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Towards Strengthening State - Civil Society Relations

The Context for State-Civil Society Relations

The Local Level

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Introduction

This essay examines the context of state-civil society relations at the local level and the implications for regulating the relations between them. It includes in this discussion, the roles and relationships between NGOs and assemblies.

The essay begins with two comments:

Manor (1999) suggests that when there is cynicism about the performance of government, and voluntary associations or non-governmental organizations at lower levels may step in with resources mobilized through local and external sources to generate development and poverty projects. He describes this phenomenon as "decentralization by default". However, he also argues that democratic decentralization has limited contribution to promoting co-operation between non-governmental organizations and government.

International experience suggests that NGOs and civil society organizations are critical for exacting accountability at the local level by raising required resources for advocacy and monitoring, mobilizing information and facilitating alliances and coalitions to address this situation (Coston, 1998; Brautigam, 2000; Shepherd, 2000; World Bank 2001; Johnson and Start, 2001). However, questions have been raised about the representativeness of these organizations suggesting that very often, it is those with the resources and voice who prevail and there are real possibilities of capture of state and local resources and the encouragement of rent-seeking politics.

Context

The 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution confirmed the need for politico-administrative decentralization to promote popular participation in democracy, under the Directive Principles of State Policy in Chapter 6. Article 35 Clause 6 (d) states that the State shall "make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life and in government".

A later chapter, Chapter 20 was devoted entirely to Decentralization and Local Government, which made provision for the mode of decentralization, namely the assembly system and the sub-structures, the actors and efforts required to operationalize these structures. Importantly, it states in Article 240, Clause 2 (e) that one feature of local

government will be “to ensure the accountability of local government authorities, people in particular local government areas shall, as far as practicable, be afforded the opportunity to participate effectively in their governance”.

The Fourth Republican Constitution also recognized the rights of communities and local groups to organize and take responsibility for their development (Article 37, Clause 2).

Civil society activity, in the form of traditional authority, community-based social, economic and occupational groupings have been with Ghanaian society since pre-colonial times. Organized labour, faith-based group involvement in relief, development and welfare and the media have been much later features.

In the eighties, NGO activity in Ghana expanded, reflecting worldwide recognition of these parties as alternative development channels to governments. NGOs registered with the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare rose from about 80 in the early eighties to about 900 in 1996 (Katsriku, 1996). By the end of PAMSCAD in 1993, there were considerable numbers of NGOs engaged in poverty alleviation in many localities around the country.

In 1995, the government initiated efforts to legislate its relations with NGOs and provide a framework for regulating their activities in Ghana, perhaps due to their proliferation, independent sources of funding and undisputed presence in development. Spirited reaction from the NGO sector led to the suspension of this effort. Efforts at developing a framework to regulate relations between NGOs and the state were revived in 1999 with the active involvement of the Ghana Association of Private Voluntary Organizations in Development (GAPVOD), other NGOs including the international organizations and with the support of government agencies like the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare and Health, mainly. The orientation of this effort was to reflect partnership rather than a control relationship.

In the absence of a coherent national regulatory framework for state-civil society relations, the local level has had to adopt a variety of ways to manage. There were certain relevant provisions in Act 462 which was passed in 1993 indicating what assemblies could do with non-state actors and how. They included the following:

Some Legislation

Section 5, Sub-section 1: This indicates the appointment of persons not exceeding 30 per cent of the total membership of the assembly by the President in consultation with the traditional authorities and other interest groups in the district;

- Section 10, Sub-section 3 (c) which makes the assembly responsible for promoting and supporting productive activity and social development in the district and removing any obstacles to initiative and development;
- Section 10, Sub-section 4 making it the responsibility of the assembly in (b) to guide, encourage and support sub-district local government bodies, public agencies and local communities to perform their roles in the execution of approved development plans;

