in monitoring of poverty reduction programmes to reinforce government's downward accountability and donors' upward accountability. However, the poor's participation in monitoring the

implementation process and outcomes of poverty reduction programmes has been weak and only a token despite the need for accountability (Natal 2006: 48; Siebold 2005: 14-16). If the need were to account to the citizens, would every actor, government, donors and NGO themselves not be made to account? Of course, donors are weary of the poor performance of past aid and the resultant loss of credibility. Thus, for donors, the current accountability mechanism is to keep the 'aid game' in momentum. Howell and Pearce (2001: 118) argued that if NGOs challenge the goals of donors, then donors' interests in NGOs may subside and donors may begin to view NGOs as obstacles. At the same time, NGOs are aware of their dependence on donors for growth and survival thus would not want to antagonise the relationships.

NGO involvement in service delivery of poverty reduction programmes is partly because of the increased need for efficiency in the provision of public services and donors insistence on 'value' for money. NGOs also often assert that they are in a unique position to facilitate community empowerment because they are nearer to the poor and utilise participatory approaches to development. NGOs are involved in several empowerment activities through subcontracting. However, it is important to note here that the roles and strategies of NGOs as public contractors are a bit different from NGOs in the past. NGOs that offered complementary services to those bypassed by universal programmes are now increasingly implementing universal programmes. Simultaneously, NGOs remain accountable for service delivery and find themselves engulfed in the client-master struggles with government whom they are supposed to hold accountable. Although originally they accessed their direct funding for service delivery, governments are now the main source of NGO income for subcontracted services through the public competitive tendering process. Moreover, development funding that focuses on government-managed poverty reduction plans opened NGOs to competition from the private sector (Bebbington et al. 2007: 15). Thus, public-private partnerships resulted in the marketisation of roles of NGOs, which increased organisational insecurity, competitive pressure and fiscal uncertainty for the sector. The idea that competition would cut waste, curb corruption, improve professionalism, enhance project management and allow new NGOs to become service providers does not always hold true

(Cooley and Ron 2002: 9-18). If NGO activities do not necessarily curb waste or corruption, what then is their motivation and interests in the poverty reduction agenda?

There is need to scrutinise further the roles of NGOs as public subcontractors. Indeed NGOs have their own share of criticism while acting as subcontractors. For instance, CARE (2005: 7) studies on NGO subcontracting in Uganda notes that subcontracting compromises NGOs' abilities and willingness to hold local governments accountable. This is because of the potential conflicts of interest due to their contradictory position as recipients of government funding and watchdogs of government policies. Often in a public-private partnership, actors learn to accommodate each other in a mutually beneficial manner without necessarily benefiting the interests of the citizens. Fowler (2005b: 28-9) also sees NGO partnerships with government as bound to compromise NGOs. However, some NGOs may resist material pressure due to their idiosyncratic funding patterns, unique organisational culture, remarkable leaders or coalitions, while others may define themselves in opposition to the mainstream (Cooley and Ron 2002). Nevertheless, while NGOs as donor dependants succeeded in legitimising the PRSPs, at the same time, they became vulnerable to control. Why would agents (NGO) of donors eventually become a subject of control by the donors in the first place?

NGO funding always comes 'bundled with particular rules and ideas regarding how they must be governed and contribute to governing others' just as development had done in the past (Bebbington et al. 2007: 8). Largely, the interest of the donors and those of government shape what NGOs eventually do. Often the government is interested in controlling poverty reduction policies and finance for service delivery, the absence of which could compromise its legitimacy and support. On the other hand, donors are interested in controlling policy directions and government accountability (Molenaers and Renard 2006: 20-6). When NGOs enter into contractual arrangements with donors and governments to offer services, they concentrate on serving their interests rather than those of the local communities (Pollard and Court 2007: 142). For instance, Renard and Molenaers (2003: 5) found that in Rwanda, NGOs were not ready to rise to the challenge of engaging policymakers in the PRSP process, but donors did little to protect

them. Although most assume NGOs are interested in the normative agenda, African NGOs are caught between a rock and a hard place where the salvation of Africa, getting out of poverty through NGO roles, is still illusive (Hearn 2007: 1107; Igoe and Kelsall 2005). Therefore, it is impossible to separate poverty reduction in general from the interests of actors because the choices made in regard to these interests influence poverty reduction trends and outcomes.

However, Hearn (2007) notes that some NGOs managed to resist donor control. With the examples of Uganda Action Aid and Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), she observes that not all African NGOs lost their autonomy or resistance to donor agendas although such cases are rare. Although Hearn tries to link NGO position and roles to the global political economy, she does not adequately link NGO position to their own interests. As seen in chapter 1, NGO interests range from the normative agenda of empowering communities to accessing funding for growth and institutional survival to wielding power in the eyes of other actors especially donors and governments. Although NGOs continue to justify their existence and access funding in the name of the poor, often their normative agenda is accompanied by the struggle to defend their own institutional survival and become part of that class of institutions that determines the fate of the poor. Therefore, it is important that the discussions and assessment of the roles of NGOs and the fact that they participate in programmes that may not benefit the poor, relate to development funding dynamics and the NGOs' own interests.

NGOs as agents of their own survival

NGOs expected to play a central role in poverty reduction have their own institutional interests. These interests help NGOs operate as their own agents. Edwards (2007) proposes a useful dichotomy of NGO imperatives (see Table 2.1).

Edwards maintains that foreign aid limited the focus of NGOs to development imperatives. Consequently, NGOs settled for incremental impacts rather than struggling to achieve social change. Although this means ascribing certain roles to NGOs in poverty reduction programmes, in reality what NGOs eventually do relates, in part, to their institutional survival. Edwards'

Table 2.1
NGO imperatives

Development Imperatives	Institutional Imperatives
▪ Bottom line: empowering marginalised groups for independent action ▪ Downplay the role of intermediary; encourage marginalised groups to speak with their voices ▪ Democratic governance: less hierarchy; more reciprocity; focus on stakeholders ▪ Multiple accountability, honesty, learning from mistakes, transparency, sharing of information ▪ Maintain independence and flexibility; take risks ▪ Address the causes of poverty; defend values of service and solidarity ▪ Long-term goals drive decision-making; programme criteria led ▪ Rooted in broader movements for change; alliances with others; look outwards ▪ Maximise resources at sharp end; cooperate to reduce overhead and transaction costs ▪ Maintain focus on continuity, critical mass and distinctive competence	▪ Bottom line: size, income, profile and market share ▪ Accentuate the role of intermediary; speak on behalf of marginalised groups ▪ More hierarchy; less reciprocity; focus on donors and recipients ▪ Accountability upwards, secrecy, repeats mistakes, exaggerate success and disguise failures. ▪ Increasing dependence on government funds; standardisation; bureaucracy ▪ Deal with symptoms: internalise orthodoxies even antithetical to mission ▪ Short term interest drive decision-making; marketing criteria lead ▪ Isolated from broader movements for change; incorporate others into your own structures; look inwards ▪ Duplicate delivery mechanisms (e.g. separate field offices); resources consumption increasing by fixed costs ▪ Opportunism-go where the funds are; increasing spread to activities and countries

Source: Edwards, 1996 cited in Edwards (2007: 48)

list risks different interpretation by different scholars because of its broadness. However, NGO imperatives may be useful in explaining why NGOs participate in poverty reduction programmes that may not necessarily benefit the poor.

In practical terms, Edwards (2007: 47) noted that the 'institutional imperatives of growth and market share still dominate over development imperatives of individual, organizational and social transformation' of the ma-

jority of NGOs. A similar explanation was given by Fowler (2005b: 25) who argued that the prevailing poverty alleviation objectives pegged NGOs 'growth, fundraising and institutional survival', which are reinforced by the 'harmony and partnership' model of social change. This was echoed by Piron and Evas (2004: 14) who noted that NGOs are given privilege to access policymaking processes and at the same time, benefit from 'large inflows of donor funding.' Fowler later recognises that NGOs roles and interests are gradually changing with the changing face of development for security (Fowler 2007). Overall, there are inconsistencies between what NGOs set to do and what they actually do. Although there are some NGOs that are exceptional such as Action Aid, in practice, the majority of NGOs may show signs of doing the poverty reduction toil of empowering marginalised groups, handing over control and becoming more accountable to beneficiaries, but in reality, they prioritise institutional survival. How has the focus on institutional survival worked to retain NGOs in PRSPs that may not benefit the poor? Chapter 7 addresses this last question more thoroughly. Why are there inconsistencies between NGO missions and actual practices? NGOs have several failures including failure to change systems and structures that perpetuate poverty, establish strong connections with social movements, change internal attitudes, values and behaviour towards development, innovate in form and nature of their organisational relationships with other actors, and as such and have since internalised functions that should have been played by other actors (Edwards 2007). Edwards equates these failings to an elephant in the NGO room, which continues to move with them and stops them from achieving development imperatives. Edwards views NGOs as a major growth industry, in the comfort zone of maintaining the status quo and set to continue along that path. However, why do the majority of NGOs function in a comfort zone?

Biekart (1999: 78) maintains that the permanent tension between the institutional and development imperative is one of the key mechanisms to understanding the policy choices of private aid agencies. This tension explains why there is a considerable gap between rhetoric and reality of NGOs. Biekart notes that in periods of financial pressure, the balance between institutional survival and development obligations for NGOs tend to shift towards institutional imperatives. However, is it only in periods of financial

pressure that NGOs attach more importance to institutional survival? Are there other circumstances that peg NGOs to institutional survival? In most studies, institutional survival is significant and is a fitting explanation as to why NGOs seem to remain deep-seated in programmes that may not necessarily benefit the poor. However, are there circumstances where NGOs have appropriate funding and yet continue to privilege institutional survival over social change objectives? Are there other factors besides the institutional imperatives that guide NGO work in PRSPs? Chapter 7 discusses and addresses these questions as well.

The argument thus far shows that the changing dynamics of development funding since colonial days, the socioeconomic factors together with the institutional imperatives are the major elements that partly explain the roles of NGOs. The view that NGOs work as agents of donors and of their own survival sets an appropriate basis for answering the key question of this study in the Ugandan context—why NGOs participate in official poverty reduction programmes amidst growing knowledge and evidence that these programmes may not benefit the poor. This perspective is important to understand other forces and actors in poverty reduction agendas. It helps to understand the power struggles in poverty reduction programmes that may obscure realities of the poor. The interests and roles of NGOs in poverty reduction is a social and political process performed and attained in relation to other actors. The participation of NGOs does not make them enemies or friends of the government or donors, but makes them key players that keep the system moving. Yet, the current social, economic, political system harbours exclusionary elements for the poor.

2.5   Conclusion

This chapter set out to understand the assumptions and the roles of NGOs in poverty reduction. Available studies suggest that NGOs commonly work as complementary actors, largely as instruments of the donors and for their own survival, and on a limited scale as substitutes of governments. NGOs perform these roles simultaneously but with differing levels of importance. Discussions of the three broad categories show that funding dynamics largely dictate the roles of NGOs. The roles of NGOs as complementary actors include relief, welfare and socioeconomic and political empowerment

activities through participatory approaches. NGOs succeeded in causing some material achievements as highlighted by Amutabi in the case of Kenya. However, development funding trend factors such as colonisation, missionary work and donors' anti-statism agenda influence what NGOs do as welfare agents and the strategies they adopt. Although the majority of the NGOs worldwide still engage in gap filling roles, the current poverty reduction agenda upholds NGOs in a policymaking and advocacy role. NGOs engage in human rights education, civic education and policy reform campaigns as substitute actors. Although NGOs have an opportunity to participate in the democratisation processes of some countries, for any democratic state, it does not necessarily follow that there is a strong NGO sector. There persists a general assumption that NGOs would take over government responsibilities, in reality governments are still strong institutions and NGO interventions do not necessarily lead to good governance.

As agents of donors and their own institutional survival, NGOs engage in poverty reduction activities, operating between the government and donors. Donors and their own interests dictate what NGOs do. NGOs engage in policymaking, consultation with the poor, monitoring of poverty implementation and even subcontracting service delivery. There is space for NGOs to influence the poverty reduction agenda; however, the dominant view of participation is as consensual with the global dominant poverty agenda. Many scholars have said that NGOs work to reinforce the controlling hand of donors (Amutabi 2006; Hanlon 1997; Hearn 2007), which may compromise their focus on poverty reduction. Moreover, there is always tension between NGOs development obligations and their institutional survival. In reality, there is no such strict dichotomy, some NGOs or parts of an individual organisation may struggle for development imperatives while others struggle for institutional survival. Although these factors provide an understanding of the roles of NGOs, they may not adequately explain the specific interests of NGOs and the dynamics of participation in Uganda's PRSPs. Thus, it is important that assessments of the roles and interests of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes that may not benefit the poor focus on interrelated systems of cooperation with other actors, on development funding and power struggles of the actors in these programmes. This issue informs the discussions in the forthcoming chapters.

Notes

[1]   Oxfam, our trust's mission, http://www.oxfamint.org.in/au_mission.htm

[2]   Participation of civil society became a prominent issue in literature. Even those scholars referring to NGOs talk about them as CSOs. There is a loose definition of the concept of civil society, the study deals with understanding NGO roles as part of civil society, and it does not challenge the notion of civil society. However, the emphasis is on intermediary NGOs in poverty reduction, it does not engage for instance in deeper discussions on the roles of NGOs in the democratisation process in later chapters.

[3]   Abeldraham (2001: 54) cautions against explaining NGO growth as a response of state failure because it 1) projects the state and NGOs as competitors and yet in reality they work in cooperation; 2) negatively portrays the state-led development model and NGOs as alternative and yet the same development model is being pursued; 3) portrays NGOs as having comparative advantage over the state and yet practically their claim of comparative advantage are usually over exaggerated; and 4) portrays NGOs as functionally efficient, which leads to overlooking weaknesses of NGOs.

[4]   Sheng Yap Kioe, Chief of the Poverty Reduction Section, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, gave an elaborate explanation on the conceptual meaning of governance and good governance (http://www.unescap.org/).

3 NGOs, PRSPs and Other Actors

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 explored the roles of NGOs in poverty reduction. It showed the roles of NGOs as changing with the dominant development agenda of the time. This change has not only increased the numbers of NGOs over time, but also influenced their position and strategies. The one-time prevailing opinion of NGOs as mere complementary or substitute actors to government is now changed to critical partners in poverty reduction. Building on that discussion, chapter 3 seeks to answer the following questions: Why have NGOs grown in Uganda? How does their growth relate to the roles discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis? What kind of NGOs are they? The answers to these questions are critical in understanding the growth and development of NGOs in Uganda, the reason for their continued growth and relevance to poverty reduction.

Studies on NGO growth worldwide describe the 1980s and 90s as a period of explosive NGO growth or, an 'NGO boom' (Bebbington et al. 2007: 12; Mitlin et al. 2007: 1670; Parks 2008: 215). The factors for NGO growth relate to 1) the colonisation and re-colonisation process of Africa characterised by invasion of the South by the North. 2) The missionary era in which NGOs were engaged in welfare, religious and development activities. 3) Several interrelated socio-political and economic crises such as wars and famine. 4) The neoliberal agenda of weakening states and its related aid industry where NGOs work to confront the capitalist agenda with alternatives or to consolidate its reign. However, each NGO has its unique forces surrounding its operations and the causal forces for NGO formation in given countries could be different. The terrain for NGOs in Uganda varies and may risk generalisation, but as stated in chapter 1, the focus here is on

intermediary NGOs. Chapter 3 begins with an overview of the growth trends of NGOs in Uganda and then discusses the factors for its growth, which shows that the NGO factor in Uganda is not an isolated phenomenon from international trends. However, how this growth translates into poverty reduction is the central theme of this thesis. Thus, chapter 3 shows that NGO growth relates to the historical, socio-political and economic processes including the dynamics of development aid agenda. This chapter draws on the numerous studies explaining the growth and development of NGOs in Uganda.

Section 3.2 looks at growth trends of NGOs in Uganda and the geographical scope of operation. Section 3.3 locates NGO growth within the broader historical, socioeconomic and political processes with an aim towards analysing the factors that inform NGO growth and characteristics. Section 3.4 explains the Ugandan PEAP/PRSPs formulation and the kind of NGOs that participate in its formation. Section 3.5 explains the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS) implementation processes and the kind of NGOs that are subcontracted for service delivery. Section 3.6 provides some concluding remarks.

3.2   NGO Growth Trends and Scope of Operation

There are no accurate figures on the total numbers of NGOs in Uganda because of the high dropout, registration rates and the inability of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to maintain updated lists. Figures are scattered over different documentation centres. However, Figure 3.1 shows that the number of NGOs[1] grew from 289 in 1986 to about 4000 in 2004, 6500 in 2006 and 7000 in 2007. Although difficult to delineate intermediary NGOs from other kinds of organisations, the majority of NGOs in Uganda (92%) are local NGOs working from national to local levels and eight per cent are international NGOs (Wallace et al. 2004: 4). The information shows a sharp growth in numbers of local and international NGOs.

The NGO Forum (2003: 1-2) study found that of the 753 NGOs surveyed countrywide, 32.4 per cent were district-based NGOs, followed by CBOs (31.4%), national organisations (23.9%), and international organisations (10.8%). In terms of geographical location, 34.4 per cent (259) were operating in Eastern Uganda, 24.8 per cent (187) in the West, 23.6 per cent

(178) in the North and 17.1 per cent (129) in the central region. Thus, the eastern region has the highest number of NGOs, yet it is also the second poorest region in the country (MoFPED 2004). This is intriguing because one would expect that with many NGOs, the region should be less poor. Despite the intriguing paradox (which this study does not disentangle), the civil wars in the region could partly explain the high numbers of NGOs. Security is a major objective of the 2004 Ugandan PRSPs. Therefore, it is possible to argue that NGOs operate in the eastern and northern regions to handle war and post war emergency and welfare activities. However, the numbers may not show the relevance of NGOs to poverty reduction without further exploring their roles, who they serve and their interests (for further discussion, see chapter 7).

Table 3.1
NGO growth trends in Uganda

Year	Number of Organisations
1960	18 International*
1970	38 International*
1980	109 International*
1986	160 Local & International **
1988	371 Local & International*
1989	180 International*
1990	600 Local & International**
1992	396 International*
2000	3499 Local and International (Barr et al. 2003)
2000/2001	3500 NGOs**
2004	4000 NGOs**
2006	6500 NGOs (Busiinge et al 2006)
2007	7000 NGOs (DFID estimates 2007)

Source: * Estimates made by the Office of the Prime Minister 2000.
        ** DENIVA report on the Civil Society Index 2006

NGOs are engaged in a variety of activities adapting to the 'holistic approach' (Barr et al. 2003). Barr et al. (2003: 20) showed that 96.6 per cent of the surveyed 295 NGOs engaged in raising awareness of several issues through meetings and workshops, followed by 59.1 per cent who engage in advocacy and lobbying, 57.4 per cent in education and training and 32.8 per cent in credit and finance. Other NGOs engaged in supporting farming, counselling, water and sanitation, providing grants to CBOs, research and evaluation, art and culture and conflict resolution. Although the majority of NGOs engage in community development activities with categories of beneficiaries like women and children, the activities are largely soft in nature (talking) rather than tangible (physical) service deliveries. The holistic nature of NGO activities allows for flexibility and the ability to take on any activity when they want; however, it restrains their opportunity for specialisation. Although studies show that numbers of NGOs are increasing and their engagement in various activities, there is still limited information on what motivates their work. The next section examines the origins of Ugandan NGOs in relation to their activities.

3.3   NGO Origin, Objectives and Activities

To understand how NGOs emerge in Uganda, what they do and their focus on poverty reduction requires historical analysis. NGOs in Uganda form and operate voluntarily under the general normative agenda of causing social change. However, their formation has a direct relationship with the historical, socioeconomic and political situation in the country including the dynamics of development aid.

The Colonial Period (1888-1962)

NGOs in Uganda have their origin in native resistance to colonial exploitation. Different groups evolved initially to resist colonial rule and demand better prices for their agricultural products. As a result, the colonial government introduced greater African participation and promotion of agricultural cooperatives that put the marketing of produce in farmers' hands. This led to the birth of membership organisations including cooperatives and the elite led groups such as the 'Young Men of Buganda' and the Uganda African Welfare Associations. These organisations lead to a number of workers'

strikes in the 1940s (Bazaara 2000). This period also saw the birth of the Uganda Council of Women comprising middle-class women that rallied behind women's right to participate in national politics and the cultural-based organisation to represent specific cultural interests (Nanna et al. 2002). These membership organisations initially formed to serve members interests. Compared to Europe where NGOs were mainly in response to World War II or faith-based beliefs that set out to offer relief services, the situation is different in Uganda where NGOs seem to originate from nationalistic interests and resistance against exploitation.

However, the invasion of international charitable and religious based NGOs such as the Salvation Army (1931), Young Women Christian Association (1952) and Young Men Christian Association (1959) shifted the approach of NGOs from civic engagement to welfare. NGOs concentrated on complementing government programmes by giving charity to those bypassed by government programmes. Of the 18 registered NGOs with the NGO directory at the time, 12 were international religious based NGOs (Sekatawa et al. 2001: 9). These NGOs received funding from northern governments and international donors. In addition, the arrival of missionaries led to the growth of religious groups, which established churches, schools and hospitals. Although they offered alternative approaches to service delivery, they mainly amplified the role of religion in Uganda. Religious institutions remain key players especially in areas of health and education targeting special groups such as children and the disabled. Barr et al. (2003) noted that most of the NGOs in Uganda have religious characteristics, whether or not founded by religious institutions. Implicitly, most NGOs in Uganda are engaged in service delivery although shifting from delivery of tangible services to talking organisations, which Barr et al. attributed to donor impatience and fragmentation. As seen in chapter 2, talking is associated with empowerment of the poor, and remains a key strategy for NGOs even in the current poverty reduction programmes.

Post Independence (1962-1986)

After independence, the number of international NGOs continued to increase. NGOs such as the International Committee of Red Cross/Uganda Red Cross (1962), Oxfam (1963) and American Relief Organisation in De-

velopment-CARE (1969) started charity work in Uganda. The growing number of international NGOs increased the flow of funding together with northern ideologies that further influenced approaches to NGO work. Politically this period in Uganda is characterised by civil war, politicised ethnicity, regionalism and religious differences, which led to authoritarian rule (Dicklitch and Lwanga 2003: 483). These differences led to numerous strikes by workers forcing government to institute strong laws to curtail the operations of trade unions and expulsion of foreign workers in 1968. This result stems from the overwhelming view of these forces as anti-government (Bazaara 2000). At the same time, the mass/ membership-based organisations that were involved in independence struggles had more or less achieved their objectives and some of their leaders found themselves co-opted into government activities (Nanna et al. 2002). Thus, there were limited NGO activities. Robinson and Friedman (2005) attributed this to the limited opportunities of NGO survival in multiparty democracies. Local NGOs could not develop, possibly for fear of being associated with any political party. This argument remains untested in the recent multiparty politics. Although in other African countries, the elite organisations that sprung up to fight for independence gradually became formal NGOs, in Uganda besides the cooptation, political insecurity limited formal organisation.

The 1974-79 dictatorship further suppressed NGOs, as the regime stifled all freedoms to organise. Some international NGOs withdrew their staff and scaled down their activities. Mainly faith-based institutions persisted with the provision of basic services especially in health, education and community development. Only 11 per cent of NGOs registered with the directory began between 1962 and 1980 (Sekatawa et al. 2001: 10). Some of these organisations included the Uganda Law Society and the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA-U-1974), created to deal with the rampant human rights abuses of the time. Those NGOs that persisted received funding from northern governments and religious connections. They concentrated on welfare, relief services and human rights education because such a focus created minimal conflicts between NGOs and the government. The NGO sector remained 'decimated and disorganized' (Dicklitch and Lwanga 2003: 488). The relationship between NGOs and the government remained non-interventionist, which enabled NGOs to enjoy financial freedom. The pe-

riod 1979-1985, was characterised by political instability, abuse of human rights, socioeconomic break down of the country and there were minimal NGO activities in the country. However, due to global trends like the struggle for human rights, membership NGOs like Action for Development-ACFODE (1985) and the Uganda Human Rights Activists (1982) formed and obtained external funding to champion human and women's rights.

Museveni's era or post-war periods (1986-to date)

Although some parts of the country, especially northern Uganda still experience insecurity, much of the country had stability since 1986. Since then, the NGO sector has been steadily growing. Dicklitch and Lwanga (2003: 496) describe this growth as 'a flood of NGOs.' The factors for such growth relate to post war rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, SAPs, failure of the 1990s economic growth to trickle down to the population together with other social problems like HIV/AIDS, the rhetoric of civil society, good governance agenda of donors, and the World Bank poverty reduction agenda as explained below.

The Movement Government[2] set an economic recovery and reconstruction programme aimed at national unity, socioeconomic and political stability including observance of human rights. The government adopted interventionist programmes. It introduced a local government system premised on socialist ideologies of the broad-based popular participation of citizens, self-governance and restricted the multiparty activities of the neoliberal thinking (Piron and Norton 2004). The system provided space for different classes of people to engage in national development through local government systems or by forming self-help community-based organisations (CBOs). Several NGOs, especially membership NGOs like the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (1986) and non-membership organisations, such as the Uganda Rural Development and Training programme (1987) and VEDCO (1987) developed specifically to participate in the reconstruction, offering social and welfare services. Primarily, the elite class in Uganda and Ugandans living abroad formed these organisations. In part, the socio-political and economic collapse of the country made the elites develop alternative survival routes but the appalling situation in war-ravaged areas needed welfare interventions. The elite phenomenon within NGOs is

not unique to Uganda or to this period, but has existed since the colonial days. In most parts of Africa, elites initiate and provide leadership to the NGO sector. During this period, NGO funding was project based. This saw elite NGO founders encouraged by donors to travel around the globe searching for funding and marketing their activities. The elites continued to influence NGO dynamics in the country. Barr et al. (2003) describe the NGO sector as a thriving hot bed of talent and indigenous entrepreneurs that have put their experience and expertise to servicing public development. However, whether the elite driven organisations serve the interests of the poor is a continued debate.

Although the Government of Uganda implemented interventionist programmes, the World Bank and IMF insisted on liberal economic programmes since 1987. As in most countries in Africa, the socioeconomic hardships of the SAPs led to the growth of NGOs. One of the effects of SAPs was retrenchment of civil servants, who having lost their jobs and with an increasingly high cost of living due to cost sharing, found solace in NGOs as alternative sources of employment and income. In addition, Bazaara (2000) suggests that most service delivery NGOs and women's community-based self-help membership organisations in Uganda formed around this time. Examples include the Uganda Change Agent Association (1992), Bunyoro Kitara Development Association (1994) and BUSO Foundation (1990). These organisations took on participatory approaches to involve communities in self-help programmes. Others like ACFODE became increasingly involved in development work. For instance ACFODE lobbied for the establishment of women studies at Makerere University, the creation of the Ministry of Gender and Social Development and the formation of a gender sensitive constitution in 1995 (Namara 2002: 60). However, NGO'ism became a business for the survival of a small group of elite founders, as an alternative source of income for the unemployed and some government bureaucrats (Hearn 2007: 1102-3; Dicklitch 2001: 31). Government is said to have created its own NGOs like the National Association for Women of Uganda (1992) an umbrella organisation not only to bring women's NGOs under government control, but also as an alternative agency to deliver services to the electorate. Evidently, some of these efforts went to overcoming personal crises because of structural problems resulting from

SAPs. Thus, their effects on poverty reduction would be indirect rather than direct. Even then, much of the NGO work during this period seems concentrated on addressing the symptoms of poverty rather than its causes.

The failure of the SAPs and the conviction by the World Bank that they failed due to lack of proper structure and accountability made NGOs the preferred conduit of channelling aid to Africa. In Uganda, international NGOs expanded their business countrywide and others like Plan International (1992) opened up operations. NGOs mainly worked as complementary actors and intermediaries between donors and CBOs. NGOs received funding for multiple and sometimes duplicated projects from bilateral and international donor agencies. Local NGOs like ACFODE expanded their outreach to several districts and their programmes to include micro-credit. Elsewhere in the world, the 1980s were a decade where NGOs became important in delivering aid from the North because of the view that governments were corrupt and inefficient. Amutabi (2006: 70-1) claimed that as conduits of foreign aid NGOs endorsed the capitalist models, which became successful in Africa in the 1980s compared to socialist experiments. For instance, the number of international NGOs grew to 40 per cent of total NGOs working in Kenya. NGOs like Oxfam more than doubled its receipts from official sources from $5.5 million in 1985 to $51.1million in 1993 (Amutabi 2006: 73-4).

The multiple funding to NGOs together with the governments' decentralisation reforms further ignited the growth of district-based NGOs. Local NGOs in Uganda tend to operate in one district with a minimal national focus although there are a few NGOs that integrated their budgets in government programmes (Dicklitch 2001: 31; Barr et al. 2003: 19). While NGOs predominantly operate in one district, the majority of the NGOs in Uganda are urban-based or tend to locate their offices in trading centres for easy accessibility (Wallace et al. 2004: 4). Barr et al. (2003: 13) also noted that about 15-30 of the registered NGOs in given districts are in operation. More so, the prospects for money led to the growth of 'semi NGOs' or briefcase NGOs (Makara 2000; Dicklitch 2001; Barr et al. 2005). The NGOs reacted to the criticisms by forming NGO networks such as DENIVA (1988) and the National Union of Disabled People of Uganda (1987) to coordinate NGOs and use synergies for collective action. The

government reacted by establishing a body to regulate and control NGOs in the name of the NGO registration board.[3] This can be attributed to governments need to remain in control amidst rapidly increasing NGOs, but there were some 'wrong guys' within the sector that continued to taint the image of NGOs negatively.

Other forces that led to the growth of NGOs in the country were for instance the restoration of cultural ethnic institutions in 1993 to complement decentralisation policies. Culturally related NGOs such as the Buganda Cultural and Development Foundation (1994) opened and received funding from the Kingdom and its donors. The continued war in northern Uganda also resulted in the growth of local NGOs, incoming and expansion of international NGOs to offer relief and psychosocial services. NGOs like Oxfam and World Vision directed their efforts to relief services. Factors such as HIV/AIDS saw the growth of NGOs like TASO (1987) to undertake community-based care programmes directly or through CBOs and Barr et al. (2003) claims that HIV/AIDS is the most talked about subject among Ugandan NGOs. Furthermore, Barr et al. (2003) shows that about 59.1 per cent of the NGOs ventured into lobbying and advocacy activities. However, NGOs were heavily criticised for investing in capacity-building, spending lots of funding on workshops, diverting from tangible deliveries and their heavy presence in Kampala with less commitment to the countryside (Dicklitch 2001). Significantly, NGOs were changing their strategies to accommodate capacity-building. However, by the close of the 1990s, the NGOs trademark of being the 'panacea for underdevelopment and authoritarianism' was challenged by scholars like Dicklitch (1998) who argued that it was an illusion to believe that NGOs would create a Uganda free of poverty or would make Uganda more democratic. Dicklitch's argument may still hold today, but may not explain fully the interests of NGOs.

Amidst the predictable illusion of NGOs, there were rapid growth in NGO networks such as the NGO Forum (1997), Human Rights Network (1998) and Uganda Debt Network (1996), which formed mainly to conduct policy advocacy and dialogue with government. There are all kinds of networks in Uganda, major ones being thematic/sectoral networks for women, children and education; specialised associations, coalitions or platforms for anticorruption, governance, monitoring and capacity-building;

and national networks or umbrella bodies such as, DENIVA and NGO Forum. Then there are mirror images of national networks at district levels often called district networks or forums such as the Soroti Development Association Network and Kumi Network of Development Organisations. DENIVA (2006: 24) suggests that about 72 per cent of NGOs belong to umbrella organisations at district or national levels. This is because donors prefer to work with NGO networks instead of individual organisations, as they are believed to be better organised and able to withstand government threats (Nanna et al. 2002). Increasingly, funding for NGOs went through umbrella organisations. For instance DFID changed its funding strategy from projects to broader poverty reduction programmes and worked with fewer NGO networks at policy levels (Wallace et al. 2004: 6). However, the NGO Forum (2007: 3) notes that 'the initial enthusiasm and expectations that the formation of networks would foster synergies and collectivism have been incessantly called to question as many networks began to look and operate like NGOs…they have led to unnecessary competition for funds and members and overlapping roles.' A partial explanation may lie in the shift in donor approaches that emphasise open competitive funding where even NGO networks compete with other actors. It also seems that the original purpose of the majority of networks were to coordinate NGOs rather than cause collectivism towards poverty reduction.

Since the late 1990s, more NGOs have taken on advocacy for good governance and poverty reduction work. This coincided with the dramatic donor shift to fund governments that had pro-poor policies and shared aims around democracy and good governance, directly (Wallace et al 2004: 6). The NGO networks concentrated on the 'watch dog' role directed towards government programmes and self-governance. Prominent of these included the human rights NGOs such as the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, which concentrated on campaigns against human rights abuse and legal reforms. By 2000, there were 25 NGOs with significant human rights components out of the 4000 registered NGOs in the country (Dicklitch and Lwanga 2003: 496). Others like MS Uganda, Uganda Joint Christian Council, Action for Development and Uganda Women's Organisations Network became involved in creating electoral democracy through civic education and election monitoring. Yet others like the Uganda Debt Net-

work and the Anti-corruption Coalition of Uganda engaged in anti-corruption campaigns. The Uganda Debt Network successfully campaigned for international debt relief (Namara 2002: 52-63). As Amutabi (2006: 75) noted, in Africa NGOs such as Transparency International became respected watchdogs for the donor community. However, Robinson and Friedman (2005: iii) with examples from South Africa, Uganda and Ghana suggest that NGOs had limited significance on democratisation processes because of their undemocratic internal governance. As such, governments continually challenge them on whether they are the right institutions to champion democracy. Similarly, the NGO Forum (2007: 9) noted that NGOs in Uganda are accused and 'in some cases quite justifiably of exhibiting the very vices they claim to fight against; corruption, lack of transparency, mission creep and undemocratic structures and systems.' Because of questioning NGOs' own accountability, NGOs in Uganda reacted by developing the Quality Assurance Mechanism (QUaM) 'to clean up the NGOs own house, increase credibility and accountability and demonstrate seriousness of purpose' (Kwesiga and Namisi 2006: 89).

As explained in the next section, the government embraced NGO participation in poverty reduction programmes since 1997. This also coincided with the WB insistence that NGOs are an alternative channel to bring about economic growth through direct support of neoliberal policies and participation in poverty reduction programmes. The national NGO networks such as DENIVA, UDN and the NGO Forum positioned themselves to lead others in policy advocacy despite the lingering question of legitimacy.

Overall, the majority of the NGOs in Uganda are unspecialised, engaged in various activities, with emphasis on intangible benefits through awareness creation and are increasingly involved in advocacy activities. Ugandan elites initiated and lead the majority of NGOs. Historical analysis shows that NGO growth is related to the socioeconomic and political situations in the country, thus making them relevant to the development of Uganda. It shows that first, NGOs developed as a result of citizenship struggles, then the welfare orientation, development, human rights factors and the need for coordination saw the growth of NGO networks. However, there are also linkages between the growth of NGOs and changes in funding dynamics whereby donors shifted their emphasis from service delivery to advocacy ac-

tivities. These factors are not peculiar to Uganda but apparent in the rest of Africa with the exception of NGOs that are a result of kingdoms. Section 3.3 describes the Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan /Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PEAP/PRSPs). It discusses the origin of the PEAP, highlights the key players in its formulation and examines different research on the roles of NGOs in PEAP/PRSPs. The purpose of the section is to understand the actors in PEAP process and, how NGOs use their positions to generate benefits for the poor.

3.3   The Ugandan PEAP/PRSPs

The PEAP[4] is Uganda's national development framework and medium term planning tool. It focuses public policy explicitly on poverty reduction. Piron and Norton (2004: 13-15) attribute the origin of the PEAP to three forces. 1) President Museveni's feelings that macroeconomic stability and growth since the early 1990s had not translated into real gains for the rural poor. 2) The 1995 Government of Uganda and World Bank seminar in which the Bank tried to convince the president that market-led policies were adequate. 3) Criticism by UN agencies towards the 1995 World Bank report on Uganda together with pressure from vocal NGOs to make public policies pro-poor. Consequently, the PEAP came into being in 1997 with the goal of reducing poverty from 44 per cent in 1997 to 10 per cent in 2017. Later, the World Bank modified the PEAP and applied it globally as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Pro-poor growth policies like the thinking behind the PRSPs, was not the primary need underlying the PEAP, but the country needed policies to redistribute growth and to translate that into poverty eradication.

The PEAP gives technical guidance to the formulation of government policy and the implementation of programmes through sector wide approaches and a decentralised governance system. The sector plans guide development of district plans and budgets through decentralisation. As shown in figure 3.1, other policy instruments and implementation modalities emanate from PEAP; they in turn inform the PEAP. Figure 3.1 links decentralisation and participatory planning with public policy management. The strategic actions in the PEAP and in the sector plans translate into concrete spending plans through a three-year Medium Term Expenditure Framework

(MTEFs) and annual budgets for the sector and districts. This framework provides a formal planning structure and legitimises the contribution of other stakeholders in national planning.

