

The Changing Role of CSOs in Public Policy Making in Ghana

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Introduction

The last two decades have seen significant changes in the relationship among the State, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Development Partners (DPs) in many developing countries. In Ghana, this relationship has ranged from mutual suspicion and exclusion to one of greater engagement and accommodation. Between the 1950s and the years of Structural Adjustment in the 1980s, the state was seen as the central mechanism for economic and social development. Consequently, policy making centered on a small team of government officials with support from development partners.

Since the mid-1990s, however, Ghana has witnessed a major paradigm shift in the relationship among the State, Development Partners and CSOs with regard to development policy dialogue in particular and public policy making in general. Indeed the role of civil society is growing, as exemplified in its role in some important national development policies such as the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II: 2006-2009) and the National Budget Processes since 2005. The new development paradigm is further exemplified in the emergence of numerous civil society networks and coalitions that seek to increase the penetrating powers of CSOs in the policy making processes. While skeptics may still view the policy making environment with mixed signals, there is clearly a discernable trend for all key stakeholders – government, development partners,

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and civil society – to look to one other not as competitors or enemies, but as partners in the development process.

This paper seeks to critically examine the following questions: How effective are CSOs in contributing to policy making and poverty reduction in Ghana? Is the new shift in relationship among the three actors amenable to greater input from civil society actors? Is civil society an equal player in this relationship? To what extent has the new development paradigm empowered Ghanaian CSOs? What challenges do CSOs face in the current policy-making environment?

Conceptual Definitions

The Notion of Civil Society

In recent years, the use of the term ‘civil society’ has become ubiquitous in politics and policy analyses. For some, the term has established itself as a significant, even paradigmatic concept in the field of policy and practice (Howell and Pearce, 2002). Despite its centrality in the development debate, however, there is no universally acceptable definition of the term ‘civil society’, and scholars particularly differ immensely about what is to be included or excluded in a definition of the concept. While some emphasize associational life, others confine the contours of ‘civil society’ only to formal organizations (Fierbeck 1998). Another contentious issue about civil society concerns its appropriate relationship with the State: Should State-Civil society relations be cordial or hostile? Yet another theoretical dispute in the literature is the question of whether or not business associations should be included in the parameters of civil society. This paper employs the term ‘civil society organizations’ broadly to refer to all voluntary associations that actively participate, at least periodically, in influencing public policies without trying to take direct control of the Stateⁱ.

Participation

Greater people’s participation [in policy making] is no longer a vague ideology based on the wishful thinking of a few idealists. It has become an imperative – a condition for survival.

(Human Development Report, 1993, Chapter 5, page.99)

The term 'participation' continues to be a considerable focus of debate in the field of politics and public policy-making at international and national scales, especially in developing countries. But what exactly does it mean to 'participate', and what constitutes effective 'participation'? Like many concepts in the social sciences, the term 'participation' does not yield itself to one universally acceptable interpretation. While political scientists tend to conceptualize participation in terms of involvement of community members in decision-making processes; economists talk of participation in terms of sharing in benefits of development projects and programs; and development administrators concentrate on community members assuming roles in the implementation of policies when they make reference to the term participation. This paper is mainly concerned about the political scientists' and development administrators' perspectives on participation which require that citizens, both individually and organized in various forms of associations, must be allowed to engage effectively in the decision making processes in their communities. The participation paradigm evolved from the human development approach to development, which sees human beings as 'makers and shapers' of public policies rather than merely being 'users and choosers' of public servicesⁱⁱ. In this paper, we adopt the World Bank's (2002a:237) definition of participation as "the process by which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy making, resource allocations, and/or program implementation". The key stakeholders in the policy-making processes here includes government, the general public, civil society, private sector actors and development partners.