- Section 10, Sub-section 5 which indicates that “A district assembly shall co-ordinate, integrate and harmonize the execution of programmes and projects under approved development plans for the district and other development programmes promoted or carried out by Ministries, Departments, public corporations and other statutory bodies and non-governmental organizations in the district.
- Section 10 Sub-section 6 that indicates that the Assembly shall act in cooperation with the appropriate public corporation, statutory body or non-governmental organization in the discharge of its functions; and in Sub-section 7, that it shall be the duty of such public corporation, statutory body or organization to co-operate with the district assembly.
- Section 10, Sub-section 8 indicates that in the event of a conflict between an assembly and an agency of central government, public corporation, statutory body, non-governmental organization or individual over the applications of sub-sections 5 and 6, of 10 the matter would be referred by either of the parties or both to the Regional Coordinating Council.
- Section 16, Sub-section 1 (a) states that an assembly member shall maintain close contact with their electoral area, consult their people on issues to be discussed in the district assembly and collate their views, opinions and proposals.
- Section 16, Sub-section 1 (i) requires the assembly member to maintain frequent liaison with organized productive economic groupings and other persons in the district.
- Under the planning authority of the assembly, Section 48 indicates that an approved district development plan shall be complied with by any person, body or organ in the district responsible for or connected with the implementation of the plans.

Other legislations have important implications for the relationship.

- Act 480, the National Development Planning Systems Act makes the conduct of public hearings and planning from the community and sub-structure levels, a requirement for district planning.
- LI 1589 requires consultation of traditional authorities and organized economic groupings in localities for the appointment of memberships to Urban, Town and Zonal Councils and Unit Committees;
- The Development and Services Committee of the Urban or Town Councils are required to provide leadership in the selection, planning and implementation of community participatory projects, mobilize the community for self-help work and propose development plans for the consideration of the Urban or Town Council (Section 34, Subsection 1b and c).

- However, the Second Schedule of LI 1589 which sets out the functions of urban, zonal and town councils indicates in (1) that these bodies should take over as appropriate, all the functions formerly performed by the Town and Village Committee concerned. It makes a similar provision in the Fifth Schedule for Unit Committees.

It is also important to take into account, provisions made in the Service Laws for civil society participation in district level development. For instance, Act 506 the Education Service Act and Act 525 the Health Service Act, makes provision for the representation of civil society groups, such as religious faiths on district oversight and management committees in their various sectors.

Over the past two decades, a wide array of NGOs and CBOs have worked at the local level in a vast range of activities. These include health, agro-based activity, income-generation and employment skills-building, micro-credit and environmental sanitation and management. **However, what relationships are there between NGOs and governments particularly at the sub-national or local levels? How can these relationships be enhanced to optimize the resources for development?**

In the districts, the practice of registering NGOs and CBOs with the district assembly was adopted. NGOs also had to be registered with the Department of Social Welfare. However, in many districts there were indications that the assembly was officially not aware of their presence and activities. In some districts particularly in Northern Ghana, some assemblies designated an official “the NGO-desk Officer”, in many cases the planner. NGO and CBO establishment appears to have been greatly stimulated by development projects. This was so with International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) intervention of the 1990s. National scale projects like the Social Investment Fund and the Village Infrastructure Project also stimulated links between assemblies and occupational groupings with whom they worked.

In fulfilment of the legal requirement (Acts 462 and 480) for assemblies to undertake medium term planning, the 2002 planning guidelines from the National Development Planning Commission required assemblies to capture the activities and presence of NGOs in their districts in their socio-economic situation analysis. This requirement has been repeated in the 2006 guidelines.

Trends can be identified in NGO and CSO interest in, relationships with and influence over assemblies and the decentralization process. For the purpose of analysis, three time periods from 1988 when the assembly system started to date can be identified:

1988 to 1993 as a first generation of relationships; 1994 to 1998 as the second generation; and 1999 to date as the third.

In the first generation, NGOs were quite indifferent to the creation and operation of assemblies - perceiving these as political instruments. NGOs focused on welfare and development activities within communities without much attention to the district structures in whose jurisdiction the former lay. NGO interest in the second generation continued to be ambiguous as they regarded the assemblies as ineffective. However,

their influence grew, as both international and local NGO activity expanded and therefore became important channels of local level development. There were tensions on both sides, as assemblies regarded NGOs as interfering and over-resourced.

In the third generation, NGOs' interest in assemblies has grown with changes in development paradigms - namely, the promotion of good governance and rights-awareness. NGOs began to see assemblies as bodies with the responsibility to deliver local development and therefore "duty-bearers". NGOs have promoted citizen's participation in budget formulation, district planning and programme monitoring as operational strategies. In the third generation, the roles NGO play as channels of development assistance and their advocacy and mobilization roles (interesting ordinary people in local governance) have raised their influence in the decentralization process to high.