Figure 3.1
Planning levels and institutions in PEAP process

VISION 2025

POVERTY
ERADICATION
ACTION PLAN

Donor programmes

SECTOR PLANS

DISTRICT PLANS

Results of participatory monitoring

NGO programmes

Private sector initiatives

3 year Medium Term Expenditure Framework

Local Govt 3 year Medium Term Expenditure Framework

"Budget Speech" & "BTTB"

Annual Budget

District Budget

Civil Society
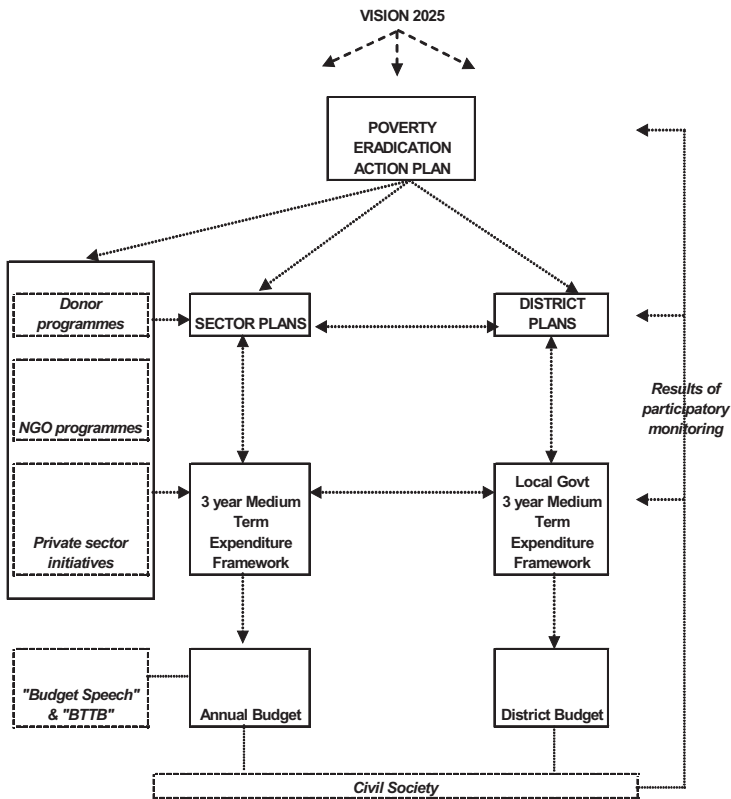
Source: Lwanga-Ntale 2004: 15

Piron and Norton (2004: 16) suggested that the PEAP is not only a technical process, but also a political project to promote mobilisation of

communities, national unity and maintain government interventions. The PEAP is also a technical project for state building by Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) and it is an international donor project to show cause for their international development assistance trends. However, to ensure the achievement of the three-pronged objective constrains the potential for the PEAP to remain focused on redistribution of growth. As a technical process, the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) provides technical expertise. It issues guidelines for its revision, coordinates inputs from different stakeholders and is responsible for production of the PEAP document and related reports. However, Booth and Nsabagasani (2005: 7) using the experience of the 2004/2005 revision process suggested that the critical thinking originally afforded by the MFPED had waned. Canagarajah and Van Diesen (2006: 650) are more critical referring to the MoFPED as a 'gatekeeper' responsible for prioritising policy suggestions from other stakeholders. They argued that often policies are prioritised based on the expenditure optimisation-allocation ceilings rather than on the priorities set by different sectors. Although Canagarajah and Van Diesen (2006: 649) showed expenditure optimisation as a likely hindrance to stakeholders' policy proposal ability to pass through the PEAP, they do not sufficiently link the roles of the gatekeepers with the political economy of poverty reduction. Why would MOFPED insist on expenditure optimisation?

As a political project, the PEAP/PRSPs had political backing for a long time and succeeded in achieving some political goals. Examples include the introduction of the universal primary education programme in 1997 and abolition of cost sharing in health services in 2000 (Canagarajah and Van Diesen 2006: 652). Each of these accomplishments was significant to mobilise the masses and retain the Movement government in power. However, Booth and Nsabagasani (2005: 7) argued that the PEAP became a more 'inclusive, high-quality process, and non-political.' President Museveni has become progressively less involved over a number of years, allowing the strategy to become more sophisticated in terms of overall objectives and articulation with sector plans, but more technocratic in terms of ownership. Canagarajah and Van Diesen (2006) give a slightly different but complementary interpretation of the PEAP revision 2004/2005. They concluded

that the PEAP had become too comprehensive and lost focus on specific poverty issues. Amidst this loss of political interest and making the PEAP comprehensive to the extent of losing specific focus, the question addressed in chapter 4 is, what are NGOs doing?

As a donor project, since 2000 the PEAP became the PRSPs used as a tool for debt relief from the World Bank and International Monitory Fund under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative.[5] Since then, formulation of the PEAP/PRSP occurs together with the technical guidance and approval of the World Bank. Although Uganda was among the first countries to receive debt relief, the savings are 'ring-fenced' in the names of poverty action fund and directed to social sectors such as health, education, agriculture, water, sanitation and rural roads (Gariyo 2002: 17). This did not only make the PEAP rigid in terms of addressing emerging local issues, but it further skewed accountability away from downward accountability upward, tied to aid funding. In addition, the PEAP/PRSPs formulation and consultation process has seen increased funding, which Canagarajah and Van Diesen (2006: 651) argued poses a risk to true local participation and ownership. The funding skewed accountability in PEAP towards donors especially to satisfy demands by the World Bank Poverty Reduction Support Credit (PRSC),[6] which operationalises the PRSP. As such Uganda was among the first countries to receive credit equivalent to USD$ 150 million in 2001 and USD$ 19 million through the IMF poverty reduction growth facility in 2002 (Norton and Piron 2004: 22). Several donor agencies still link their own support to PRSC assessment reports and dialogues. However since NGOs participate in PRSPs to neutralise some of these interests in favour of the poor, it is still pertinent to ask how NGOs participate to neutralise such donor interest, an issue followed up in chapter 4.

Several studies (Canagarajah and Van Diesen 2006; Hickey 2005; Piron and Norton 2004) maintain that Ugandan PEAP/PRSP focused public policy on multidimensional poverty reduction, encouraged innovations and the testing of certain models or instruments, which can be replicated in other countries. They also created some space for other actors like NGOs to participate in decision-making, increasingly conditioned aid funding to relevant sector plans and enabled different alliances among donors. Despite these

achievements and the existence of comprehensive PRSPs, the number of people living below the income poverty line increased from 35 per cent in 2000 to 38 per cent in 2003 although there is some evidence it reduced again to 31 per cent in 2006. Nyamugasira (2007) attributes such poverty trends to the controlling hand of the World Bank, which diverted the countries' efforts to handle poverty effectively. Chapter 4 of this thesis discusses these topics more thoroughly. Although Nyamugasira's criticism comes from the NGO sector, it is still important to examine what NGOs are doing in the poverty-reduction strategy development process. How did they come to engage in PRSPs in Uganda? What contributions have they made?

NGO participation in PEAP/PRSPs

This section examines the nature of NGO participation in PRSPs, highlights the issues NGOs try to address and its contribution to poverty reduction. The reason and circumstances that led to NGO participation in the Ugandan PEAP/PRSPs processes are varied, but studies show three main reasons. First, governments own initiative to invite NGO participation. For instance, Piron and Norton (2004: 13-24) noted that due to the culture of consultation and participation inherent in the National Resistance Movement system of governance, NGOs were invited to participate in the PEAP. The Movement government adopted a socialist orientation that encouraged many actors to take part in government-managed programmes. Thus, government used the poverty agenda as a mobilisation tool to rally key actors behind government initiatives. Furthermore, NGOs had previously been involved in the constitution-making process in 1995, the Local Government Act formulation process and the National Gender Policy formulation processes. NGOs like UDN worked with government in lobbying for debt relief. Moreover, Larok (2006: 1) noted that the government needed to utilise strong NGO networks to facilitate dialogue at local levels and thus invited umbrella organisations to participate. This is in line with the argument by McGee et al. (2002: 16) that the government recognises that NGOs 'have useful knowledge to contribute and are therefore legitimate interlocutors on poverty and policy issues.' Worldwide, the 1980s and 90s are associated with the UN calling for development with a human face and the rapid spread of participatory approaches to development. Thus, NGOs had an

advantage in participatory development and in integrating social development into the poverty agenda.

Second, NGO participation originated from NGOs own effort to seek formal recognition in public policymaking. Gariyo insists that NGO participation was due to self-initiation by some NGOs who lobbied government to be included 'as serious development partners and actors in policy arena' (Gariyo 2002: 10). Third, the CSO Task Force, (2000: 2) on the revision of PEAP attributes NGO participation to insistence by the International Monitory Fund and the World Bank to include NGOs in PRSPs and continued pressure from donors. Similarly, Gariyo (2002: 9) shows that the demand for tripartite engagement between government, donors and NGOs by the World Bank traces back to 1996-1999 during the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative. NGOs also participated in the World Bank's participatory Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) in 1997 where the Bank undertook consultation in two selected districts. The beginning of the new millennium has seen a lot of pressure on the NGO sector where donors look at them as drivers of good governance, development and poverty reduction. However, the question further discussed in chapter 4 is, are NGOs, regardless of how they acquired a seat at the policymaking table influencing poverty reduction policies in favour of the poor?

There is no doubt that NGOs have been heavily involved in PEAP processes. The PEAP allowed NGOs to participate in the PEAP consultation, Mid Term Expenditure Framework, sector working groups, and the monitoring of the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF). NGOs spearheaded the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Projects (UPPAP) where efforts were made to consult the poor on their own priorities in planning. In the revision exercise of 1999/2000, a task force of ten[7] international and national NGOs and research institutions chaired by the Uganda Debt Network led the regional consultative workshops. In all, 644 participants (405 men and 239 women), mainly representatives from NGOs and CBOs attended the regional consultation workshops (CSO Task Force 2000: 4). NGOs contributed to the policy content, including the structure of the PEAP documents. For instance Gariyo (2002: 26) shows that due to the presence of NGOs in the PEAP revision of 2000, issues such as employment and NGO participation and monitoring were given more prominence. The

view of poverty came to be as a multidimensional phenomenon including governance issues like powerlessness and voicelessness although it could not attribute it wholly to the participation of NGOs (McGee et al. 2002: 16).

In 2003/2004, NGOs led by the NGO Forum organised in 13 related smaller sector subcommittees that coordinated the sectoral meetings, reviews and prepared sectoral specific position papers, later consolidated into the CSO report. The consultation with the public at least tripled from 644 people in 2000 to 2449 in 2003 (NGO Forum 2004: ii). In 2004, NGOs provided feedback on problems of slum dwellers, internally displaced people and contributed to the inclusion of issues of pastoralism and conflict resolution, which the policymakers may have omitted. Larok (2006:3) argued that there is a close similarity between the PEAP 2004 structure proposed by NGOs and the structure eventually adopted. Although Renard and Molenaers (2003) cautions that the expected results from NGO participation are ambitious, NGOs have had incremental results on the PRSPs process and content (Piron and Evans 2004).

Despite the above, Piron and Norton (2004) and Nyamugasira and Rowden (2002: 4) criticised that NGO participation in the PEAP 1997 and 2000, was rushed and disorganised. Although NGOs were involved in the consultation, these institutions may not have represented the poor (CSO Task Force 2000: 4). The PEAP was rushed because it was used as PRSP for debt relief thus, its formulation. Nanna et al. (2002: 33) also explained that during the 2000 revision exercise, certain policy issues such as loans, macroeconomic policies remained no-go areas for NGOs. In addition, Larok (2006: 1-4) highlighted the 'very rigid and pre determined macro-economic parameters which are often negotiated exclusively between donors and government or imposed on government.' Amidst these limitations, DENIVA (2006) published a report entitled 'Civil Society in Uganda: At the Crossroads'. The report describes the sector as passive, focusing on service delivery and subcontracting from government. It is a divided sector, sometimes suspicious, it is where accountability is more important to the donors than to the local population, some NGOs are run by one or two individuals and some are not sure of long-term donor support (DENIVA 2006: 1-11). However, what are they doing at the crossroads? Who benefits from their position? How have they linked the poor with poverty reduction pro-

grammes? Although the available studies highlight some of the achievements and challenges of NGOs in PRSPs, the issues addressed in the next chapter are how are the NGOs manoeuvring to achieve the objectives of their participation in globalised poverty reduction projects? NGOs in Uganda are engaged in delivery of several public services such as the Community HIV/AIDS Initiative and feeder roads maintenance programme, but at the policy implementation level, this study focuses on the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS). This is because the majority of the poor in the country depend on agriculture for survival thus; it is worthwhile to understand how they are included in the NAADS programme.

3.4   The National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)

This section explains what NAADS is and the key actors and the roles NGOs play in the programme. The NAADS formed in June 2001 with a mandate to 'develop a demand driven, farmer-led agricultural service delivery system targeting the poor subsistence farmers.'[8] The dominant view since the colonial era is that agriculture extension is the responsibility of government. This includes the coercive form of extension during colonial rule, followed by professionally driven extension in the 1960s, then parallel and unified extension in the 1990s and the NAADS of 2000s (Namara and Mugyenyi 2004: 90). Common among these forms of extension is that the farmers are the apparatus for trial but the political policies of the time also influence extension. Falling within the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, the NAADS represent a paradigm shift from the previously public financed and delivered extension provision to demand driven and private led advisory services.

Implementation of the NAADS started in July 2001 and since then, it expanded to new districts and within districts to new subcounties. As shown in Figure 3.2, 79 districts are currently implementing the NAADS. By December 2007, NAADS was extended to about 715 000 farming households in 712 subcounties representing a quarter of the farming population. There were 39 684 groups potentially benefiting from the NAADS at the national level, composed of 55-59 per cent women and 40-45 per cent men. There has been an exponential growth of farmer groups from 4911 groups in 2003, to 15 900 in 2005, and to 39 684 in 2007 (MAAIF 2007: 10-11).

The number of groups with an average of 502 groups per district is one success story of the NAADS programme.

Figure 3.2
A map showing NAADS participating districts

Sources: http://www.NAADS.or.ug/districts.php

There is a direct relationship between the PEAP and the NAADS. It stems from the poverty agenda by the NRM government, which led to the development of the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) aimed at transforming subsistence agriculture into market-oriented agriculture. Anticipated to increase agricultural productivity for more than 80 per cent of the population in Uganda who earn their livelihood from agriculture, the

PMA was seen as a blueprint for eradicating rural poverty (Gariyo 2002: 10). The NAADS is one of the components of the PMA intended to offer agriculture extension and advisory services (MoAAIF 2000). NAADS has seven components including Farmers' Institutional Development (FID) aimed at strengthening farmer institutions and the Integrated Support Farmer Group (ISFG) intended to scale up technologies among farmer groups.[9] Until recently (2006), it was mainly characterised by capacity-building workshops, as the supply of inputs had been outside the original design of the NAADS because donors regarded supply of inputs as welfare or as provision of subsidies.

The guiding principles behind NAADS are farmer empowerment, fostering participatory processes and market-oriented farming among others. Their empowerment activities go directly towards individual socioeconomic material gain. This is in line with the neoliberal orientation anchoring the NAADS programme. The individual focus aims at humanising development and puts individuals at the centre of development policies and programmes (Fride 2006: 7). There is an assumption that including individuals in decision-making would give them the power to change their situation and that of their community. On the other hand, NAADS utilises the group approach where decision-making should ideally be by a consensus of group members. Wils (2001: 9) argued that group arrangements are necessary because what empowerment intends to achieve 'is not change of incidental arrangements but rather modification of societal and institutional norms, customs and or stratified relationship which often excludes certain kinds of people and sectors from decision making.' However, the mixture of these strategies is not without struggles and ambiguities. Chapter 5 addresses these issues in more detail.

Several actors are involved in implementation of the NAADS programme, which coincides with the good governance agenda of opening space for other actors. The Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) has overall responsibility for implementation of the NAADS programme supervised by the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development. The subcounty and district local councils and administrations are responsible for support and supervision at their levels. An executive board of directors leads the NAADS; it has a secretariat with tech-

nical staff members responsible for technical guidance, programme coordination and supervision. Although there is a direct and structural link between the MAAIF and the NAADS, in terms of practice, the NAADS is an independent entity. The MAAIF has limited control in terms of decision-making over NAADS operations. Other institutional frameworks for implementation include farmer institutions, local governments, the private sector and NGOs. The NAADS has coordinating offices at district and sub-county levels. The farmer leadership together with subcounty NAADS coordinating offices and the subcounty committee on production at the district and subcounty levels are responsible for planning and implementing NAADS programmes. Their responsibility includes contracting out services to private service providers including NGOs, but does the participation of these actors especially NGOs lead to the empowerment of farmers? Chapter 5 of this thesis follows up on this question.

NAADS received 80 per cent of its budget from donors, eight per cent from the central government, ten per cent from local governments and two per cent from farmers. The amount of money disbursed to the districts from the central government depends on how much the district and its farmers have been able to co-finance. NAADS funds pass through a number of institutions intended to ensure transparency and accountability. Figure 3.3 shows that donors deposit funds into the NAADS budget support account, which is later transferred to the government consolidated fund account (basket fund); to a poverty alleviation fund account, then released as NAADS conditional grants to the districts. Then, the districts deposit money in the subcounty or production department accounts. It is at the district or subcounty level where service delivery is subcontracted to service providers including NGOs. The path of funding is a reflection of the top down nature of government programmes. At the same time, it shows the accountability and communication structures of the programmes. The hierarchal structure has been criticised for causing slow disbursements, which leads to delayed implementation of activities and encourages inefficiency and corruption (Namara and Mugyenyi 2004: 94).

Figure 3.3
Funding flow in NAADS programme

Flow of Funds-National Level
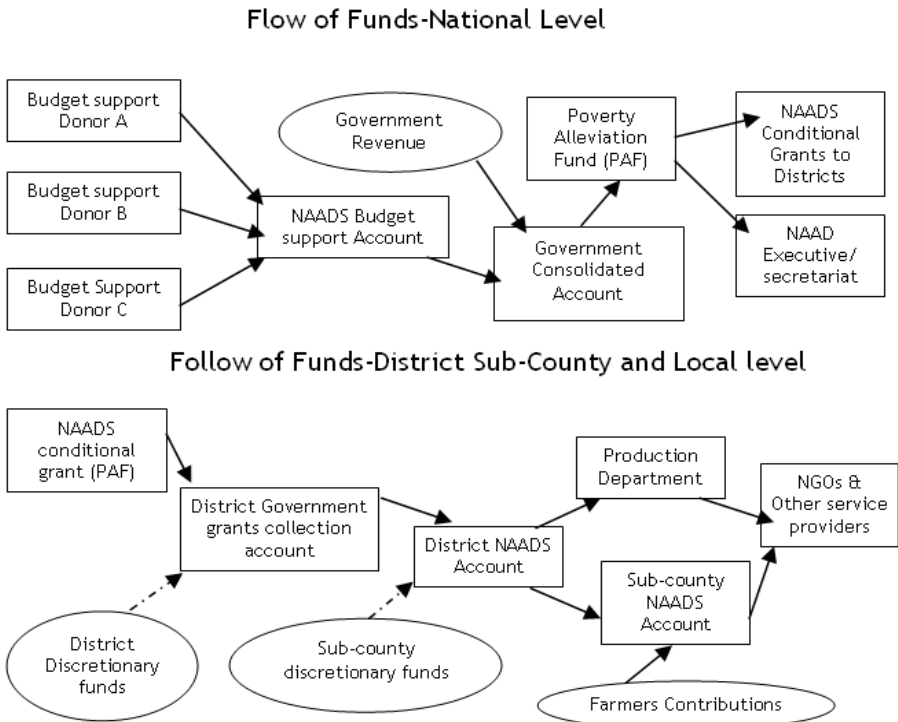
Source: MAAIF (2000), Master Document of National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)

Donors who believe governments have limited capacities to deliver services effectively spearhead worldwide contracting out of services. The sub-contracting of delivery services became a common phenomenon with the impetus of new public management driven by donors that saw a retrenchment of public servants leaving public offices with few staff members to manage service delivery through private means. MAAIF (2007: v) indicates that NAADS is in line with the World Bank, European Union and other donor strategies for development cooperation. In Uganda, donors shifted their funding from project specific funding to Sector Wide Approaches

where funds flow in one basket to the government. Sector Wide Approach guidelines dictate the contracting out of services to private service providers such as individuals, companies, academic institutions and NGOs to ensure timely accountability. However, CARE (2005: 30) noted that the accountability envisioned through subcontracting of NAADS services favours donors rather than farmers. This is because local governments obtain their mandate from the central government and donors who finance their operations thus they tend to concentrate on reporting to central governments rather than the people.

NGO participation in NAADS

The NAADS Act of 2001 legitimised the participation of NGOs in the delivery of agriculture extension services through a system called 'outsourcing' (MAAIF 2000). Overall, the view of NGOs is as another service provider. As of September 2005, there were a total number of 864 registered private service providers in 14 districts.[10] Of which, 121 (14.0%) are NGOs including CBOs, 260 (30.0%) private firms and 483 (55.9%) individual service providers. The reasons for NGO engagement in NAADS subcontracts vary. CARE (2005: 5) shows that local governments largely view subcontracting NGOs as an obligation. Government anticipates several advantages such as enhancing accountability, improved speed in absorbing conditional grants, which have time limits, promotion of efficiency since the common thinking is that NGOs are more results-oriented, and increased joint accomplishment of objectives, which saves resources in the end. Government also viewed NGOs as complementary actors by contributing resources and filling capacity gaps experienced by local governments. Government expectations seem biased towards efficiency and outputs because these are critical measurements for good governance. On the other hand, NGOs anticipated that subcontracting from government would broaden their financial base, as it is one way of recognising the capacities of NGOs, an opportunity for government and NGOs to know each other, and it could lead to joint accomplishment of common objectives (CARE 2005: 12).

NGOs are subcontracted to offer Farmer Institutional Development (FID) and Integrated Support Farmer Group (ISFG) training services. The FID component includes mobilisation and development, strengthening

farmer groups through training[11] and enabling farmers to select viable agriculture enterprises, which are the basis of the advisory service interventions (agricultural extension). The FID is intended to enable farmers to create institutions through which they can collectively act, make their voices heard in the decision-making process and access relevant information and resources to influence policies that affect agriculture and agricultural service delivery (MAAIF 2000: 4). With the ISFG, NGOs are involved in revolving credit schemes, management training and selection of groups compliant with ISFG requirements[12] and development of technology for farmers at the national, district or subcounty levels. The purpose of this training is to prepare farmers to receive grants or loans in the form of farm implements. Thus, the district NAADS coordination unit together with the district farmers' forum and district technical core teams select the NGOs through a public tendering process. However, the nature of the selection had 'some NGOs pay more allegiance to the district than to the sub county' (NAADS 2002: 3). Although there are more 'smaller' NGOs (in terms of budgets) that have entered into a contract with the NAADS at local government levels, large NGOs like CARE International and Africare have to be begged to participate in the public tendering process.

Originally, FID and ISFG training were informally a preserve for NGOs because 1) of the assumption that NGOs were effective in mobilising and empowering farmers; 2) NGOs were believed to have experience and competencies in awareness creation and education activities for grassroots communities; and 3) they were believed to have experience in participatory and group approach processes. However, with time there has been evidence that NGOs lack the necessary skills to satisfy the demands of the contract (DENIVA 2005: 16-19). DENIVA concluded that participation of NGOs in FID, in for instance the Arua, Tororo and Kabale districts 'did shoddy work in training and enterprise selection; partly due to lack of technical human resource capacity and partly due to the short time and poor budgetary allocation for institutional development.' Similarly, CARE (2005: 15) observed that the short-term contracts of three-to-six months together with NGO involvement in bribery lead to substandard work. Consequently, some districts opened up FID and ISFG service delivery to other private service providers. A number of impact surveys of NAADS have been under-

taken by Scanagri (Denmark), IFRI (USA), Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS –Uganda), ITAD (UK) and other internally commissioned studies by NAADS covering farmers' households and groups, assessing issues of production, income, adoption rate of the programme, quality of services and availability of services. Notably however, is the fact that assessment of farmers' empowerment occurs by looking at ownership of the programme and material benefits rather than shifts in relational power relations. Although empowerment is both an objective and a guiding principle of NAADS, how NGOs have been actors in the empowerment of farmers remains poorly studied. It is this issue that chapter 5 discusses.

3.5   Conclusion

The historical analysis has shown that NGO growth in Uganda relates to the socioeconomic and political situations highly, thereby making them relevant within development trends of Uganda. First, NGOs developed because of citizenship struggles especially the elite membership NGOs. Then, the welfare-oriented forces including international NGOs and missionaries created others. Post independence saw few NGOs emerging due to multipartism and the dictatorship regimes of government that did not allow freedom of organising. The trend changed rapidly from 160 NGOs in 1986 to approximately 7000 NGOs in 2007.

Government interventionist approaches that encouraged the growth of local NGOs for social mobilisation and service delivery partly explained the rapid growth of NGOs since the mid-1980s. The international NGOs also intervened to participate in the reconstruction process. NGOs like ACFODE (women's organisation) expanded their activities across the country. This combined with the socioeconomic hardships of the SAPs; elites established several NGOs as alternative sources of employment. Government employees also formed their own NGOs as a source of income. This coincided with the anti-statist agenda of the World Bank that saw increased funding and interest in NGOs. Working on multiple areas or sectors NGOs became complementary agents as well as conduits for foreign aid. Although it increased NGO flexibility to undertake activities of their choice, it also increased their fluidity and unspecialised nature.

Other forces like the HIV/AIDS, persistent war in northern Uganda, corruption in the country and continued abuse of human rights resulted in the growth of more service delivery organisations. Moreover, NGO umbrella organisations developed because of need for coordination within the sector and increased funding for networks to undertake advocacy activities. NGOs shifted their approach to focus more on education, awareness creation and advocacy. These forces together with the donors' quest for good governance and democratisation process led to advocacy NGOs. The growth of NGOs also links with changes in funding dynamics whereby donors shifted their emphasis from service delivery to advocacy activities. However, the shift attracted criticism for being talking organisations. Accusations of being undemocratic and corrupt also arose. NGOs reacted by forming more NGO networks at both national and local levels and lobbying to engage in public policymaking processes.

Since 1997, NGOs in Uganda especially advocacy networks have been involved in poverty-reduction policy formulation processes. NGOs lobbied for inclusion in PRSPs; donors also insisted on NGO involvement and increased their funding for their engagement. In implementation of the NAADS, NGOs were involved in the FID and ISFG training aimed at empowering farmers; a number of farmer groups formed, received training and assistance from NGOs. Thus, NGOs in Uganda have a potential to contribute depending on the funding dynamics and the socioeconomic and political context at a given material time. What remains unknown, and what this analysis turns to in chapters 4 and 5 is: how are NGOs participating to achieve expectations for their participation in the poverty reduction agenda?

Notes

[1]   NGOs have legal recognition as such in Uganda if they register with the NGO registration board under the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Barr et al. (2005: 672) shows that 86 per cent of the NGOs in Uganda are registered.

[2]   National Resistance Movement is a result of Museveni's multiethnic guerrilla movement, the National Resistance Army, in rural Buganda in 1981-1986.

[3]   The NGO Registration Board is a statutory body mandated to control the operations of all NGOs in the country and ensure that they operate within pub-

lic interests. Established by statute in 1989, the registration goes through the local governments system and then to the Board.

4   The PEAP 2004/5-2007/8 has five major components:

Pillar 1: Economic management that aims at boosting growth through: Removal of bureaucratic barriers to investment; Improvement in transport infrastructure and utility services; and Modernisation/ commercialisation of agriculture, with emphasis on value-added.

Pillar 2: Enhancing production, competitiveness and incomes: Focus production, competitiveness and incomes, transport infrastructure, energy, tourism, financial services, medium, small-scale and micro-enterprises, environment, labour market and productivity of workers; and Promotion of co-operatives and Area Marketing Cooperative Enterprises, to enhance farmers' ability to market crops; Institutionalising a trade negotiation team, strengthening the monitoring of standards, and streamlining export promotion.

Pillar 3: Security, conflict-resolution and disaster management: Use security forces to protect population; equip and transform the army; regularise vigilante forces; and normalise the roles of the army and other institutions as peace is restored; Search for peaceful methods of conflict-resolution; support amnesty process and pursue disarmament; Strengthen disaster preparedness; Coordinate the humanitarian aid response; and Mainstream management of refugees into district planning and continue to implement the policy on self-reliance of refugees.

Pillar 4: Governance: Commit to maintaining high standards of human rights; Justice, Law and Order: continue with reforms of criminal and commercial justice; Improve access to justice by recruiting police and judicial officers; and better monitoring and financial controls, including the Integrated Financial Management System, procurement reforms, and the publication of transfers to local government

Pillar 5: Human development: Education: improve efficiency and quality of education; improve targeting of Universal Secondary Education; Health: continue implementing health reforms and prioritise preventive care under the new Health Sector Support Plan II; Water supply: increase percentage of people served with access to improved water sources; and Social development: revitalize community development function and strengthen management and monitoring

5   Uganda was the first country to receive HIPC II debt relief upon accepting its plan as a PRSP.

6   The PRSC is a World Bank lending instrument created to provide concessional lending in support of implementation of PRSPs.

7   These included Uganda Debt Network (Chair), Uganda Women's Network, Veco Uganda, Action Aid Uganda, Oxfam GB, Forum for Women Educationalists, the Centre for Basic Research and Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR)—the last two are research institutions.

8   http://www.NAADS.or.ug

9   Components of NAADS include Farmer Institution Development, Integrated Support Farmer Group, advisory services and information for farmers, agri-business development and market linkages, capacity development for service providers, planning, monitoring, quality assurance and programme, management and coordination.

10   These districts include Arua, Kabarole, Kabale, Kibaale, Kitgum, Busia, Tororo, Soroti, Rakai, Hoima, Mbale, Mukono, Wakiso and Luwero.

11   FID training content includes 'rights, responsibilities and role of farmer groups, group initiation, growth and development, leadership skills and development, participatory planning, enterprise selection, constitution making, farming as a business, linkage to markets, gender considerations in farmer group development, sustainable natural resource management, participatory monitoring and evaluation and mainstreaming the concerns of the impact of HIV/AIDS on agricultural production and farmer group development' (DENIVA 2005: 23-4).

12   A group compliant with ISFG requirements must have a group bank account, constitution, meeting minutes and registered at the subcounty level.

4 Poverty Reduction Policy Influence: Realities of NGO Participation

4.1   Introduction

Within the dominant poverty reduction agenda, the roles of NGOs are expected to lead to three interconnected outputs, namely broad-based ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability, which will eventually result in poverty reduction (Dewachter 2007: 7; Molenaers and Renard 2006: 8). Chapter 3 showed that NGOs in Uganda have a long history of participation in poverty reduction programmes as service providers. However, since 1997, many NGOs claim to do advocacy, most especially in the PEAP/PRSPS. Given reports that the performance of the Ugandan PRSP progress is disappointing in view of its overall principles of 'country ownership', 'result orientation', 'comprehensive approach', 'partnership framework', and 'long term outlook' (Canagarajah and Van Diesen 2006), the questions then become, what are NGOs doing? How are NGOs participating in relation to the expectation about broad-based ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability? What are the results of NGO participation and how do we explain these results? Chapter 4 argues that NGO participation in policy processes is often reactive, inconsistent, and seemingly cosmetic and in most respects technocratic. There is lack of a deliberate arrangement to make NGO participation influential towards poverty reduction, there is limited NGO competencies and the unwillingness of donors to listen to the interests of the poor. As such, the process of incorporating NGOs in the PRSPs has led to tension among actors including NGOs because some of their interests remain unsatisfied. Of course as suggested in chapter 2, the nature of NGO participation within PRSPs and the factors that explain it are not isolated from the interests of government and donors.

This chapter contains six sections. Section 4.2 explains the logic underlying NGO participation in PRSPs. Sections 4.3-4.5 utilise the Ugandan context to examine the dynamics of NGO participation in relation to broad-based ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability. Section 4.6 gives concluding remarks by reflecting on the argument of the chapter.

4.2   Logic of NGO Participation in PRSPs

Since the 1980s, participation has been a significant development approach and an integral process in project planning, implementation, policymaking and governance (Salinas Lanao 2007: 10). A major benefit associated with participation is its alleged ability to challenge the top down model of development. The objective of participation is to transform existing development practices radically including social relations, institutional practices and capacity gaps, which cause social exclusion (Hickey and Mohan 2004: 13). Thus, the common view of participation is as a means as well as an end to poverty reduction. Although participation has been tyrannised, the majority regard it as a central condition in the current poverty reduction policy processes and the new aid architecture. This section examines the underlying assumptions behind NGO participation in poverty reduction programmes in order to understanding its dynamics.

Molenaers and Renard (2006) suggested that donors consider civil society participation critical in poverty reduction because of the expectation that it will lead to the three results of broad-based ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability through the process of policy formulation. Civil society participation thus means participation by citizens, its representatives and by NGOs in poverty reduction policy processes. Thus, figure 4.1 shows the cause-to-effect relationship where donors think that civil society participation would lead to poverty reduction. Although Molenaers and Renard criticised this donor view as too naïve, simplistic, ambitious and wrong, it presents a rich analytical framework for an empirical study like this one, because in their support of PEAP/PRSPs, this view motivates donors.

Figure 4.1
Civil society causality chain
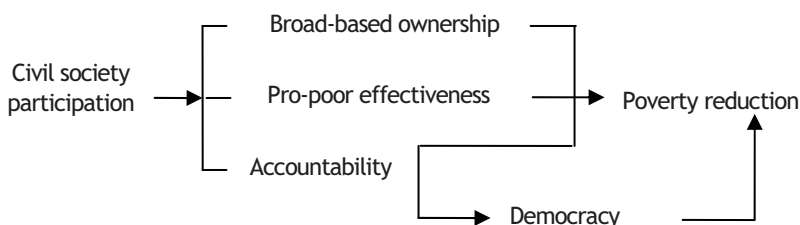
Source: Molenaers and Renard (2006: 8)

For purposes of this study, Molenaers and Renard's framework is slightly modified (see figure 4.2) to examine the NGO participation in achieving the three ascribed expectations to explain how NGOs influence poverty reduction policies and what explains their participation. Chapter 3 showed that the circumstances that led to participation of NGOs in the Ugandan PEAP/PRSPs ranged from governments' initiative to promote national unity, NGOs struggle for recognition in policymaking and donor pressure to include NGOs in their governance agenda. However, NGOs continued to participate within Molenaers and Renard's framework where their participation involves different interests, institutions and capacities that eventually influence what NGOs do. This chapter discusses the roles of NGOs in achieving the three outputs henceforth influencing poverty reduction policies.

Broad-based country ownership is taken to mean a process where policies are country driven, aligned to country priorities and participatory in the sense that a majority of the population and their representatives participate in development of a strategy, its implementation, monitoring and ongoing development (Eberlei 2007: 8). The designers of the PRSP mechanism view the development of national poverty reduction policies as a consensus and cooperation instrument by governments and by a wide range of stakeholders in policymaking and priority setting. The criticisms of the previous models of development, viewed as donor driven and imposing policies on develop-

ing countries informs the emphasis on broad-based ownership. Thus, PRSPs consider these policies as a product of joint participation by government and civil society actors. The extent to which participation of NGOs leads to participation of the poor and their ownership of the policies is of major interest in this chapter.

Participation links closely to decision-making where people can plan and decide for themselves about what action to take to change their own situation. It is through participation that NGOs would cause broad-based ownership by enabling the poor and other stakeholders to engage in policymaking and policy debates. The claim that NGO participation would lead to broad-based ownership may be accurate because NGOs always claim to work for the poor thus PRSPs can be seen as an extension of their work. However, several criticisms have been directed to this alleged NGO role as consensus builders, development brokers and not necessarily representatives of the poor (Piron and Evas 2004; Cling et al. 2002). NGOs are criticised for harbouring different interests, lacking a joint voice and not being able to establish better linkages with the poor (Hickey and Bracking 2005). 'Yet development cannot be done to people. People have to become the agents of their own development' (Ramphele in Boyte 2008: 119). Despite the criticism, it is still important to understand the dynamics of NGO participation because NGOs are increasingly participating in PRSPs with a normative agenda of transforming existing policies and practices.

In the case of pro-poor effectiveness, the emphasis is in response to the failure of governments to implement policies that address the poor's needs. Rombouts (2006:28) equates pro-poor effectiveness with achieving poverty reduction. Of course, NGO participation alone may not reduce poverty but NGOs should contribute by 'bringing out the poverty issues and concerns of local poor' and more importantly the multidimensional nature of poverty and voices of the poor into poverty reduction policies. In this regard, pro-poor effectiveness is about influencing poverty reduction policies through accumulating valuable knowledge on the local context of poverty and advocacy to push for pro-poor agendas in policy discussions (Court et al. 2006). However, there is an assumption that the national government and its international donors are ready to listen to pro-poor voices, which actors such as NGOs could voice. There seems to be a general assumption that the par-

ticipation of NGOs will be problem free and purely technical rather than politically aimed at transforming existing social order (Dewachter 2007). In reality, the dynamics of interaction between NGOs and other policy actors is characterised by negotiated choices and struggles over varied interests. The contribution of NGOs is partly dependent on their competencies, ability to provide acceptable input and the willingness of other actors to listen.

Most expect NGOs to increase the accountability of governments towards the population. Accountability may mean transparency in decision-making and accounting, efficiency of operations and working within legal confines in a transparent manner (Jordan and Van Tuijl 2006: 4). The insistence on accountability is a result of the loss of confidence in the role of governments as they are often accused of being inefficient and protecting the interests of the non-poor. Thus, NGOs are to protect the interests of the poor through participation in monitoring budget and resource utilisation and exerting pressure on government to ensure responsive policies to the poor. NGO participation is as both a technical and a political agenda. Moreover, Molenaers and Renard (2006) show that there is a linkage between accountability and good governance, which eventually will lead to poverty reduction. However, as they argue, democracy is not the direct aim of PRSPs.

Renard and Molenaers (2003) used the causality chain to study NGO participation in Rwanda and concluded that donors should scale down their ambitions on NGO participation in poverty reduction programmes. This is because they found that NGOs were not ready to rise to the challenge of participation in PRSPs and donors did little to protect them from government repulsion. Thus, governments could get away with a semblance of NGO consultation. Molenaers and Renard use the causality chain mainly to understand the effectiveness of the aid industry. In 2006, Molenaers and Renard followed up their own argument and suggested some pre-conditions for participation. These include having institutional and political features of legal framework for participation, elites accepting dissident voices of participation and studious preparation on the part of NGOs (Molenaers and Renard 2006: 11). They argue that, in order to push participation, the conditions must be right. Although Renard and Molenaers assume that once these pre-conditions are present, then NGO participation might be effec-

tive, the argument may not be adequate to explain the realities of NGO participation in the Ugandan poverty-reduction process.[1] This is because Uganda is one of the countries that established formal arrangements for planning, coordination, networking, monitoring and also allocated time and funding to participation. Renard and Molenaers' (2003) preconditions for participation are supported by Hickey and Mohan (2005: 238-62) who suggest that participation should be pursued as part of a wider, radical political project aimed at securing citizen rights and participation for marginal groups. Participation is important when actors seek to engage in development as an underlying process of social change rather than a form of discrete technical intervention. How NGO participation has enabled the achievement of this fundamental goal remains a central element of this thesis. Although Hickey and Mohan do not argue against using participation absent these conditions, like Renard and Molenaers (2003) they seem not to recognise that participants in poverty reduction work have multiple agendas. The validity of pre-conditions is that space and actors may not be enough because it is easy to manipulate participation. On the other hand, changes may take place within the space even when the conditions of equality of power are not present (Salinas 2007). Importantly, the views on pre-conditions for participation point to the fact that NGO participation often takes place in a contested environment with unequal power relationships. What then explains NGO participation and its influence on poverty reduction policies in Uganda?