One crucial challenge in evaluating civil society participation in policy making is the question of what constitutes 'effective' participation. Eberlie (2007) has proposed that participation can be considered effective only when it is rights-based, integrated in the political environment of a given country and if it has empowered stakeholders. The World Bank (2002a:ibid) also suggests that participation in policy making can vary along a spectrum, ranging upward from (i) information-sharing, (ii) consultation, (iii) joint decision-making to (iv) initiation and control by stakeholders. From the Bank's perspective, information sharing is the weakest form of participation because it represents a one-way relationship in which decisions are largely made by the state and only

communicated to the general public. Consultation goes one step further and unlike information sharing, it allows participants to freely express their opinions even though their views are not bound to be incorporated into the formulation and implementation of public policies. In other words, consultation may merely mean 'consult and ignore', and is often used to legitimize the actions of the powerful stakeholders in the decision making process (Oxfam, undated: 10). On the other hand, joint-decision making gives participants the shared right to negotiate the content of decisions, while 'initiation and control' implies a high degree of citizen control over the decision-making processes. The Bank's definition of participation adopted in this paper is geared towards the '*initiation and control*' end of the participation ladder – participants should be able to *influence* and *control* policy making and agenda-setting, as well as budgeting and implementation.

Empowerment, Ownership and Participation

In discussing participation of civil society in policy making, the issues of ownership and empowerment and their relations to participation is crucial. While empowerment implies to give somebody power or authority". "power" means the ability, knowledge and skill to do something (Kinyashi 2006:12). Therefore, to be empowered simply means "to be invested with power" (Peake 1999)ⁱⁱⁱ. In the context of policy making, empowerment may be defined as the "expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable, institutions that affect their lives" (World Bank, 2002b:5-6).

But does 'empowerment' necessarily represent a pre-condition for participation? The answer to this question is largely dependent upon what is to be understood by participation. White (1995, cited in Lewis, 2001) argues that the politics of participation revolves on the questions of who participates, what they participate in, how they participate and for what reason; and that these may vary from nominal or "tokenistic display" to "transformative participation". Thus on the one hand, if by participation is meant the process of bringing groups, often deprived groups, to the table (Fetterman 2005:10, quoted in Kinyashi 2006:11), or what has been variously called '*passive*' participation (Rifkin, 1985); '*token-*

ism' (Hart, 1992); '*manipulated*' participation (Bordenave, 1994); '*pseudo*' participation (White et al., 1994) or *information-sharing* (World Bank, 2002a), then participation can successfully occur with or without empowerment.^{iv} On the other hand, if by participation is meant what Kinyashi (2006) termed as '*genuine participation*', in which local communities are active participants and are empowered to retain control over the policy-making processes at all levels, then participation would be inconceivable without empowerment. Indeed what 'participation' comes to mean in this regard goes beyond older practices of consultations to giving real voice and power to the people in the form of making information and resources available to them to be able to influence decisions that affect their lives. As Cornwall (2002:28) rightly concluded: "Enhancing citizenship participation requires more than inviting or simply inducing people to participate. And it calls for more than simply making spaces available for people to express their needs and exercises in gathering "voices". ...it requires giving people access to information on which to base deliberation..."

That empowerment is a necessary condition for '*genuine participation*' is not difficult to justify. In their work on deliberative mechanisms in the US, Fung and Wright (2001:25) observed that effective deliberation occurs only if "there is a *rough equality of power*, for the purposes of deliberative decisions, between participants" (our emphasis). This argument implies that if civil society organizations are to be effective participants in the policy making arena, they must by virtual necessity be equipped with the necessary tools for effective participation and seen as equal partners. Unfortunately, and as Whitfield (2005:657) has observed, while the notion of '*partnership*' embodied in the term '*development partners*' idealizes relations among government, donors and civil society, it fails to acknowledge the power imbalances at play in the interactions of such partners. The danger of ignoring this power asymmetry is that participation in itself could be used as an ideology of domination and control as civil society may only be brought to the '*participation table*' to validate decisions already taken by the more powerful actors.

Nevertheless, that empowerment enhances effective participation should not be viewed as a chicken and egg paradox. On the one hand, it may be logical to argue that one cannot effectively participate without

necessarily being empowered. However, following the 'practice makes perfect' logic, participating individuals or organizations have opportunities to be empowered as they participate in certain development activities. Put differently, in as much as one cannot effectively participate without first of all being empowered, participation is another way of empowering the participating individuals (Kinyashi, 2006). In effect, one may suggest that there is a reciprocal relationship between empowerment and participation; the more empowered individuals or organizations become, the more effectively they can engage in the decision-making processes, and the deeper the engagement, the more empowered they feel to continuously participate in shaping the lives of their constituents through policy dialogue and other mechanisms.