Taking civil society as an entity, interest in the decentralization process and assemblies has been rather ambiguous but increasing in all three generations. This can be partly due to the heterogeneous nature of the entities so classified. In the first generation, labour unions for instance were against decentralization seeing it as a political tool (see also Herbst, 1995). Chiefs resented their virtual banishment from local government, a territory which they had controlled in the past. Faith-based organizations were indifferent, pursuing welfare activities at the community level. Their influence over the process was low.

Civil society interest in decentralization lay between ambiguous and positive in the second generation. On one hand, there were tensions between existing town development committees (often involving chiefs) and the unit committees. On the other, legal provision had been made for chiefs to be consulted in the selection of appointed assembly memberships (but were often not) and had representation on the Regional Coordinating Councils.

In the third generation of decentralization, civil society interest continued to be ambiguous. Traditional authorities and other interest groups have agitated for clearer roles in local governance including making the appointed membership process more transparent. Other examples of increased interest have been the efforts by some faith-based organizations to educate their members in local governance.

NGO and Civil Society relations with assemblies or local authorities take various forms.

- There are NGOs with international affiliations such as ActionAid Ghana working directly in the districts;
- There are foreign development organizations like the Netherlands Development Organization who in the past (1990s) who adopted a two-pronged approach: intervened directly in the development of districts such as in Mpohor Wassa East and through a Ghanaian affiliate (African Centre for Human Development in the Sankofa Programme in Kadjebi); now adopting a regional focus with an advisory and facilitating posture;
- There are three-tier arrangements with international organizations working with local, national-scale NGOs to support the work of community-based organizations like

in the Family Reproductive Health Programme and its successor Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights

- There are other arrangements where NGOs support assemblies and decentralized departments with resources to do their work better or help to implement their project priorities.

There are NGOs working in various sectors and on different scales. Some NGOs work on a virtual nationwide scale: in more than one district and across the country as do some civil society groups such as the faith-based ones. These bring a national perspective to bear on their relationship with local authorities. These are mainly actors with international links like World Vision, Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), Action Aid Ghana, the Danish NGO, Ibis Ghana, the Dutch Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and the Cooperatives League of the United States of America (CLUSA). A few local NGOs could fit this category like ISODEC and CEDEP.

Increasingly, these inter-district, inter-region actors are interested in scaling up, applying local lessons to national policy and policy advocacy. National coalitions formed by international and local NGOs engage in advocacy for public education, programme review and policy inputs on poverty issues. The implications for assemblies include the fact that the data for advocacy has been generated from the districts through various local development programmes. In the name of participation, assembly officials are invited to launching and validation workshops. It is not clear who owns the information or what happens next.

Between 1997 and 2005, national level advocacy was undertaken on water privatization

HIV AIDs, availability and equity in basic education, health and women's issues with information generated from localities. Various national coalitions have been formed ranging from the National Coalition Against the Privatization of Water to those currently involved in the MDGs. The international NGOs collaborated with local NGOs like ISODEC, CEDEP and the Network of Women's Rights Organizations (NETRIGHT) in these efforts.

NGOs in service delivery and infrastructural development at the district level may deal with communities directly but maintain information relationships with assemblies. Other actors such as membership organizations, social, ethnic and faith-based associations have undertaken development with resources raised from their membership, citizens living outside the locality, foreign associates, NGO partners and even the assembly.

However, NGOs and CSOs have since 1999 increasingly designed and implemented programmes in collaboration with various assemblies, district departments and community groups. For instance, ISODEC's girl child education programme had been implemented through the partner assemblies.

Civil society organizations engage in activities with communities that affect district assemblies from different levels, national, regional and local as indicated in the table below.

Level	Activities
National	Faith-based groups like Christian Mothers Association (CMA) in programme development and implementation . Labour unions in advocacy for members engaged in service provision at the local level. The National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG) in advocacy and skills-building . Civil Society Coalitions for advocacy for development and economic policy review .
Regional	Traditional authority representation on the Regional Coordinating Councils with advocacy, monitoring and evaluation roles Universities and research and training institutions in skills development, monitoring and evaluation and research for advocacy work .
Local/District	Village and town development committees engaged in needs identification, planning, limited fund-raising and implementation . Local level project management/ development committees created as a phase-out strategy for development projects engaged in implementation and service delivery . Joint project implementation committees involving assemblies, civil society and local informal/private sector Local civil society committees monitoring the use of public resources for poverty reduction such as HIPC funds .