Using the civil society causality chain of Molenaers and Renard, this chapter examines NGO participation in achieving broad-based country ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability in the official poverty reduction agenda. There is an assumption that the achievement of these results will lead to poverty-reduction policy influence rather than poverty reduction *per se*. Policy influence is a social and political process thus the causality chain helps to unravel different processes and interests in poverty-reduction policy formation. The creation of the three expected results does not happen in a vacuum. It depends on the interplay of institutions for participation, NGO competence and donor willingness to listen. Although these factors interact, each of these factors may be important in creating one output more than the other as shown in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2
Factors for NGO poverty reduction policy influence

Donor Willingness to Listen

Broad-based ownership

Pro-poor Effectiveness

Poverty
reduction
policy
influence

Institutions
for Participation

Accountability

NGO
Competencies
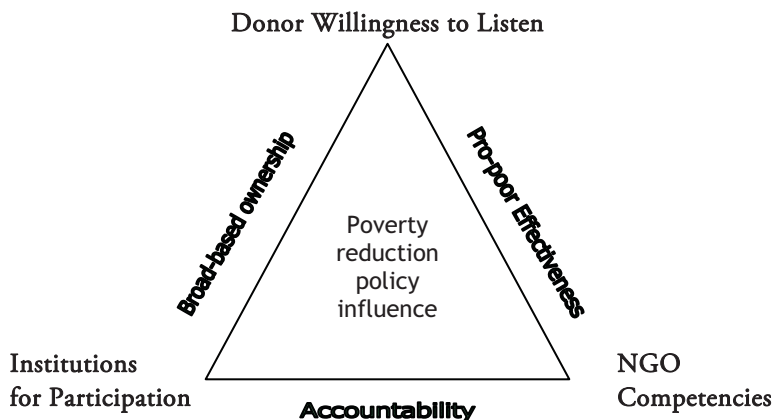
Source: Author for purposes of analysis

Institutions for participation guide the interaction of NGOs with other ac-
tors in the policy arena and influence the results of the interaction. Institu-
tions refer more broadly to 'a stable, recurring pattern of behaviour includ-
ing formal and informal rules of political life and related organisational
structures' (Lowndes 2002: 91). Institutionalisation of participation in-
creases NGO proximity to government actors and acts as a source of lever-
age to access decision-makers. It widens opportunities for policy dialogue
and increases opportunity for the poor to connect with policymakers. In a
complementary manner, strong capacities enable NGOs to consult and mo-
bilise communities to participate in policy formation and to specialise in
certain poverty reduction issues, which allows them to identify and advocate
better for pro-poor strategies. Donor willingness to listen increases the pos-
sibility for integration of local poverty issues. It matters less for NGOs to try
to influence poverty reduction policies when donors dictate the poverty re-
duction agenda. Thus, this chapter examines the activities, strategies and
realities of NGO participation in achieving the three expectations to under-
stand the influence of NGOs on official poverty reduction policies.

4.3   Broad-based Ownership

Country ownership is one of the principles that underpin the PRSPs as articulated by IMF/WB in 1999.[2] There is an assumption that ownership of policies will better reflect country priorities and has a high likelihood of implementation (Rombouts 2006: 27). The Ugandan PEAP is 'home grown' and therefore a result of the interests of politicians, technocrats and development partners (Piron and Norton 2004). The role of NGOs was that of broadening ownership beyond these three groups of actors through mobilisation and organising the poor to participate, to consult with their leaders and participate in policy debates. The next section analyses these roles to explain NGO participation in relation to broad-based ownership.

Mobilising the local population

This subsection examines the nature of NGO consultation with the poor and their leaders in the PEAP processes since 1997 and to explain further, NGO roles in relation to broad-based ownership. Gaventa (2005: 7) emphasised that civil society participation is 'participation of the poor and marginalised citizens and civil society organisations in decision-making processes that affect their lives and creation and reinforcement of conditions to this effect.' The participation of the poor and their organisations increases the possibility of addressing local poverty issues and enabling the poor to control the poverty reduction agenda. This section shows that although NGOs have tried to consult the poor through workshops, conferences, research projects and radio programmes, people largely remain immobilised and unorganised to influence poverty reduction policies.

Although NGOs are assumed to be in the business of mobilising communities, the 1997 processes reflected limited evidence on how NGOs mobilised their constituents for participation in deciding on PEAP strategies. The government arranged the community consultations. The president invited NGOs and donors to tour poverty-stricken areas of Luwero and listen to the communities. The exercise was the first consultative process in Uganda bringing together several stakeholders to deliberate on poverty issues, but there was no clear formal institutional arrangement for mobilising the poor to participate. Some NGOs were included in the drafting committee and different working groups to collect inputs from their constituents,

something which Gariyo (2002: 8) argues was consultative. NGOs did not have systematic consultations with the poor, but the first PEAP opened up spaces for a number of NGOs[3] struggling to gain acceptance at the policy-making table. It also gave more recognition to the advocacy role of NGOs as key instruments in influencing policy. The timing was also appropriate in the post-war period because the government was now open to new ideas and policies to distribute economic growth. Ssewakiryanga (2005: 34) referred to it as 'a unique' experience within the domestic 'political project around poverty reduction' because poverty received a significant political push and it brought together different actors at one table. Government also used the PEAP to promote national unity and maintain government legitimacy. However, the process also gave opportunity to multiple interests to gain entry into public policy making. The donors, especially the World Bank, used the opportunity to convince government of the supremacy of market-led economies towards poverty reduction and the need to have multiparty democracy.

In the PEAP revision exercise of 1999/2000, the Uganda Debt Network (UDN), one of the advocacy NGOs, led the Civil Society Task Force comprised of ten organisations[4] but still there was no clear consultation arrangement to deepen local consultation and ownership. The UDN successfully collaborated with the government in the International Jubilee 2000 campaigns for debt reduction. As such, participation in PEAP became an automatic extension of UDN's work especially since the 2000 PEAP/PRSP went for debt relief purposes. At the same time, it was important that NGOs use the opportunity to show donors that they are reliable partners. Because the global poverty agenda insisted that governments allow NGOs to participate in policy processes. Thus, NGOs in Uganda launched eight regional consultative meetings to discuss the draft of the revised PEAP with communities between March and April 2000 (CSO Task Force 2000: vi). However, with limited time and effort to reach the poor, the PEAP revision and consultation with the communities were rushed. The regional workshops appear to have been aimed at informing the population of what PRSPs were about and creating consensus about the PRSP approach. It is not surprising that during the 2000 PRS formulation process, the macroeconomic policies were a no-go area for NGOs because they were regarded

as non-negotiable (Nanna et al. 2002). The PEAP revision had to fit the timing requirements of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Consequently, donors took control of the planning function leaving government with the role coordinating donor goals. Thus, the chances for the poor to have greater influence on policies in such hurried consultation processes and own its proceedings are minimal. The basis for the consultation was the already conceived draft and it was more of a sensitisation exercise about PRSPs, rather than a deliberate effort to obtain commitments from the poor on local poverty issues. The practice of taking a draft to the communities compromised a bottom up planning principle, which would reinforce broad-based ownership. As Boyte (2008) argued, we need to move from mobilising people to organising people to drive their own desired change.

Broad-based ownership requires a shift from externally driven policies to a process of country driven and participatory priority setting. Yet the Ugandan PEAP revision processes reflect much donor influence. Donors advanced the techno-managerialism of economic governance, institutionalizing the authority of market and insulating it from political scrutiny and contestations. The 2000 PEAP went to the World Bank and the IMF in May 2000 and Uganda was among the first countries to qualify for debt relief under the enhanced HIPC initiative. The use of the PEAP as a tool for debt relief was diverting it from its original purpose because it became a fundraising tool adhering to the rules of the donor rather than a local, political decision-making tool. Although NGOs did not enable the poor to communicate many of their demands in terms of policy proposals, the donors still regard the Uganda PRSPs as home grown. The home grown legacy of the Ugandan PEAP has been described as 'a comfortable fiction' because it led to increased and aligned financial, political and technical support to PRSPs (Booth and Nsabagasani 2005: 3). NGOs did not question the last minute nature of PEAP/ PRSPs or its formulation in anticipation of World Bank and IFM funding. This is because of the pervasive view that reducing the debt burden was crucial for the country and therefore NGOs did not question the World Bank (Nanna et al. 2002). Additionally, for NGOs, their continued participation was important to retain their legitimacy among other policymakers. It was not until two years later that Nya-

mugasira and Rowden (2002) observed that some NGOs had not questioned the rushed and badly organised consultative meetings.

There was, apparently a more comprehensive and elaborate consultation process in the later round of PEAP in 2003 and 2004 (NGO Forum 2004). The PEAP review used a five-strand approach including processes led by the central government, the local government, the private sector, civil society consultations and a team focusing on cross-cutting issues. Donors were being represented at every level of policy design including the final decision making body. This approach intended to produce comprehensive poverty reduction strategies. Government accepted the elaborate technical process because it released it can access more funding by allowing day-to day decision making regarding poverty reduction to be made according to technical consideration without much government intervention. However, despite the increasing numbers of NGOs[5] participating in the PEAP processes, it did not lead to closer contacts with the poor or to closer connections with the grassroots groups. Instead, there was a weak linkage between the NGOs and the poor. This is because NGOs changed their strategy to decrease outreach to the poor, intentionally in favour of exploratory research. As explained by one NGO official:

> We organised few consultative meetings but concentrated on analysing available studies. We know that seminars would only lead to a list of wishes without analysis. We studied the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment reports (UPPAP) and the SAPRI studies. We commissioned a few studies on children, pastoralists, disabilities and held different focus group discussions with the media, in northern Uganda (Dan, ED-NGO4.1).

Thus, the PEAP/PRSP revision and consultation increasingly became more of a technical project. Compared to the previous consultation exercises where NGOs mainly engaged in awareness seminars and workshops, in 2003, they leaned towards utilising previous studies to identify people's voices and priorities. The mobilisation of the poor became deficient. The production of quality inputs became a pre-occupation of NGOs rather than systematically deepening connections with the grassroots. However, the change in strategy is not accidental, but a result of donor insistence on quality policy proposals with measurable indicators and also in response to recurrent criticism of NGO failure to make research-based alternative propos-

als (Court et al. 2006). Thus, technical participation, which would guarantee their legitimacy and further their recognition as efficient players, continuously overrode the expected political participation.

Including local leaders in policy debates can increase the chances of ownership of the poverty policies. However, NGOs did not fully mobilise democratically elected leaders to participate in the PEAP/PRSP processes. For instance, Gariyo (2002: 24) notes that 'to make the workshops truly civil society… invitations excluded local governments and local political leaders.' NGOs were reinforcing the consensus nature of PRSPs rather than making it a politically contested undertaking. Yet the consensus model has been criticised by Cornwall and Brock (2005), Fowler (2005b) and Molenaers and Renard (2006) for depoliticising participation and poverty reduction. Ownership of the poverty reduction agenda is a political issue therefore excluding local politicians in meetings with poor citizens was a missed opportunity to capture commitment and ownership from local leaders. The neoliberals are aware of the political interests of peoples representatives thus were scared that the process would increase contestations on peoples issues at the expense of the market. At the same time, making policies more civic driven could have jeopardised NGO relationships with donors who ideally believe in top down processes. Piron and Norton (2004: 27) concluded that the Ugandan PEAP had limited impact on parliamentary developments, as members of parliament did not have ownership of it. Members of parliament rarely debated the PEAP/PRSPs but played an important role in discussing the budget process through which they implemented the PEAP. Vincent (2004) is critical about making NGOs surrogate representatives of the poor and yet in reality, NGOs cannot assume responsibility for making politically binding decisions. Therefore, an arrangement for communication and establishing linkages with parliament and local leadership increases the possibilities of owning and defending policy suggestions that address the needs of the poorest or pay adequate attention to local priorities.

Involving district-based and membership NGOs would have increased opportunities for mobilising local communities and fostering participation of even those difficult to reach poor. Although the majority of national advocacy NGOs has large constituencies, government often invites them to policy debates, there are indications that NGOs' own consultation exercises

could not guarantee participation of district-based NGOs. As an NGO official explained:

> The assumption is that our member organisations participate. I cannot say that such numbers participated in a certain district…I can only speak for the secretariat because we did not have the resources and a clear mechanism to involve them (Kristin, ED-NGO3.1).

One district-based NGO network in northern Uganda especially influenced the 2004 PEAP outlook on conflict resolution issues because it brought in research based information. However, the majority of NGO networks often worked independent of their members. The NGO networks become involved in a scenario of advocacy before mobilisation of the people. An absence of streamlined communication and feedback mechanisms to ensure participation of NGO network members and resource constraints to mobilise membership for participation illustrate this weakness. Moreover, the district NGO branches often are not very organised to feed the secretariat with local policy issues or to participate in local policy deliberations in the districts. The NGO Forum (2007: 3) attributed it to 'weak and ineffective' networking between NGOs in Uganda. There is a mismatch between network organisations and the principles of networking such as fostering synergies and collectivism. Furthermore, given the emphasis on quality strategy papers and the limited time often allocated to the revision exercises, NGOs adopted strategies to enhance their technical contribution rather than enabling the poor to engage in poverty reduction issues. Boyte (2008: 123) suggested that technocracy is widespread but it is responsible for eroding people's civic development. This is because experts have 'lost respect for local knowledge and peoples capacities.' Therefore, in order to hinder the technocratic creep, NGOs need to invest in organising people and closing the gap between NGOs, the people, their leaders and organisations.

In sum, although there are some attempts by NGOs to consult with the poor, these consultations were either hurriedly done, ad hoc or on already formulated policies, and excluded local leaders and the majority of district-based organisations in poverty reduction policy processes. There is lack of deliberate arrangements for grassroots participation in shaping poverty reduction strategies. There is a weak link between NGOs and the people. NGO strategies focused on gaining a seat at the policy table and legitimacy

among other policymakers. Focusing on meeting deadlines and guidelines often set by government in respect to donor interest compromised NGOs. Also compromised, it seems, were the expected upstream planning and decision-making leading to broad-based ownership.

Participation in poverty reduction policy debates

NGO participation in debates on poverty reduction policies is one way to increase broad-based ownership. Although NGOs are not legitimate representatives of the poor, they can technically contribute to shaping policy priorities and can advocate for pro-poor policy choices: both will increase policy ownership. Participation in PEAP was formalised in 2003/2004 when the PEAP secretariat mapped out a consultative process with its revision guide. This further provided an opportunity for NGOs to be in closer proximity to the government. Proximity may compromise NGO capacity to speak out (Robinson and Friedman 2005); however, interviews with NGO officials indicate that they do not find working with the government a significant threat and their relationship with the government is not antagonistic. Proximity enabled some NGOs to join government trips, secure their jobs and be recognised by government as key allies. NGOs believed that their success in incorporating issues in poverty reduction policies was because they worked with the government. As discussed later in this section, some NGOs are very close to the highest political offices in the country. In fact, if NGOs are to sustain their position in the PEAP/PRSPs processes, they inevitably have to work in close proximity with the government.

Institutionalisation of participation in policy formulation would enable NGOs to gain a recognised seat at the policy table and set clear guidelines for participation. Elberlei (2007: 21) maintains that institutionalisation of participation is one indicator of broad-based ownership of poverty reduction strategies. Although Renard and Molenaers emphasised the condition of binding legal institutions, the discussions here regard the semi-permanent formal and informal institutions formed for the sake of PEAP revision, which may not necessarily be legal entities. As earlier mentioned, in 2004, participation was organised in five strands and each of these strands contributed to different PEAP objectives/pillars.[6] Policy ideas hatched and prioritised at the sectoral level went to the pillar[7] consultants, then to the techni-

cal committee[8] for merging and harmonisation, then finally to the national steering committee[9] for final approval. Gearing the processes towards producing quality plans ensured that the respective government ministries provided input to the PEAP. Although NGOs were represented at the national, steering and sectoral working groups, there are indications that NGO participation was inconsistent partly due to the presence of pillar consultants hired to merge and standardise pillar outputs. The consultants, whose role was mostly technical, had a great influence on the language and choices of strategies under a given pillar and ultimately on the ownership of the PEAP. The consultants were ideal to produce quality documents as demanded by the donors; however, some NGOs that would have wished to push their policy issues through to the end could not lobby consultants who were doing technical work. Thus, NGOs like other actors had minimal contact with their policy propositions. Second, individual NGO networks would struggle for representation in several committees even when their sister organisations were present. Although it might be a survival strategy, the struggle for representation on every committee sends a signal that NGO participation was probably not effectively organised.

The sector working groups were a nucleus for policy priorities and initial centres for building commitment and ownership of policy proposals. Central government consultations were organised under 13 government-sector working committees, formed based on government business arrangements to ensure mandatory contribution to the PEAP from the Ministries. This arrangement was duplicated at local government levels where different departments conducted PEAP review exercises. NGOs also chose to organise their consultation into 13 related smaller sector subcommittees who coordinated the sectoral meetings, reviews and prepared sectoral specific position papers, later consolidated into a report.[10] The sectoral arrangement enabled NGOs to submit a 131-page document[11] described as 'the civil society winning formula for poverty eradication' to the revision process (Larok 2006: 2). Discussions with NGOs show excitement about the process because NGOs hoped to provide alternative strategies to poverty reduction. This would also increase their legitimacy among the poor. There is a lot of information in the NGO document highlighting social, political and economic wishes of the sector. In addition, NGOs managed to maintain some

policy issues on the agendas of different sectors. However, as an NGO official explained:

> During the 2003 PEAP revision exercise, we fragmented our efforts into sectors so that holistic thinking about principles that guide the PEAP was not there…. You may find an organisation like ours in three different sectors. There was no opportunity to sit and ask who is behind the PEAP? Who is it for? Is it there to develop us or not? (Kristin, ED-NGO3.1)

Discussions with NGOs show that their efforts were fragmented thus constraining their contribution to questioning the overall driving principles of the PEAP. To date market principles still drive the PEAP despite NGO participation.

NGOs also attributed their failure to focus on strategic directions of policy to the fact that the PEAP is not their own initiated and governed process. Implicitly NGOs realise that they are participating in a project that is not their own. As one NGO official expressed:

> We think the PEAP is just a World Bank model to govern the developing countries. They have succeeded because they have managed to bring the key actors on board to implement their model…we remain in good terms with the donors despite the fact that poverty is increasing (Kristin, ED-NGO3.1).

A World Bank official disapproved of this and said:

> Why would an NGO say that? In terms of who commits the biggest chunk of money, yes? But they participated in the revision. The good thing is that they have participated in its revision. Why don't they influence it? Let them give us alternatives (Lawrence, DO3).

The demand that NGOs produce alternative models to development often skews NGO efforts to challenge the dominant models. Although NGOs managed to legitimise the global poverty agenda, when they try to criticise donors they appear as obstacles to poverty reduction (Howell and Pearce 2001). NGOs were aware that they are participating in a World Bank project and as such, they did not necessarily own the PRSP/PEAP. At the same time, they were aware of their interdependence with donors thus would not want to antagonise these relationships.

In such policy dialogues, communication as to meeting venue and contribution to the agenda enhanced attendance at the meeting and ownership

of the results. However, with the general expectation that NGOs would participate in central government working group meetings, their participation was more reactive. This is because, often NGOs were not clear about the meeting venue, the agenda and some meetings conflicted with their other donor-funded activities. As one government official said:

> It is not always that NGOs will know where the PEAP revision meetings are…often they wouldn't have somebody in the sector meetings and the sector would not even inform them of where the meeting will be. So, the problem was that an NGO would want to participate but would not know where to go (Joy, NC13).

At the same time, the absence of NGOs in sectoral meetings would not hinder government's ability to make decisions. Consequently, NGO participation in meetings was not recurrent and the follow up on policy issues and decisions was not consistent. Compounding this was the limited numbers of staff members within networks thus hampering the physical presence of NGOs at some negotiation and discussion tables. Although participation of NGOs was institutionalised, NGOs have to struggle to fit into the government agenda and their contribution in practice is not obligatory.

NGO participation was also cosmetic due to limited opportunities to discuss and reach a consensus on their proposals. There was no jointly determined agenda for sectoral meetings thus, NGO contributions depended on the pre-determined agenda prepared by government sectors. Thus, if NGOs wanted to contribute they had to be at the decision-making table. As one government official noted, the PEAP is a government responsibility thus NGOs have to fit the set schedules. Yet interviews with NGO officials show that NGOs had an opportunity to talk but there was less discussion and consensus on most of their proposals. The un-concluded issues then went forward to the technical committees where NGOs would lose ownership of the process and their influence on policy content.

Vincent (2004: 111) argues that participatory development requires people to take the time and energy to engage in establishing the basis for planning, carrying out and evaluating some activities that will bring about change. Evidently, the timing of the entire revision exercise influenced NGO participation in terms of time and personnel they needed for the exercise. Although, government allotted broader time slots (4-9 months) for the

2003 consultation exercise compared to the previous two revision exercises (MoFPED 2003: 23), this may have been inappropriate timing for some NGOs. Some NGO staff could not always participate in all consultations because they had other responsibilities. While the PEAP revision fell within the activities of the government's calendar year and its terms of references for its employees, the guidelines assumed that NGOs had to put aside other activities to create time for the PEAP revision. In reality, participation in the PEAP did not mean a halt to other NGO activities. Consequently, NGOs reacted to the revision timeliness with difficulty even though they were aware that PEAP revision is a routine activity. NGOs conducted limited consultations to fit in the guidelines otherwise they would fail to engage the government.

In addition to the formal consultations, NGOs utilised their informal relationships to influence the PEAP formation processes. Consequently, some NGOs had the opportunity to share business trips with high-ranking government officials including the Presidents to different countries and even to political negotiations with donors. Such NGOs were nicknamed 'government darlings'. However, as expressed by an NGO official:

> The other danger we run into is that lead NGOs have been co-opted by the government. Tom has personal friends in the MoFPED…when he stands up to speak, he speaks the language of the government…even when he criticises them, they know that he is one of them (Kristin, ED-NGO3.1).

Some NGOs may feel privileged over others, which creates tension and undermines their potential for a unified voice. Thus, it is not surprising to find the NGO Forum accused of being stuck in the government bedroom (NGO Forum 2007: 7). This led the Forum to advocate for open lines of communication with the state on policy issues. Conversely, the friendship could be one factor that has flexed the relationship between the MoFPED and NGOs thus increasing their opportunity to engage government consistently. The informal relationships contributed to widening the spaces for NGOs to participate; however, these relationships are still looked upon with suspicion by some NGOs especially those who argue that the informality could lead to cooptation. On the other hand, it is feasible they may have exaggerated the influence of friendship. As discussions about NGOs labelled

'darlings' revealed, such organisations joined the policy debates better prepared compared to others and policymakers often listened to them.

The apparent gaps within the PEAP 2004 revision arrangement created tension and a feeling among NGOs that their participation was possibly unnecessary. An NGO official said:

> We [NGOs] are now thinking that maybe we are becoming too much in the government corridor and it may be high time we retreated to concentrate on our own work (Jane, ED NGO5.1).

As a way of emphasis, another NGO official echoed:

> We have almost reached a level where people think it makes no difference what we say (Else, ED-NGO3.2).

And a government official said:

> NGOs no longer make noise as they used to do because we already know their story and even if it was you, you would get tired of telling people the same story over and over again (Joy, NC13).

The arrangement for participation in PEAP seems frustrating to those NGOs engaged in the process. This confirms Gaventa's (2004: 25-34) argument that the effectiveness of participation is not the space or institutional arrangement rather the strength of the actors and the proper balance of power that imbues them. Chapter 7 of this thesis explores these power struggles within the PRSPs process further. Some institutional failings such as the presence of consultants that thwart NGO continuity in debates and sectoral committees that gauge NGOs' focus on sectoral issues rather than overriding poverty reduction principles. At the same time, NGOs are aware that they are participating in a process that is not their own leading to inconsistency, fatigue and loss of commitment. Although NGOs have legitimacy to participate, it seemed inadequate. PRSPs are mainstream development models to which NGOs supposedly should position themselves as alternatives. For NGOs to have meaningful participation they need a long-term vision rather than reaction approach to poverty advocacy issues.

4.4   Pro-poor Effectiveness

This section shows that NGOs' own capacities in planning and mobilising people to engage in poverty reduction processes and donor acceptance to listen to the voices of the poor are useful factors in explaining NGO contribution to pro-poor effectiveness in Uganda. This proposition is not necessarily new, for instance Gaventa (2004: 37; 2005: 15) talks about 'strong capacities for exercising countervailing power against the rule of the game that favours entrenched interests.' Michael (2004) speaks of 'NGO own area of expertise or niche to gain power to change the rules of development', and Renard and Molenaers (2003: 12) say that pro-poor effectiveness is also dependent on donor priorities. While these factors may not be new or unique, they are still useful to understand the realities of the roles and interests of NGOs in influencing pro-poor policies. The focus is on empirical evidence on how NGOs accumulate valuable knowledge about poverty and use it to push pro-poor agendas in policy debates.

Accumulating valuable knowledge about poverty

If national poverty reduction policy design takes place within a broader global development agenda, then it is important that NGOs are conversant with general contexts and specific poverty issues, political, macroeconomic issues and the policymaking process. Improving context analysis and conducting specialised poverty analysis increases NGO possibilities to push for relevant pro-poor agendas.

Understanding the policy context

Actors have different interests within a given policy. These interests jointly shape policy content. In the Ugandan policy context, NGOs must know the position and interests of several players if they want to contribute to pro-poor effectiveness. As explained by a government official:

> The extent NGOs influence policy has a lot to do with the current climate in the policy environment, at country, regional, national and donor levels. But remember, policy is also a political issue, the President, Executive and Legislators have a lot to do with what exactly is adopted as a policy of the country…. So, if at both policy and budget levels an issue does not make sense, what is the point of raising it highly and loudly for the NGOs (Joy, NC13).

The priorities of different government institutions and the available national resource basket determine the policy environment in Uganda. As highlighted in chapter 3, President Museveni initiated the PEAP as a political project to redistribute growth given his socialist convictions. In addition, the support citizens accorded to the national resistance movement during the early 1980s informed the focus on the poor. However, this focus has since shifted significantly and discussions with donors showed that government consistently made annual budget shifts towards security, rather than investing in agriculture where the majority of the poor dwell. The PRSPs are highly driven by macroeconomic, market oriented realities and donor interests, which may not necessarily be pro-poor. This means that the basis for NGO participation has to be a thorough understanding of socioeconomic and political factors.

In Uganda, the No Party National Resistance Movement government that has been in power since 1986 and through its local government structures has been influential in mobilising people for development. With strategies like door-to-door canvassing (Kakuyege) during political campaigns and giving of rewards to supporters, the government had an upper hand in mobilising the masses. Since 2006, Uganda adopted a multiparty political system of governance where the Movement Organisation is still the ruling party. Ideally, the ruling party's policy positions inform the official poverty reduction policies. Yet, NGOs have not positioned themselves to operate in a multiparty arrangement. Discussions with NGOs and government officials show that although policymaking is a political process, dependent on the politics surrounding governments, NGOs have limited competencies in developing and influencing policies based on understanding of political situations. An NGO official explained that:

> Recently some NGOs were "thrown" out from the Ministry of Finance. Sara told them that President Museveni's policies are based on his party manifesto. So, if you are saying things outside the manifesto they will not accept them. But most of us [NGOs] have not read the manifesto. We are only making noise on different things. So how can we take on the government if we do not know what they promised to achieve? (Else, ED-NGO3.2)

Although advocacy NGOs conduct research, have their own libraries and have access to information surrounding the political changes in the country,

discussions with NGO officials and donors show that NGOs do not know how political parties operate. Consequently, their contribution may meet resistance from the ruling party. NGOs have not used the information at their disposal to develop a deeper systematic understanding of the political and macroeconomic context of the PEAP. Chapter 8 examines the question of, how relevant is an understanding of the Ugandan political context for NGOs further.

Evidently, some NGO staff members in Uganda lack the skills to conduct macroeconomic policy analyses. DENIVA (2006) noted that NGOs had limited technical capacity including low ability to develop strategies based on understanding the social, political and economic context. Other limitations are those of being too timid to question both government and donor policies. Although some NGO networks possess knowledge of macroeconomic issues, sometimes they are reluctant to attack the powerful forces. This is because attacking the dominant agenda may undermine their survival since they are operating in a consensus model. As a result, NGOs settle for incremental achievements despite the fact that pro-poor effectiveness demands radical changes of traditionally exploitative systems. NGOs stand a better chance of influencing policy if they understand the macroeconomic actors and the power they wield. As Gaventa (2005: 15) argued, NGOs need strong capacities to challenge powers that may not favour the poor's needs. The failure of NGO leadership in understanding the complexities of development work and in creating a vision for civil society to approach the complexities with the necessary passion and innovations contributed to the lack of technical competencies (NGO Forum 2007: 9). The limited understanding of macroeconomic dynamics makes it difficult for them to create alliances with like-minded policymakers hence their views are likely to meet resistance.

Knowledge of practical policy cycle processes and techniques of influencing actors and their positions are important for NGOs to sustain their participation. The NGO forum insists that 'this time round [2003] NGOs felt better equipped than before to engage on all issues of the PEAP because of a lot of experience and knowledge gained through previous PEAP revision exercises and the networking with the global civil society on PRSP and SAPRI' (NGO Forum 2004: 3). However, there are indications that some

NGO workers are not conversant with the government policy-formulation process. Thus, they hardly follow up on policies from the initial stages to conclusion. As explained by an NGO official:

> You say we know the processes of policy formulation, when did we know them? We are just learning those things. There are very few organisations that will confidently stipulate for you the process of policy formulation up to evaluation…but for us, we are always on and off-shooting here and there (Kristin, ED-NGO3.1).

Despite the preponderance of elite members and leaders staffing the NGO sector (Barr et al. 2003), it is not automatic that these elites are conversant with policy processes. Since NGOs positioned themselves to influence policy, the expectation is high that they understand policy process, generate high quality research and communicate with policymakers and other stakeholders (Court et al. 2006: 37). Knowledge of the policy circle would enable NGOs to understand the risks, uncertainties and opportunities involved in pushing for certain policy options. Those NGOs that continued participating gained experience on government policy processes, but this experience does not cut across all advocacy NGOs.

Poverty analysis

Besides knowledge of the general context, NGOs need to specialise in analysing different kinds of poverty. This specialisation increases their technical confidence, increases their appreciation of local knowledge on poverty and the chances of their suggestions being acceptable. An NGO official explains:

> In those cases where we succeeded, we had NGO specialists in those areas that had done serious work. We have refused to understand that influencing policies is a highly technical issue. If you are going to meet technical experts, you must be prepared to engage in technical discussions. Those people do not take NGO input while seated, it is a real battle so you can only win when you are technically prepared (Else, ED-NGO3.2).

Worldwide, PRSPs have been criticised for making poverty and poverty reduction a technical issue (Cornwall and Brock 2005). The way NGOs are participating in this technical exercise and still maintaining the poor's views on the agenda is of concern to this study. In reality, policymaking and planning are technical exercises in which NGOs are interested in having techni-

cal confidence as well. The PEAP 2004 document is technical, comprehensive, general and somewhat complex to reflect the local contextual knowledge of poverty. Discussion with NGOs show that those NGOs specialised in areas like gender, children, literacy and conflict resolution management are respected by other policymakers in policy debates and thus often meet limited resistance. However, Larok (2006: 4) maintained that the NGOs inadequate policy analysis and independent research capacities have been a major challenge for NGO participation. NGOs also face limits enforcing policy adoption, which reflect the local knowledge and context.

The realisation that NGOs have limited expertise continued to make their contribution to policy dialogues less valued by policymakers and the poor they supposedly represent. As Boyte (2008) noted, technocratic professionalism undermines those regarded to have limited technical credentials. Again, the government desires to maintain a superior command of public policies. Evidently, there are NGO specialisations developing but it is ambitious for the PRSP process to assume that NGOs already have the necessary competencies in poverty assessments. Even then, discussions with government officials showed that NGO specialisations are still weak because most NGOs claim to be holistic. For example, one government official in this study criticised NGOs for making criticisms without suggestions to address issues raised.

> In one case on the security and conflict resolutions pillar, NGOs interviewed about 500 people, which is a very huge sample. The report was saying the situation is bad, things are so hard, but no solution. So I gave the document to Civil Society Organisations representatives to synthesise and come up with major messages but they also failed.... I said, you are going to blame me that I never put anything in the PEAP from your research but what can I put. In such cases if we [government] think it is a useful issue, we take it further and analyse it. For instance, we picked the issues of pastoralism, children's poverty and gender. We produced papers and discussed them for incorporation in the PEAP (Joy, NC13).

The government is aware that NGOs may not bring thorough research-based proposals. As such, if it is interested in a given poverty aspect it will do further analysis on it. Moreover, the technical weaknesses are also evident in policy meetings. For instance in meetings of experts on health, NGOs are

likely to send a person specialised in agriculture. This of course would compromise NGO status among other policymakers. Equally, NGOs are aware of their technical inadequacies and attempted to harmonise their poverty analysis by concentrating on research as evidenced in the 2003 revision exercise. However, as noted by Eberlei (2007: 21), PRSPs activities seem engulfed in the practice of gathering information that may not necessarily change poverty situations because powerlessness remains downplayed as a major cause of poverty. In their struggle to build the technical competencies and produce good research reports, NGOs are inevitably ignoring organising the poor to voice their local knowledge and solutions towards poverty reduction. Although NGOs influenced the outlook of the Ugandan poverty reduction plans, their inability to organise the poor showed that NGOs are in a comfortable zone even when the powerlessness of the poor remains unchallenged.

Influencing pro-poor policy effectiveness requires an understanding of multidimensional poverty. NGOs seem to understand the multifaceted nature of poverty as reflected in the consolidated input to the PEAP revision exercise in 2003, where they proposed redistribution, social protection, economic growth, security and other pro-poor strategies. However, the 2004 PEAP/PRSP maintained more focus on economic growth because donors believed in market-led and liberalised economies.

Policy advocacy and negotiation

The government recognises advocacy and independent research on key policy issues as roles of NGOs (MoFPED 2004: 9). Pro-poor effectiveness depends on how much the policy agenda and content sustain poor people's issues. The assumption that NGO participation is not problematic because governments will unconditionally accept their role, donors will abandon control and align with country priorities and that NGOs will automatically push for pro-poor issues continues to hamper NGO advocacy efforts.

NGOs engage in advocacy and negotiations with other actors including the government and donors but they engage in advocacy before mobilising the people. In Uganda, umbrella urban-based NGOs, with advocacy experience and connections with policy circles (McGee et al. 2002) have been more involved in policy dialogues than have other organisations. Donors

prefer networks because they consider them stronger and better able to with-stand government pressure. Findings show that these NGOs managed to sustain certain policy issues on the political agenda. An NGO official explained:

> The government appreciates the role of NGOs. In one seminar, the MoFPED likened NGOs to a police man who traverses a high crime area regularly without convicting anyone but crime is reduced…Without NGO participation, you would not imagine pro-poor issues like pastoralism, concrete ideas for conflict resolution and more recently, the chronic poverty/social protection agenda getting the attention that they do now (Dan, ED-NGO4.1).

Another NGOs official echoed:

> To be fair to that process, there have been some changes that took place but when you look at it, they are so small; I think our expectations were much higher. But if you look at these things mentally and if you are to compare them with before, you would find a positive difference (Jane-NGO5.1).

Fortunately, there have been some incremental results, especially on issues of interest both to the government and to donors such as, governance and security. In addition, the continuous participation of NGOs provides independent feedback on neglected issues such as slum dwellers and pastoralism (Larok 2006: 1). The presence of NGOs at the discussion tables also sends signals to some policymakers that they have issues and interests to present. Despite their achievements, many NGO expectations are still unmet. This is because revision of the PRSPs occurs within a harmony consensus-based model (Fowler 2005b) where implicitly, NGOs have to accept the agreements made at the dialogue table. As earlier noted there is advocacy without mobilisation and organising of the poor. NGO officials noted that one of the reasons why advocacy NGOs lose heated policy debates is because of the weak linkages with local realities.

In addition, there is limited negotiation and advocacy expertise among NGOs, donors tend to resist some input from NGOs and there is fear of the risks associated with advocacy. The absence of skilled advocates may mean losing arguments on the discussion floor. NGOs are likely to lose an argument except on a few issues like accountability, governance, corruption and conflict (current issues in the development agenda) and other issues like basic health services, which might be politically safe areas. Two related factors

created this argument losing dynamic. First, the inability for NGOs to push for policy propositions based on facts rather than emotions. As expressed by a donor official:

> I think in many cases that they [NGOs] do not bring in as much as they should. I think they need to have more skills for analysing the issues. They need to be more forceful, based on facts rather than emotions and other things (Lawrence DO3).

Donors tended to view the force of NGOs from a technical point of view although NGOs were complaining about the inability of policymakers to take NGO contributions seriously. Second and related to the above, some policymakers tend to listen more to some personalities in the NGO world than to others. Such NGO officials were referred to as 'darlings', close to the MoFPED because they speak the same policymaking language. These could be individual survival strategies, but reportedly, some other NGO officials were tongue tied during sessions waiting for the 'darlings' to talk. The most highlighted examples were discussions on hard economics, natural science and technology, where NGOs opted to be silent in meetings. However, another NGO official denied this saying:

> NGOs have to realise that it is a limited space and we have to fight for attention…. A lot of work goes in before you meet the government and by the time you enter, people think you are a darling when it has been a year of work and when in reality, your presentations are convincing (Jane, ED-NGO5.1).

There is no doubt that government may want to co-opt NGO officials, but NGOs lose debates because of their failure to dwell on causes of a particular poverty issue. While some information on issues like governance exists in the media, and policymakers are interested in them, other issues need thorough analysis. Although the issue of selective listening to certain NGO leaders may not be underestimated, policy discussions need competencies including presentation and strategic negotiations to bring convergence of interests and actions together supported by research. Being prepared to negotiate with policymakers should not only include technical research, but also organising the poor to advocate for themselves and establishing strong linkages with local realities.

Second, the Ugandan experience showed that although pro-poor effectiveness demands a shift from externally donor driven policies to country driven, donors largely shape the content of the Ugandan PEAP document and determine the kind of NGO contributions included in its content. The policy discussion tables have been avenue through which the powerful show control and co-opt other actors instated of negotiating to incorporate people or their concerns. Although NGOs attempt to raise pro-poor issues, they would meet resistance from externally donor driven policy prescriptions. This came out in several interviews with NGO officials as exemplified by an interview with one NGO official below.

