

# **A 9 Point Guide to Understanding the NGO Policy and Supporting its Implementation**

*A Summary of the NGO Policy*

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Government fully acknowledges and recognizes the key role that Non Governmental Organisations play in service delivery especially to marginalised groups and improving accountability of public institutions. The National NGO Policy is the first of its kind in Uganda. It provides the overall framework under which the Government will engage with NGOs as part of the development process.

The broad aim of the NGO Policy is to set out a framework that strengthens the relationship between the NGO sector and Government and enhance capacities and effectiveness in the areas of service delivery, advocacy and empowerment.

The spirit of cooperation between NGOs and Government was aptly demonstrated during the consultative process in formulating the NGO Policy. Various stakeholders were consulted and made their input. The overall framework for its implementation re-affirms this spirit and we now expect that the actual implementation does the same.

I would like to thank the Office of the Prime Minister, my ministry and especially the NGO Registration Board and NGOs for developing this summary version of the NGO Policy with the aim of making it more accessible and for different stakeholders. I encourage every institution identified as key in the implementation of this policy to play their part to ensure that it is a success.

Hon Hilary Onek  
MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

## INTRODUCTION

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This Summary NGO Version of the NGO Policy is developed to make the document more accessible and reader friendly. It was developed in a joint undertaking by the Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Internal Affairs and NGOs. The Summary Version of the NGO Policy highlights the key contents of the NGO Policy and is structured in a simple 9-Question format to make the reader quickly glean through the important sections of the Policy and grasp its essence.

This Summary Version of the NGO Policy is prepared primarily for NGO practitioners and Government Officials whose duty entails regular interface with the NGO sector at national, district and lower local government levels. It is also envisaged that this Summary Version will also be useful for other development practitioners interested in understanding the work of NGOs and Government's support towards it.

# 1

## What is the NGO Policy?

The NGO Policy is a document that sets out the overall framework for strengthening partnerships between Government and NGOs in development. It is set within the context of the Constitution of Republic of Uganda and the Public Private Partnerships Principles (PPPs).

The NGO Policy contains a situational Analysis of the NGO Sector in Uganda, espouses a vision and principles for the partnership between NGOs and Government and sets out an Implementation framework for the implementation of the NGO Policy.

# 2

## Why was it developed?

The NGO Policy notes that while the existing NGO Act addresses the basic legal and regulatory issues about the NGO Sector, Uganda has lacked a comprehensive policy to guide the development of the NGO Sector and hence facilitate strengthening of NGO – Government relations. The broad goal of the NGO Policy and its specific objectives are:

### Goal

**The broad aim of the NGO Policy is to set out a framework that strengthens the relationship between the NGO sector and Government, and enhance capacities and effectiveness in the areas of service delivery, advocacy and community empowerment.**

### Specific Objectives

- Define NGOs and their role with a view to promoting increased citizen participation in policy-making processes and development issues;
- Clarify the role of other stakeholders and their relationship with NGO actors;
- Provide for legal, policy and procedural changes that will allow NGOs to effectively contribute to national and district development planning in a harmonized manner;
- Ensure the autonomy of duly registered NGOs; and
- Promote a culture of accountability amongst different players in national development.
- Provide for guidelines in partnership between government and NGOs in implementing specific programmes

## 3

### When and how was it developed?

The process to develop the NGO Policy started in 2007 and the final document was approved by Cabinet in October 2010.

The process involved a series of consultations and discussions with a wide range of stakeholders at regional and national level. Various interest groups including NGOs and NGO umbrella bodies, public servants at national, district and lower levels, Parliamentarians, the Private Sector and Donor representatives were all consulted.

This NGO Policy is, therefore, a landmark development that culminated from a long consultative process involving several stakeholders.

## 4

### What is envisioned in the NGO Policy?

The NGO Policy sets a very important foundation for strengthening the NGO Sector and its relationship with the Government as stated in the vision and principles below:

#### Vision

**A vibrant and accountable NGO Sector enabling citizen' advancement and self transformation**

## Guiding Principles

- Respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms with regard to social, cultural and religious beliefs and practices, which rights will be exercised responsibly;
- Freedom of association and independence of individuals and NGOs within the overall framework of the law;
- Voluntarism and respect for diversity within the NGO sector;
- The right of NGOs to autonomy, self-governance and self-regulation consistent with the laws of Uganda;
- Dignity, mutual respect and trust underpinned by open dialogue, transparency and accountability; and
- Gender equity and equality

# 5

## What does the NGO Policy Say about NGOs?

The NGO Policy acknowledges NGOs as important players in the country's social, economic, political and intellectual development. The policy explicitly recognizes the diversity in the NGO sector, from those working in direct service delivery to those primarily focused on policy advocacy and some that do both.