Over the years, traditional authorities through the National House of Chiefs have made various representations to government on their involvement in the assemblies resulting in the granting of 30% quota of appointed memberships. Their involvement with assemblies is more visible at the regional level, where by law the regional houses of chiefs have representation on the RCCs. Various independent efforts by notable traditional rulers have also been undertaken in localities and even regionally without the agency of local authorities.

There are faith-based organizations providing pro-poor services in health, education and income-generation at the local level countrywide. Increasingly, they are also showing interest in providing their membership with skills in public engagement, political office amongst others. However, it is not clear that we can generalize about the types of relationships they have with the assemblies in the delivery of these services. Organized labour unions have also not been visibly engaged with local authorities.

The National Association of Local Authorities of Ghana (NALAG) an umbrella body of assemblies can be perceived to be a national level civil society operator with an impact on

district assemblies. Respondents classified NALAG as civil society because it was a membership organization of local governments. NALAG is devoted to advocacy on issues affecting local authority and building local and international relationships between local authorities including sister-city collaboration.

Some observers have classified research and advocacy institutions as civil society in this exercise (including the universities, despite their main funding sources being government and donors). They argue that the thrust of their work in local governance may demonstrate reasonable independence. There has been work done by such institutions including studies by the University of Cape Coast for Action Aid Ghana, and the University of Ghana Political Science Department funded by Ibis Ghana. Research and advocacy institutions in the G-RAP community have worked within districts and engaged assemblies in different ways. Other such institutions like the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) and the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) have engaged in training and research relationships with various assemblies.

However, some observers consider these relationships with assemblies as arguably extractive (collecting data or doing consultancy to satisfy a client) rather than investing in the locality.

At the local level, most communities have welfare, economic and occupational groups such as market associations and ethnic clubs that periodically engage in local development activities. In such cases, local civil society has undertaken programme planning, limited fund-raising and implementation. Their relationships with local authorities have consisted mainly of approaching assemblies for financial and material assistance and inviting the support of the DCE. However, there could be the potential of running into difficulty with unit committees. Village and town development committees which had existed up till the early eighties ran into political difficulty from the mid-eighties in relation to their roles vis-à-vis the revolutionary committees and later, the unit committees. This is enshrined in LI 1589 where unit committees were required to replace these entities.

Civil society involvement can also be considered evident in community-level management committees, arising from development projects initiated by NGOs and donors. These committees involved community representatives of interest groups within districts. Over more than a decade of community development, Action Aid Programmes had had such community management committees (CMCs) for grain banks, credit management and small infrastructure amongst others. However, these committees do not always have a direct relationship with the assembly, drawing their resources from and reporting to the sponsor and the community.

Other initiatives local civil society is engaged in have more direct involvement of assemblies through joint committees. For instance, district core groups have been formed (made of assembly members, unit committee representatives, traditional authorities, district staff and local NGOs) to promote an agenda. A novel approach has been promoted under the Ghana Decent Work Programme with the International Labour Organization (ILO) where in two districts¹ special sub-committees of the assemblies to promote productive

¹ The Awutu-Effutu-Senya and the Ajumako-Enyan-Essiam Districts in the Central Region.

employment, have been established with representation from business-owners, assembly members and technical district staff.

There are committees involving local civil society to monitor the use of public resources. The HIPC Watch Committees stimulated by the Social Enterprise Development (SEND) Foundation are an example. In 20 districts, civic unions made up of professional unions, faith-based organizations and occupational groupings of traders, mechanics, artisans and hairdressers have been formed with support from the Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT) Programme. These have organized town hall meetings to listen to local politicians on plans and budgets. With facilitation from the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), public deliberation methods have been used to foster Governance Issues Fora in 20 districts, which have examined issues of public interest.

In these two examples, the projects had carefully invested in relationships with political leaders such as DCEs and Presiding Members and garnered their support. These committees kept assemblies informed of their activities; shared their findings, facilitated some development activities; and promoted good citizenship such as the payment of rates and taxes. Their relationships with assemblies were informational and consultative. In some cases, assemblies are rewarded with small projects for hosting these initiatives.

Membership organizations could provide assemblies with services. The most popular is the use of occupational and economic associations to collect income taxes on behalf of local authorities. Some of the most visible are where the local branches of the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) control car parks on behalf of assemblies, check driver malfeasance and maintain the facilities in addition to collecting taxes.