> I participated in the last review and I observed it as a told story hard to believe…the politics were very interesting. The NGOs of course are always on their message—we want results this time, poor people are suffering. The government is also there at the table and then the donors claim they must seek the political role of ensuring that the things that the people actually want in terms of services are more liberalised and services like agricultural extension do not get a clear path…. So, I remember we had a meeting—the agricultural group with the government and donors. Of course, the donors are much more intellectual, they use big words and the rest of us are using quite simple words. We sat down and said communities are telling us that we need to review the extension services provided…. But one of the donors rose up and said we cannot go back to the old days of government-supported subsidies. You are taking us back to the ancient days that will not bring development to this country. I think we are being quite combative. And when they heard combative, the government backed down and the NGOs kept saying that is wrong, this is a PRSP process, it's about Uganda, it's about the poverty eradication action plan…. You could say it is a process of participation of course because NGOs said what we wanted to say, but donors would not listen. The government was saying these are our donors we can't criticise them. The NGOs said, we don't care, we will criticise them, but you can see that was the dynamic (Jane, ED-NGO5.1).

Evidently, NGOs have an opportunity to present their proposals, there are frank discussions between NGOs and stakeholders but counteracting it is what Igoe (2005) calls the 'rock of western donors.' NGOs that raise poor people's issues sometimes encounter resistance and donors that pretend to know better than other institutions, how to help the poor. In the

2003/2004 revision exercise, donors scrutinised sectoral reports and position papers produced by other actors. Larok (2004: 8) indicated that even with advocacy, the government and development partners could deliberately refuse to accept useful submissions from NGOs for unclear reasons during the 2004 PEAP revision exercises. Coupled with the limitations in their policy, analysis and negotiations meant that NGOs had to back down from fundamental pro-poor issues and settle for less. 'This is what happens when powerful financial institutions hijack the existing new ideas', there are often unreasonable deliberations to which NGOs are part (Brown 2004: 249). Donors holding onto decision-making and approval of decisions made by other stakeholders contradict the true essence of their insistence on NGO participation in PEAP. It sends signals to NGOs and other actors that they are participating in a game with pre-determined rules.

Besides the direct control of NGO input into policy content, there seems to be tension and anxiety among NGOs. They are despairingly on the 'playground/dialogue table' with the government yet NGOs can hardly win a game where donors and government, in some cases, guard the same goal. As an NGO official observed, the current PEAP is an externally driven and created policy.

> You see the problem with PEAP is that somebody has built a house, and then for us, we come and say this window should not be here it should be there, this room should face that way. The owner would be grateful of course, you will influence its looks, but it's not the same as coming up with a new structure…. Demolishing PEAP now will be attacking the real spinal cord of the NRM government…you can't fight PEAP because you will be fighting a big battle. PEAP is also the lifeblood of donors. Here, you can only amend a house but if its foundation is wrong what can you change? (Else, ED-NGO3.2)

There is no doubt donors have interests that are exerted through aid and that even some of the shifts taking place in NGO participation are due to aid leverage. Discussions with NGOs showed that donors and governments hold onto the PRSPs so dearly that they find it hard to accept divergent views. More so, although the funding for NGO participation in the PRSPs increased over time[12], donor gymnastics of reporting constrained the ability for NGO quick response to government policy proposals. On signing con-

tracts with donors, NGOs tend to dance to the tune chosen by donors and directed by government. Consequently, NGOs will serve donor interests out of fear of challenging their policy priorities.

Influencing policy decisions is a risky exercise and requires NGO advocates taking risks on behalf of the poor. However, sometimes advocacy NGOs feared confronting the government with people's views. In some cases, NGO networks chose to exclude themselves from negotiations because they did not want the government to perceive them as questioning it. An example was the National Research Policy Formulation discussions where some NGOs chose to excuse themselves to attend a meeting with policymakers (parliamentary committee on agriculture). This is consistent with Robinson and Friedman (2005: 19) who argued that NGOs in Uganda attach a secondary priority to policy advocacy activities because of the fear of being controversial and facing de-registration by the Government. NGOs express interest in advocacy not because they are deeply committed but because aid donors favour this approach as a response to criticism on aid failure (Bazaara 2003: 18; Robinson and Friedman 2005: 20). As shown above, when NGOs are humiliated by losing an argument at the dialogue table, the failure is on NGOs not donors. Therefore, the need to protect the organisational image and survival make NGOs hesitate to undertake the humiliating risk. More so, the Ugandan PRSPs are criticised for perpetuating the participation of umbrella NGOs that may not 'represent alternative political views or development approaches' (Piron and Evas 2004). This is not to say that umbrella organisations are more fearful or cannot present alternatives compared to others, but NGOs would prefer to stay in 'good books' with the government because their interests are often achieved in cooperation with other actors. Thus, in some cases, both the government and donors prevent NGOs from raising pro-poor issues.

Some scholars and government officials who are proposing a paradigm shift are contesting too much donor influence in Uganda. Ssewakiryanga's[13] reflection on the politics of poverty reduction in Uganda poses the question, 'what is the reality for a country which is donor driven where donor citizens are participating in the management of poverty reduction…any possibility for exit?' (2005: 29) Ssewakiryanga's question comes only a year after the PEAP 2004 revision, and shows that the Ugandan government was already

asking whether donors could listen to paradigm shifts. Canagarajah and Van Diesen (2006: 661) warned against too much donor influence because the PEAP tended to pay more attention to quality of paperwork than to the underlying process and emerging implementation challenges. In the same year (2006), the Minister of Finance Planning and Economic Development proposed an interventionist approach to reduce poverty and inequality in the country. Described as an alternative to neoliberalism, it was embraced by the NGOs because it included issues proposed by NGOs that had not been included in the PEAP. This short-lived excitement did not change the policy content of PEAP 2004. The World Bank acknowledged the stagnant growth and increasing inequalities in the country and some scholars and government officials voiced criticism as well. They asked if through the PRSPs Uganda is sailing the same boat as SAPs are and if there is need for a paradigm shift. Consequently, the government is seemingly shifting its focus from poverty to wealth creation and from globalised PRSPs to national planning.

Although there remains a worldwide trade in PRSPs attempts to revise the PEAP in 2008, the Ugandan government is developing a national development plan. This is of course a government reassurance of supremacy in public policy, but of what implication is this shift to the World Bank poverty reduction agenda? Will it shift the politics of state weakness and influential aid? What is the politics surrounding this shift? How are NGOs participating? Will the shift be of any significance to pro-poor effectiveness? These are some of the questions not fully explored even in this study. Discussions with NGOs show that they believe the shift to national planning signifies that government is reclaiming its development agenda from donor control. However, the paradigm shift may not necessarily deter donors from dominating because, the 'nature and expressions of power' of powerful actors like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund may change rapidly (Gaventa 2005: 5). Donors ought to hand over control as they play their facilitating role. This does not mean that they relinquish the funding role, but should stimulate relationships that fundamentally empower the poor and the marginalised to influence decisions.

4.5   Accountability

With accountability, NGOs have the responsibility of making government responsive to the population by fostering downward accountability. Although NGOs are also under pressure because of accountability (Jordan and Tuijl 2006), they are expected to monitor the successes and failures of the official poverty reduction agenda and with it, exert pressure on government institutions to be transparent (Rombouts 2006: 28). In addition, NGOs must take responsibility to enable the communities' demand for accountability from leaders and government. This is the more political role of NGOs involving representation and helping the poor speak for themselves. However, this section shows that NGOs' current position is difficult because as shapers and implementers of the PRSPS, they are also expected to be accountable. In addition, when NGOs try to position themselves as outsiders to the PRSPs, they face institutional arrangements and their own capability inadequacies to exert pressure on other policymakers.

Monitoring PEAP/PRS implementation

The agitators of NGO participation in monitoring of PRSPs expect that it would lead to pro-poor policies and to citizens' control and empowerment (Natal 2006: 6). The prevailing hope is for the monitoring results to feed into the decision-making process by enabling NGOs to exert pressure on government to deliver their promises. Uganda has several institutional arrangements[14] for poverty monitoring whereby the government, donors, NGOs and the poor themselves engage in monitoring at different levels and using different approaches.

The government adopted the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES) to monitor PEAP performance in 2004, but it does not guarantee NGO contributions. The NIMES focuses on ensuring effective public information management, harmonising parallel monitoring, evaluation systems and ensuring compatibility with each other for government reporting purposes. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics and the Local Government Information and Communication Systems capture the official poverty-related information. It is this official information that often informs policies, but NGOs may not contribute. This is because NGOs have limited skills in NIMES' frameworks. As explained by an NGO official:

> I think 90 per cent of NGOs are not versed with UBOS monitoring matrix. Therefore, whatever we bring, it does not fit into that matrix, it does not fit anywhere. If it does not fit, it will not appear in the national statistics, which influences national planning. Government has it own way of doing things you cannot just bring information and put it there and say, I provided input. It will not be captured nor will it be used (Else, ED-NGO3.2).

At the same time, there seems less importance attached to NGO information by NIMES. The government prioritises quantitative information more than qualitative information with a high likelihood that the government poverty monitoring system cannot easily capture the qualitative NGO research. Thus, information by NGOs may not find itself in policymaking because there is no streamlined mechanism to pass on the information and ensure its application.

NGOs participated in the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) as lead agencies since 1999. The UPPAP activities were more fact-finding exercises however; UPPAP deserves credit for having created the need for more public information, leading to the abolition of user fees, numerous fieldwork activities and reports. Piron and Norton (2004: 26) caution against taking the UPAPP and NGO consultations as political channels for representing the priorities of the poor. This is because it is a selective process, managed by technocrats who analyse people's voices rather than enabling the poor to demand accountability. The UPPAP was criticised for not being participatory. McGee et al. (2002: vii) noted that participatory practices within NGOs that claim to speak on behalf of the poor in PRSPs 'merit greater attention than it has received today.' The UPPAP presented an opportunity to interact with the poor, enhanced NGOs accessibility to relevant information, but not for enabling the poor to hold their leaders accountable. It cannot also be ascertained how NGO participation in UPPAP lead to transparency in policymaking. NGOs seemed to work as information aides to the donors rather than using UPPAP to seek accountability.

Although NGOs are expected to enable the communities' demand for accountability from leaders and government, discussions with NGO leaders showed lack of clear plans to ensure accountability through PEAP processes. As an NGO official said:

> We have not yet asked government to take us through step-by-step on their promises to the people since the PEAP started. Of course, we receive government reports but when the revision exercise approaches, our major concern is about the input into the forthcoming plan (Kerstin, ED-NGO3.1).

NGOs claim to have concentrated on making improvement proposals to the functioning of programmes like universal primary education, but not organising the masses to control such programmes. Due to the nature of NGO participation (discussed above) and the gap between NGO networks and the poor and the fact that few people get to know the content of poverty reduction plans, demanding accountability through PEAP processes remains rhetoric. Demanding accountability also depends on the political context. For instance, while during the debt relief campaigns NGOs influenced both donors and governments to reduce debt and gauge its usage now, it seems to be business as usual.

Monitoring resource utilisation

There is funding trickling into the country for poverty reduction processes. The majority of donors (World Bank, the African Development Bank, Austria, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Norway and Sweden) use the PEAP as an entry point for development assistance. These donors give funding to the government in the form of budget support through the Mid-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)[15] and the Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF). The Central Government extends poverty reduction funding to local governments through PAF conditional grants. However, discussion with government and NGOs showed some donors not aligned with the PEAP. The donors bypass the PEAP because they are aware that the demand for accountability focuses on the government rather than donors. NGOs do not participate in the government budgeting process and they have limited avenues to present their monitoring reports.

The conditional grants restrict local flexibility, as local governments have to fit in the predetermined national priorities. The districts formulate budgets in alignment with the PAF areas as guided by the Uganda Joint Assistance Strategy (UJAS). The UJAS aligns to the PEAP and describes how partners support its implementation (Canagarajah and Van Diesen 2006: 660). The advantage is that the premise of the conditional grants is poverty

reduction. The Ugandan government receives praise for having pro-poor budgeting because PAF funds flow towards basic services such as universal primary education. Piron and Norton (2004: vi) note that Uganda has seen impressive pro-poor spending patterns. Similarly, Ssewakiryanga (2005) notes that donors were happy with PAF because it showed government investing in poverty eradication and poverty discourse became part of the bureaucratic discourse of service delivery at the district level. However, budgets often fit the central government priorities, which may not necessarily represent local contexts. Although the Local Government Act requires NGOs operating in a given district to participate in planning processes, in reality, NGOs do not participate in budgetary processes both at national and local levels. The parliament and parliamentary committees, which often do not invite NGOs to attend their sessions discuss and approve the national budgets.

While NGOs would like government to account to the population, the NGOs are mainly accounting to the donors. Thus, when NGOs demand accountability from the government they often receive challenges to show their own accountability. As such, the relationships between NGOs and local governments are sometimes characterised by suspicion. Jordan and Van Tuijl (2006: 4) attribute the demand for NGO accountability to the increasing numbers and size of NGOs, attraction of more funds to the sector and their stronger voice in shaping public policy. As shown in chapter 7, some NGO leaders used the NGO agenda to gain positions in local government. Similarly, DENIVA (2007) for example attributed the threat to de-register NGOs in northern Uganda to envy by local government officials. DENIVA proposed that NGOs should:

> Strengthen the District NGO networks and fora, to clean up their own houses and to embrace Quality Assurance Mechanism as a tool that shows that NGOs are very serious about accountability and transparency issues.

This stands in contrast to local government official recommendations that emphasise that NGOs should dialogue with local governments, sometimes donating money and skills to local governments. They should practice what they preach such as sharing information on budgets and be transparent. While we may not rule out local government envy, in reality NGOs have to address their accountability issues. In circumstances of mistrust, NGOs

hardly participate in local government planning cycles. While government budget processes discuss departmental budgets, NGOs are not involved because they do not have the mandate to allocate government resources. In addition, NGOs do not participate because they may have to integrate their budgets into government budgets; an issue NGO officials felt would bog down their operations. Excluding NGOs from budgetary processes makes their demand for accountability not only reactive but also limits their understanding of assumptions behind certain incomes and expenditure allocations.

NGOs in Uganda, led by the Uganda Debt Network (UDN) set out to monitor the use of Poverty Alleviation Funds (PAF) through researchers and PAF monitoring committees in some districts. However, UDN experience shows that NGOs monitoring reports of the PAF may not influence decisions unless there is clear mechanism for utilising monitoring reports. Originally, NGOs presented their reports to the quarterly donor/government meetings, but these meetings are not consistent and NGOs have no control over them. Furthermore, the PAF monitoring by NGOs seems to concentrate on expenditure rather than the entire budget process including sources of income. For instance, although UND participated in debt relief campaigns, during their PAF monitoring, the government increased the acquirement of new loans. Of course, if NGOs are to influence the way government acquires new loans it would mean putting an end to the work of some donors. A few donors will listen to the crusade of accountability if skewed to questioning donor dealings with governments.

The UDN in its PAF monitoring established a monitoring system at district levels to enable communities to participate in monitoring and hold local governments accountable. Natal (2006: 48) said that NGOs promoted grassroots debates and the free flow of opinions. However, McGee et al. (2002: 72) showed that the PAF committees 'do not use participatory approaches nor monitor the quality of the participatory bottom up process through which the use of funds should be determined.' Natal (2006: 48) also criticises citizen participation in the PAF process and outcome levels as 'tokenism'. Thus, superficial involvement of the poor in monitoring may not lead to accountability. The emphasis on NGO engagement in demand-

ing accountability could be undermining the local political accountability, mainly the role of local leaders.

Demands for accountability have selectively focused on government decisions. Does this mean that only the government has to account for its decisions and actions? What about the donors and NGOs that contribute to poverty reduction promises in the PEAP documents? The donor agenda towards good governance drives the focus on government. Viewing poverty reduction as a political process, actors in the poverty reduction process ought to account for their actions. However, discussions with NGOs show poor monitoring of donor roles as well as those of NGOs. As an NGO official noted:

> Actually, NGOs in Uganda have lost that ability to put the question back to the donors about their behaviour and their own stand on poverty. We do not monitor them anymore as effectively as we used to do when we were campaigning against debt (Jane, ED-NGO5.1).

Equally, whether NGOs are making any significant contribution or not in policy dialogues is not a primary concern of donors or governments. Concentrating on government activities other than powerful actors like the World Bank is mere witch hunting with a high likelihood of failure. While NGOs used to monitor donor activities during debt relief, they have since stopped. Although donors, through their periodic monitoring missions look at poverty issues and receive government PEAP reports, there is no explicit arrangement to monitor NGO participation. Thus, insistence on NGO participation is donor illusion as many actors really care whether NGOs contribute significantly to policies.

Enforcing accountability through monitoring is an information gathering process; however, the formal monitoring system (NEMIS) does not give prominence to NGO gathered information because often it does not fit the standards. Some NGOs are involved in public expenditure monitoring however, they do not participate in budgetary debates. NGOs have not organised the people to demand accountability from institutions claiming to work for poverty reduction. Some view NGOs' own innovation of PAF monitoring, intended to enable the poor to hold the government accountable as mere tokenism. Demanding accountability focuses selectively on government rather than on all actors involved in the PEAP process.

4.6   Conclusion

Although there were some attempts by NGOs to consult with the poor in the Ugandan PRS process, these consultations were either hurriedly done, ad hoc or on already formulated policies, and excluded local leaders and the majority of district-based organizations. Three realities of lack of deliberate arrangement to involve the poor, donor unwillingness to listen and the limited NGO mobilisation competencies have negative repercussions for NGO influence. NGO participation has not managed to broaden ownership in terms of enabling the poor, their leaders and community-based organisations to participate in policy processes and increase NGO ownership of poverty reduction policies. There is a weak link between NGOs and the people. The practice of consultative participation in reality rendered the PRS process and content vulnerable to external control and compromised the expected upstream planning and decision-making. There are flourishing NGO participation meeting deadlines and guidelines often set by the government in respect to donor interests, which inevitably minimizes the glaring need of people's participation in their own poverty reduction process. In addition, NGOs are aware that they are participating in a World Bank project or a government programme, which they can only improve rather than significantly change. Consequently, there is frustration among actors including NGOs because of frequent failure of their motivations for participating.

NGO participation aimed at pro-poor effectiveness lead to the growth of some specialisations among NGOs and accumulation of valuable information through research. A comprehensive document reflecting the multidimensional social, economic and political desires of the sector towards poverty contain the recently compiled information. NGOs managed to achieve incremental results through advocacy, especially on those issues not regarded as political and those in which both donors and government have interests. However, the voices of the poor, knowledge and solutions to the poverty situation remain sidelined in favour of technocratic solutions. Even with advocacy, donors and government would reject some submissions from NGOs in favour of global market-oriented policies. More so, NGO participation has been characterised by limited understanding of the political and macroeconomic context and inability to sustain arguments in a policy dialogue. NGOs have not engaged the politics that surrounds government and

its influence on policy context and process. There is advocacy before mobi-
lising and organising people; as such, the poor have not yet taken control of
the poverty agenda. Rather, there is an apt description of the PEAP/PRSP as
'life blood' for donors and 'a spinal cord' for government rather than that of
the poor. Donor influence has been criticised especially by the government,
which has reacted by replacing the PRSP with the national development
plan.

NGO participation in increasing accountability of governments to the
poor lacks clear mechanisms to involve NGOs in monitoring and budgetary
processes. The information gathered by NGOs does not always fit within
the NEMIS partly because government gives emphasis to quantitative in-
formation. Although NGOs were involved in the Uganda Participatory
Poverty Assessment and in monitoring the Poverty Alleviation Fund, it was
a mainly information seeking process rather than a demand for accountabil-
ity. Even then, the demand for accountability focused selectively on the gov-
ernment rather than donors or NGOs themselves. If accountability is rele-
vant to poverty reduction, several actors that participate in making national
poverty reduction decisions ought to account for their decisions. In conclu-
sion, one could argue that in reality, NGOs are present but at the same time
absent in poverty reduction policy processes. The poor are not organised to
influence policies and a weak link exists between NGOs and the people they
serve. Are NGOs useful in policy implementation? The next chapter ad-
dresses this issue using the National Agricultural Advisory Services pro-
gramme, one of the programmes aimed at reducing rural poverty under the
PEAP/PRSP.

Notes

[1]   NGO Forum (2004: ii) shows other CSO actors who participated in the
review although the majority were NGOs.

[2]   IMF and the World Bank (10 December 1999) Poverty Reduction Strategy
Papers, Operational Issues, Washington DC: IMF and WB.

[3]   Gariyo said that before the PEAP, NGOs took part in the 1996-1999 Struc-
tural Adjustment Participatory Review and the 1997 WB Participatory Assis-
tance Strategy in two districts.

[4]   The task force included international NGOs, local NGOs, research institutions and church-based organisations (Gariyo 2002: 19).

[5]   Lead NGOs included the NGO Forum (overall coordination), the UDN, Water Aid, Uganda Water and Sanitation Network, Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Organisation, Uganda Child Rights NGO Network, Civil Society for Peace in Northern Uganda, Uganda National Health Consumer Organisation, Council for Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa, VECO-Uganda, Coalition for Sustainable Development and Panos Eastern Africa. The CSO analysis team was composed of Warren Nyamugasira (NGO Forum), Frank Muhereza (Centre for Basic Research), Margaret Akello (SNV) and Sarah Ossiya (Panos Eastern Africa). This review team included Monica Naggaga (Oxfam), Jane Ocaya (Action Aid), Judy Kamanyi (Associates for Change), Fred Muhumuza (EPRC) and Jane Alowo (Makerere University) (NGO Forum 2004: ii).

[6]   A pillar is a broad directional objective. The PEAP 1997 pillars included primary health care, rural feeder roads, primary education, provision of safe water, and modernisation of agriculture. The PEAP 2000 focused on creating an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth and transformation, promotion of good governance and security, increasing the ability of the poor to raise their incomes, and improving the quality of life of the poor. The PEAP/PRSP 2004 focused on economic management, production, competitiveness and incomes, security, conflict resolution and disaster management, good governance and human development.

[7]   The composition of participants per pillar differed, for instance the pillar on economic development was comprised of MFPED, the Bank of Uganda, donor representatives, private sector foundations, Cross Cutting Issues Team, Economic Policy Research Centre, Civil Society Organisation representatives, Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry, Merged Uganda Investment Authority, Uganda Tourist Board and others.

[8] The technical committee included D/EA (chair), lead consultant, pillar coordinators (tech aides), lead crosscutting issues team coordinator, donor reps, two chief administrative officers, Secretary General, Uganda Local Authority Association, and NGO Forum,

9   The steering committee included Head of Public Service (Chair), Permanent Secretaries' of lead sector ministries, Chair NGO Forum, Chair Uganda Local Authority Association, Donor Representatives and PSF.

10   The paper is a result of 11 other, smaller papers in diverse disciplines of agriculture, environment and natural resources, education, health, HIV/AIDS, macroeconomic framework, local government, social development, peace, security and disaster management, water, justice, law and order, accountability and the media.

11   The NGO submission entitled 'the search for a new development path' has four broad priorities or pillars. These include:

- Increased investment in sectors where the poor are concentrated-rural agriculture, pastoralism and informal sector;

- Utilisation of assets the poor have more effectively, efficiently and equitably-giving land rights to those in production especially women, promotion of appropriate technologies, investment in labour intensive production and agro processing;

- Social protection and building of human capital–increased investment in health, education and water, increased access to social services for vulnerable groups, enhancing social justice, taking rights based approach to all development programmes;

- Redirect resources to higher priority areas-shifting resources from public administration to areas of health and agriculture, provision of government support to agriculture through farmer managed cooperatives, protecting vital domestic industries, deepening financial services, reforming social security, managing and utilising natural resources (NGO Forum 2004: 4).

12   NGO participation in 2003 came from DFID, Oxfam GB in Uganda, World Learning Inc and the UNDP (NGO Forum 2004). The World Learning Inc also provided technical assistance in the form of researchers and liaison officers.

13   Richard Ssewakiryanga is a team leader for the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process, in the MoFPED.

14   It includes the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, which captures data on household population and poverty indicators, the National Planning Authority that is responsible for National Planning Authority, the National Integrated Monitor-

ing and Evaluation System under the Office of the Prime Minister, which is responsible for monitoring government business.

[15] MTEF was introduced in 1997 by the government and since linked with the PEAP. The MTEF introduced a medium-term outlook in government planning as well as the thinking in outputs.

The Paradox of Empowerment: A Case of the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS) Programme

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed various roles of NGOs in poverty reduction. Chapter 3 focused on the growth of NGOs, their relevance to poverty reduction and understanding the different actors in the poverty-reduction policy formulation and implementation in Uganda. Chapter 4 concentrated on assessing NGO participation towards influencing the Ugandan PRSPs in terms of broad-based ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability. This chapter explores how the roles of NGOs in the National Agricultural Advisory Services shifts relational power positions of the poor in terms of enhancing their decision-making and control of the agenda of the programmes. The NAADS programme, as explained in chapter 3 offers an appropriate avenue to analyse the roles and interests of NGOs in the empowerment process of the poor. This chapter argues that there are tensions and ambiguities within the NAADS programme leading to a paradox whereby through a number of empowerment-oriented activities, some groups of farmers experience disempowerment and other empowerment processes do not necessarily lead to power shifts. The question remains, what tensions exist in the NAADS programme and what are their implications on shifting poor farmers' power relations?

Chapter 5 begins with a conceptual understanding of power and empowerment aimed at focusing the discussion on the relational power and the fact that empowerment is a political issue involving several actors whose choices affect shifts in power relations. Sections 5.3-5.6 discuss the various activities aimed at empowering farmers, highlights the tensions and ambiguities in

these activities and their implications to poor farmers' empowerment. Section 5.7 provides some concluding remarks.

5.2   Concept of Power and Empowerment

The discussions on power in social and political theory often refer to Weber's understanding of the concept as the 'opportunity to have one's will prevail within a social relationship, also against resistance, no matter what opportunity is based on' (Weber 1076: 28 cited in Berenskoetter 2007: 3). This perspective of relational power is followed by a behavioural oriented political scientist like Dahl who views power as a situation where 'A has power over B to an extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do' (Dahl 1957: 202 cited in Schmidt 2007: 48). In this view, power is about prevailing in decision-making and does not equate with resource power, which is a potential source (Dahl 2002: 6). Scholars like Bachrach, Baratz and Arendt, credits Weber's understanding of power for its ability to maintain power as a relational issue, which can be understood by analysing social relationships and decision-making processes in a given context. One's ability to exercise influence over others can be analysed in a process of interaction, happening in a given context. Thus, one's influence over other actors can come through resistance and cooperation. Berenskoetter (2007: 10) maintains that power works not only where there is conflict over resources and differing interests/preferences, but also where there is a consensus.

Weber was criticised for his failure to view power as an individual possession of specific resources (Schmidt 2007: 47). Power has different bases including money, rights and other capabilities and also different types such as political, economic, social and intellectual (Malena and Heinrich 2005: 342). The acquisition of these resources and capabilities involves bargaining and negotiation as well as resistance and manipulation (Kabeer 1999: 438). It is possible to understand this by analysing power as a relational issue. Despite the criticism, Weber made a useful suggestion that power has different facets whose achievement depends on technical, habitual and emotional relationships. In a supplementary way to Weber's thinking, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) suggested two faces of power. The first face is power as decision-making. It consists of conscious ways such as the use of force or mutual

exchange or creation of obligation to influence the content of the decisions in relation to actors known preferences (Heywood 2002: 11). Thus, A invests energies in reinforcing social and political decisions and practices that are comparatively favourable to A's public preferences. In this case, the focus is on the ability of the farmer groups to control decisions within the NAADS programme. The second face is power as agenda-setting ability to prevent the making of decisions. This face of power involves the ability to control the political agenda by preventing issues or proposals from becoming decisions (Ibid). Thus, B is prevented from bringing to the fore issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's preferences (Bachrach and Baratz 2002: 31). Luke (1974) criticised Bachrach and Baratz's 'two faces of power' by arguing that it reduces power to individual actions or deliberate non-actions; yet power is inherent to past forms of structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups. Luke suggests the third face of power, which is thought control—ability to influence political agenda by shaping what others think, want or need (Heywood 2002: 11). Importantly, the three faces of power make power an active and agency-oriented concept, which is useful in analysing shifts in power relations. They focus on decision-making and help to move studies on power from the mere concern of definition and measurement of power to focus on what power can do. The agency can be experienced with respect to different tasks such as ability to have a conversation in the bank, ability to help others, ability to make decisions in one's family or general ability to plan effectively (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007: 383). Thus, power can do several things depending on one's want. The three faces also link power with causality in which some gain and others lose some power. Even then, power changes take place in relationships where actors often have multiple objectives thus leading to contradictions. As shall be seen in later sections of the chapter, this causality has tensions and ambiguities.

Power in this chapter is a relational concept used to assess how poor farmers influence decision-making and control the political agenda of the NAADS programmes. The chapter does not engage in discussions on the measurement of power as elaborated by Dahl because relational power shifts may not necessarily be measured and power is widely diffused. Equally, it does not engage in recent discussions on space (see Cornwall 2004; Gaventa

2003) because NAADS is a programme designated to empower farmers. It also does not examine the third face of power, thought control, which seems to demand psychological methods to collect and analyse data. The chapter also does not examine the material aspect of power or gains of the NAADS programme. NAADS has had evaluation studies (see chapter 3) that tend to concentrate on analysing the socioeconomic material impact of the programme and how it has enabled farmers to be productive. However, these studies rarely focus on the relational aspect of power and the context within which power shifts take place. Although the December 2007 NAADS evaluation looked at farmer empowerment in relation to decision-making, it did not explain the tensions and ambiguities within the programme and its implication to relational power shifts.

The definitions and conceptual approaches to empowerment of the poor vary in many organisations and disciplines (see Ibrahim and Alkire 2007: 380-2). This chapter understands empowerment as a process by which poor people or groups possess power, exercise it and obtain the benefit thereof (Uphoff 2005: 219). It is a process of shifting power relations to benefit those powerless to exert control over and influence decision-making. Since empowerment takes place in a relationship, the shifts in power relations are not linear and they can change in favour of the powerful.

Operationally, different institutions practice empowerment differently because of the various purposes they attach to it (Oakley 2001: 39-55). Some institutions practice empowerment as a process of enabling individuals to acquire and control the needed resources. This is the national power approach that focuses on individuals' economic, social and political spheres. In this case, empowerment strategies focus on building the individuals' inner personal power and giving them the confidence and experience to expand their horizons. This is the expansion of one's agency to shape one's life, enable individuals to act freely, and thereafter cause structural changes (Kabeer 2000; Luttrell et al. 2007). The national power approach assumes that the individual agency will be socially beneficial. However, the focus on expanding the individual asset base and capabilities privatises poverty reduction and misses the opportunity to empower the poor because collective action is not part of the strategy (Uphoff 2005: 231). On the other hand, other institutions practice empowerment from a more structural perspective

where people not only take part in decision-making, but also assert themselves and demand their rights. Wils (2001: 8) and Luttrell et al. (2007: 2-3) emphasised that although empowerment is linked to people's social, economic and cultural dimensions, it is more of 'a political strategy' directed towards changing the underlying structural causes of disempowerment such as gender and illiteracy. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007:383) noted that the institutional environment or structure offers pre-conditions for effective agency thus insisting that the process of empowerment is incomplete unless it enables people to act.

While recognising the importance of individual agency and institutional structures, other scholars link empowerment with participation and decision-making (Mayoux 2003). Participation provides an avenue to understand the power dynamics and decision-making, where and when power be applied, including the power to influence behaviour and choices of third parties (Wils 2001: 7). Therefore, without participation in decision-making, empowerment remains hollow rather than an active political struggle for change. In agreement with Fride (2006: 5), empowerment should not be synonymous with participation because participation is a means to empowerment. In this chapter, empowerment means an operational concept aimed at understanding how the roles of NGOs in the NAADS programme facilitate the poor to gain power. It focuses on understanding the relational power shifts in terms of decision-making and controlling the agenda of the poverty reduction programmes.

There have been several studies on the empowerment of the poor within the poverty reduction programmes. Luttrell et al. (2007: 3) criticises the empowerment agenda for being a means to control those suffocated by the neoliberal policy regimes, rather than encouraging a radical struggle against social injustice. Other studies argue that empowerment as one of the buzzwords in 'development policy which may offer little hope of the world free of poverty' as it is being 'used to evoke' because the concept has been depoliticised (Cornwall and Brock 2005: 1043). Despite the criticisms, empowerment is still relevant to poverty reduction. Expectations are high that poverty reduction programmes will change power relations in favour of the powerless. Empowerment strategies can increase pro-poor growth, sustainability of collective activities and cost effectiveness of the poverty reduction

programmes (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007: 397). The crucial part of the litera-
ture has focused on material dimensions of power, there seems to be limited
information on relational power shifts.

This chapter utilises the two faces of power to investigate how the roles
of NGOs in NAADS enabled farmers to participate in decision-making,
control of the political agenda and challenge exploitation in the NAADS
programmes. The chapter analyses the process and the contextual factors of
the Farmer Institutional Development (FID) activities including farmer
group formation, group training, farmer leadership institutions and man-
agement of the Integrated Support Farmers Group (ISFG) to understand
how farmers exercise influence on other actors to do something they would
otherwise not do. In so doing, the chapter highlights broad tensions in the
programme related to the usage of groups for efficiency rather than collec-
tive action, the top down yet claimed bottom up empowerment approach,
representation in relation to enabling farmers to influence decisions collec-
tively and resistance to change by the technocrats who found NAADS a re-
warding avenue to manoeuvre their interests. These tensions present a para-
dox in which empowerment activities do not always lead to power shifts and
in some cases, they even lead to disempowerment of the farmers.

5.3 Farmer Group Formation

Although the individual farmer is the principle target of empowerment,
NAADS argues that it is difficult to empower isolated poor individual farm-
ers. NAADS utilises a mixture of individual and group approaches. With
group processes, assessing empowerment involves looking at whether farm-
ers have a choice to join groups or not and whether joining groups is a con-
scious action or commitment to shifting power relations. The choice for
farmers to work in groups has a bearing on the extent to which they engage
in-group, decision-making or even collectively challenge decisions of other
actors that may not be beneficial to them. According to Plummer and Tay-
lor (2004), self-initiative is the highest empowering form of participation.
Evidently, there are limited chances for farmers to choose not to join groups
and at the same time benefit from NAADS as individuals. As a NAADS of-
ficial stressed:

> Our principle is that we work with farmer groups; the first thing is to prepare groups, so if you are not in a group then you miss out.… Who stops them from joining groups? We are dealing with groups because it is easier to reach many people given the resource envelope for the programme (Sabiti, NC12).

Although individual farmers are mobilised to form groups used as entry points into communities, groups seem used for operational purposes. Following the donor requirement of efficiency in public service delivery, the group approach ensures minimal utilisation of funds rather than a process in which farmers have choice-making powers. Although the group approach may be cost effective, tagging individual empowerment processes to group processes disadvantages those farmers who may not want to work in groups. As Gaventa (2003)[1] argues, there is an invisible kind of power at work where farmers cannot think to either stay in groups or leave and still benefit from the programme.

Farmers do not decide on mobilisation modalities for group formation. NAADS offers an open invitation to several categories of farmers such as women, men, disabled and youth to participate. Of course, this is in fulfilment of the universal approach of government services aimed gaining control of electorates. However, it does not encourage social mobilisation, collectivism and learning for long-term benefits. The universal mobilisation process for group formation has made it difficult to mobilise the 'hard to reach' farmers. Currently, mobilisation is mainly through radios (47.4%), workshops (32.8%), government officials (29.3%) other farmers (27.6%) and neighbours (18.5%) (MAAIF 2007:15). The radio and workshops, which represent about 80 per cent of information sources of poor farmers, are not ideal compared to the more direct contact methods. Again, the programme assumes that every farmer is interested in working through groups irrespective of age or group conditionality. Yet discussions with non-NAADS farmers show that some groups have conditions that stop new farmers from joining old groups. Despite the ideological advantages of working in groups such as collectivism and communal benefits, some farmers may not be interested in joining groups. Evidently, not all farmers join groups, the majority remain largely outside the programme (MAAIF 2007: vi). Those farmers outside the NAADS groups have no influence on the programme although they compose the majority of the farmers. NGOs have

to be aware that factors such as globalisation, technological advancement and the entrenchment of capitalism erode the older forms of social mobilisation such as bringing women to form a women's group. Thus, the realities of social mobilisation suggest both gradual and radical activities with a long-term collective strategy that allows learning, which enables even the laggers to appreciate the change process.

Often even those farmers reached by mobilisation receive different messages and contradictory approaches by different mobilisers. Commonly, farmers 'form and get services from NAADS', which sends signals of attaining material benefits. This leads to growth of numerous groups but has partly been the source of 'false groups' in all three districts. Information and influence would enable farmers to identify and express their preferences (Khwaja 2005: 273-4); however; conflicting information does not enable farmers to make informed decisions. Discussions with farmer groups show that false expectations by members and unharmonised needs between those of the group and individual members lead to inactive members, which eventually lead to dropout. In addition, the NAADS embraced different actors to mobilise farmers as a strategy to reduce government monopoly, at the same time, the government could not stop mobilising its electorates. Thus, the programme lacks a harmonised guide to mobilise poor farmers. For instance, district and subcounty government officials did the first round of group formation in the Kabale district; yet in Tororo and Luwero, NGOs performed the district mobilisation. Community Development offices conducted mobilisation of the expansion to new subcounties in the older districts[2] (MAAIF 2007). The haphazard group formation has been one of the sources of high group and member dropout from NAADS activities in all three districts. In Bubare subcounty in the Kabale district, in 2001/2002, there were 300 NAADS groups, which reduced to 87 groups in 2006. Similarly, MAAIF (2007) shows high group dropout in Bukinda, Kabale district from 250 in 2001/2002 to 61 in 2006/2007. Other factors generating the dropout rate include lack of other incentives like transport refund, lunch for farmers and lack of material benefits (MAAIF 2007: 18). Thus, groups keep struggling to retain membership to work with NAADS rather than struggling to exert influence on the programme.

The external drive for group formation reduces coherence and deliberate collective action within groups. There are indications of limited time for proper group development to form, storm, norm and mature to determine their own agenda. For example, a farmer group expressed:

> We were told that groups are supposed to be 30 members; our original group was 50 members so we had to divide into two groups, others chose to undertake piggery or poultry projects but since then, the poultry group has collapsed because chicks died. For us, we are persisting although they took away our pigs and others died (GP8).

The intention behind limiting group numbers is to create smaller and more effective groups but it may lead to reduced cohesion of the group. Evidently, in most farmer groups, members could not stand together and stop the injustices experienced by group members. For instance, in the Kabale district in one of the farmer groups, a member refused a poor breed goat supplied from the subcounty; other members accepted the goats. Similarly, in Luwero district some members refused to receive eight kilos of rice from the subcounty instead of ten kilos and others accepted it, signed for a full supply and to date are still waiting for the balance. Krishna (2008) argued that the poor could not act collectively because of different interests; however, in this case, the farmers are not organised enough to take advantage of their diversity. Top down processes have historically been criticised by those who currently criticise the World Bank PRSPs as disempowering. Although empowerment remains relevant to poverty reduction, it cannot be externally determined or given. Confronting the unequal power relations among farmers requires mobilisation of a wide range of actors together with learning and organising for long-term social change.