### Types of NGOs defined in the NGO Policy

#### **Non-Governmental Organization:**

Any legally constituted private, voluntary grouping of individuals or associations involved in community work which augment government work but clearly not for profit or commercial purposes.

#### **National Non-Governmental Organization:**

An NGO that is wholly controlled by Ugandans, registered exclusively within Uganda and with authority to operate within or across two or more districts in Uganda.

#### **Regional Non-Governmental Organization (RENGO):**

An NGO having its original incorporation with one of the states of the East African Community (EAC) and partially or wholly controlled by citizens of one or more partner states in East Africa but operating in Uganda under a certificate of registration.

#### **International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO):**

An NGO having its original incorporation in and partially or wholly controlled by citizens of one or more countries other than the Partner States forming the east African Community, but operating in Uganda under a certificate of registration.

#### **Community Based Organization (CBO):**

An organization wholly controlled by Ugandans, operating at sub county level and below, that is involved in NGO type activities (as per attached schedule) augment Government work but work clearly not profit or **commercial purposes**.

**The characteristics of NGOs as outlined in the NGO Policy include:**

- NGO roots established in voluntarism
- A central strength and distinguishing feature of NGOs is additionality - they mobilize additional financial, technical and political resources to complement the State.
- The majority of NGOs in Uganda are small, fragmented and Community Based Operators.
- The NGO sector in Uganda is highly donor dependent. Most NGOs in Uganda access funds from external donors either directly or through international NGOs (INGOs).
- A significant dimension in NGO sector is the increased initiatives that have resulted in the formation of clusters, networks or umbrella organizations.

# 6

## How will the NGO Policy be implemented?

The implementation framework set out in the NGO Policy is informed by the need to ensure cost effectiveness, strengthen mechanisms through which NGOs generate policy debate and strengthen an internally driven culture of responsible conduct by NGOs. There are four major organs defined in the NGO Policy at national and district level:

AT NATIONAL LEVEL	DISTRICT LEVEL
<p><b>Office of the Prime Minister</b> The Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) is the overall coordinator of the NGO Policy in line with its Constitutional mandate under Article 108(A).</p> <p><b>NGO Sector Lead Ministry</b> The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) is the Lead Agency for monitoring and overseeing the operations of NGOs in Uganda. The Ministry also hosts the NGO Board.</p> <p><b>The Non-Governmental Organizations Board (The NGO Board)</b> The Board shall exercise its mandate for registration, regulation, monitoring and overseeing the activities of NGOs. The status and institutional capacity of the NGO Board shall be strengthened appropriately to enable it carry out its functions both at national and district level.</p>	<p>At the district level the National NGO Board shall be represented by the District NGO Monitoring Committee (DNMC) which will be composed of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) - Chairperson</li> <li>ii. Community Development Officer (CDO) - Secretary</li> <li>iii. District Internal Security Officers (DISO) - Member</li> <li>iv. District Director of Health Services (DDHS) - Member</li> <li>v. District Education Officer - Member</li> <li>vi. Representative of NGOs in the District</li> <li>vii. The Committee shall have powers to co-opt technical officers to deal with specific issues.</li> </ol> <p>At the sub-county level there will be a sub-county NGO Monitoring Committee (SNMC) composed of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Assistant Chief Administrative Officer (ACAO) - Chairperson</li> <li>ii. Assistant Community Development Officer (ACDO) - Secretary</li> <li>iii. Gombolola (Sub-county) Internal Security Officers (GISO) - Member</li> <li>iv. Sub-county Health Inspector - Member</li> <li>v. Representative of NGOs in the Sub-county - Member</li> </ol>

# 7

## What will change as a result of the NGO Policy?

It is expected that when the Policy is embraced and fully implemented by the responsible players, the following impacts will be registered:

- ➔ A vibrant relationship and productive synergy between a publicly accountable NGO Sector, Government, the Private Sector and Development Partners at both the centre and local level;
- ➔ Improved coordination of the respective contributions of State and Non-State Players to sustainable development;
- ➔ Availability of a strong and efficient mechanism for effective monitoring and assessing of the impact of the NGO sector to development;
- ➔ Enhanced integrity, accountability, and transparency amongst sector players, and
- ➔ An empowered population that ensures it gets what it is entitled to and that takes the initiative to mobilize additional resources for development.