What has been achieved by NGO/CSO Interventions at the Local Level?

NGOs have contributed to the quality of life, infrastructural development as well as civic engagement of assemblies in many districts in Ghana. They have provided emergency relief, facilitated access to social services by constructing schools, health facilities, markets and potable water. They have sought to add value to income-generating activities by animating production, credit and marketing groups. They have also tried to provide strategic skills for their principals (beneficiaries) through management training, legal rights awareness, civic education for democracy and reproductive health education.

Some NGOs have tried to promote sustainability of their interventions by fostering community committees (innovation teams, platforms, fora etc) to manage the initiatives they have introduced into various projects. However, this has implications for their relationships with assemblies and the lower structures, unit committees primarily.

District assemblies indicate that they have provided an “enabling environment” for NGOs to work in. This has ranged from providing premises and facilities for their offices, sometimes accommodation, allowing them access to administrators and staff and assembly members and supporting their functions with their presence and moral support. Finally, by generally not interfering with their work.

Decentralized departments have provided skills for programmes identified and initiated by NGOs and CSOs. Public sector staff have been used by NGOs to collect relevant data. District planning and other technical staff have acted as resource persons on NGO-sponsored training programmes. In some cases, decentralized departments have seconded staff to work on NGO initiatives where specialized input is required, such as agricultural extension, public health and agro-forestry, based on memoranda of understanding.

Some NGOs and assemblies have consciously fostered their collaboration and participate in the formulation of their respective plans at all stages - not only during public hearings and validation meetings. This promotes their mutual interests.

NGOs have contributed to the technical capacity of the decentralized departments by funding training and providing logistics for outreach and other work. Some beneficiaries have been the Ministries of Food and Agriculture and Health, the Ghana Education Service (GES), the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE). NGOs have also fostered skills building in the public sector in community animation, mobilization and participatory techniques with district administrative and technical staff.

Other critical inputs that NGOs have made is in the functioning of the assembly are in training assembly members. NGOs in various areas have conducted supplementary training to apprise members of their roles and responsibilities, skills-building in planning, problem-solving, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation, gender, environmental management and child rights awareness.

Other contributions have been more tangible. These include the development of immovable property developed by NGOs as their offices and accommodation, which assemblies hope to acquire at the end of projects. Another contribution has been the support to institutional development of credit unions, village and rural banks which service entire communities.

The community development committees referred to earlier as arising to sustain projects and create community ownership has had the result of preparing people for public office. People who have served on these committees have found their way onto unit committees and assemblies, with their public service track record. Their advocacy and insistence on certain principles have raised the awareness of assemblies on such critical issues as gender, disability and environmental sustainability.

In conclusion, non-state actors have played as prominent a role in local level development and poverty reduction efforts as central and local governments. NGOs and civil society organizations have engaged extensively in programmes intended to better the quality of lives of people in communities, therefore, the local level. NGOs had engaged in different categories of activities including relief and welfare work; development and capacity-building activities; and increasingly advocacy and accountability-related work, including monitoring and evaluation at the local levels. These roles particularly, the last one, has traditionally been regarded as the purview of government.

These contributions have not necessarily been acknowledged or integrated into the total official picture of poverty reduction efforts. Different categories of assembly actors have different recollections about their work. For instance, secondary data could indicate that

there have been interventions by particular projects in particular districts, which assembly officials will not recall, report nor record.

In district case studies, the assembly members have been able to mention more NGO efforts than the administrators and indicate more familiarity and acknowledgement of these efforts alongside assembly, government and donor initiatives. Various reasons were proffered for this including that the assembly members know more about NGO activity than the technocrats because they live in the communities. Other reasons are about the state of record-keeping in the assembly and high turn-over of staff at the district level. Finally, it has been suggested that NGOs do not always keep assemblies abreast with what they were doing.

That local communities can draw clear dichotomies about which projects “belong” to which sponsor (assembly projects versus development partner/NGO projects) is indicative of the fact that local “collaboration” does not always work. In such cases, the people could perceive the assembly as non-performing in comparison to the other actors.

Questions Arising for Legislating Relations

How appropriate are the provisions indicated in Act 462 and other laws? How workable are they and how can they be taken account of in any effort to legislate relations?