Farmer groups (especially the new groups) have limited coherence and collectiveness compared to older groups. Cohesion is an objective characteristic of any social structure, which enables groups to have a strong common voice (Mizruchi 1990: 1). Internal cohesion and a sense of solidarity are two of the indicators of an empowered group (Oakley 2001: 49). Discussions with farmer groups show that group cohesion is not only dependent on gathering groups of women or youth, but also on friendship and having a common goal. Within NAADS, the 'old' farmer groups—those that were in existence before the programme—are more active and members work to-

gether and are, thus, coherent compared to the younger ones. This confirms DENIVA (2005) and MAAIF (2007) earlier findings on NAADS groups. The coherence among old groups is attributable to the presence of group assets such as land, goats and bank accounts; benefits from groups, the presence of good leaders, the history of certain groups and having an inherent vision for a better future. Although farmers generally increased friendship and networks with other farmers, some of the above factors are still lacking among the new groups. The basis for these group decisions is often not on group values or interests, but on those of NAADS. It was common to hear that 'we are in groups because government wants us to work in groups.' The formation of farmer groups has been largely a top down exercise. Coherence is not a desire for powerful actors who wish to continue controlling the farmers. Nevertheless, although the old groups are coherent, there is limited evidence that old groups can control certain decisions more than young ones can. As such, old groups still accept poor quality seeds and goats from the programme.

Group identity could be another indicator of group empowerment. An empowered group should clearly identify itself and work towards protecting its name and image. Ideally, group identity would increase group autonomy; however, most refer to farmer groups working with NAADS countrywide as 'NAADS groups'. Their technology site bears signposts reading 'NAADS demonstration sites' even when some of the sites are hosted by individual families. Both NAADS and the farmers argue that this is an advantage to the groups because they are easily identifiable. Consequently, NAADS farmer groups lose identity as well as opportunities to determine their own destiny. Discussions with groups show that they can hardly stage resistance against NAADS. Often, what motivates decisions to open bank accounts, formulate a group constitution or even register the groups is the hope for reward from NAADS. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007: 392) argued that decisions taken for fear of punishment or hope for reward (avoiding shame or gaining praise) may compromise the groups' autonomy. The current arrangement promotes patronage where farmers pay loyalty to the programme rather than trying to influence it to their own benefit. The limited group identity hampers efforts by farmers to demand what collectively belongs to them.

Still with regard to identity, discussions with NGOs show that NAADS uses signposts (posters) as physical evidence of their presence in an area, which is necessary for accountability purposes. At the same time, government is interested in legitimacy and controlling citizens thus signposts give evidence of their presence. In addition, NGOs also compete with NAADS to distribute signposts around homes or group projects in the districts. The practice has seen a number of signposts littering villages with names of NGOs operating in the area. In some cases, signposts appeared on sites where certain activities have since died out or are in recess. Although it is a practice of clientism, some NGOs claim that it is a way of eliminating duplication of resources and over targeting the same clientele. However, discussions with farmer groups in Luwero and Tororo districts show that there is segregation of farmers. NGOs tend to mobilise farmers they have had prior contacts with even in NAADS programmes. Once a household hosts a signpost of an NGO, other NGOs do not mobilise them for their activities. Consequently, farmers or groups with signposts are often loyal to the NGOs and hardly question their activities. The majority of the groups recognise that NGOs are a bonus to the communities. Government officials in districts like Tororo said that their experience had shown that NGOs might reach the poor farmers during mobilisation more than the private service providers can. It is possible to interpret these sentiments about NGOs as the desire to have access to more patrons rather than having control over activities contracted by NGOs in the NAADS programme. This is a power game where NGOs try to gain legitimacy in the eyes of farmers.

Overall, within NAADS, there is no common understanding of empowerment and its indicators. Discussion with NAADS coordinators suggest that empowerment, although it is the overriding principle, there is no clear strategy for its achievement. Asked about the indicators of an empowered group, a NAADS official noted that:

> An empowered group is one, which is able to select a viable enterprise and comply with NAADS requirements such as having a constitution, specialisation and production for the market (Sabiti, NC12).

Another coordinator echoed,

It is a group, which has real power in terms of hiring and firing service providers, which can select a viable enterprise to engage in, and, which is represented at different farmer structures where decisions are made (Adakun, NC6).

NAADS (2004: 24) gives details of empowerment indicators with a focus on efficiency and effectiveness of farmer institutions and increased demand for advisory services. The NAADS emphasis is on the farmers' ability to own, manage and demand agricultural advisory services. Specific indicators in the NAADS manual specifies issues like the number of farmer groups or, for those who are aware of procurement procedures, follow planning guidelines, with clear reports/minutes, those aware of deliverables of service providers, can pay subscription fees, and retain their membership with NAADS for at least two years. Evidently, this not only makes the programme superior to the farmer, but also places more emphasis on material or immediate tangible results indicators rather than on relational power dynamics. There are no clear indicators of decision-making and agenda setting for the programme. This ignores the fact that the achievement of the outputs or outcomes goes through a process of power struggle and negotiation. NGOs either have not helped to clarify these indicators because they work as contractors and often assume that the client (NAADS) is aware of the indicators of empowerment.

The discussion so far shows that NAADS groups form largely to ensure efficiency in service delivery and claim legitimacy by some actors rather than hubs for decision-making and challenging power inequalities by the farmers. NGOs still believe in the potential for groups in empowering the poor. However, they neglected to question the lack of coherence, strong identity and collectivity in NAADS groups or, why some farmers are not in groups. The empowerment approach seems not geared towards developing farmer agencies to control or make decisions in pursuit of values. Technically, NGOs participate in group-formation, but there are no indications that farmer groups influence and control the formation process of other groups, which is externally driven.

5.4   Training Farmer Groups

This section shows that although training remains essential for empowering farmer institutions, the manner in which it is offered, its content, timing and facilitation largely undermine farmers' empowerment. NAADS consid-

ers empowerment in terms of material conditions such as individuals having appropriate resources, access to secure income and appropriate skills. This is similar with the World Bank view that emphasises capacity-building activities to increase ownership and create commitment to poverty reduction programmes (Fride 2006: 4). The capacity-building drive is, to a certain extent,[3] supported by service delivery NGOs that offer Farmer Institutional Development (FID) and Integrated Support to Farmer Groups (ISFG) training. However, discussions with farmer groups show that farmers believed that training alone through FID and ISFG would not empower them. Although training enables farmers to gain skills and establish friendship networks with other farmers, it does not always mean farmers influence decisions in the NAADS programme.

First, discussions with NGOs show that donors dictate decisions regarding training. For instance, an NGO official expressed:

> There is nothing the government could have done to this dubious programme loaded with donor funding other than accept the conditionalities. But how do they expect someone living on one dollar or less to practice the knowledge learned? Is it not really mocking the poor? (Jane, ED-NGO5.1)

Being conscious of the surrounding realities would enable the poor to challenge the powerful. However, the farmers in NAADS are not aware that other forces largely control their decisions and those of the government. The current nature of training overshadows the need for farmers to focus on broader contextual issues like funding for the agriculture sector, the food security policy and world trade policies, which affect the agriculture business. For instance, despite the FID and ISFG training by NGOs, some groups do not even know the difference between NAADS and the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture activities; much less, the amount of resources that comes into NAADS programmes. The training of farmers focuses on internal issues to the project such as group formation, constitution making and monitoring and evaluation. Yet the context shapes farmers' ability to demand and control resources of production. The NGOs are often criticised for spending too much time in workshops and seminars; however, with the NAADS training, the government commissioned the service delivery NGOs. NGOs, like other service providers, are hired and paid to offer training. The NGO networks and international NGOs have been critical about

making NAADS training a front-runner of other components of the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture like micro-finance, health and community road networks. Still, they have not challenged its technocratic focus. While some NGOs can afford to criticise the NAADS policy, the service delivery NGOs continue to solicit bids to offer the training. This is because government programmes are one of the sources of their funding.

The FID and ISFG trainings are technocratically driven thus farmer groups do not get to decide what they want to learn, when they want to learn it and how, but rather they are, over time, exposed to generic training in group dynamics. Technical government experts, who believe that farmers need guidance on what they learn, decide the training content. Thus, the basis of the training is largely on the assumed training needs of farmers without enabling farmer groups to decide the content. When asked whether they participated in needs assessments before engaging in service delivery, one of the NGOs said:

> Since most of the time local governments have a number of groups they want us to reach, we assume that the terms of reference reflect the training needs (Rita, ED-NGO1.1).

Although technocrats especially NAADS officials argued during their interviews that farmers need to be guided by controlling what they should learn, the course content seems detached from the farmers' day-to-day life. As such, some farmers decided to attend the training in order to stay on good terms with NAADS not necessarily that the training will meet their needs. Such training is likely to compromise groups' ability to utilise skills acquired in decision-making. The training provides an opportunity for farmers to share experiences, but training content does not take into consideration education levels of the farmers and the fact that some groups had similar training before.

Since the aim of the training is group strengthening, it would logically follow that the characteristics of groups guide the training. However, training content and delivery does not conform to the characteristics of the groups and their members. The content of FID promotes exchange of information on group dynamics, but does not pay attention to needs of specific groups.

Table 5.2
Basic characteristics of farmer groups

Group Code	Year started	Membership		No. of literate members	Other characteristics
		M	F		
GP1	1994	12	14	19	Group engages in potatoes, vegetables and goat projects. Group owns assets like a he/boar goat, bank account and draws members from one extended family
GP2	2003	25	35	32	Group activities include potatoes, fruit and vegetable growing. It is an association made of six small groups
GP3	2003	10	8	15	Group engages in growing potatoes. It is made up of church leaders and their spouses mainly using church land for projects
GP4	1987	2	15	11	Group activities include groundnuts and poultry projects. The group is made up of one extended family
GP5	2003	12	18	15	Group activities include groundnuts and poultry projects. The majority of the members of the group are teachers
GP6	2000	5	17	12	Group is involved in groundnuts and piggery activities. It is comprised of teachers and women political leaders
GP7	1998	3	17	13	The group activities include groundnuts and banana growing. Group comprised of different people in a village
GP8	2001	3	17	11	Group engages in piggery and rice growing
Total		72	141	128	

Source: Fieldwork data on basic characteristics of groups

Table 5.1 shows that, some farmer groups are older than the NAADS programme; yet others are newly formed. One group in the Bubare subcounty of the Kabale district comprised six groups and others were single entities. Groups are composed of elites and non-elites, where the non-elites make up about 39.9 per cent of the total membership. Some groups own assets like land and bank accounts, and members join from extended families and neighbourhoods of which the majority are women. Although, such groups ideally would require different content and delivery methods, discussions with farmers and NGOs show that during training activities, groups are mixed; even the old groups still undertake the same training. It seems the aim of mixing groups is to ensure that several groups attend the training in the shortest time possible rather than addressing group needs. The NGOs spearhead the training; they produce attendance lists and training reports as indicators for work done.

The FID and ISFG training is training centre-based with schedules and delivery conducted at centralised locations (centres) rather than at group level. The number of centres per parish depends on the number of groups and the ability of the groups in a subcounty to co-fund the programme rather than the needs of the farmers. The training centre approach intends to cut costs in the delivery of training and afford opportunity to several farmers to attend the training. While in the Tororo district training was open to every group member, in the Kabale and Luwero districts, representatives attended with the hope that the information would trickle down. However, there is limited consultation with farmers, which has made training schedules more service provider [NGOs] suited than farmer suited. Local governments and the NGOs devise the schedule and as a result, farmers explained that:

> The training is conducted during rainy and planting seasons when we are busy opening gardens. So, for purposes of maintaining ties with NAADS, we send our children to learn on our behalf (GP2).

As echoed by an NGO official:

> These farmers have no interest, the majority do not attend the training and those who attempt to attend rarely complete the training (Rita, ED-NGO1.1).

In all three districts, there is a reported loss of farmer interest in the training including dropouts, absenteeism and substituted participants to include children. The Bubare subcounty report indicates that the major challenges of FID were low turn out of farmer groups in Ihanga, Rukore, Murambo and Rwakayundo and poor time management by farmers. In addition, farmers were reportedly more interested in tangible benefits and their participation was affected by politics and interferences by other service providers from NAADS (A2N, 2006b). If farmers had no interest in learning, it follows that they would not send their children for training. The absenteeism and low turn out could be a form of latent power to influence the programme, but in this case even with low attendance, centralised trainings are organised and activity reports written. NGOs acknowledged that the training centre approach may not address the specific interests of groups, but it helps to achieve the terms of the contract given the short time often given to contracts. Those who attended the training learn some skills but the training centre approach does not necessarily help the majority of the groups determine the business at the centre or stop training events from taking place. Furthermore, there is no mechanism to ensure a trickle down of learning to the majority of farmers.

The FID and ISFG training is repetitive in nature, hurriedly done and under short-term contracts of three-to-six months. NGO officials are aware that farmer empowerment needs ample time and is often a slow process but since they use donor-government funds that demand timed results, NGOs have to fix the training to achieve results. In addition, with NAADS, new training contracts do not take into consideration gaps left by the previous contractor. This is because training is a top down routine activity often assuming that farmers have similar training needs. For instance, even those groups who possess constitutions have to undergo constitution-making training. While repetition makes farmers revise the course content, it may not broaden farmers' knowledge base because it is the same training over again. During discussions with farmer groups, members expressed boredom and resentment of the repeated training. For instance, a farmer group expressed:

> We were trained so many times first by the International Centre for Research in Agro Forestry and CARE during the 1990s. NAADS training to us is like

> repeating primary one instead of being promoted to primary two. It wastes our time although some of our members have made new social ties through NAADS, which is good (GP1).

Although NAADS and NGOs argue that repetitive training is suited for adult learners because it gives them chances to revise issues, it wasted time for some farmers especially those in old groups and it did not build on the existing knowledge in groups. With repeated training, farmer groups seem to have limited choices other than to attend and have not contested it. Equally, NGOs as public contractors seem unbothered by the repetitive nature of training. As Fowler (2005b) noted, the current poverty reduction programmes pegged NGOs for institutional survival, reinforced the harmony and partnership model for social change. Exceptionally however, the NGO in the Tororo district introduced group-based facilitators, equipped them with training of trainers' skills, facilitated them with bicycles and 5000 Uganda shillings monthly to go and coach individual groups. The coaching introduced by an NGO in Tororo district enabled farmer groups to remain aligned to group activities. However, the coaching also concentrated on group dynamics rather than relational issues like decision-making or negotiations with local governments and NAADS, which was contrary to the practice of repeated training.

The delivery of FID and ISFG activities harbours contradictions where some NGOs tend to work for their own survival rather than that of their farmers. Discussions with farmers show that in one of the districts a service delivery NGO organised training for three days, but actually trained for one day and asked farmers to sign the attendance lists for three days. As expressed by the group of farmers:

> It is not that we do not attend the trainings. The thing is that a trainer comes and tells you that the training will take three days and tells you that it will inconvenience your work schedules, so he persuades you to sign for the three days training when in actuality; he trains you for one day (GP7).

The choice by farmers to sign attendance lists is not necessarily that they are busy, not interested in learning or motivated by fear of punishment. The act of making farmers sign false attendance lists is tantamount to silencing their voices. In such cases, NGOs undoubtedly perpetuate unethical conduct of misusing public resources; a vice transferred to farmers. In so doing, NGOs

not only compromise farmers' integrity, they also make farmers lose the moral ground to challenge corruption practices in NAADS. It is reasonable to expect that empowered farmers would refuse to sign attendance lists and demand training but in this case, they chose to favour NGO requests rather than attaining skills. Moreover, in the three districts both government technocrats and farmers complain of NGOs deploying poorly trained trainers. Yet farmer groups have not revolted against attending such trainings.

NAADS has yet to undertake the real farmer institution training. This does not mean that the programme is not aware of the needed slow, coaching-based training, but there is no deliberate investment in it. Discussion with NAADS show that in districts like Kibale, NAADS together with FAO funded a pilot project that significantly strengthened farmers' institutions compared to the current practice. As explained by a NAADS coordinator:

> The real farmers' development programme is not in place. We had a programme in Kibale where we had group promoters, whom we employed and paid 400 000/=Uganda shillings. They were allocated five groups for training and coaching for a period of one and a half years. There is evidence in for instance in Mabale, Rwamiramira, Bwanswa and Bwikala subcounties that farmers' leaders are strong and they make decisions for their programmes. Coordinators or even service providers do not want to work in those subcounties because they know that they will be held accountable for their actions by farmers. NAADS borrowed some good practices from this pilot, but not all. My thinking is that empowerment cannot be achieved with three-month contracts (Sabiti, NC12).

The training driven by need for results where indicators emphasise number of training sessions and number of people trained may not be appropriate to empower farmer groups. The NAADS coordinator noted that the achievements of the pilot project even in Kibale district might soon disappear because of lack of a system to strengthen the leadership continuously. In the end, farmer institutional development training, which is technocratic driven where NAADS makes decisions regarding the training schedules, the time allocated to the contracts and how often it takes place together with contractors makes farmers passive players. Groups seem to send participants for training based on the hope of reward rather than on group needs. NGOs spearheaded the training and managed to enhance farmers' skills in group

dynamics, but farmer groups have not influenced the content or the methods of the routine repetitive training. The training did not enable farmers to understand the contextual issues surrounding agriculture. Further, although there was an innovation by an NGO in Tororo district to ensure that training focuses on specific group needs, the repetitive nature of training and its course content does not bother a majority of NGOs.

5.5   Farmer Leadership Institutions

Uphoff (2005) maintains that for the poor to be organised and act collectively they need to have formal and informal rules and procedures. Thus within NAADS, the Farmer Institutional Development activities are supposed to enable farmer groups to establish clear group structures and systems. NAADS also envisioned empowerment as a process through which farmers gain access and control over structures and processes that transform resources into what they desire (MAAIF 2000: 4). Having these structures is not enough to eliminate farmer exploitation. Thus examining the leadership structures helps to understand control over decisions, who makes decisions and whether the poor have freedom to make choices. The purpose behind establishing the farmers' leadership institutions from the parish to national levels through a system of representation was to enhance ownership of the programme, ensure participatory decision-making and collective action. These institutions include the farmers' fora [district and subcounty], the procurement committees, parish coordination committees and the community-based facilitators. The fora, parish coordinating and procurement committees interface with the technical teams at different levels of government on matters of enterprise selection, planning, monitoring procurement and addressing operational matters (MAAIF 2007: 29-30). Compared to the previous extension programme, indications are that NAADS brought decision-making closer to the farmers through farmer leadership structures. However, there are also indications that the committees have not enabled the majority of the farmers to participate in decision-making or enhanced them to set the agenda of the programme collectively because largely, the leadership of the programme has been monopolised by elites and local politicians.

NAADS farmer leadership has been vulnerable to local elite and male capture; consequently, poor farmers of which the majority are likely to be illiterate and women remain sidelined in the decision-making process. Predominantly men direct and manage NAADS farmer institutions with the exception of the Kisoko subcounty where there were equal numbers of men and women in subcounty farmers' fora. In the three districts, the majority of the women occupied leadership positions at the parish and village levels. As explained by an NGO official:

> There is no money at those levels, no allowance or decision-making powers. Men are found at the subcounty levels because there is money (Kirstin, ED-NGO3.1).

Thus, few women occupy positions on the levels where resource allocation decision-making occurs. Additionally, local elites in respective districts lead the farmers' fora because they are knowledgeable to articulate farmer views. However, as Oakley (2001: 53) notes, the high dependence on local elites for decision-making minimises chances for the poor to increase their powers. Elite capture is not a unique occurrence in the NAADS programme but it is characteristic of the poverty reduction agenda where the elites act as consensus builders. Although, NGOs engage in training farmer leaders, they have limited influence to change the character and composition of the leadership committees to create space for the non-elites to voice their demands.

The elite capture had some advantages. The 2007 NAADS evaluation states that the Kabale, Lira and Soroti farmer institutions (the district fora, subcounty committees, parish committees) were empowered because they articulated their issues well, understood the process and operations of NAADS, were confident and independent in executing their duties. As expected of the elites, during the end of the 2006 financial year review meeting in the Kabale district, leaders articulated their concerns. Farmer leaders to a certain extent engaged in planning and coordination of activities especially the subcounty executive and the procurement committees. For instance, the farmer leaders in the Wakiso districts worked with Environmental Alert to support a farmer petition that resulted in increased technology development sites in areas they were sparsely located. Similarly in the Lira, Ntungamo and Soroti districts, parish committees and farmers' fora at subcounty level decided to reject bids from unsatisfactory service

providers and to return unsatisfactory inputs to the suppliers (MAAIF 2007: 34). In the Bukinda subcounty, Kabale district in 2004, some service providers including an NGO were not paid due to poor service delivery and/or incomplete contracts. Significantly, these examples show signs of farmer leaders' ability to influence other actors in favour of farmer interests. However, the ability to influence decisions by farmer leaders deliberately is inconsistent. For instance in one of the districts, the chairperson of the subcounty fora successfully stopped payment for incomplete contracts but became complacent when elected to the office of the District Fora Chairperson. In this same district, farmers were complaining about poor quality goats and spray pump supplies during this researcher's fieldwork. The extent farmer leaders exert influence on other actors differ across and within districts among farmer institutions.

Although many believe leaders allow opportunities for farmer empowerment, it is not always enough that the characteristics that bring them to leadership positions will ensure the interests of farmers. However, evidently in some NAADS districts there is divide and rule practices that limits the opportunities for farmer leaders to influence the government machinery including NAADS coordinators and subcounty chiefs who often make decisions for farmers. As expressed by a farmer leader:

> I am a member of the farmers' fora but they do not invite me when they are deciding on certain issues. Four times, I got the invitation letters when the date for the meeting had passed (GP8).

The chairs of the fora in all districts are powerful elite farmers often working closely with the subcounty or district political leadership who, in most cases are secretaries for production. The decision-making process tends to bypass elites who tend to sympathise with the farmers. Thus, such leaders do not exercise their agency even when they would have wished to do so. For their part, NGOs seem not to follow up on the operations of the fora, or identify such sympathisers of the poor to give them more information. Therefore, having a representative does not guarantee anyone will pay heed to the voices of farmers and those decisions are on behalf of farmers they represent.

More so, individual leaders often pursue interests that are quite different from those of the poor they supposedly represent. Some leaders see the corruption in the programme but decide to 'turn a blind eye' towards the cul-

prits sending signals that they are part of the propellers of corruption. Local government officials, farmers and NGOs accuse farmer leaders of being corrupt. The farmer leaders acknowledge the challenge of corruption within the farmer leadership structure but claim that other actors face corruption in the programme. For instance, when asked about the accusations from the district that leaders connive with suppliers to supply fake seeds to farmers, one of the leaders had this to say.

> Is that what they are saying? Okay. Then it means they are also part of it because they approve the payment. Why don't they refuse to pay? (Musa, FL1)

A NAADS coordinator insisted that farmer leaders are not helping the poor farmers.

> You have a district chairperson who spends most of the time in politics. And you have nothing to do to such a person because he is elected by farmers, if you intervened too much, it may seem you are disempowering the farmer… but a man can become a problem, a dictator and everything in the forum yet for us, we have no powers to remove him (Adakun, NC6).

Another NAADS coordinator echoed:

> The worst thing that has happened to NAADS is the existence of farmer leaders who are not farmers but business people, money minded and who have no farming interest at heart (Sabiti, NC12).

Although in some projects, elites are outsiders to the programmes, in the case of NAADS, the local elites are insiders to the groups. However, that does not stop them from pursuing personal interests. Some elites use NAADS as a stepping-stone to acquire political office. Implicitly, the practice of representation in decision-making harbours individual interests so that even after activities like the FID training, group leaders still pursue individual interests rather than seeking collective gains. While representation may reduce costs of decision-making in the programme, it may not rebalance the oppression of the poor by elites or stop the elite from capturing those spaces.

Representation in decision-making would be empowering to the farmers if it deliberately enhanced consultations, feedback, discussions with farmers and collective action. Achieving this can occur through social mobilisation to help the poor realise their potential for collective action. Oakley (2001)

suggests that the ability of the groups to analyse and discuss issues critically is a sign of empowerment. Khwja (2005: 274) noted that empowerment consists of information and influence, which together allow the poor to express their voices and provide them with bargaining power to make informed decisions. However, within NAADS the opportunities for farmers to discuss issues amongst themselves, act collectively and voice their demands seem constrained by those leaders who act as power brokers. For instance, a farmer group said:

> Some leaders have no time to come to consult us and they assume that they know our problems. In fact, when we elect them they become too busy…. Others like Fabian, comes to tell us when decisions are already made (GP7).

Consequently, farmers did not get to know what contracts were approved and for how much to enable them to put pressure on service providers to deliver (DENIVA 2005: 28). Farmer leaders have limitations in terms of giving information or consulting farmers on decision-making. Reportedly, other leaders absent themselves in meetings or reported late for meetings only to pick up allowances. Some farmer leaders reportedly engaged in paid employment like teaching, thus undertaking agriculture as a secondary activity. Moreover, there is no streamlined feedback mechanism for the groups and it all depends on the leaders' willingness to share information. Therefore, the limited information flow limits farmer effort to exert pressure on other actors to act in their favour.

WDR (2000/2001) emphasises that empowerment is about enhancing the poor's capacity to influence and hold accountable the institutions that affect them. However, farmer leaders seem to reinforce government policies by mobilising farmers to subscribe to them, which policies may not necessarily benefit poor farmers. For instance, leaders mobilised their groups to receive the inflated supplies through Integrated Support Farmer Group (ISFG). Although it is a matter of policy issue, some leaders justify it because of taxes levied on these items. As explained by one of the farmer leaders:

> This money is for transporting these supplies…but who should shoulder those taxes? Why are they paying taxes on sugar and other items? Why don't they complain? (Musa, FL1)

One of the NGO leaders equated the inflated prices charged to farmers with 'milking a collapsing cow':

> Government has failed the agriculture sector where the majority of the poor dwell. How do you promise that you are getting people out of poverty and you continue to over tax them through inputs? Other countries like Zambia and even in developed countries governments give farm subsides to farmers, why not Uganda? (Rita, ED-NGO1.1)

Farmer groups are required to pay for agricultural items through a revolving fund mechanism under the ISFG. However, farmers maintain that these items usually have inflated prices compared to local markets although re-payments go to group bank accounts. Ideally, empowerment activities are supposed to enable the poor to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold institutions accountable (Narayan 2005: 5), but in this case, over priced supplies are not negotiable. To some leaders, the payment of taxes is not an issue for negotiation whether majority of farmers feel over-burdened by inflated prices or not.

The local politicians in the name of deepening decentralisation in Uganda also capture the farmer leadership. Subcounties are expected to be the lead organs in planning; implementing, funding, monitoring and evaluation of the NAADS programme (NAADS 2004: 12). Thus, NAADS mandates local governments under the leadership of politicians to become involved in the management and supervision of the programme. NAADS is one of the programmes cherished for deepening decentralisation (MAAIF 2007). Although decentralisation and empowerment activities would enable the poor to harness their diverse complexities, the inclusion of local politicians within NAADS has given them more power over decision-making compared to the poor farmers. Discussion with farmer groups show that some local politicians such as the production secretaries of councils and Local Council 3 chairmen use the programme to solicit for votes, reward the electorates and retain their political powers. Most of the NAADS coordinators maintained that NAADS is a political project that changes with the changes in politics. In a few cases, the presence of politicians who were also farmers in districts like Kabale, helped some decisions favouring farmers made faster than it would be otherwise. However, in the Luwero district, the employment of the district NAADS coordinator stalled for some years be-

cause of political differences between the Local Council 5 and the Chief Administrative Office. This stalled NAADS activities yet farmers had limited powers to influence government decisions to streamline employment much quicker.

The majority of the NAADS groups were afraid to question their political leadership. A few exceptional individual farmers endeavoured to resist their leaders' choices. For instance, in one of the groups in Kabale, a female farmer refused to take a poor quality goat and in Luwero, a male farmer took eight kg of rice, but did not sign for ten as requested. These are just a few cases. The majority of the farmers have limited ability to speak out forcefully to their leaders or to prevent leaders from making decisions that may seriously be detrimental to their preferences. For instance, a group of farmers noted:

> We had been complaining of poor potato supplies but one day, we were called for a meeting at the subcounty, before the subcounty chiefs stepped into the meeting, we were complaining amongst ourselves. But when the chief came, we all kept quiet…because if you complained of the poor quality, they tell you that other farmers from other subcounties would take these items anyway (GP2).

An NGO official echoed:

> NAADS groups are more tongue tied compared to none NAADS groups (Rita, ED-NGO1.1).

The local leaders use intimidation of shifting the programme to silence the majority of the farmers. As Bacharach and Baratz (2002: 31) argued, the poor farmers may fail to influence other actors because 1) of fear that their actions are expressions of disloyalty to the institution; 2) considering the belief and attitude of other farmers, their own positions could represent a minority one; and 3) sometimes farmers may sense that given the nature of NAADS programmes, their contribution would be pigeonholed. The fear of punishment is a sign of limited autonomy (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007: 392), which may compromise farmers' ability to speak out or challenge a policy agenda. Evidently, NAADS groups rarely impose their choices beyond that of NAADS coordinators, chiefs and often their own leaders. Farmers are users of choices made by others rather than shapers of their own agenda.

They hardly control the programme or influence other actors to make choices in their favour.

Despite the fact that information is key in empowerment of the poor (Khwaja 2005), within NAADS there is a practice of hiding information even among farmer leaders, NGOs and other actors thus holding the government in uncertain conditions. The hording of information in the programme makes certain loopholes like corruption undetectable and renders the programme ineffective. For instance, one NAADS official said that:

> If you were a government official we would not tell the truth, we would only indicate that NAADS is doing well (Nakintu, NC8).

The technocrats fear losing their job and thus prefer to keep the programme running by hording information. On the other hand, NGOs want to maintain their contractual relationships with local governments so they avoid creating antagonism with each other. As mentioned earlier, farmers believe that the government can withdraw NAADS from their subcounty if they give information that may jeopardise the programme. Thus, lack of information makes farmers passive towards questioning their leaders or farmers concentrate on complaining and placing accusations on their leaders and government.

Overall, local government officials and local elites capture farmers' leadership structures easily but sometimes pursue their own interests instead of those of the poor. There is no deliberate consultation, feedback or discussion with farmers so that they can voice their demands. There is limited direct consultation with farmer groups in decision-making and in a way, farmer leaders helped reinforce government policies that could be exploitative to the poor. Farmer leadership seemed largely beneficial to the leaders rather than the poor farmers they represent.

5.6   Allocation and Usage of ISFG Funds

Resource control is one of the bases of power, as earlier stated both government and farmers view empowerment in terms of resource control. However, for the poor to control resources, involves negotiation and bargaining through a decision-making process. This section will show that within NAADS there is resistance among technocrats against farmers' control of

resources or even making decisions on resource utilisation. For instance, farmer groups in the districts expressed the need for groups to purchase farm inputs on their own because the current providers supply poor quality inputs or supply past the planting season. The groups argue that if they controlled the allocation and usage of the ISFG funds, it would enable them to determine the agenda of the programme. As a government programme, the ISFG guidelines mandate the procurement committee be comprised of farmer leaders, NAADS coordinators and subcounty chiefs to manage ISFG funds. The majority of the farmers are mere recipients of farm inputs like seeds, spray pumps, goats and pigs. In the form of technology scale up, they have limited chance to pre-select the appropriate quality of items supplied. The NAADS guidelines in a way propel the denial for farmers to become involved directly in decision-making.

Interviews with government technocrats show resentment over farmers' control over resource utilisation despite the existence of farmer leadership institutions. Technocrats argue that farmers are likely to misuse resources. The insistence that farmers should not control ISFG funds at group level stems from past failure of related projects such as the entandikwa.[4] In some cases, farmers sold off the inputs supplied to pay school fees, buy alcohol and invest in non-agriculture activities. Of course, power over resources should not be to glorify misuse of resources. However, farmer groups are dissatisfied with the current practice that denies them control. As expressed by a farmer group:

> Government tells us that we have powers over NAADS, that it is our programme we should own it. Even NGOs tell us that we have powers but if we talk, nobody is moved. But if you say that groups need to control the money, we want to buy agricultural inputs ourselves and nobody listens to you…you talk and they do what they want. Then what kind of powers do we have? (GP2)

Consequently, an NGO official said that:

> The poor will take the little or the quality that is provided. They say to go around struggling for more may jeopardise the little they are currently receiving. They end up accepting those supplies (Else, ED-NGO3.2).

The overall view of NGOs is as empowering agents, in this case, they just prepare farmers to receive ISFG inputs but they have not advocated for

farmers control of ISFG money. Ownership of resources by the poor in the programme is not automatic and farmers often feel helpless and unheard on issues of resource allocation. The assumption that the poor will automatically control the resources ignores the power asymmetries and conflicts of interests involved in resource mobilisation and utilisation.

Discussions with NGOs show that they too fear blacklisting by local governments. Thus, NGOs prefer to 'close their eyes' on farmers' struggles or controlling ISFG funding. An NGO official explained:

> There is no enabling environment for us to rise up. There is intimidation almost everywhere. There is no avenue for NGOs to confront whoever is denying farmers their rights. The only thing we can do is to attend district review meetings, give our opinion, but we cannot ensure that decisions are taken in favour of farmers…. But how do you sabotage the Local Council 5 chairperson's deal? When you do that, then you risk your name being tarnished and blacklisted and you will find yourself in problems (Rita, ED-NGO1.1).

In order for NGOs to protect their legitimacy, NGOs concentrate on offering a technical service rather than rising up on behalf of the poor. Meanwhile, international NGOs like CARE Uganda have pulled out of the programme. Discussion with NAADS officials show that the threat by some NGOs to pull out of the programme holds government in an uncertain position because it is aware that it would affect NAADS funding. Thus, government prefers to maintain their relationship with NGOs largely because donors want it that way. It is possible to interpret donor insistence as justification of their private-public partnership agenda. Often, NGOs find themselves caught up between governments' way of doing things and donor demands (Igoe and Kelsall 2005).

Although most see the NAADS as a farmer empowerment programme, in reality it is the NAADS and local government officials controlling the decision-making processes. First, they can overturn or fail to recognise decisions made by farmer groups. For instance, there were incidents in the three districts where farmer groups claimed they waited for NAADS coordinators to approve sharing of group produce from demonstration sites. As a farmer group in Tororo district expressed:

> When we were given groundnuts for our group garden, we planted half an acre and decided to give the rest of the seeds to our members for their own

gardens…the coordinator told us that next time; we have to ask for permission before we divide the groundnuts (GP7).

In another group in the Kabale district, members reached a mutual agreement with NAADS officials on how to share 11 bags of potatoes from their demonstration site among members. Meanwhile, in the Luwero district there was one group of farmers where a group's decision to share piglets among members was overturned by the Local Council 3 chairperson. Even the piglets were withdrawn from the group to other groups. This contradicts the NAADS perspective that groups enable farmers to determine their own development agenda. The majority of the groups still find it hard to make their own choices or determine their own agenda in the programme. NGOs are aware of the failure of groups to influence the agenda of the programme at local levels, but they continue to train in group dynamics rather than confronting the hidden powers of the NAADS, local government officials and politicians who make decisions on behalf of farmers. There are indications empowerment of farmers has been depoliticised, and the gaining of power in decision-making practically is not pursued by the actors.

Second, although government officials are not supposed to become service providers, some coordinators own companies that win tenders to offer services or supply inputs. In some cases, the coordinators from district B solicit and win a tender in district C or exchange tenders with fellow NAADS coordinators in other districts, but at the same time fail to deliver on the expectations of the contract. This practice has not only made coordination ineffective, but also the coordinators who would support farmers to hold service providers or suppliers accountable are at the same time the service providers who inevitably cannot pin themselves to account for their actions. As expressed by a NAADS coordinator:

Actually, farmer groups complain, they lament that service providers and suppliers give us poor seeds, we are not trained, we have never seen a service provider completely but then you wonder, the same service provider or supplier is contracted for the next season. Sometimes the subcounty NAADS coordinators are off station for weeks without explanation thus halting the smooth progress and reporting of NAADS activities (Adakun, NC6).

Discussion with NGOs and NAADS coordinators show that an ineffective coordinator may mean total silence even by the farmer leaders. This is be-

cause coordinators form part of the elite class to which farmers tend to submit. Because of the structural arrangement, the district coordinators may discipline subcounty coordinators who do not directly report to them. Equally, local politicians often receive tenders to buy and supply inputs while also owning companies. Discussions with NAADS coordinators show some resignation against questioning the inadequacies in the tendering process. The coordinators attributed this to the fact that they are employed by local governments who can hire and fire so they have to protect their jobs. The other challenge is that some individual NGO staff members own companies that possibly also win tenders. There are chances that such NGO leaders may fail to raise a finger to certain companies because of their own interests. There is a conspiracy among agents of empowerment. The agents are supposed to enable farmer groups to exert influence on service providers and the suppliers are the same agents that the farmers cannot challenge. Due to allegation of corruption, resource misuse and poor performance of NAADS, the President[5] suspended its funding in September 2007. Despite the suspension, the IFAD, one of the donors said, 'it was the government that was complaining about the misuse of funds but not donors. The government cannot force us to suspend our funding' (Kagolo 2008).[6] In a situation where donors are satisfied with NAADS accountability, it matters less when farmers' empowerment is not forthcoming. Although this study does not analyse the influence of the operations and culture of local governments on NAADS, there seems to be a close linkage. Further studies can investigate this.

5.7   Conclusions

This chapter examined how the roles of NGOs in NAADS have shifted the relational power positions of the poor in terms of enhancing their decision-making and control of the political agenda of the programme. The discussions show that NAADS activities have not enhanced decision-making or control of the programme agenda by the majority of the farmers and in some instances, certain decisions taken by farmer groups were overturned.

   The intention behind group formation is to increase efficiency in service delivery and institutional legitimacy for both NAADS and NGOs rather than for enhancing decision-making and collective gains. Although group

formation is one of the success stories of the programme, it is externally driven, farmers have no freedom to choose not to join groups and at the same time, benefit from NAADS and groups' lack of coherence, collectivity and strong identity, which are all key indicators of group empowerment. Although NGOs participate in a universal mobilisation for group formation, the majority of the farmers remain outside NAADS groups. The motive behind some group decisions such as having a group constitution, registering a group and opening a bank account are anticipated rewards from the programme rather than their own interests. If empowerment is the overriding principle in NAADS, then the relational power aspect of the programme has to be further developed. What remains poorly understood, however, is how the emphasis on efficiency through group approach will empower farmers.