# 8

## What is the role of different stakeholders?

The NGO Policy identifies and spells out roles of different stakeholders, both state and non state actors. Detailed roles are contained in the annex of the NGO Policy. In brief:

- 8.1 Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)** is expected to coordinate the implementation of the Policy across line Ministries, Government Departments and Agencies as well as the Private sector to ensure harmonious and cost-effective operations.
- 8.2 Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA)** is expected to promote the NGO Policy and support the NGO Board to build institutional capacity to carry out its mandate.
- 8.3 The NGO Board** is expected to register, monitor and ensure that only legitimate NGOs are allowed to operate in Uganda. The Board will also play a coordination role between NGOs and Government as well as with other development stakeholders.
- 8.4 Line Ministries, Departments and Agencies** are expected to strengthen the integration and documentation of the contribution of the NGO sector in programs coordinated by the line Ministry and designate an officer to be responsible for liaison with the NGO Board and other NGOs.
- 8.5 NGO Umbrella Bodies** are expected to popularize the NGO Policy amongst their members and provide leadership for the self-regulation of NGOs as well as coordinate the participation of their members in government policy processes.
- 8.6 Development Partners** are expected to comply with the objectives and principles of the NGO Policy and relevant legislations and support NGO sector partnership coordination mechanisms.
- 8.7 The Media** is expected to disseminate and popularize the NGO Policy amongst stakeholders and provide wide publicity of success stories in the NGO sector.
- 8.8 The Private Sector** is expected to support the objectives and principles of the NGO Policy and develop productive linkages with international, national and local NGOs.

- 8.9 Research and Academic Institutions** are expected to undertake operational research in NGO sector policy management and development impact, and widely disseminating the findings.
- 8.10 The District Council** is expected to ensure that effective measures are put in place to carry out the Committee's statutory mandate for monitoring and coordinating the activities of the NGOs and CBOs in the district, in liaison with the NGO Board.
- 8.11 District Technical Planning Committee** are expected to put in place guidelines and procedures to enable the participation of the NGO actors in preparation of comprehensive and integrated district development plans incorporating plans of lower local councils and their implementation.
- 8.12 The Resident District Commissioner (RDC)** is expected to facilitate the activities of the NGO Board in the areas of NGO registration and deregistration of NGOs and CBOs according to guidelines provided by the NGO Board.
- 8.13 District NGO Monitoring Committee** is expected to register CBOs and recommend NGOs to the National NGO Board. They are also expected to advise the RDC on matters of NGOs including registration and monitoring.
- 8.14 Sub-county NGO monitoring Committee** is expected to recommend CBOs to the District NGO Monitoring Committee and advise the DNMC on matters of NGOs and CBOs.
- 8.15 Individual NGOs** are expected to internalize and comply with the principles and provisions of the Policy, conduct themselves in a responsible and accountable manner. They are also expected to share their program plans and budgets with government and sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with relevant government agencies as may be appropriate.
- 8.16 Community Leaders** are expected to mobilize communities to actively engage with NGOs in initiatives that improve service delivery and civic empowerment. They are also expected to participate in grass root level audit of the contribution of NGOs to community development.
- 8.17 Communities** are expected to support the legitimate activities of NGOs based on clear communication of the objectives and methods of work of the said organizations.

# 9

## Where can I get more information about the NGO Policy?

While this summary version captures the essence of the NGO Policy, it is however important that all key stakeholders acquire and acquaint themselves with the details of the Policy itself. Copies of the NGO Policy can be got in the following locations:

- ➔ Online from the Ministry of Internal Affairs website – [www.mioa.go.ug](http://www.mioa.go.ug) or on the NGO Forum website [www.ngoforum.or.ug](http://www.ngoforum.or.ug)
- ➔ Hard copies can be got from the NGO Board in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Uganda National NGO Forum Offices in Kampala as well as District NGO Forums and Networks.