Are NGOs performing functions that are governments or are they complementary? Perhaps in our situation, these arrangements have arisen because of the under-resourced circumstances assemblies find themselves in. In spite of the extensive political, planning and administrative powers bestowed upon the assemblies, they are constrained in the delivery of development by their lack of adequate financial resources generated from traditional tolls and fines and to a large extent, delays in transfers from central government. Problems with legislative limitations on borrowing and their inadequate experience with managing investments and relations with the private sector have aggravated the problem - in both cash and in logistics.

In the current environment, communities’ assemblies and even central government functionaries have high expectations of NGOs. This is evident in the calls and appeals to NGOs to support various causes and provide help in emergencies.

The lack of sufficient integration of service delivery and the work of some decentralized departments in the business of assemblies could have implications on the relations with NGOs/CSOs. Where the latter work in education and health for instance, the assembly and the district departments of the services still have to be managed tactfully, especially if there are already coordination difficulties on the ground. Different policies for managing donor and development resources, in different sectors in the same district have to be taken into account in NGO work as well as assembly capacity to assess the total impact on the development of the district.

Can NGOs foster uneven or differential rates of development in the same district? When NGOs/CSOs choose particular communities to work in and are better resourced than the

assembly, then assemblies face the difficulty of explaining to underserved communities why they have been left behind.

Where the NGO/CSO is better resourced than the assembly, what are the implications for the credibility of the latter?

How far should an NGO/CSO go in seeking to support the assembly's initiatives?

Should the NGO/CSO provide total disclosure of its resources, particularly financial? What amount of disclosure is healthy for the relationship? Are NGO/CSOs' fears that they will be taken over by assemblies justified?

How should property acquired or developed by the NGO be treated by the assembly?

What kind of title deeds and property deeds are necessary especially where the land belongs to the assembly, or is gifted by a traditional authority? Should such property revert to the original land-owners after the project? What should be the model of transfer, to whom, after the NGO phases out of the district?

Where NGOs have trained assembly members, what are the experiences? What methods should be employed? How should quality control be exercised? How can capacity building be sustained? How can best practices be elicited and passed on?

Around power issues: to what extents are local NGOs caught between the priorities of donors/funders/sponsors and the needs and expectations of assemblies and communities? Very often NGOs have to align the needs of communities as closely to the expectations and priorities of the funders. But when push comes to shove, who should the NGO support? How should the NGO be protected?

When NGOs have to manage the demands of multiple actors, including donors who help them to survive, how can they be protected? How are relations with, expectations and demands of foreign technical assistance/experts (who indirectly or directly control the disbursement of resources) managed - especially with assemblies and the local NGO in the middle?

How can NGOs mitigate the impacts of changing development policy of donor countries and of the government of Ghana on their partner communities and on themselves?

To what extent do the additional resources provided through NGOs give them an "unfair" or unwarranted leverage over the assembly? To what extent can assemblies "regulate" the activities of NGOs in their districts?

To what extent does the presence of a major NGO in a district deprive that district of the attention and support of other development partners who could have supported that assembly in meeting the needs that their large NGO partner cannot? (When a large NGO is present in a particular district, other NGOs/development organizations may stay away).

To what extent do NGOs have a responsibility to promote, link other organizations to and provide information about the district they work in?

To what extent do the production, income-generation, community management and other development committees fostered by NGOs within communities pose a threat of potential conflict with the assemblies' or districts' priorities?

To what extent does the provision in the second and fifth schedules of LI 1589 of 1994 about town, zonal councils and unit committees affect efforts sponsored by NGOs to stimulate interventions by civil society development groups?

How can the capacities of assemblies and NGOs/CSOs be built to engage with one another? Collaborate with one another? How can we foster relations? Assemblies may regard NGOs/CSOs as overly resourced, sometimes interfering acquaintances. NGOs/CSOs may regard assemblies as under-performing, under-capacitated duty bearers who should be assisted to know what they ought to be doing. NGOs have been known to express concern at the slow process of assemblies and doubts about whether unit committees and sub-structures work.

Final thoughts

The demand side of local governance that is the capacity of the people, civic groups and communities need to be further strengthened and in that regard, assemblies must be assisted to involve civil society more productively in its efforts. Assemblies must be encouraged to keep a register for all NGOs and CSOs and their activities; establish regular meeting fora for feedback and collaboration; and generally recognize their efforts by visiting NGO project sites. The relationship must be one of respect and collaboration, including information-sharing as will be mutually agreed upon.