Building capacity of the poor through community structures and training are basic strategies for empowerment. However, farmer groups have no control of the training schedules and content, often agreed upon between NGOs and local governments. The NGOs spearheaded the top down, technocrat driven Farmer Institutional Development and the Integrated Support Farmer Support Group Training. Farmers do not decide on the time allocated to the contracts or get to know how much money goes to the service provider. Although the training enhances farmers' capabilities in, group dynamics, farmers remain unaware of the broader power dynamics that control what they learn and how they learn. NAADS training contracts are sources of funding for NGOs, who seem unaffected by suitability of content or the repetitive nature of training. If empowering farmers means enabling them to possess power and exercise it, then the current training in group-dynamics does not help farmers to exert influence on other actors against technocratic driven training even when they resent it.

Through farmer leadership structures, farmer groups have representation at different levels of decision-making. Individual male elites and local politicians whose preferences are often dissimilar with those of the poor farmers capture these structures, yet they rarely receive consultation in decision-making. There is no deliberate social mobilisation, consultation, feedback or discussion with farmers so that they can voice their demands. Certain corrupt tendencies in terms of misuse of resources and poor coordination have

also infiltrated NAADS. Often farmer leaders exploit fellow farmers with overpriced poor quality agriculture supplies. Although NGOs engage in training farmer leaders, they do not influence the choice of leaders or ensure that leaders give feedback and consult their members. The subcontracting arrangement in service delivery has made NGOs ignore the relational power shifts in favour of material outputs, which may not necessarily enable the poor farmer to influence other actors.

Both government and farmers view empowerment in terms of resource control; however, in practice the farmers face resistance to their demand for control over allocation and usage of ISFG funds. In some cases, politicians and technical officers who largely continue to make decisions and manage the fund on behalf of the farmers overturn farmers' decisions. The resistance against farmers' control of resources does not only disempower them but also sustains them in a powerless status. Moreover, because the poor have limited resource endowments, they can receive only the little given to them by the powerful actors even when the intention of the project is to benefit them. There seems to be a close relationship between ownership of resources with relational power shifts. Additional research might explore this further. There might be no perfect design or implementation but if farmers' empowerment is achievable via NAADS, it has to invest in aligning practice and theory.

In the end, tensions and ambiguities often surround the struggle for a power shift in favour of the poor: that is why theory and practice are often different. Although there are several empowerment activities, most do not lead to power shifts and especially not to relational power changes. In some cases, farmers even lost their powers. If NGOs are to contribute empowering the poor through public contracting, they need not only focus on material outputs but also relational power shifts.

Notes

[1]   There are no such strict demarcations between global, national and local places as Gaventa's compartmentalisation suggests. In any case, global forces can influence empowerment even at the local level. The visible, hidden and invisible powers can influence farmers' empowerment.

2   The first districts to try NAADS include Luwero, Kabale, Ntungamo, Soroti and Lira,

3   Service delivery NGOs may not agree with NAADS tenets because in all the districts, NGOs still offered parallel agricultural extension programmes in addition to NAADS.

4   Entandikwa is seed money given by the government of Uganda to the rural poor as capital to enable them to start income generating projects.

5   Ssejjoba (2007) reports that President Museveni after his recent tour in Luweero district decided to suspend NAADS funds until the cabinet reviews the programme. According to President Museveni, 'Government released Shs 48 billion in 2006, and 60 billion in 2007 for the programme, but there is nothing to show for it…in Masaka district, the coordinator said over Shs 198 million had been injected into Bukukula subcounty alone in 2005-2007. Imagine all that money to a subcounty. Many officials have misused this money, organising one seminar and accounting for 2 million' (Ssejjoba 2007: 1).

6   Kagolo, New-Vision, Tuesday, 6 May 2008.

6 NGOs and Social Exclusion

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 concluded that tensions and ambiguities often surround the struggle for power in favour of the poor: that is why theory and practice are often different. If NGOs are to lead the process of realising relational power shifts through the official poverty reduction agenda, they have to initiate a protracted struggle to increase inclusiveness of the poor in policy formation and implementation. The literature shows that the political economy of PRSPs promises social inclusion of the poor. The WB president James Wolfensohn notes that 'our goal must be to reduce disparities across and within countries, to bring more people into the economic mainstream, to promote equitable access to the benefit of development regardless of nationality, race or gender' (Wolfensohn 1997: 1). Wolfensohn emphasised the need to think of development in human terms and to bring the weakest and the vulnerable from the margins of society to centre stage. Similarly, the use of concepts like participation, empowerment and pro-poor effectiveness in the poverty reduction programmes depicts a process where the poor are drivers of these programmes (Cornwall and Brock 2005). In a similar vein, although NGOs cannot be equated with the poor, their inclusion in the PRSPs shows that poverty reduction plays out within a framework of many relationships and interests whereby some actors are included or excluded. Thus, the questions for this chapter are in what ways are the poor included or excluded in the Ugandan poverty reduction programmes? What factors and processes explain the inclusion or exclusion of the poor? In cases of exclusion, how do NGOs confront exclusionary dynamics of the poor? This chapter argues that although the Poverty Reduction Strategies promise social inclusion of the poor, in the end it is business as usual. This is because

PRSPs try to marry growth with poverty reduction without being explicit on the social and political agenda. The current poverty reduction programmes demand cooperation but at the same time, PRSPs are characterised by unequal power relationships among stakeholders implying that inclusion of the poor has to be negotiated. This chapter shows that NGOs appear to have largely condoned social exclusion when they engage in poverty reduction programmes as technocrats rather than as change agents.

The chapter contains five sections. Section 6.2 elaborates on the framework for analysing inclusion and exclusion of the poor in PRSPs. It shows that the different categories of the poor can be included yet excluded at the same time. Section 6.3 discusses the inclusion process at the level of policy formation and section 6.4 examines the inclusion processes at policy implementation levels. In other words, sections 6.3 and 6.4 focus on how inclusion or exclusion unfolds (what process, who is being included or excluded) in the poverty reduction programmes and how NGOs respond to these processes. Section 6.5 gives concluding remarks.

6.2 Mechanisms of Social Exclusion

Social inclusion is a process of integrating marginalised individuals or groups in society. An inclusive society is characterised by striving to reduce inequality, balance between individual rights and duties and increased social cohesion. Abrams et al. (2005: 18) show that inclusion or exclusion of the poor can be abstract, as in cases of social ideologies, moral conviction and social representation where people have different degrees of essence like in cases of apartheid. However, inclusion or exclusion can also be concrete or specific where individuals or groups divide into different categories leading to social groups. Importantly, Abrams et al. (2005: 19) suggest that individuals or groups can be included or excluded in two different forms. These are physical segregation and communicative practices. Depending on the different political ideologies, inclusion can be either a result of progressive redistribution of resources or a result of free markets.

Munck (2005: 27) predicted that there is a risk for capitalism to include equity and equality within the poverty reduction agenda. Munck insisted that it might generate inequality, marginalisation and exclusion to a huge scale without any control. In other words, inclusion can be exploitative. For

instance, Munck (2005: 31) showed how developing countries are included in the global economy but they remain poor. Similarly, Kabeer (2005: 6) noted that one could find excluded groups in the worst paid jobs and there are asymmetrical patron-client relations where excluded exchange of labour and independence exists in return for security. Thus, social inclusion is a complex process involving political, negotiated and interactive relational processes. Therefore, studies on poverty require an understanding of the social-political relational process, within which certain categories are included while others excluded.

Social exclusion is a new way of conceptualising poverty rather than the traditional view of poverty that focuses on absolute individual income poverty measurements (Kabeer 2005:2). Social exclusion focuses on multidimensional deprivation and emphasises the relational processes through which certain groups in society find themselves locked out or left behind. Exclusion of the poor can be full or partial and in areas such as the social, political, economic and cultural systems in society.

Social exclusion as applied to poverty studies differs. Some scholars use the concept to understand inclusion of the underclass in society. This has been criticised for making poverty an individual blame yet poverty is a multidimensional, political and social issue, which is a result of decisions by different actors more than the misfortune of the underclass in society (Alcock 1997). On the other hand, the social integrationists use the concept to study labour markets and education systems (Smith 2005: 168). And yet others, especially those informed use social exclusion to understand redistribution of resources, inclusion in decision-making and structural and unequal systems of power in society (Bradshaw 2004: 3). Implicitly, the mechanisms through which the poor suffer exclusion in the poverty agenda are varied. Important however, is to search for processes and institutions that maintain disadvantage and generate non-integration of the poor in society.

Understanding social exclusion requires analysis of relationships and processes through which resources are distributed. In this case, the focus is on analysis of public policies, through which certain categories of people receive access or not and on mechanisms through which the poor are included but at the same time excluded. Social exclusion does not only mean absence but also being in the cyclical exploitative processes. More so, exclu-

sion is dynamic, often people who are included today may be excluded in the next process or by other factors. While often-used structural factors such as ethnicity, caste, race, gender, disability and location might analyse social inclusion or exclusion, this chapter focuses on programmes designed for inclusion of the poor. Not only public policies have responsibility for social inclusion or exclusion, but also individuals and groups might face exclusion from development through practices of interdependence (Abrams et al. 2005: 19-23). Therefore, analysing formal institutional actors (NGOs, donors and government departments) and other actors like farmer leaders contribute to understanding the socio-political relationships and processes behind the exclusion of the poor from programmes intended for them.

Framework for analysing social exclusion in poverty reduction programmes

The PRSPs aim is enhancing social inclusion where the poor are the main participants in the poverty reduction agenda. Participation is a process meant to increase inclusion of the poor by enabling them to be makers and shapers rather than mere users and choosers of programmes designed by others (Cornwall and Gaventa 2000). It involves participating actively in controlling and determining priorities of development programmes. In this regard, how are the poor participating in poverty reduction programmes and what of their concerns incorporated in these programmes? Participation is considered radical and at the same time controversial (Berner and Phillips 2005) because it can be exploitative. For instance, chapter 4 showed that consultation with the poor during the poverty reduction policy formation processes, by their leaders and community-based organisations was *ad hoc*, hurried and on already formulated policies. There was simply a lack of deliberate institutional arrangement for grassroots participation. At the same time, chapter 5 showed that despite empowerment activities, there was limited power shifts among the poor. Thus the two chapters signal the possibility that the poverty reduction agenda may exclude the poor.

Although participation has been depoliticised, it is still a crucial element of inclusion of the poor in poverty-reduction programmes. Participation would physically include the poor in policy dialogues and enable them to frame poverty reduction policies and practices. Second, the World Bank

policies hinge on 'actions to stimulate growth, make markets work for the poor and build their assets' (Munck 2005: 35). The claim to make markets work for the poor was in response to the failure of development funding. While ideally these factors would contribute to social inclusion of the poor, as shown in the discussion, the poor largely remain excluded. There is no single category of 'the poor', different people respond differently, to specific factors of their poverty and NGOs respond differently to these factors.

There have been a number of other studies on social exclusion in poverty reduction programmes. For instance, Dube (2005) analyses the participation of disabled people in the Ugandan PEAP and highlights time constraints and the limited capacity of change agents as limiting factors for inclusion of the poor. However, Dube does not adequately link the findings to a broader political economy of the current poverty reduction programmes where the powerful actors often dictate the rule of the game. Tomei (2005) studied the ethnic audit of selected PRSPs from 14 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and found that targeting, data collection and participation of indigenous and tribal people are a requirement for successful PRSPs. These studies highlight different mechanisms of exclusion even though these investigations do not provide adequate information on the interaction of different actors, which leads to exclusion of some categories of the poor. Second, there is less attention on how the supposed change agents such as the NGOs, CBOs, religious organisations and leaders position themselves to deal with social exclusion in these programmes. This chapter therefore examines the factors and processes of inclusion or exclusion of the poor in programmes intended for poverty reduction by linking them to the political economy of poverty reduction. The focus is on who is included or excluded in terms of participation and what specific issues for the poor are (not) addressed in poverty reduction programmes.

6.3   Social Exclusion at Policy Level

Two factors of consultative participation in PRSPs and the marrying of economic growth with poverty reduction are examined to understand the inclusion of the poor at the policymaking level.

Consultative participation

The formulation and revision of the Ugandan PEAP/PRSP emphasised the participation of different categories of actors including central and local governments, donors and NGOs. Since 1997, politicians backed the process and the MoFPED rendered the required technical support while donors offered the financial and technical support, and NGOs spearheaded consultation with the poor. However, the space did not ensure the participation of those regarded as marginalised in society to control the decision-making process. As shown in chapter 4, the process of integrating different actors rendered the homegrown project vulnerable to external control. The powerful actors took control of the PEAP and the required painstaking participation of the poor became cosmetic.

In 1997, in the formulation stage of the PEAP, it brought together key stakeholders. The PEAP process may not have been largely inclusive since the majority of the poor did not participate in its formulation. However, the process was more organic and it reflected the local contextual poverty issues. The first PEAP addressed primary health care, rural feeder roads, primary education, safe water and modernisation of agriculture. In 2000, the World Bank took control of the PEAP with its adoption as a debt relief instrument. The revision exercise lasted less than two months with minimal consultation from the communities. The chances that the poor would have physically participated and had a greater influence on policy development in such a hurried consultation process were minimal. The information sharing workshops were hastily put together with a risk of excluding those with no transportation to attend regional workshops. NGOs consulted 644 people in 2000. In this case, the aim of the regional workshops was informing the population of what PRSPs were about and creating consensus about the PRSP approach. As Berner and Phillips (2005: 7) noted, participation needs to go beyond listening to the beneficiaries to achieve their active role in decision-making. The NGOs did not contest the taking over of the PEAP and since then, external forces dictate the process more than local realities. The PRSPs have been criticised for depoliticising poverty, participation, empowerment (Cornwall and Brock 2005) and for being insulated in technocratic bubbles delivering poverty reduction (Hickey and Mohan 2008: 246; Grant and Marcus 2008: 102). The unquestioning stance of the NGOs shows that

they espoused the technocratic character with a likelihood of furthering de-politicisation of participation.

In terms of content, the PEAP 2000 emphasised the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth and transformation, promotion of good governance and security, increasing the ability of the poor to raise their incomes, and improving the quality of life for the poor. The focus of the poverty reduction agenda shifted towards legitimising development funding rather than redistribution of growth. Although during that period, the NGOs spearheaded the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessments in which they captured the voices of the poor, the areas of emphasis within the PEAP 2000 reflected a shift from a simply poor focused plan associated with the first round of PEAP. Even then, the poor did not control the assessments since it was largely an information-gathering mission rather than a decision-making or negotiation meeting on poverty. Why would NGOs not negotiate with the poor when given the opportunity? As earlier stated, NGOs in Uganda had been struggling to gain a seat at the policy-making table, and therefore their focus was on gathering as much information as can be appreciated by government and donors.

In 2003, the number of NGOs participating in PEAP increased. They wrote a 131-page document reflecting proposals on different kinds of poverty reduction, including issues of redistribution, social protection and empowerment strategies of the poor. NGOs proposed the delivery of quality and equitable social services to be the overriding goal of the PRSP. They also proposed that the PRSP should adopt a rights-based approach to create social transformation and improved quality of life for all Ugandans (NGO Forum 2004: 6-7). Further, there were some efforts to maintain contact with the public: public participation tripled from 644 people in 2000 to 2449 in 2003 (NGO Forum 2004: ii). NGOs such as the Uganda Joint Christian Council organised consultations in the districts of Lira, Gulu, Luwero, Nakasongola, Masaka, Rakai, Tororo, Busia Mbale and Kapchorwa and group discussions were held in conflict affected districts of Gulu, Pader, Lira and Soroti by district NGO fora (NGO Forum 2004). However, NGOs largely changed their strategy to concentrate on exploratory desk research to produce a high quality input into the PRSP rather than deepening the participation of the poor, their organisations and their leaders. Given

that the time for the revision was a bit longer and the number of NGOs was more than the previous revision exercises, it is likely that many more people would have participated. However, changing the strategy to concentrate on literature-analysis minimised the opportunities for the poor to participate. NGOs increasingly adopted the technical position, because the input expected from them was equally technical. The production of quality inputs became a pre-occupation of NGOs rather than systematically deepening connections with the grassroots.

In addition, NGOs are not always included at the policy discussion tables. Although NGOs had structural representation on all committees of PEAP/PRSPS formulation sometimes, important information, such as a change of venue, would not reach them. Second, even when NGOs attended these meetings, their contributions would often meet resistance from donors who were pushing their agenda. Those who thought they knew enough to impose blueprint solutions rejected some NGO proposals such as redistribution of land and farmer subsidies. The presence of NGOs at the PEAP revision tables with minimal influence masks the true meaning of participation in decision-making. This does not mean that NGOs may not join other policymakers at policy tables, but it means that inclusion is more than allowing NGOs into a meeting. Including NGOs in activities that may not address the interest of the poor they claim to represent is a mockery of the true intentions of participation.

The practice of consultative participation in reality rendered the PEAP process and content vulnerable to external control. The desired deep connections with the poor and the painstaking participation lost out in favour of the technical consultations. In a situation where powerful actors position themselves to control and determine the agenda for the poor, much of the NGO policy proposals reflect the desire for social change; however, it may not have much influence. External forces with a focus on economic growth govern the PRSP formulation process.

Marrying of economic growth with poverty reduction

The Ugandan PEAP 2004 assumes that if the country achieves an annual economic growth of six per cent in real GDP, inequality would be reduced and the poverty headcount would reduce to 18 per cent by 2013/4 (MoF-

PED 2004: xv). The argument for linking poverty with economic growth is that the focus on growth will enable the country to attain a middle-income status, increase industrialisation and country competitiveness thus, privileging economic growth over social development, social protection and redistribution of the wealth from the rich to the poor. The PEAP 2004 states that while the PEAP 2000 focused on social development, the PEAP 2004 would focus more on investment in productive sectors. In order to reverse inequalities, the government wanted to enable the 'poorer households to participate in economic growth through self employment inside and outside agriculture and wage employment' (MoFPED 2004: xv). Like social integrationists, the PEAP seems to focus on inclusion in paid employment without taking into consideration the different categories of the poor. Considering social exclusion not as a multifaceted phenomenon sustains exclusion. Yet, despite the economic growth in Uganda, the country is characterised by regional, gender and urban-rural imbalances, as well as the failure of economic growth to trickle down to the poor. There is risk in growth and Fowler (2008) argued that when the risk increases, those better off shift it to the vulnerable categories in society.

Although the original intention of the PEAP was to distribute economic growth and cause rural development, the assumption that PRSPs will result in both economic growth and poverty reduction ignores the pressure added onto the poor due to liberalised economies. Although the PEAP recognises different broad categories of the poor such as women, youth, children, the unemployed, internally displaced persons, the elderly and persons with disabilities, it ignores the fact that even these categories are not homogenous categories. For instance, while most regard women as vulnerable, there are different classes including but not limited to educated/uneducated, employed/unemployed, married/unmarried, politically active/inactive, with different abilities. Thus, the programme excludes different classes of women because of their unique characteristics. A deliberate poverty and social analysis of the communities that help to understand the subgroups within the poor will enhance targeted social mobilisation for poverty reduction. Categorisation of the poor would enable the policy reduction agenda not only to refer to the poor and vulnerable categories but also to find concrete responses to reach the poor effectively.

The PEAP 2004 document lacks a comprehensive redistribution strategy. Redistribution is not a key ingredient for neo-liberal programmes, which seem to have no obvious form of interdependence with the poor (Abrams et al. 2005). This is not to say that the poor are not interdependent to the wealthier but within the PEAP issues of the poor like gender, environment and HIV/AIDS are 'cross cutting issues.' Yet, these are the real issues excluding the poor in society. The limited redistribution of growth made NGO leaders describe the poverty situation in the rural areas as naked compared to urban areas. As one NGO official said:

> You go upcountry, poverty is naked. The employment through agriculture they talk about is not there. Go to Kisoro, Bundibugyo and Bulisa districts for instance, you will find people drinking alcohol in the morning. You will find some cassava, beans and maize here and there but agriculture production is low (Else, ED-NGO3.2).

While programmes like universal primary, universal secondary education and rural credit schemes attempt to redistribute growth, the universal programmes fail to address equity concerns that are paramount for maximising equal opportunities. The agriculture sector is under funded attracting less than five per cent of the GDP against the Maputo Declaration Standard of ten per cent (Asainut 2008) yet this is where most (80%) of the poor obtain their livelihoods. The nature of public discourse that focuses on universal principles may not address specific preferences of the excluded categories in society (Krishna 2008: 22). Even then, implementation of these programmes is piecemeal, characterised by trial and error.

Although the PEAP 2004 contains some redistributive policies, for instance the PEAP is committed to protect women's land rights, although there is no affirmative mechanism for its redistribution. The NGO contribution to policy discussions highlights 'social protection, equitable distribution and access to national resources for vulnerable minorities' (NGO forum 2004: 7); however, even when attempts are made to redistribute land, it goes to the rich categories of society. For instance, the Ugandan government is currently allocating land to investors rather than to the poor. The argument by government officials is that the poor may not invest in land anyway. The Ugandan situation is not unique from other PRSPs. As shown in chapter 1, the PRSPs in Bolivia, Honduras and Nicaragua emphasise economic growth

through enhanced competitiveness making the idea of pro-poor growth an illusion. They promise redistribution but in practice incentives are restricted economic sectors (Cabezas et al. 2004: 17).

In addition, the PEAP document contains strategies to empower the poor, to handle vulnerability and to bridge gender gaps but the major emphasis is on economic transformation. The PEAP refers to the vulnerable categories of people such as women, youth, children, the unemployed, internally displaced persons, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Implicitly, the PEAP acknowledges the existence of these categories of the poor however; it lacks better strategies to deal with vulnerability. As expressed by a donor official:

> I would not say the PEAP really excludes the poor…but the options for poverty reduction are not reaching everybody. The content of the PEAP makes reference to the poor and vulnerable categories but perhaps falls short of concrete responses to effectively and sustainably reach these groups (Kiiza, DO2).

During the PEAP formulation process on their part, NGOs proposed strategies like giving subsidised loans, pension schemes, orphans funds, and giving the elderly and disabled priority in accessing services. The NGO contribution seems to emphasise government subsidies, which have, however, less importance among the poverty reduction strategies as preference goes to private-led economies. There is limited emphasis on a welfare safety net system for the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. The social protection of the vulnerable groups such as the elderly resides with communities. The PEAP prioritises community-based responses to care for children better, expansion of community-based rehabilitation for persons with disabilities and strengthening informal community support for the elderly (MoFPED 2004: 177-9). Although a social and caring economy is at the core of human development, it is not emphasised within the PRSPs thus leaving the victims of neoliberalism to rely on the private economy.

The PEAP includes strategies to mainstream gender: interviews with both NGOs and government officials show that the strategies to close the gender gap in the PEAP 2004 are more comprehensive. These strategies include implementation of the revised gender policy, a paralegal programme aimed at preventing violence and respecting the basic rights of the poor. Others include monitoring of gender mainstreaming, conducting gender

equity budgeting analysis, producing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data, capacity-building for women and youth leaders, and developing a gender management system for government agencies, plans and programmes. NGOs as change agents have a long history of engaging in women's empowerment issues: they proposed strategies like the establishment of an equal opportunity commission, social protection funds, reflection of women's work in national statistics, and enactment of fair family law. Both donors and government were apparently interested in tackling gender imbalances, so government carried out separate studies. Although women continue to be the majority poor[1] in the country despite the presence of PRSPs over the years, there is significant work done towards closing the gender gap through policies. Promoting inclusion of other issues in PEAP policies would need NGOs to align policymakers behind those issues already under recommendation.

The PEAP content also refers to the general empowerment of society even though the current strategies may not shift the unequal power relations in society. It outlines strategies such as adult education, gender analysis in sectoral ministries, the promotion of hygiene and sanitation to rural households, and community awareness on development interventions (MoFPED 2004: 174). These strategies show that power is conceptualised as consensual not necessarily based on class struggles. Reference to empowerment can be a positive step to recognise power imbalances even though empowerment needs strategies that are more robust. The PEAP emphasises contracting out community empowerment activities to private service providers to ensure efficient service delivery. The government contracts out some of the community development functions including community mobilisation and empowerment to NGOs (MoFPED 2004: 175). What does privatising empowerment mean for the socially excluded categories in society? Although it is trendy with new public management to liberalise and privatise development to improve effectiveness, privatising the empowerment process of the poor is tantamount to blaming them for their own poverty. Moreover, the private service providers are interested in maximising profit for a service rendered rather than sorting out power inequalities. The limited strategies to enable the poor to exert influence over other actors may not eliminate social exclusion.

The contribution of NGOs to shift the orientation of the poverty reduction strategies to greater social development could in reality be minor but the trend does not advance in the same direction on all policy issues. In the PEAP 2004, much of the NGOs' proposals on issues of conflict resolution and gender were readily acceptable, while other proposals like those of farmer subsidies and redistribution of land met resistance. However, Larok (2006) insisted a strong similarity exists between NGO propositions with the 2004 PEAP as shown in figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1
Visual comparison of NGO proposals with PEAP 2004 outlook

NGO outlook   Revised 2004 PEAP outlook
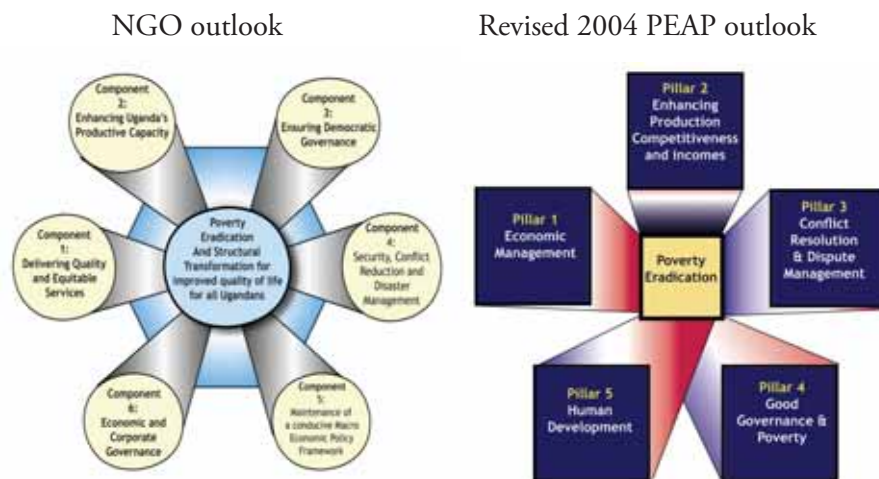
Source: Larok 2006:4

The similarities may mean that NGOs and governments think inevitably alike. However, some NGO officials noted that:

The NGO paper was elaborated on by a government official who was hired as a consultant. The next thing we see is a document published as an NGO position (Kirstin, ED-NGO3.1).

This was disproved by another NGO official, who said:

I participated in the drafting, amalgamating the sector papers and editing the document so it is indeed our own document (Jane, ED-NGO5.1).

The similarities in the outlooks may confirm some voices within NGOs that a government official hired as a consultant influenced their propositions to PEAP, while other NGO officials disagreed. Conclusively, since the PRSPs emphasise cooperation, often NGOs tend to speak the language of the government as well as its donors and therefore the similarity is not surprising. As Bebbington et al. (2007: 5) noted, NGOs have a tendency of identifying themselves with the alternative forms of intervention within the capitalist mode of development rather than with systemic change. The claimed similarity seems a comfortable fiction because it shows that NGOs think in a similar way as other actors and it decreases questioning NGO capabilities to contribute to poverty reduction. As further discussed in chapter 7, the similarity affirms NGOs in the club of decision-makers. In reality, looking at the NGO contribution in more detail, some of their contributions were not included in the Poverty Reduction Strategy document. Thus, the similarity may not mean inclusion of the interests of the poor. Market-led strategies drive poverty reduction programmes, it is largely business as usual and the PEAP has limited strategies for redistribution of wealth, empowerment of communities, and decreasing vulnerability. Although the PEAP refers to the poor, different subgroups of the poor remain unaddressed with largely privatised poverty reduction strategies.

6.4   Social Exclusion in NAADS Programme

This section examines the inclusion process of the poor in NAADS programmes with an aim to understanding the factors that exclude the poor and how NGOs tend to respond to these factors. As discussed below, the dynamics of exclusion of the poor in NAADS relate to both the design of the programme and its implementation where NGOs work mainly as public contractors. As elaborated in chapters 3 and 5, NGOs are hired as public contractors to mobilise farmers into groups, strengthen farmer groups through training and facilitate the farmers to select viable farming enterprises. While these activities in themselves may not be exclusionary, they catapulted NAADS as a poverty reduction programme into implementation in an existing arena of weaker and stronger stakeholders where inevitably the

stronger stakeholders are more likely to be included in the programme than the weaker ones are. Furthermore, the programme emphasises universal targeting, top down strategies, and representation in decision-making. While the purpose of these strategies is to increase inclusiveness of the poor, they are the same factors that lead to the exclusion of certain categories of farmers from the programme. For instance, one may trace universalisation to the activities of farmer group formation, co-financing and specialisation in agriculture enterprises.

Farmer group formation

NAADS targeted the active poor who can thrive under universalised interventions. This is despite the information on targeting displayed on the NAADS website, which shows that 'the principle beneficiaries…are the poor farmers and in particular women, youth and people with disabilities.'[2] The NAADS core documentation (NAADS 2000, 2004) and realities on the ground show that NAADS targets the active poor who are mobilised to join and benefit from farmer groups. NAADS targets those who can survive in market economies thus inherently exclusionary. Discussions with farmer groups showed that NAADS targets active poor farmers who are members of registered groups, who own land and are willing to co-fund and engage in farming as a business. Some NAADS coordinators, who noted that it is not only a piece of land that matters but there should be some agriculture related activities, echoed targeting the active poor. However, some NAADS officials refuted targeting the active poor, which shows that NAADS officials may not agree upon the exact target. For instance, one said:

> But we target the poor. We deal with every farmer willing to engage in farming…joining a group is a measure of interest and seriousness on the side of a farmer…those farmers who are not in groups are not interested (Sabiti, NC12).

The specificity in targeting as shown on the website, which unfolds as universal targeting in practice could merely be an excuse to continue domination of the active poor. Although women are the majority (59%) in the NAADS programme, women form the largest percentage of the population involved in agriculture in the country and are more likely to work in groups. As such, men and youth in communities rarely access NAADS services be-

cause they rarely join farmer groups. However, the presence of women in big numbers in the programme did not mean that other targeting factors did not exclude them from benefiting. For instance in Tororo and Kabale districts, there were cases where poor group members missed the opportunity to host technology sites because they could not afford requirements like shade or food for the animals. Furthermore, the assumption that groups are only composed of active poor farmers is not true because farmers are not homogenous. NGO networks and international NGOs engaged in criticising universal targeting of the programme, but the service delivery NGOs continue to ally with the government as subcontractors. After all, NAADS is another source of funding.

Belonging to a farmer group signifies social inclusion although Abrams et al. (2005) argued that exclusion from a dysfunctional group could be inclusive, in a way. In the case of NAADS, belonging to groups is a way of including more poor farmers compared to working with individual farmers. In practice, every farmer willing to join a farmer group (despite the levels of poverty) works with NAADS because groups form based on friendship, neighbourhood or other relationships, not on poverty levels. Individual farmers are seemingly free to associate and join groups given the existing networks in rural areas. However, NAADS mobilisation for group formation, which is mainly universal mobilisation through radios and workshops, does not take into consideration the above factors that influence individuals to join groups. Even then, NAADS does not conduct targeted mobilisation. Thus, those farmers not reached by universal mobilisation or those still hesitating to join groups remain outside the programme. Few actors view farmer mobilisation as an opportunity to mobilise the vulnerable and often excluded categories. Although employed to facilitate group formation, NGOs have not used this opportunity to affect targeted mobilisation of poor farmers, often practiced in their own donor-funded programmes. As change agents, NGOs are responsible to conduct particular mobilisation of the excluded categories of farmers but they have concentrated on pursuing universalism. NGOs see themselves as selling labour to the government at a given cost. At the same time, they concentrated on achieving contractual terms rather than bringing in new approaches or values to the programme.

Although the poor are free to join groups, inequalities within groups are ignored in the name of universal targeting. MAAIF (2007: VI) shows that a significant proportion of farmers are not active and do not directly participate in NAADS due to unsatisfied expectations. As seen in chapter 5, this is one of the factors for farmer dropout, having been members of certain groups. Thus, even when entrance into groups is non-discriminatory, it may not help much especially those already placed in unequal positions compared to other members. Those promoting individual freedoms will not mind even when certain members rarely fit in those groups. Farmer groups are not homogeneous. In addition, NAADS works with old and new groups and these groups are made of different classes of people including elites, non-elites, rich, poor, crop farmers, cattle keepers, men, women, different religions, tribes and different political affiliations. The mixture of different categories and different interests is in itself a reflection of the farming communities. An example of a typical farmer group in the Kabale district has 26 members mainly Christians from different villages. Its members belong to different political parties and own an average half acre of land: the majority of the members are married and there were two widows. During discussions, two thirds of the group members described themselves as very poor because they did not own reasonable land and their children were not in school. Although the poor somehow join groups, the limited focus on social differences within the farmer groups such as education levels, income differences, family status and asset ownership are a source of exclusion for members. For instance, ignoring gender differences in groups excludes women members who may not freely visit a technology site hosted by male members (FOWODE 2007). Discussions with NAADS officials show that the programme has not effectively undertaken social mapping to understand the social characteristics of its farmer groups. The particular characteristics of farmers in groups require further identification.

Co-financing NAADS programme

Their ability to co-finance the NAADS budget forms one of the bases of NAADS services to farmers. Good governance presupposes that people should contribute because there are no free services. Thus farmers groups regardless of their economic abilities are supposed to co-finace the NAADS

programme. However, some farmer groups often fail to co-fund and consequently the programme excludes them. The co-financing is a condition for donor funding and a justification for sustainability of the programme. Although co-financing ideally is advantageous to the programme, it is not based on the group characteristics. Co-financing is universal, mandatory and the amount of donor-government funding expected for the district dictates the amount each group must co-fund. However, if a group does not contribute, it does not receive advisory services in that particular season. Half of the groups interviewed indicated that they were not sure of the source of funds to co-finance in the next season. This is irrespective of a group's history in co-financing. Interviews with some NAADS officials show an attitude that the government will work with those farmers who can pay or those who want to move. Subjecting inclusion to co-funding sets a pre-condition to farmers' entry into the programme. The co-financing requirement assumes that groups are the same yet some groups have limited sources of income. Those with poor resources are vulnerable to segregation in terms of accessing advisory services. As such, the co-financing requirement contributed to farmer dropout of groups. For their part, NGOs concentrated on mobilising farmers to co-finance but have not reinforced equity of group contributions thus condoning exclusion of some groups.

Even with co-financing, some groups may not receive subsequent enterprise development and ISFG training because of another requirement of specialisation. The intention underlying specialisation is to organise farming according to ecological zones, increase production and marketing of farmers' produce and in this way, to increase farmers' incomes. However, if the group level enterprise (agriculture activity) is not among the three priority subcounty enterprises,[3] then those groups may not receive subsequent advisory services. Yet, no mechanisms exist to refund group monies to groups that co-funded but did not benefit from the programme. Farmer groups equated this exclusion to robbery. As expressed by one farmer group:

> To us farmers this is robbery. Where do they expect us to get money to continue financing them? When you do not co-finance they blame you but if you co-finance and do not get a service, then they keep quiet (GP6).

While NGOs mobilised farmers to join groups, co-fund and select agriculture enterprises, when they witnessed exclusion practices in advisory services

they did not rise up to protect the farmers. From a technical contractor's point of view, it is not the NGO's responsibility to ensure that farmers access advisory services. However, as Amutabi (2006) said, NGOs are not neutral bystanders in this exploitation. Why do they engage in mobilising farmers to co-finance but not ensure that they get services? NGOs do not bring their values into the government contracts they undertake. NGOs, as change agents, are supposed to act on behalf of what they value or their, assumedly beneficial, goals. However, NGOs technocratic positioning makes them apply global blueprints of the poverty reduction agenda. NGO officials claimed that demanding accountability or repayment of farmer contributions might lead to government blacklisting an NGO. Thus, NGOs prefer to maintain good relationships with NAADS for purposes of future contracts. As discussed in chapter 7, although the expectation exists for NGOs to play a central role in NAADS, they have their own survival interests.

Agriculture enterprise selection

With the universal specialisation requirement, some groups of farmers increased their production and sold in bulk. As explained by a NAADS official:

> Farmer groups dealing in banana growing in Rugaga-Mbarara district, those dealing in honey production in Arua district have increased their production and consequently they have the ability to pay for their technical services. This is because they specialised in fewer enterprises (Sabiti, NC12).

However, DENIVA (2005: 29) showed that in Bukinda subcounty, when enterprises reduced from nine to three, the number of groups dropped from 135 to 70. Some groups had to take on enterprises against their original preference and others dropped out of the NAADS programme entirely. At an individual level, for instance in Kabale district, farmers were forced to grow vanilla. Some farmers felt that enterprises promoted by NAADS were elitist crops like vanilla and apples…the enterprises have a long gestation period, which discouraged most farmers. Recognition of poor farmers as an undifferentiated category hinders their differences that may cause exclusion. For instance women farmers who are at the same time responsible for providing food to their households find it particularly difficult to take on elitist

enterprises (FOWODE 2007: 7). Discussions with farmers particularly in Kabale district where farmers have small chunks of land showed that specialisation is difficult because farmers have to divide their plots for multiple purposes. Specialisation does not take into consideration the mixed farming agricultural system in Uganda and the fact that food production takes first priority for most Ugandan farmers. Specialisation seemed driven by ideals with inadequate understanding of local farming contexts.

The universal specialisation requirement without taking into consideration the characteristics of the farming communities excludes those with small plots of land and those who produce only for food consumption. In the end, NAADS universalisation needs to consider the inter-group and intra-group differences to increase inclusion of the poor in the programmes.

Training farmer groups

Looking at the Farmer Institutional Development training (FID) and Integrated Support Farmer Group (ISFG) delivery, the poor farmers seem used by external forces as a means to an end. The design and transfer of the training packages and input supply strategies flows into communities through private service providers and with the support of farmer leaders. Most often, government, donors, NGOs and elite farmer leaders negotiate NAADS delivery and decision-making processes with minimal inclusion of poor farmers. MAAIF (2007: 11) indicated that 'while NAADS potentially extends to perhaps about a quarter of the farming population, the number of persons participating in advisory services or technology demonstrations is typically between 5-10%.' Thus, the majority of farmers in Uganda have limited room to shape the programme.

Similarly, data from the three districts showed that some farmer groups remain excluded from the FID training by NGOs. In the Tororo district, an average of 53 per cent of farmers in groups attended the training cumulatively over the years, compared to an average of 42 per cent in Luwero and Kabale districts. This is because some FID trainings were organised during rainy seasons when farmers were busy planting thus making it difficult to attend training. In addition, in the Tororo district training is open to the entire group membership, while in Kabale and Luwero districts the strategy is that groups should send representatives for training with the hope that

training would trickle down. In the Kabale district, a few of the farmers who attended the training tried to organise group-level information sharing but some of their group members did not attend. Farmer leaders attributed this act of self-exclusion to lack of interest among farmers. Although it is impossible to rule out the issue of lack of interest in training, the imposed learning content compounds the lack of interest. There is no planned mechanism to trickle down the training. At the end of the contract, NGOs receive their fees and NAADS seems unbothered by the low attendance. Training transfer to the majority of the farmers falls to the trainees and their groups.

Although training is pre-designed, the choice of trainees falls to the groups. Implicitly, groups are included in deciding who should attend the training. Discussions with farmer groups show that group leaders attend most of the trainings especially in Kabale and Luwero districts. During discussions, group leaders ably articulated some contents of FID especially record keeping and planning compared to other farmers. This may be because these leaders attended the training. Often, even when groups sent more members for training, few understood what was going on and did not record the training. As stated by a farmer group:

> Some of our members go for the training in order to get a book and a pen to give to their children to go to school. Nobody questions whether you have written notice or not. It is a chance to get a book for other usage. But even when we write, do we refer to those things? (GP1)

Although groups choose the trainees for FID training, the non-elite farmers often find the training content (especially topics of profitability and market analysis) difficult to understand and they rarely record the lessons. The training seems detached from the day-to-day activities of farmers.

As explained in chapter 5, the FID training is centre-based rather than group-based making it more difficult for some farmers from distant, inaccessible places or even those unable to walk to those centres to attend. Rather than taking groups as a mechanism of social inclusion, NAADS used the centre approach to reduce costs. In the three districts, farmers attributed the low attendance to the few training centres of an average of three centres per parish. However, there were also cases like in the Kabale district where the high number of training centres did not guarantee high participant attendance. Those farmers near centres still did not attend the training. Discus-

sions with farmers attributed such cases to the repetitive nature of FID training. Discussions with NGO leaders showed that NGOs were largely unbothered with the number of training centres with the exception of one NGO in the Tororo district, which introduced 'group facilitators' in 2005. The group facilitators were recruited, equipped with training skills and required to coach individual groups with the aim of increasing inclusiveness through group-based coaching. Farmer groups in Tororo appreciate the coaching however; neither the entire district nor NAADS have taken up this innovation. This is because it shifts the focus from training centres to groups, which may increase costs for the programme. Since NGOs often have no assurance of the next contract, there was no plan even within NGOs to sustain the practice.

With the FID training, there is an assumption that NGOs are experts even though in the three districts, farmer groups complained of poor delivery of training courses by poorly prepared trainers. NAADS officials maintained that the government believed that the NGOs had experience in FID. They had enough staff members and provided them with additional resources in order to perform better. However, over time it appears that NGOs have limited competencies and resources to contribute to the NAADS programme. The poor quality of training discouraged some farmers to attend the training sessions consistently. As one of the farmer groups said:

> At first they used to send us knowledgeable trainers like A and B, but nowadays, they send us young girls who cannot express themselves…we have told them to stop sending those girls (GP2).

The farmers' complaint could have a gender or generational gap connotation but further discussions with NAADS and NGO officials still highlighted poorly prepared trainers as one of the reasons why farmers do not attend the training. Some accused NGOs of bidding with lists of qualified staff and fielding undergraduate students to train farmers. NGO officials attributed this scenario to having more work than they could effectively handle. A majority of the NAADS officials argued that large NGOs have other priorities, as NAADS is not their major funder. NGOs are equally aware NAADS is more interested in material outputs such as the number of training sessions; the number of people trained rather than the outcome of the training. As indicated in chapter 5, a few NGOs would organise training

over a few days, but then ask farmers to sign their attendance lists for more days than they provided. There seems to be limited follow up on the quality and actual benefits that farmers get from the training. In such cases, irrespective of gender or social class, poor delivery affected the farmers.

Integrated Support Farmer Group agricultural supplies

The poor quality and limited quantity of ISFG supplies also had the effect of excluding some farmers from the programme. Only two per cent of the rural population directly benefited from the first round of the support / micro-finance package (MAAIF 2007: 11). Procurement of the agricultural items took place at the subcounty procurement committee level and the majority of the farmers were simply told to pick up the supplies. As expressed by a farmer group:

> NAADS allocated one million shillings to our group and with it; we received 16 goats and one spray pump. Some of the goats are already sick and are underweight. Farmer leaders told us to take the little goats because the subcounty chief had already signed for them from the suppliers. Leaders said that if we did not want them other farmers in other subcounties would accept them (GP1).

In all three districts, farmer groups received the type of items asked for but often not the quantity and quality requested. Although charged with quality assurance responsibility, the technical teams at the subcounty level gave excuses for not ensuring quality services. For instance in Kabale district, they claimed to have no machines to measure the quality of supplies like potatoes. Intimidation was a factor compelling farmers to accept such poor quality supplies, which reinforces exclusion of the vulnerable members whose only choice is to accept the poor quality. The fear instilled by farmer leaders seemed a manipulation in support of the exploitative top-down, private sector driven activities.

Despite indications that the sharing of ISFG supplies among group members was relatively equal, it actually enhanced the inequalities within groups. Often the supplied quantities to individual groups did not correspond with the numbers of group members. Thus, some members of the group did not receive items and\or often were short. For instance, in the Luwero district, individual farmers received eight kg of rice seeds regardless

of differences in groups and in Tororo district, each group received 25 kg for group gardens. In the Kamwezi subcounty Kabale district in financial year 2005/6, there were only six goats procured for the entire subcounty (FOWODE 2007). This was in spite of the presence of 80 farmer groups in the subcounty with a total membership of 960 farmers. Moreover, supplies often arrived late as in Luwero and Kabale districts, for example, where the rice and potato seeds arrived past the planting season in 2005. Although NGOs are involved in preparing farmers to receive their supplies, they have not questioned some of the practices that may have disadvantaged the poor.

Farmer leadership

As explained in chapter 5, NAADS introduced a system of representation in decision-making for the farmer leadership (district/subcounty farmers' forum, parish coordinating committees, community-based facilitators, procurement committees) at different levels of the programme. Thus, decision-making powers came closer to farmers at the different levels of programme governance. However, often representation excluded certain categories of farmers in the decision-making process. First, the percentage of women representatives was low in these leadership structures although they compose 55-59 per cent of the total membership. The subcounty farmers' fora in the three districts were mainly composed of men. Why would groups select men as representatives? Discussions with farmer groups showed regard for men as more flexible, with ample time to attend meetings and often more vocal in groups. Therefore, both male and female farmers assumed men would represent their interests more strongly. In one of the subcounties in Tororo district, the fora had equal numbers of men and women but still all enterprises selected over time favoured men rather than youth or women. Thus, there is need to recognise the unequal position of women due to unequal social characteristics. There are guidelines in NAADS to ensure equal gender representation but it suffers from a lack of reinforcement.

Second, farmer leadership was largely composed of representatives from an elite class whose decisions may not necessarily represent poor farmer interests. The literacy levels of some farmers excluded them from gaining positions on various committees. The NAADS guidelines further sidelined the non-elite farmers. For instance, guidelines required that members of the

procurement committee must have a minimum qualification of an Ordinary Level Certificate. This intended to ensure accountability. However, it implied exclusion of those with less education from the procurement committee. The regulation assumed that poor farmers were educated at a secondary school level, yet many farmers were illiterate. The procurement committee is a reflection of the fora that select the representatives. In addition, each group sends two representatives to the subcounty fora but it does not mean that the decisions made always represent group interests. As expressed by a group of farmers:

> We send them only after they have reached that level, and then they decide for themselves. They never consult us, we never decide for them. In fact, if it would have been possible for us to reshuffle them, we would have done it because these people are not helpful. When they receive their allowances they keep quiet…yes, these are the people we send to represent us but after they have eaten, they come here and tell us nothing (GP2).

As shown in chapter 5, to some extent representatives of the farmers made decisions regarding service delivery. They were aware of the budget allocations and how much funding came into the subcounties; they sometimes stopped payments for incomplete contracts. However, some accuse leaders of not consulting their members in decision-making. Some leaders informed their groups after the decision-making occurred. Others excused themselves and went late to the meetings only to find decisions already made. There was no mechanism to recall a poor performing leader. NGOs concentrated on awareness creation, telling farmers to rise up, but farmers were not organised as a pressure group and often they feared speaking out. NGOs reached out to some of these groups but they have not questioned the behaviour of their elite leaders nor have they revolted on behalf of farmers. NGOs seemed to work to stabilise the status quo by enabling farmers to accept their leaders' decisions.

Those farmers in formal leadership positions tended to have more information about the programme than other farmers as a result there is mistrust among actors. This was evident in laying the blame on one another reflecting a failure to accept responsibility. Due to limited information reaching the farmers, they accused other actors of ill intentions. For instance, in the Kabale district when gardens of potatoes dry up or planting delays occur,

the farmers blamed the local governments for having supplied poor seeds. Local government officials and the NAADS coordination blamed farmer leaders for having approved the poor seeds. They also blamed the farmers for having accepted the poor seeds and planting in poor soils; and the NAADS secretariat for late disbursement of funds, which equally blamed the MoFPED for late release of funds. As the NAADS coordinator noted:

> Farmers like telling lies; they cannot tell you that some potatoes are doing well. Do you want them to miss other opportunities by accepting that they are better off? (NC2)

On the other hand, farmers suspect that there are many resources at the subcounty level that fall into the corrupt hands of farmer leaders and NAADS coordinators. As expressed by a farmer group:

> A certain percentage of NAADS funds are deducted for personal benefit at different levels, farmers get residuals and when things go wrong, they blame the farmer (GP2).

Discussions with farmer leaders and NAADS coordinators showed that there was a belief that farmers often told lies or made false claims. The leaders in turn blamed NGOs for not having dealt with farmers false expectations during FID and ISFG training. The NGOs blamed the lack of an enabling environment for them to mediate the voices of the poor. Consequently, the lack of trust resulting from this information gap isolated some farmers from NAADS, especially those unable to cope with uncertainties. Representation through formal institutions opened doors for poor farmers to be included in decision-making, but it also ignored factors like elitism, gender and feedback challenges that engulf leadership structures and continue to exclude the poor.

While universal targeting benefited the active poor, the technocrat driven top-down imposed FID and ISFG compromised the quality of services received by farmers, and the formal representation excluded women and non-elites in the decision-making processes. NGOs as public subcontractors had to assist the programme with their values and all-inclusive approaches, but seemed to nurture the status quo rather than help to create a feeling of discontent among farmers. Although NGOs are in prime position to create

social inclusion, their current technocratic position overlooks those practices and programmes that propelled social exclusion.

6.5   Conclusion

This chapter examined the different processes through which the poor are included in the poverty reduction programmes and how NGOs responded to the exclusionary elements. Overall, at the policy level, there were attempts to include the poor through consultative workshops, seminars and awareness programmes spearheaded by NGOs; however, consultation *per se* does not include the poor and ensure that their voices influence policy. Deeper forms of including the poor in decision-making have not emerged because most of the workshops were information sharing instead of decision-making events. Instead, consultation has rendered the PEAP/PRSPs controlled by interests of powerful actors rather than the poor. The NGOs largely help to maintain the status quo. Similarly, the marriage between economic growth and poverty reduction without being explicit on the social and political agenda, continued to exclude the poor. There was no robust redistributive and equity based strategy to address the growing inequality. Although the PEAP refer to the poor categories in society, the present strategies largely task the vulnerable population to cater to themselves and privatise empowerment processes of the poor. The role of the NGOs was technical and they did not probe into deeper issues of existing inequality, power and poverty as well as divisions inside communities and between men and women. NGOs claimed much similarity between their proposals with the approved Ugandan 2004 PEAP document implying that they were toiling the same path with government to reduce poverty rather than fundamentally challenging the exclusionary elements inherent in current public policies. In the next chapter, the analysis turns to why NGOs participate in the Ugandan poverty reduction programmes.

Although universal targeting in theory gives equal chances to farmers to participate and benefit from poverty reduction programmes, evidence suggests that the NAADS programme benefits more the active poor farmer who can thrive under universal interventions. Given that about ten and two per cent of the farming population have benefited from FID and ISFG respectively, it means that the majority of poor farmers were left outside the pro-

gramme. Furthermore, the farmer mobilisation, training, co-financing, specialisation and supply of farm inputs ignored the differences between groups, within groups and within the farming communities thus excluding certain categories of farmers. Farmer leadership structures enabled elite farmers to take part in agriculture extension decision-making processes, but largely excluded women and non-elites. The expectation on NGOs was to increase inclusion of the poor through mobilisation and training of farmers but NGOs did not mobilise the socially excluded categories of the poor. Instead of using the opportunity to comb the corners of villages to mobilise and organise poor farmers for collective action, NGOs concentrated on working to produce results as required by their service contracts. NGOs offer the potential to negotiate the inclusion of the poor but in fact, they ignore the particulars or social characteristics of farmers as well as the fundamental power and political nature of participation and representation of the poor by privileging universal equality practices, which condone social exclusion.

Notes

[1]   HIV/AIDS affects women more than men due to unequal power relations; and often they have to care for the sick and dependents. Women participate less in the labour market than men and women's wages remain significantly lower than men's are. They work longer hours than men do, taking domestic tasks into account (MoFPED 2004: 19).

[2]   http://www.naads.or.ug

[3] The selection of enterprises begins at the group-parish, and then subcounty levels where the enterprise selected by the majority of groups becomes the subcounty enterprise. Often groups realise their preferred enterprises were not selected among the three enterprises at the subcounty level.

7 Political Economy of NGOs and Poverty Reduction

7.1   Introduction

Chapter 6 showed that while the Ugandan PRSPs and NAADS programmes promised social inclusion driven universalism, there are no robust redistributive and equity-based strategies to address social exclusion. NGOs toil the same path with government rather than negotiate politically to stop social exclusion. It seems that the contexts in which NGOs operate have significant implications on whether they confront social exclusion head-on. Are NGOs no matter what contextual realities, always working for poverty reduction? This chapter argues that the intrinsic mission does not always drive NGO activities in poverty reduction programmes; the roles of NGOs are dependent on the realities of their funding and the struggle to wield power entrenched in the poverty reduction programmes.

Section 7.2 explains how the intrinsic merit of NGO participation is instrumental in sustaining their role in poverty reduction programmes. Specifically, the merit that NGOs would advance pro-poor agendas at policy level and deliver services effectively. Section 7.3 discusses NGO participation as it relates to income generation as a source of institutional survival. Section 7.4 discusses how the struggles to wield power shapes NGO strategies and sustains them in poverty reduction programmes. Section 7.5 gives some concluding remarks.

7.2   NGOs Trading the Normative Agenda

This section shows that NGOs engage in official poverty reduction programmes to trade the normative agenda although they end up caught in development aid dynamics. The roles of NGOs in official poverty reduction

programmes received general acceptance as a means to introduce new ways to ensure the poor's interests find their way into policies and programmes. Literature shows that NGO participation makes sense because they will push for a pro-poor agenda through the country-centred participatory processes, pro-poor accountability, and confront market-oriented policies that may exclude the poor. Although there are contradictions for NGOs to achieve these expectations (see chapter 4), NGOs in Uganda are aware of this inherent merit attached to their participation. NGOs regard their participation as an opportunity towards re-ordering the relationships between donors-governments-the poor. For instance, an NGO official expressed:

> We are working with the donors and the government to neutralise their interests on behalf of the poor. We bargain with these stakeholders and a lot can still be achieved despite the rigidity of the neoliberal regimes. When something small happens due to NGO work that is good for the poor…surely the things we say when we are on those policy tables, you will not hear other people talk about them. Eventually some voices begin to change government behaviour and their view on the poor as they adopt concepts like social protection…. In Uganda this is a step, we have to take advantage of it but the problem is our internal deficiencies and failure to bring out fundamental alternatives (Dan ED-NGO4.1).

Some NGOs stick to the official poverty reduction programmes because they know they are doing something good for the poor. Despite the rigidities of the poverty reduction models and the incapacities in the NGO sector, doors are open for NGOs to engage other actors. There is also a general feeling among NGOs that they have to grab the opportunity and bring out rarely discussed issues in policy discussions. Even though NGO proposals may meet resistance, their presence is still relevant for their survival. Their presence in PRSPs is a position gaining strategy, which also gives legitimacy to NGO roles.

Furthermore, NGO participation lead to some incremental results in the Ugandan PRSPs. Social issues like gender and HIV/AIDS were included in PRSPs (McGee et al. 2002: 6; Nyamugasira and Rowden 2002: 4). Implicitly, NGOs managed to bring in some social aspects within the economic driven policies. These incremental results also encourage NGOs to stick to the poverty reduction agenda. For instance, an NGO official explained that:

You really ask yourself if you did not say anything about this poverty issue and a policy is passed by government, how many people would be affected by it. Look at an example of Universal Primary Education, if NGOs were not raising anything about poor feeding, poor buildings, poor quality of teaching, what kind of people shall we produce in this country? Look at the conflict in northern Uganda, they continue resolving it in a violent manner, but the people suffering are the women, children and the poor…. It is really that concern to say that if there were no one to articulate these issues, things would be left to chance and maybe things would be worse off than how they are now. When we articulate these things a little bit of it is done and that is better than nothing. It makes a little difference but that is really the motivating element for NGOs…. It is really that hope that keeps us moving (Kirstin ED-NGO3.1).

NGOs had a positive incremental contribution however, since poverty reduction involves bargaining and cooperation with other powerful actors, NGOs' often have no assurance of incremental results. For instance while the PEAP paid much attention to the social issues in 2000, the 2004 PEAP pays more attention to economic growth. Given that, NGOs have no assurance of even incremental results in poverty reduction, it signals that NGO efforts may only lead to stabilising the *status quo*. Like Bebbington et al. (2007: 18-19) argued, NGOs have not done well identifying alternative transformative options to the dominant poverty agenda. Yet, NGO presence with their incremental results is advantageous to the good governance agenda of the donors who claim that PRSPs are a shift from donor excessive control to participatory and negotiated poverty reduction programmes.

Normatively, NGOs participate to neutralise the interests of other actors on behalf of the poor; however, NGOs end up being neutralised. The expectations NGOs have remain unmet as they settle for less political issues. As expressed by an NGO official:

Although in PRSPs our expectations were much higher than we achieved, I think we achieved something. I think the problem with NGOs is we never take stock of the small achievements we make…and then we can never convince anyone that we are useful. But if you count one by one our achievements, you will realise that our contribution is profound. For instance if someone was to compare the government especially the Ministry of Finance in

the past and the Ministry of Finance now, you would find a difference (Jane ED-NGO5.1).

On inquiring why their expectations often remain unmet, the same NGO official said:

> I think personally that the weaknesses of the PRSP process are glaring. Why it was never going to succeed is because ideologically, it was surrounded by different perspectives. You have NGOs saying people should have access to health, special services, minimum price guarantee; the government says no, we are a liberalised economy we cannot do that. You are just pushing a different kind of system so there was little room for agreement (Jane ED-NGO5.1).

Having a relaxed relationship with the Ministry of Finance for NGOs who originally 'made noise' from outside government is a noble achievement, but it does not guarantee that interests of the poor are given priority. NGOs are supposed to play a technical and a more political role in decision-making, but in reality, they seem to supplement government decisions when the neo-liberal system model becomes difficult to challenge. As shown in chapter 4, during the 2004 PEAP revision exercise, NGOs concentrated on shaping sectoral issues rather than confronting the principles and interests governing the poverty reduction agenda. NGOs end up being crucial in universalising and conditioning poverty-reduction agendas through development and implementation of universal plans. The failure to focus on overarching principles and interests of other actors ignores processes and institutions that may continue to disadvantage the poor. If NGOs are ever to neutralise government or donor interest in favour of the poor, they have to understand what actually determines what is included in policies. NGOs need not only gaze in the direction of the poor by concentrating on sectoral policy issues, but also at the rest of society, especially the powerful actors. However, as many scholars (Edwards 2007; Riddell 2007; Easterly 2006; Igoe and Kelsall 2005) noted, how they acquire their funding and their institutional survival imperatives dictate, in part, NGO activities. This brings us to the other factor where NGOs participate in poverty reduction programmes mainly as an alternative source of funding.

7.3   NGOs as Sources of Income

This section suggests that the roles NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes have a direct bond with the way they acquire funding, and the forces of power that determine its utilisation. Some NGOs in Uganda form to search for money while others form to utilise the available funding. In both cases, the official poverty reduction programmes provide an avenue for NGOs to access funding. Even though poverty reduction is an entry point, the search for funding, employment and survival causes NGOs to stick even with programmes that may not work for the poor.

NGOs as fundraising initiatives

Poverty reduction remains useful as a ticket for NGOs to form, fundraise and establish linkages with other actors. Discussions with NGO and donor officials show that some NGOs in Uganda formed as sources of income, employment and political reasons. For instance when asked why NGOs are engaged in official poverty reduction programmes that may not benefit the poor, an NGO official explained:

> Who are these NGOs we are really talking about? You see NGO has lost its meaning in this country. We make an assumption that NGOs' main role is to critique policies. Is it true? Can it be tested? If I form an NGO to earn some money together with the Local Council 5 chairperson-how can I criticise district policies? Another assumption is that NGOs are pro-people…they mobilise people, do civic education, and tell people to get up and fight for their rights. How many NGOs do that? Let me give you an example of how some NGOs form and why they form. I know this from practice. People come and say we want to form an NGO because we are dying of poverty, we want to join politics and many other reasons: how do we go about it? I tell them to write a constitution. Somebody is a member of parliament, a councillor looking for a better political base. It is easy to start up some kind of NGO, where someone will be heard shouting. These are real facts…what is the vision, what is the mission, what is the constitution? Those are public records. These individuals are clear on what they want. NGOs are formed, funding is sought from here and there and their founders become known and actually obtain government positions (Else, ED-NGO3.2).

A donor official echoed these views.

> NGOs are formed to offer employment to the founders and relatives and some NGO leaders once they receive funding they move to purchase "a state of the art" vehicle…. NGOs in Uganda have become hubs of accumulating material wealth, with some leaders earning more than any diplomat does and they are a source of prestige and status…these organisations are initially started by individuals. These individuals have a vision for these NGOs, perhaps that vision is self-centred. Sometimes these individuals look at these NGOs as a source of survival therefore they will push to survive in any circumstance… (Kiiza DO2).

NGO documentation reflected the normative agenda of poverty reduction; however, the operational activities of NGOs may not rule out the 'other agenda-of self seeking'. Evidently, founding and working with an NGO often increased one's wellbeing, status, material benefits and incomes; thus, people form NGOs to attract these benefits. Even government officials formed NGOs to tap donor funding for their political survival. Individuals already knew that poverty reduction is a ticket to accessing funding or acceptance by both communities and government. Donors indicated that it is unlikely to refuse funding to such NGOs on grounds that they may not follow the normative agenda because their documentation is just right.

It is trendy to form an NGO claiming to help the poor, but even when there is no service extended to them, no one is responsible. Interviews with NGOs, donors and government officials show that individual founder interests in income, survival, employment and political gains drive NGOs rather than the social agenda usually associated with NGOs. Cerna (2005: 34), Busiinge et al. (2006: 22) and Mwenda (2007: 34) earlier stated that NGOs in Uganda are the first place for alternative employment. Cerna argues that rather than poverty reduction, many NGO workers care about alleviating their own poverty and will do anything not to lose their jobs. According to Boyte (2008: 123), paid development gradually leads to technocratic creep for most institutions. The need to create jobs also characterised the SAPs era; thus, NGO workers will stick to PRSPs processes because they earn a living out of those exercises. For instance, NGOs undertook the delivery of NAADS because they needed to earn some income. A NAADS coordinator said that:

> I think those NGOs working with NAADS are the small ones who definitely need money. Although some survived before NAADS, they were weak and they saw NAADS as an opportunity to earn a living (Sabiti, NC12).

Although the expectations of government are mainly of a competent and stable service provider able to increase efficiency in service delivery, while donors wanted to reduce losses associated with bureaucracy, NGOs on the other hand seemed to work towards achieving their funding requirements. There is 'rapid growth in number of NGOs created entirely for purposes of accessing government contracts and devoid of social agenda [and secondly,] NGOs can get involved in non-accountable practices, such as bribery and influence peddling, to obtain contracts against their best judgment'(CARE 2005: 16). Thus, NGOs will hang on to the programmes that may not benefit the poor because they have nothing to lose as long as their money and secure jobs remain. However, not all NGOs are engaged in subcontracting. It seems the poorly resourced NGOs are more likely to continue seeking government contracts than well-resourced organisations. This is because public contracting is an important source of their funding.

Searching for alternative sources of funding exerted pressure on those organisations created specifically for poverty reduction. The increasing numbers of NGOs together with the briefcase ones (Wallace et al. 2004) increased competition over limited resources. Consequently, those NGOs whose financial resources are weak (especially local service delivery NGOs) tend to ally with official poverty reduction programmes to access more funding through public tendering. As discussed later, there are indications that while service delivery NGOs allied with local governments mainly for funding, the NGO networks created alliances mainly for legitimacy and visibility. The stiff competition also helped NGOs expand to new locations especially northern Uganda or focus on multiple development issues. As expressed by an NGO official:

> When we offered water and sanitation services the Directorate of Water Development and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund started constructing boreholes in the district. Then we had to find more means for the organisation to survive and we decided to concentrate on food security. Nowadays, Adventist Development and Relief Agency and Plan International have come in to offer similar services. We have decided to phase

out in this region to concentrate on northern and eastern regions (Kibedi, ED-NGO2.2).

Searching for funding has become a major NGO activity, government becomes a potential donor and grey area in terms of location, as it provides a fertile ground to create the results donors need badly. It is not surprising that war stricken northern regions provide a fertile ground for even migrant NGOs to access funding and produce short-term results.

Searching for funding has made NGOs operate multiple projects with limited innovation. The current poverty agenda seems to encourage duplication of projects because donor funding for poverty reduction is not coordinated. One NGO official noted:

> You know in the area of good governance we currently run five (5) projects, one funded by Ford Foundation, another by Sussex University, another by MS Uganda and so on. All these projects are aimed at enhancing accountability, and raising the voices of the poor in democratisation processes. We have not thought of merging such interventions into a solid model. We have not even bothered to see how these interventions link up to one another (Kirstin ED-NGO3.1).

Another NGO official echoed:

> I usually tell people that we are only in business like any other actor. Actually, we are taking advantage of the circumstances of the poor to make ends meet for ourselves, and so we are only doing a job…. It is only few of us who take time to ask whether we are actually transforming people's livelihoods like we claim…. If you looked at our proposals one by one, you cannot see any incremental progression that during the last year, we made farmers move from this step to that level and in the next three years, we want to move them to a higher level…. We are just submitting the same things to donors. And donors are not helping us either when you make an application before you know it, they have approved the money (Abbel, ED-NGO1.2).

Interviews with NGO leaders show some frustration with duplication of projects in search of funding but institutional imperatives push NGOs to those practices. Most NGO leaders know the duplication of certain projects; however, NGO leaders work to justify the duplication because they want an extra source of funding. Evidently, all service delivery organisations that participated in this study undertook parallel extension services in addition to

the official NAADS programme. Often NGO programmes are with the same communities and groups like those of NAADS. Duplication is an indicator of organisations that focus more on institutional imperatives (Edwards 2007). Donor officials indicated that they are currently working towards establishing a coordinated funding strategy towards poverty reduction. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that NGOs have a tendency to mobilise money over people because of their need for sustainable funding, and long-term employment of staff. In their resource hunting processes, NGOs interact with poverty reduction programmes as one feasible funding source.

NGOs follow the flow of funding

In search of alternative sources of income, often it does not matter whether it is the NGO that comes first or the funding. This section shows that there are cases in Uganda where funding is available for NGOs to form or adjust their business to fit the funding. This study cites two important cases where the availability of funding for HIV/AIDS[1] and the war in northern Uganda increasingly sustained NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes. Both issues[2] equally attracted donor and government attention over the years. Within the 2004 PEAP document, HIV/AIDS is a cross cutting issue while security and conflict resolution forms an independent objective.

Looking at HIV/AIDS, two dramatic changes in the NGO sector appear. First the orientation to incorporate HIV/AIDS into NGO programming and second, the growth of several NGOs created to manage HIV/AIDS funds. Discussions with NGOs and donors show that even members of parliament and government ministers formed NGOs to distribute the Global Fund intended for HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. There is no doubt that NGOs made a positive contribution through distribution of retroviral drugs to patients, taking care of orphans, offering counselling and testing among other activities. However, the challenge with HIV/AIDS funding is associated with corruption and misuse, with some NGOs implicated in corruption scandals. Despite the misuse, more funding is flowing into the country for HIV/AIDS (Izama 2008) [3] and donors still encourage NGOs to access the funding. Instead of offering a strong critique to such funding, NGOs 'mediate clientele and donor needs in a way that accommodates both sets of

interest' (Feldman 2003: 18). Thus, it is difficult for NGOs to bite the hand that feeds them. Moreover, the little NGOs can do makes them non-negligible in official poverty reduction programmes.

The current poverty reduction agenda has made HIV/AIDS a cross cutting issue. NGOs reacted by making HIV/AIDS one of their activities. The increasing role of NGOs in HIV/AIDS activities is happening in the context of governments' inability to offer adequate health services to the population. However, interviews with NGOs and donors show it is also an opportunity to access funding from government managed programmes and direct donor funding. In official poverty reduction programmes like NAADS, NGOs agree to 'ensure cross cutting issues such as gender, natural resource management, HIV/AIDS and poverty targeting are mainstreamed in all activities' (Memorandum of understanding, Bubare subcounty and A2N, 15 December 2005). Therefore, having HIV/AIDS on the list of NGO activities can be an advantage when seeking funding selection. Although it compromises NGO ability to specialise, several NGOs are still seeking to include HIV/AIDS among its activities.

Similarly, the war in northern Uganda[4] is another theme through which funding flows to the NGOs in the country. Although governments are mandated to provide security and welfare services to people, historically, welfare, emergency and after war reconstruction activities provide a basis for NGO growth. Several NGOs like World Vision and Oxfam have taken up the role of offering relief, welfare, rehabilitation and psychosocial services in northern Uganda. Others like Civil Society for Peace in northern Uganda, have undertaken research on the situations in internally displaced persons camps and findings of those studies are reported to have made the government appreciate the depth of the crisis during the 2004 PEAP revision exercise. Although after war activities are humanitarian services, some NGOs used it as an opportunity for job creation and survival. One donor official said,

> The war has been used by some Ugandans in the Diaspora and the local elites to solicit money to start organisations for the sake of job creation (Lawrence, DO3).

Both government and opposition leaders of government are dissatisfied with NGOs placing employment at the forefront of service offerings to war

victims. The *Monitor* newspaper (8 May 2007)[5] reported that government officials are bitter with many dubious NGOs and CBOs operating in the region referring to them as 'criminals' and threatening to take action against those exploiting the poor. DENIVA (2007: 3) however argued that the attack on NGOs does not seem accidental. DENIVA related it to the fact that a lot of funding is going to the northern part of the country and NGOs are receiving a sizable amount of it. Second, DENIVA insisted that the attack by the politicians is also part of the struggle over political power and resources in the area given that several NGO leaders entered politics. Despite the bitterness, discussions with NGOs show that they are aware of the bureaucratic procedures of donors, which tend to be minimal in cases of emergency funding. Yet the funding for war related activities naturally favoured NGOs. Biekart's findings in Latin America shows that European NGOs preferred to extend aid to countries during post war periods and as the country settled down, donors shifted their priority preferences because such countries were regarded as 'rich' (2007: 74). In Uganda, some donors supported activities like Kachoki Madit, establishment of radio MEGA FM, and the Acholi Religious Leaders' Activities and are willing to support many more activities for the sake of peace. The funding for welfare activities seem readily available in war zones, and thus people reacted by forming NGOs, semi-NGOs or even opening up new branches in the region.

In addition, the war in northern Uganda led to the creation of numerous local NGOs and movement of NGOs from other parts of the country or world to the northern region. All organisations that participated in this study are operating in the northern region directly or through branches, partners or members as for the case of networks. Given the war and the post war crises, the northern region needs NGO services, but some NGOs used emergency services to gain entry into an area as expressed by one NGO official.

> We are phasing out some of our agriculture activity in this region.... Our team is now in Apac and Pader internally displaced people's camps doing underground work because we want to participate in post conflict food security activities. You know we started as a relief organisation and we have experience in handling relief activities.... I have said starting from next year; we would like to tear down our operations in this region.... There are so many critical is-

sues that if I talked about them in this room you would even be shocked. But I sincerely believe that if you do not have any business in an area, then go and work for somebody who has business and who will give you supper (Kibedi, ED-NGO2.2).

While some NGOs move to the northern region under the premise of their original mission, some NGOs continue to move to the northern region in search of opportunities to build status, create visible results and enhance financial stability. This opportunism serves institutional survival rather than ensuring continuity of services in the present location (Edwards 2007). This does not mean that NGOs wish war to continue, but if NGOs are to remain relevant, they need to operate in locations where their products are most desirable. Therefore, it becomes a logical decision for NGOs to shift to the northern region. In addition, donors and the government are currently committed to northern region rehabilitation and reconstruction thereby increasing focus on the region.

In the end, whether the NGO comes first or the funding, NGOs seem to be resource niche hunters. Thus engaging in official poverty reduction provides NGOs with one other source of funding. Even NGOs driven by the normative agenda of poverty reduction eventually find themselves caught up in the dynamics of aid funding.

7.4   NGO, PRSPs Power Struggles

NGOs have no option of delinking with the PRSPs given their normative agenda, development funding dynamics and other global processes like globalisation that cherishes international cooperation. This section shows that although NGOs may not be influential, they remain fixed in programmes that may not benefit the poor because of the struggle for power with other actors. Thus, NGOs struggle to expand their assets and capabilities through inclusion and participation, access to information, accountability and local organisational capacity (Narayan 2002: vi-vii). Overall being in the G3 club (donor-government-NGO) increases NGO visibility and gives them unrestricted membership to contribute to decisions affecting the poor.

The current realities surrounding the NGO sector in Uganda inform the struggle for power. As shown in chapter 3, many studies conclude that the NGO sector in Uganda is characterised by young organisations (Nanna et

al. 2002; CDRN 2004; DENIVA 2006) because most of them began opera-
tions after the mid-1980s. Many NGOs depend on donors and they lack
stability and financial sustainability (CDRN 2004). NGOs are criticised as
urban based and thus not close to the poor (Dicklitch 2001; Barr et al.
2003). With the public, contracting NGOs are criticised for failure to man-
age programmes under their charge and for links to corruption (CARE
2005; DENIVA 2007). Researchers and policymakers labelled NGOs
'power brokers' and 'criminal'. Some argue, consistently and continuously
that many NGOs are too weak to handle poverty reduction and democrati-
sation roles effectively (Gariyo 2002; CDRN 2004; Larok 2004, 2006;
DENIVA 2006). The labelling of NGOs as powerless is not unique to
Ugandan NGOs (see Micheal 2004; Hilhorst 2003), but at the same time,
NGOs are not passively seated in a powerless situation—they bargain and
negotiate their presence in PRSPs.

   Again as earlier stated, there is some frustration within the NGO sector
regarding declining credibility and influence. NGOs are aware that some of
their contributions had limited benefit for the poor. Amidst these criticisms
and the fact that NGOs already occupy a seat at the poverty-reduction pol-
icy tables, they are struggling to capture and deploy against other actors that
may cause their downfall. Consequently, NGOs shifted their orientation
from mere focus on service delivery to advocacy activities on pro-poor issues
and laws governing the sector. NGOs are also investing in capacity-building
and engaging in self-governance. Thus in addition to working for survival,
NGOs are struggling to retain their position in the poverty reduction
agenda. This does not mean that other actors' (i.e. the government and do-
nors) are waiting to be overtaken by NGOs.

Focus on advocacy

The dominant view of advocacy is as a higher-level role for NGOs com-
pared to that of service delivery (Fowler 2005b: 17-18). NGOs think of it as
their civic role or the very agenda they have yearned to undertake. Even
those leaders, who seemed frustrated with NGO work, acknowledged that
advocacy would enable NGOs to challenge the power imbalances in society.
Ideally, effective advocacy would lead to a wider and deeper influence over
the current socioeconomic and political order that increases poverty. Conse-

quently, NGO networks are engaged in advocacy on issues like good governance, corruption, agriculture, trade and climate change. Even service delivery NGOs attempted to undertake advocacy at their level. Advocacy involves negotiation with government; thus, advocacy activities inevitably happen within government circles. At the same time, the focus on advocacy coincides with donor insistence on NGO participation in good governance and democratisation processes. Donors viewed NGO advocacy roles in terms of reinforcing the universalisation of global poverty reduction and good governance agenda. As a donor emphasised:

> We provide money to central government to deliver services to the communities because it has that primary responsibility. Then we fund NGOs to demand accountability and watchdog over the utilisation of those resources (Kiiza, DO2).

Both bilateral and multilateral donors shifted their focus from service delivery to advocacy, monitoring government to increase government accountability (Wallace et al. 2004: 7). As a result, funding for advocacy increased over time. For instance, the DFID allocated 3.3 million pounds in 2000-2003 and 5 million in 2004-2006 to its umbrella civil society funding programmes and funding is set to increase by 2 million pounds each year until 2010. Although Robinson and Friedman (2005) argued that NGOs in Uganda pay lip service to advocacy, donors insisted that advocacy in most NGOs is in its infancy, thus the need for flexibility and more funding. A few NGOs, especially urban-based networks and international NGOs access advocacy funding, but the majority of the NGOs claimed to provide advocacy services. Although advocacy is a civic role of NGOs, marrying it with donors' good governance agenda, together with increased funding made NGOs focus on showing donors that they talk the same language regarding good governance and tackle poverty reduction with similar approaches.

The claim by several NGOs to be engaged in advocacy resulted in competition between NGO networks with their member organisations and other networks within PRSP processes. For instance NGO networks struggle for presence at policy discussion meetings even when their sister networks attend. This is not only in line with the globalised nature of the poverty reduction agenda, but also promotes the 'showing face' practice among actors. Equally, donors are competing to fund NGOs especially the apex

organisations to use them in their governance agenda. Apex NGOs are likely to withstand government pressure and legitimise donor approaches. However, there is increasing donor pressure for NGOs to act as watchdogs for their agenda. Interviews with donors and NGOs show that donor pressure shifted NGO behaviour, as they tend to focus on public accountability rather than civic accountability. Apex NGOs are getting busier challenging the social injustices. As explained by one NGO official:

> The noise with little money has been silenced with lots of funding…the super NGOs have become bureaucratic filling in forms to get money for the next working session and donors became international NGOs, and started telling them how and who to work with and how to position themselves in advocacy work (Jane, ED-NGO5.1).

Consequently, some NGO networks seem detached from its members and concentrate on national issues as opposed to local contextual issues. In addition, the pressure to act as watchdogs made NGOs shift their focus from questioning donor practices to converging towards donor interests (Hulme and Edwards 1997) even when they might be exploitative to the poor. For instance while NGOs are involved in monitoring government expenditure, government is busy acquiring new debts. At the same time, the national budgets are inflexible to accommodate emerging contextual poverty issues due to conditional grants. Poverty reduction is supposedly the driving force for NGO work, but the watchdog role makes them lose focus on local poverty issues. In the end, NGOs tended to concentrate on sustaining their position, set on internalising processes that maintain the status quo. The government, donors and NGOs all struggle to show each other that they are strong allies in poverty reduction.

Although NGOs have been yearning for the advocacy role, sometimes it is for the sake of enlarging their resource base rather than moving poverty reduction issues back and forth on the policy agenda. As expressed by a donor official:

> When you invite these NGOs to lay strategies for advocacy, then they start saying pay our allowances instead of focusing on advocacy issues. I recently wrote to Kido inquiring about the position of NGOs in the forthcoming annual PEAP review. Kido wrote back saying "you donors, you put a lot of pressure on us, if you want us to do all those things give us more money." I wrote

back telling them that if networking with the CBOs requires sitting allowances, then they must accept being pushed by the wheels of donors (Kiiza, DO2).

Discussions with NGO officials show that NGOs believe that an enlarged funding base would enable them to participate, to negotiate and hold other institutions accountable. The PRSPs provide one such avenue for NGOs to acquire and negotiate for increased funding. However, no matter how good advocacy is, when used as a means of fundraising, the pressure exerted on NGOs is unbearable. If advocacy is linked with instructions from donors, there is a high risk for NGOs to lose their commitment to the issues of the poor. Given that both NGOs and donors are interested in advocacy, they tended to concentrate on building organisational abilities through workshops, seminars and meetings to create strong organisations.

Investment in capacity-building

NGOs and their donors are investing in training to enhance capabilities within the NGO sector and strengthen management of organisations. Discussions with NGO officials show that enhanced capabilities would enable them to retain their seat at the policy table and participate competently in policy dialogues. Importantly in Uganda, the numerous capacity-building workshops organised by both donors and NGOs led to the growth of NGO thinkers. These are people with a wealth of experience in the NGO sector, they attend most of the capacity-building and policy discussion workshops and read and write about NGOs. The thinkers are important in securing funding for these specific NGOs, they provide leadership to the sector and create linkage with government and donors. However, the thinkers can also be a hindrance to NGO advocacy activities when accused, as they often are, of being reactive to policy issues (Busiinge et al. 2006: 22). NGO officials attributed the reactionary approach to the fact that the thinkers serve several interests—those of the donors, their organisations and their jobs. The thinkers tended to work in close alliance with the official poverty agenda to secure their positions. As an example, one of the thinkers almost lost his job, but both donors and government intervened and secured it back. Discussions with donor officials show that they are interested in strong NGOs to engage in the democratisation process of the country. Therefore, donors

were involved in creating a critical mass of thinkers through workshops. These findings agree with Hearn (2007: 1102) who noted that African NGOs are the new compradors where donors create different classes of people within NGOs able to supervise conformity to donor projects and in return be able to escape the diverse effects of neoliberalism. These personalities enrich and legitimise poverty reduction decisions and at the same time, they seem to understand the language of donors and government.

Investment in capacity-building also includes establishment of broad-based management boards comprised of people from government, donors, research institutions, universities, fellow NGOs and beneficiary representation. NGO officials maintain that the broad-based boards would increase the institutional capacity to assert themselves in policy negotiations. Evidently, NGO boards are composed of elites who also act as opportunities for funding. The reason for such broad-based boards was summarised by one NGO official.

> It becomes easy for us to lobby the Minister on our board rather than making endless appointments to see him. Secondly, often there are opportunities within government. Possibly, they need NGOs to implement projects, so if you have someone there it is better. Therefore, we found it strategic to get board members from the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Agriculture to get us the information. There are government programmes, which we have implemented such as the upland rice project because of one of our board members (Abbel, ED-NGO1.2).

The boards of management of the four NGOs in this study consisted of elites. Two of these NGOs have politicians on their boards and two have donors of both bilateral and international NGOs, on their boards. Having broad-based boards is an innovation on how to relate to government and donors. It can be a source of leverage for accessing funding and for enriching other actors in NGO work. Of course, the official poverty reduction agenda prefers the involvement of several institutions. Therefore, NGOs with broad-based management structures comes in handy in establishing cooperation with governments and donors.

NGOs are also investing in establishing branches across the country. Ideally, district or even regional networks can develop in an effort to improve its services, interaction with its members, serve a wide range of communities

and ensure a bottom up approach to development. Interviews with NGOs also show branches accessed services to the poor, which would have not been possible without them. At the same time, the number of branches helped the NGO sector achieve recognition as having a large constituency or what Edwards (2007) calls 'market share'. One NGO official expressed:

> Kido has a large membership across the country and government will always call us into their meetings because our presence may mean that a certain constituency is represented (Kirstin, ED-NGO3.1).

Within the NGO sector, branches also counteract the accusation of NGOs being Kampala-based and elite led. Opening of new branches comes with the search for more funding to operationalise the branches. In case of NGO networks, the initial start up capital from the network secretariats does not guarantee continued support. Consequently, district networks begin to fend for their institutions by establishing funding relationships and seeking business from local governments. For the service delivery NGOs, branches access government funding to try to produce results, expand or maintain their own branches. Interviews with NGOs show that branches are not easy to control and direct. As observed in one of the NGOs, the branches blamed the secretariat for their poor performance in NAADS activities and the secretariat blamed the branch for poor management. Thus, the dynamics of funding influences NGO behaviour and its viability (Fowler 2005a). This may be one reason why NGOs are developing strategies to regulate and control the sectors better.

Focus on self-governance

This section shows that the struggle to wield power has made NGOs engage in self-criticism and self-governance. First, the majority of NGO leaders that participated in this study seemed frustrated with NGO work and had few kind words for the sector. The frustration seems to originate from the failure of NGOs to transform social inequalities and be accountable to the poor. Thus, NGOs live in doubt of their viability towards achieving their mission, which has given some leaders a sense of insecurity. Consequently, NGOs choose to forge relationships with governments and donors to share some of these frustrations. For instance, an NGO leader expressed:

We have come to appreciate that we have not done any service to this country, not at all. I want you to go among NGOs and ask each of them to show you at least 100 farmers they have managed to turn around. None will show such a thing. Let me tell you openly, I am very frustrated with this work and I want to get out of it because we are fooling the public and ourselves…. The problem is that NGO workers concentrate on routine activities rather than thinking about the impact and outcome of these activities…. People are independently going about their business, but we are claiming to empower communities and we continue to access more money from donors (Abbel, NGO1.2).

By way of emphasis, another NGO leader said:

We are working in Kasese district, where 30 per cent of the population are engaged in cotton, but the more they grow cotton, the poorer they get. Ginners who come to announce the prices of cotton are cheating farmers. So I was wondering why the NGOs in the district are not giving information on markets to farmers; especially those with internet access. This takes me back to the question, Who are these NGOs we are really talking about? Who is an NGO, who isn't an NGO in this country? (Else, ED-NGO3.2)

NGOs recognise that they have not turned around the poor's situation. At the same time, leader frustration is because of the increasing demand on these NGOs to deliver measurable achievements in poverty reduction, and value for their money (Fowler 2000: 590; Bebbington et al. 2007: 16). Consequently, NGOs started talking about value for money in their work. Besides the routine monitoring and evaluation activities, some NGOs started to invest in research not only on NGO issues, but also on government programmes. Information is a source of power for NGOs, but at the same time, they work as information aides for the donors. Although NGO activities may not have caused the desired social change, since they provide information to the donors, the little they do sustains them in official programmes.

More so, NGOs, especially apex ones, invested in several workshops/conferences to discuss NGO life, including their impact, legitimacy, autonomy and role in general. Such workshops are good avenues for NGOs to try to decrease frustration and forge a new way forward in their development work. The NGO forum and Kabarole Research Centre organised one such forum in 2006, attended by both national and international NGOs

from Uganda, Zambia, Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania, representatives of government (MoFPED) and donor agencies including DFID and the European Union. In this workshop, participants expressed the pains they felt for the NGO sector. For instance, they questioned:

> Do we know ourselves as a sector? Why can't the people at the grass roots identify with us? Are we change agents or stress agents? How can NGOs become a positive force to change society? How do we achieve political engagement? We need to bring together advocacy organisations and service delivery organisations, as the former have challenges to present their results. We need to separate the talkers from doers. Civil Society Organisations have sinned knowingly. It is high time that these organisations questioned their existence. Are we relevant? How do we move from this point? (Busiinge, et al. 2006: 8)

The list of pains felt by NGOs, government and donor leaders in the workshop shows that NGOs are trying to think through their practices and focus their activities towards their normative agenda. It could be energising for NGOs to become annoyed with the status quo and seek better solutions. However, the uncertainty with their mission, relevancy, identity and credibility could also lay the foundation for being co-opted and controlled by other powerful actors.

With such frustrations, NGOs reacted by developing a Quality Assurance Mechanism (QUaM) in September 2006. NGOs embarked on establishing the self-regulation mechanisms to 'clean up their own house, increase credibility and accountability and demonstrate seriousness of purpose' (Kwesiga and Namisi 2006: 89). The purpose of the QUaM is to promote adherence to generally acceptable ethical standards and operational norms. It sets principles and standards of behaviour for responsible practice, to protect the credibility and integrity of certified NGOs and their networks in Uganda[6]. There are several reasons for an NGO to obtain a QUaM certificate. As explained:

> The NGO sector in Uganda has grown rapidly…but this growth is not without its problems: sometimes we are embarrassed by some of our failings, sometimes we see unethical behaviour in our sector; sometimes we are open to accusations and do not have any instrument to respond. It is in the light of this that NGOs in Uganda have decided to develop and implement the QUaM (Busiinge, et al. 2006: 8).

The QUaM is still a new project, it is largely voluntary and it is not a legal requirement. Although it embodies international standards and concepts there is strong belief that NGOs initiated it themselves without much external influence although its formulation also involved international NGOs. It is still too early to establish its challenges; however, it assumes that NGO networks will implement the project and yet not every NGO is a member of a certain network and not every district has a district network to offer the certification. The QUaM has quality assurance standards not only geared towards normative behaviour, but also towards portraying NGOs as serious partners in the good governance project. In other words, NGOs are stuck in the poverty programmes that may not benefit the poor because of their own empowerment interest.

7.5   Conclusion

This chapter shows that NGO work in Uganda is not always dependent on their intrinsic mission but on the dynamics of their funding and the power struggles with other actors. They use the normative agenda to gain access to poverty reduction programmes, which funding and cooperation among actors nourishes. The power struggles among actor's moderate relationships push NGOs, including those who intended to confront the mainstream agenda to concentrate on looking for more resources and struggling to wield power for survival.

Some NGOs stick to the mainstream programme because they know they are doing something good for the poor. As such, there are some incremental changes taking place but no guarantees of them. This is because NGOs have failed to focus on overarching principles and interests of other actors in poverty reduction programmes, thus ignoring institutions that may continue to disadvantage the poor. Despite the fact that NGOs have not reordered the relationship between donors-governments-the poor, instead, NGOs forge relationships and cooperate with other actors to obtain funding from donors. NGO presence in PRSPs is not only a position designed to gain legitimacy for NGOs; but also donors use their presence to justify their good governance agenda. Due to the presence of NGOs, donors often claimed that the PRSPs shifted from donor excessive control to participatory and negotiated poverty reduction programmes. Even when NGOs intend to

do good work for the poor, they end up entangled in funding dynamics. If NGOs are to push their normative agenda within official poverty reduction programmes, they have to be conscious of the interests of other actors and the fact that other actors are not waiting to be influenced, but rather are working to influence others.

It is either NGO initiated before funding or the funding comes first, this study showed that some NGOs have become alternative sources of income, employment and platforms for political power struggles. Often NGO founders are aware that poverty reduction is a ticket to access funding or acceptance by both communities and government. NGOs are engaged in programmes like NAADS partly to access financial benefits. Although employing NGOs for programmes like NAADS to boost efficiency and reduce losses associated with bureaucracy, the government is a potential donor and grey areas like northern Uganda provide fertile ground to create the badly needed results by donors. While other development issues such as HIV/AIDS provide readily available funding for NGOs, the more focus on institutional survival has made NGOs duplicate projects—even those implementing NAADS still run parallel extension programmes.

The need to wield power entrenched in the current poverty reduction agenda makes NGOs struggle for recognition among powerful actors. The NGO sector in Uganda has, over time gained a reputation as young and weak. With the poverty reduction agenda, NGOs are struggling to acquire economic resources and increase their capability. Henceforth they are reorienting their activities from mere service delivery to advocacy work and investing in capacity-building and self-regulation. In situations where some NGO leaders do not see the anticipated social transformation and where NGOs are heavily criticised for un-NGO like behaviour, they opt to establish relationships with other powerful actors. The need to protect their position and cooperate with other powerful actors has made NGOs concentrate on self-governance. The class of NGO thinkers played a big role in establishing and maintaining these relations.

Notes

[1]   Panos Institute defines AIDS as the fatal clinical condition that results from long-term infection with HIV (Panos Institute 1992: 2). Several illnesses such

as Kaposi's sarcoma, tuberculosis, cryptosporidium, herpes zoster, chronic diarrhoea, persistent fever and weight loss are regarded as symptoms of AIDS.

[2]   AIDS cases were first reported in Rakai district in 1982 (Basaza and Kaija 2002: 6). By 1996, HIV infected almost 1.5 million Ugandans and AIDS claimed about 50 per cent of adult lives in certain areas devastating the economic structure of the country (Mugerwa et al. 1996: 20). This opened doors to the creation of innovative services for education, testing, counselling and care for AIDS patients. Government and non-governmental organisations developed extensive HIV prevention programs (Holden 2003: 140) and some local business initiatives.

[3]   Izama Angelo, Uganda gets another Sh 647b to fight AIDS, *Monitor* online Tuesday, 13 May 2008.

[4]   The war in northern Uganda between the Republic of Uganda and the Lord Resistance Army, led by Joseph Kony, has persisted for more than 20 years. There are several causes ranging from cultural, political, economic conditions and the instability in Sudan and the Republic of Congo.

[5]   Egadu Samuel 8 May 2007, Government to name fake NGOs in the north says Ecweru, Daily Monitor newspaper, http://www.monitor.co.ug/news.

[6]   www.deniva.or.ug.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The objective of this research was twofold: first, to examine why NGOs participate in official poverty reduction programmes amidst growing knowledge and evidence that these programmes may not benefit the poor and second, to analyse the mechanisms of exclusion of the poor in these programmes. Using a political economy perspective and focusing on the Ugandan Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme, the study examined NGO roles and interests in shaping poverty reduction policies, empowering the poor and increasing their inclusiveness. The literature shows contradictory value addition of the NGOs in poverty reduction without necessarily exploring the multiple interests surrounding NGO work. Incorporating NGOs in official programmes as advocates and service providers is regarded crucial to increase pro-poor effectiveness. NGOs are said to be driven by altruism and that are close to the poor in such way to organise them to participate and solicit their views for integration in programmes. This study demonstrates that NGOs have had incremental results on poverty reduction agenda. Although NGOs have had limited influence on poverty reduction policies, empowering the poor and increasing their inclusiveness, NGOs presence in poverty programmes serves diverse objectives. In seeking to understand the roles and interests of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes it is imperative to examine NGOs' normative agenda, institutional survival strategies and ongoing tensions and power struggles with other actors.

8.2   Summary of Key Conclusions

Eight key conclusions are drawn from the entire study. One, this study demonstrated that there is a weak link between the people and NGOs involved in policy advocacy. Although NGOs are to influence poverty policies by enhancing broad-based ownership, pro-poor effectiveness and accountability (Molenaers and Renard 2006), advocacy NGOs in Uganda have limited abilities to mobilise and organise the poor. They engage in ad hoc consultations, quick fix mobilisation and participatory practices, and prefer to analyse existing literature to produce quality write-ups in anticipation that it would be acceptable to other players. NGOs engage in advocacy activities before organising the people, their leaders and community based organisation thus rarely move with the poor into the advocacy arena. The PRS formulation gave more recognition to the advocacy role of NGOs but even with advocacy, some submissions from NGOs were rejected by donors and the government in favour of global market-oriented policies. The institutional arrangements for participation set in place by government assisted in mainstreaming top-down policies as well as in availing funding to government, allowing poverty reduction decisions to be made according to technical considerations rather than enabling the anticipated bottom up policy-making. After all, as noted in earlier studies, NGOs are largely supportive institutions and consensus builders (Piron and Evas 2004) embedded in activities aimed at promoting market relations and unable to maintain better linkages with the poor (Hickey and Bracking 2005). Thus, NGO participation has not enabled them to tap the energies and develop capacities of the poor to become agents of their own poverty reduction process. For NGOs to be influential in poverty reduction policies and practices, the emphasis should be on organising the poor, enabling them to communicate their demands.

Two, examining the empowerment of the poor in NAADS demonstrated a paradox. The empowerment activities implemented by NGOs through subcontracting do not always lead to power shifts especially relational power changes and in some cases, leads to disempowerment of the poor. Empowerment of the poor involves enabling them to influence decisions and prevent other actors from making decisions that could be detrimental to their interests (Bacharach and Baratz 2002). However, within NAADS, poor

farmers have limited freedom to choose and control decisions pertaining to group formation, training content, schedules and sharing of Institutional Support Farmer Group funds. Despite participation of NGOs in mobilising and training, farmer groups have limited coherence, autonomy and rarely take collective action against injustices in the programmes. Sometimes farmers' decisions regarding the programme come out of fear or promise of reward. The NAADS subcontracted programmes emphasise material outputs and efficiency in service delivery. Since NGOs are assumed to be efficient service providers, there has been a tendency for NGOs to implement pre-designed universalised activities with less questioning. NGOs have worked with strict budgets and timelines geared towards measurable impacts, thereby ignoring the relational power shifts for the poor. Consequently, NGOs compromise their values of undertaking a slow painstaking empowerment process in favour of efficiency, short-term contracts and the need to earn income. Therefore, it is difficult not to agree with Fowler (2005a:16) that there is little evidence to counter the assertion that the roles of NGOs as agents of structural change for people who are poor and marginalised is more of an aspiring self-image than an on-the-ground reality. While claims that empowerment in theory and practice often differs are not new features in the empowerment literature, development programmes that focus on material outputs leave relational power changes in terms of decision-making or stopping decisions from being made are largely forgotten despite its importance in poverty reduction.

Three, the study demonstrates that sometimes farmers' decisions fail in favour of government driven choices that emphasises efficiency in service delivery. There are also situations where leaders overrule farmers' decisions. This is because NAADS processes are largely controlled by local elites and politicians through formal structures of representation. While NAADS is expected to be farmer controlled and driven, the programme tends to ignore the socioeconomic characteristics of farmers. Despite the presence of NGOs in strengthening farmers' institutions, the elite farmers occupy decision-making organs from the subcounty level upwards. Yet these leaders often make decisions or support decisions regarding purchases and contracts that do not favour the poor. NGOs have not altered the composition of the institutions. They have instead concentrated on facilitating the top-down pre-

designed programmes without analysing the different categories of farmers and designing appropriate strategies to enhance poor farmers' position in decision-making structures. NGOs appear to have succeeded to restore the power of elite farmers and increase more convergence over technocratic efficiency, which does not necessarily focus on relational power shifts. NGOs technically implement NAADS programmes and yet want to empower the farmers. In the process, they pay little attention to relational power issues that they would struggle to influence if they were not implementing government pre-designed programmes. If NGOs are to contribute towards empowerment of the poor through public subcontracting, they need to focus on material outputs as well as on relational power shifts among different categories of farmers.

Four, the official poverty reduction programmes promises social inclusion of the poor but this research showed that in the end, it is business as usual. The poverty reduction policies and practices promote economic growth and the good governance agendas of donors, which highly depoliticises poverty reduction. They adopt the language of participation and universal targeting and representation yet with minimal success in including the poor and their issues. The poor are included in poverty policy debates through consultative workshops, which are fora for information gathering rather than decision-making. The policy documents reference vulnerable categories, as was the case with PRSPs in Nicaragua, Bolivia and Honduras (Cabezas et al. 2004), but there is no clear connection between growth and the social and political agenda. In Uganda, market-led growth is the overriding principle of poverty reduction programmes with no deliberate comprehensive equity and redistribution strategies in favour of the poor. The technical fads and language of good governance and human rights are used in poverty reduction programmes to pave the way for the market. This does not necessarily include local poverty issues into policies. The assumptions that NGO participation would radically transform social relations, institutional practices and capacity gaps that cause exclusion of the poor (Hickey and Mohan 2004) without the collective dialogue behind the social agenda is rhetoric. NGOs do not probe into deeper issues of existing inequalities, power and poverty as well as divisions among the communities and between men and women. In the end, programmes for poverty reduction adopt

strategies such as universal targeting which pays lip service to the unique characteristics of different subgroups of the poor in society. Programmes like NAADS adopt farmer leadership structures, which end up being occupied by men and the elite in society thereby excluding women and the non-elite. For NGOs to be influential, their focus should also be on soliciting support for developing local context relevant poverty reduction policies.

Five, privatising empowerment of the poor further excludes them from programmes intended for them. Privatisation in itself is a donor-driven government support policy. Although the policy is geared towards individual freedoms, in the case of NAADS, privatising service delivery restrains inclusion of the poor. The study demonstrates that subcontracting agriculture extension services to private service providers will not eliminate power inequalities because the service provider's primary interest is profit maximisation. When NGOs position themselves as elite experts supposedly ready to engage in technical private service delivery, they compromise their ability to negotiate for inclusion of the poor. NGOs end up driving the predetermined poverty reduction agenda without analysing how different actors and processes interact to maintain poverty. NGOs end up ignoring their own value-driven approaches that encourage negotiations and contestations on behalf of the poor in favour of quick fix activities that may not include the poor.

Important factors for NGO participation in official poverty reduction programmes

Six, this study demonstrated that the official poverty reduction agenda both at policy and implementation levels, is increasingly forcing NGOs to operate towards donors and government interests. The poverty reduction programmes enabled NGOs to be in close proximity to government and donors. By so doing, NGOs position themselves as technocrats ready to engage in technical policy debates and technical service delivery rather than to focus fundamentally towards social change. At the policy level, NGOs caused some incremental results by incorporating gender, social protection and corruption issues into poverty reduction policies but whenever influence proved difficult, NGOs tended to settle for lesser results or the status quo. NGOs have not radically questioned the overriding principles of PRSPs. NGOs

focus on developing competencies to perform in expectation of government and its donors. They are developing specialisation on specific poverty analysis to make evidence-based contributions to poverty reduction policy processes. By so doing, NGOs are succeeding in becoming more technocratic instead of enforcing the adoption of radical alternative poverty reduction policies. Although donors are not necessarily satisfied with NGOs driving their good governance agenda through poverty assessments, NGOs are playing a role as technical information aides for donors. The technocratic orientation forces NGOs to become cosmetic and reactive to the social agenda. Donors use their presence to justify their good governance agenda and claim that the PRSPs shifted from donor excessive control to participatory and negotiated poverty reduction programmes. If NGOs are to push their normative agenda within official poverty reduction programmes, they have to be conscious of the interests of other actors.

Seven, NGOs often find themselves caught up in a dilemma of choosing the poor or institutional survival. The normative agenda of NGOs emphasise people-driven and socially focused policies but in reality, NGOs tend to work for their own growth and institutional survival (Fowler 2005b; Edwards 2007). This thesis demonstrates that NGOs engage in official policy debates and undertake service delivery ideally to make a difference in the lives of the poor. However, the realities of NGO roles also point to the need for NGOs to gain a seat at policymaking tables and legitimacy among other policymakers. While some NGOs suggest stopping participation in PRSPs, others lobby for inclusion. In addition, even those who stick to the poverty reduction programmes, knowing that they are doing something good in the form of incremental contribution, end up entangled in funding dynamics. This is not to say that just because NGOs need money they are bad actors, but the search for funding becomes part of their activities. Although it is not their primary motive, NGO participation in NAADS as private subcontractors is evident of their search for more funding to sustain the organisations. Consequently, NGOs experience situations of unfinished contracts, sometimes use ill-qualified trainers to train farmer institutions and fail to advocate for better extension services on behalf of the farmers. Since government pays for NGO services, they continue to offer services to the poor even when they are not satisfactory. In a way, NGOs feel relevant to their norma-

tive agenda; after all, their participation in poverty programmes is not being contested. NGO activities therefore are affected by the unresolved tension between development and institutional imperatives.

Eight, the need to wield power entrenched in the current poverty reduction agenda causes NGOs to struggle for recognition among the powerful actors to protect their position. Poverty reduction programmes emphasise cooperation and roles of NGOs happen in relationship to those of donors and government. NGOs are already part of the G3 club (donor-government-NGO) thereby giving them unrestricted membership to contribute to decisions affecting the poor. However, often these relationships reflect power inequalities. This study shows that although NGOs are criticised for having had a disappointing performance, they have already occupied a seat at the policy tables and are struggling to capture and deploy against other actors that may cause their downfall. NGOs are trying hard to safeguard the space by developing a class of thinkers, developing capacities in research, creating branches and investing in self-governance. NGOs, struggle to fit the class of technocratic professionals, establishing similarities between their contributions to that of government rather than soliciting collective dialogue and supporting the social agenda. Therefore once NGOs joined a class of policymakers even when tensions and frustrations related to failure to achieve their normative agenda are present, it becomes a natural option to continue.

8.3 Rethinking the Explanation of the Roles and Interests of NGOs in Poverty Reduction Programmes in Uganda

This study examined roles and interests of NGOs using the political economy perspective where they are seen primarily to participate in poverty reduction programmes as agents of donors and their own institutional survival. However, a dilemma exists over incorporating NGOs into the official Ugandan poverty reduction programmes. This is due to tension and frustration among actors as to what interests these NGOs exactly serve. There is a mismatch between the motivations for NGO participation and the realities on the ground.

Through poverty reduction programmes, the Ugandan government expected NGOs to contribute towards creating unity, donors used them to

contribute to the good governance agenda yet ideally, NGOs push for social change. This study demonstrated that NGOs face fierce criticism over failing to provide alternatives; they would not be heard when they did propose pro-poor options and are seen to provide less technical input into the process. Donors are also not necessarily satisfied that NGOs are implementing the good governance agenda. This created tension within NGOs. The process of receiving and giving while losing dignity and focus on the part of NGOs led to frustration. Consequently, some NGOs were threatening to pull out of official programmes while others are struggling to safeguard the space by becoming more involved in power struggles. The possibility of NGOs de-linking from official poverty reduction programmes, as some suggested is unrealistic because of the structural nature of NGO work. Pulling out could be seen as an act of sabotage against the poverty reduction agenda and it may mean redefining the mission and vision of NGOs. However, as NGO participation continues to foster tension and frustration, an obvious need exists for new ways of explaining the roles and interests of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes. The analysis need not only adopt a political economy perspective that views NGO work through the lenses of aid instruments, but also by viewing it as a broader political struggle in the country. As Hilhorst (2003) argued, the roles of NGOs have to be analysed as part of the outcome of complex processes including international ideological trends, donor agendas and national historical and cultural trends.

The experience of NGOs in Uganda leads to questions of whether NGOs are playing NGO'ism (social change-donor agents) or other politics (i.e. providing surrogate institutions for politics in Uganda.) In a politicised environment, poverty and its reduction strategies reside in political struggles. A related finding has emerged that NGOs in Uganda work as social-political entrepreneurs providing avenues for employment, middle class development and act as an alternative political society. This finding may offer guidance for further analysis of the roles and interests of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes.

NGOs in Uganda offer opportunities for paid work. NGOs end up driving the globalised paid poverty reduction programmes. Besides the government, the NGO sector is one of the fastest-growing employers in Uganda (Mwenda 2007). This study showed that part of the reason for the estab-

lishment of NGOs in Uganda was to offer employment to their founders, their relatives and a number of unemployed elites in the country. Thus, poverty and its reduction through programmes like NAADS provided an opportunity for NGO officials to earn a living. Inevitably, where there is demand for NGO labour there is supply especially in an environment where the unemployment rate is high. NGOs as a source of employment in itself could lead to change but whether these changes are beneficial to the poor is dependent on how much work helps to create common benefits for society (Boyte 2008: 123). Employment provides income to employees. Even donors continue to fund NGO participation partly because of their own need to create employment (Hanlon 1997). The government of Uganda has been struggling to create diversified employment systems with emphasis on privatisation, industrialisation and private investments. Although NGOs are criticised for prioritising employment gains over the suffering of people for instance in northern Uganda, the government is aware that they partly solved unemployment challenges in the country. Government willingness to accept NGO participation in PRSPs and NAADS processes could be because they are key players in offering employment.

Earlier literature on NGOs in Africa (Amutabi 2006) and even that of Latin America (Petras 1999) suggest that elite middle class managers often establish and lead NGOs yet they rarely understand the development they want to create. NGOs in Uganda provide avenues for the middle class to develop and survive. This study demonstrated that within NGOs there are two classes of workers (i.e. thinkers and doers). The thinkers are the middle class elites, who work with particular organisations over a long time and find themselves caught in a trap of personalising NGOs. The middle class elite have their own interests to protect. Often they need to be in the decision-making arena to guide the process. The NGO thinkers spend much of the time in workshops, yet doers mainly concentrate on upward accountability and those who reach the poor do it with minimal backing by the system. In any case, the elites are also not a homogeneous category. The question then is how to maintain the middle class? It is possible to maintain the middle class through continued employment, rent seeking to accumulate property further and build loyal client networks as Hearn (2007) suggests? Under-

standing the roles of NGOs in Uganda requires further analysis of the main-
tenance of NGO workers and the different classes within them.

At the same time, both government and donors use middle class elites to
maintain their legitimacy and control. NGOs in Africa can maintain the
ruling party in government by providing alternative sources of income as
those of the state dwindle and by filling service delivery gaps (Chabal and
Daloz 1999). Mwenda (2007) with reference to Uganda criticised President
Museveni for his foreign-aid-funded state that integrates a large part of the
elite class into the government patronage network. Although this study may
not conclude on the extent of NGO integration into the government pa-
tronage network, it demonstrated that NGOs work closely with government
with some described as, located in governments' bedrooms. Likewise, these
findings support (Hearn 2007) earlier studies in that NGO workers form a
class of people who depend and accumulate property through foreign aid. It
is possible that through subcontracting and privatising implementation of
poverty reduction programmes, donors manage their development agenda
and exert their control by using NGO workers.

Furthermore, NGOs seem to provide an avenue where the different
classes of political elites meet (i.e. politicians, active, inactive, aspiring) in
opposition or in government. Since the mid-1980s, organising the popula-
tion along political party lines was restricted until 2006. Mobilising people
for development activities occurred only through the local council and de-
centralisation systems. The scenario where the government has the monop-
oly over mobilising citizens had two effects on NGO'ism in Uganda. First,
NGO contact with the communities had to be through the local govern-
ment system. Thus, the direct link with the poor became subject to the op-
erations of the government system. Despite subcontracting NGOs to mobi-
lise the poor, government machinery, including politicians and technical
officers continued to conduct parallel farmer mobilisation. This is because
government needs legitimacy; as such, it would not support activities that
out competes its machinery in mobilising people. The study demonstrated
that the government sanctioned quick fix mobilisation process lured NGOs
away, thereby making effective organising of the poor difficult. This partly
explains the weak linkage between NGOs and the poor in official pro-
grammes.

Analysis of the politics of non-politics in Uganda helps in understanding the other effect. Since the 1980s, NGOs seem to act as avenues for creating an alternative political society. Are NGOs aware of this? The alternative may not be in the form of 'alternative government', but in terms of having an alternative talking ground to express different political opinions and solicit for political support to join government. NGOs in Uganda form, partly as talking points for those who intended to attain local or national political offices. Dicklitch (2001) earlier suggested that the energy and expertise of NGO workers that might have gone into democratising the state are diverted amongst policy advocacy, humanitarian relief and human rights activism. There are other cases where NGOs worked to organise political participation. Chapter 7 showed that the boards of directors of most NGOs are composed of elites and politicians including government ministers. NGOs attributed this to the need for easy access to decision-makers for advocacy purposes. However, it is possible that such boards become conduits to create or even pass on political ideologies

The democratisation politics of Uganda, as other countries in Africa such as Rwanda, Kenya and Nigeria remain engulfed in political ethnicity. The leadership is criticized for putting individual and geo-ethnic interests at the fore of national interests. However, chapter 7 shows that government sometimes is involved in securing jobs for individual NGO leaders. This study does not fully analyse the constructions of ethnic politics in Uganda. It may not claim to understand the construction of NGO boards/leadership. Yet, could NGO boards be formed on an ethnic or class basis? If it is, what does it mean to NGOs co-opted in the political patronage and control? Following the 2004 constitutional amendment to reintroduce multiparty political competition, the government enacted the 2006 NGO Act, which NGOs see as a way of controlling them (Kwesiga and Namisi 2006). This triggers some questions that have not been answered in this study. Is it a coincidence that the NGO Act came at the same time as political parties began to operate in the country again? Could NGOs be used as organising avenues for opposition political parties? Is the law used selectively to silence the wrong doers but also reward the supporters of the ruling party?

In the end, this study may not have introduced new concepts or theories of analysing the roles and interests of NGOs in Uganda. However, it asserts

that understanding the roles of NGOs in official poverty reduction programmes needs to focus more on the normative agenda of NGOs as well as on their institutional survival interests and the struggle for wielding power. It demonstrates that the struggle of NGOs to fit the jacket of technocratic professionals is repeating the same mistakes of driving the external development they challenged in the first place. Despite the frustration of incorporating NGOs in the official poverty reduction programmes, pulling out does not seem a feasible option for NGOs because of the different interests tagged to their participation. This conclusion further reviews the analytical framework and its assumptions. The study suggests that NGOs' work as social-political entrepreneurs provide avenue for employment, middle class development and avenue for political engagement. It suggests that studies that restrictively use the political economy perspective and mainly focus on NGO'ism are insufficient. The analysis of the roles and interests of NGOs need to adopt a political economy perspective that views NGO work through the lenses of aid instruments as well as locate it in broader political struggles in a given country.

8.4   Follow up and Further Research

There remain a number of gaps in this study and some topics for further research emerged. They are as follows.

First, the study of the roles of NGOs in poverty reduction programmes would benefit from research on the internal organisation of NGOs to pressure for social change. To reduce poverty demands requires different behaviours, attitudes and institutional arrangements on the part of NGOs to respond quickly to the information emerging from participatory processes. This is because the current social, economic and political systems have a mechanism of guarding and quickly stabilising them. Therefore, an analysis that links internal institutional, organisational and individual networks would contribute to understanding NGO work in organising social life.

Another area that would be worthwhile to elaborate on further is the key argument in this study: how well do NGOs balance their posture of being technocrats with that of being social-political agents? This study showed why NGOs have taken a technocratic posture and their inability to contribute to poverty reduction policy and practice. A study that further analyses

how NGOs adopt a political posture that takes into consideration the local context, the workings of different socioeconomic systems and a clear series of radical change processes would help to understand the socio-political entrepreneurial interests of NGOs.

List of Respondents

NGO Field Workers and Managers Interviewed (13)		
Respondent Code	**Respondents Position**	**Date of interview**
FO-NGO1.1	Field Worker	20/6/2006
FO-NGO1.2	Field Worker	20/7/2007
FO-NGO1.3	Field Worker	30/6/2007
FO-NGO2.1	Field Worker	17/11/2006
ED-NGO1.1	Branch Manager	1/7/2006
ED-NGO1.2	Executive Director	10/11/2006
ED NGO1.3	Regional Manager	15/4/2007
ED-NGO2.1	Programme Director	14/11/2006
ED-NGO2.2	Executive Director	11/6/2007
ED-NGO3.1	Programme Manager	26/5/2006
ED NGO3.2	Executive Director	4/6/2007
ED-NGO4.1	Programme Manager	29/3/2006 and 4/4/2007
ED NGO5.1	Programme Manager	17/2/2007
Government Officials Interviewed (15)		
NC1	Subcounty NAADS Coordinator	26/6/2006
NC2	Subcounty NAADS Coordinator	29/6/2006
NC3	District NAADS Coordinator	28/6/2006
NC4	District Production Officer	2/7/2006
NC5	Community Development Officer	28/6/2006
NC6	District NAAD Coordinator	14/7/2006 and 19/7/2006
NC7	District Production Officer	14/7/2006
NC8	Community Development Officer	17/7/2006
NC9	District NAAD Coordinator	15/11/2006
NC10	Subcounty NAADS Coordinator	17/11/2006
NC11	Community Development Officer	15/11/2006
NC12	NAADS Secretariat	26/5/2006
NC13	Poverty Assessment Department Official	28/3/2007
NC14	MAAIF Under Secretary	10/6/ 2007
NC 15	District NAADS Coordinator	25/11/2007

Donor Officials Interviewed (3)

Respondent Code	Respondents Position	Date
Do1	Country Representative	23/1/2007
Do2	In Charge CSO Building	24/1/2007 and 10/3/2007
Do3	In Charge NAADS	3/3/2007

Farmer Groups Interviewed (8)

Group Code	Membership	District	Date
GP1	28 members	Kabale	26/6/2006
GP2	60 members	Kabale	27.6.2006
GP3	18 members	Kabale	30/6/2006
GP4	17 members	Tororo	16/7/2006
GP5	30 members	Tororo	17/7/2006
GP6	22 members	Tororo	18/7/2006
GP7	20 members	Tororo	20/7/2006
GP8	20 members	luwero	14/11/2006

Non NAADS Farmer Groups (2)

NGP1	7 members	Kabale	30/6/2006
NGP2	12 members	Kabale	1/7/2006

Farmer Leaders Interviewed (3)

Leaders Code	District	Date
FL1	Kabale	29/6/2006
FL2	Tororo	16/7/2006
FL3	Luwero	25/11/2006

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