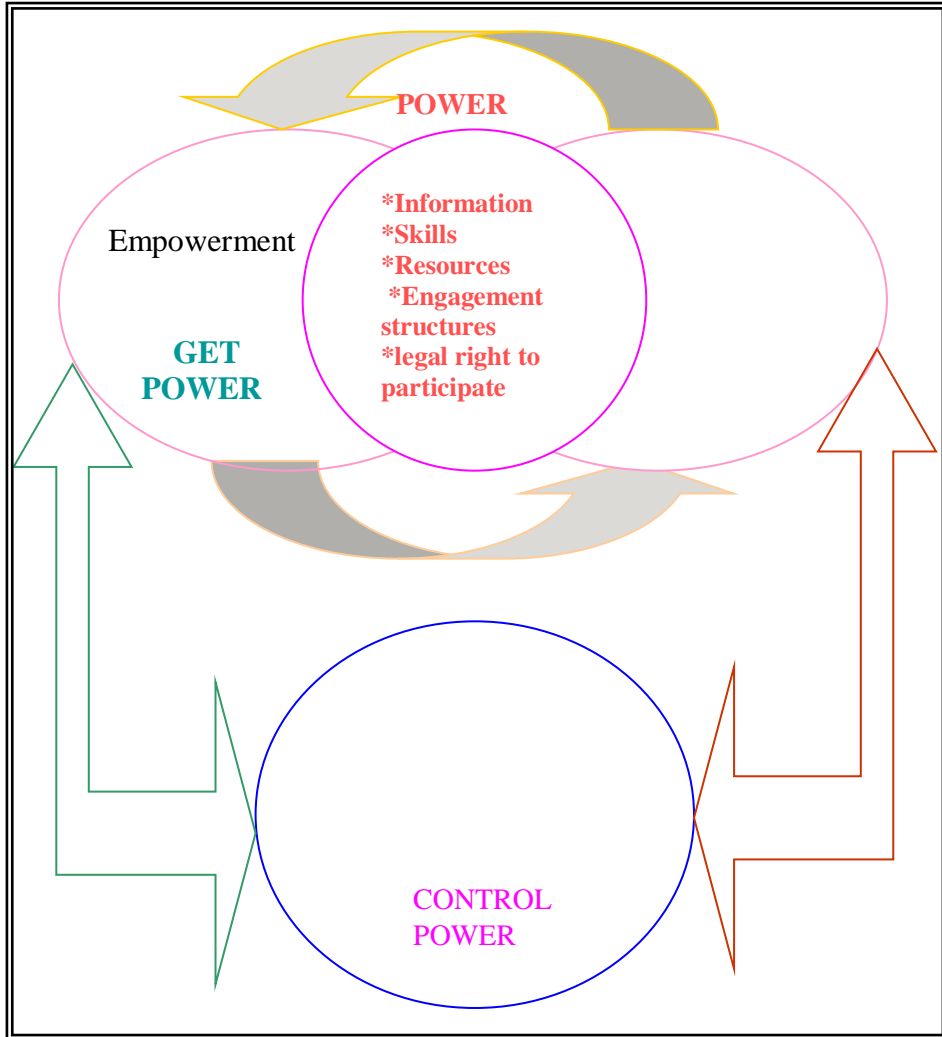
But is there any relationship among empowerment, participation and ownership? As shown in figure 1, empowerment and participation can enhance 'ownership' only when they go hand-in-hand; neither participation nor empowerment alone can lead to country ownership. This is to suggest that country ownership - defined here as the institutionalized processes that allows for the *equal participation* of governments and non-state actors (such as civil society) in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national development plans - can be achieved only when ordinary citizens are empowered to effectively participate in the policy-making processes^v. Significantly, local ownership in turn elicits citizen commitment in the implementation of development policies and programs. Killick et al (1998:90), for example, have observed that in eighteen of the twenty-one countries studied, "the extent of ownership, or its absence, was found to have exerted a decisive influence on the degree of program implementation."^{vi}

Does Civil Society Participation in Policy Making Matter?

CSO participation in policy making has been justified on a number grounds ranging from the inadequacy of state institutions in meeting the demands of the people to making development interventions more sustainable, and more recently, to the protection of the rights of the vulnerable in society. It is increasingly recognized that governments, no

matter how democratic, cannot be all-encompassing in representing the needs of citizens.

Figure 1: The Empowerment-Participation-Ownership Link



(Source: Authors' presentation, building on Kinyashi's (2006:12) conception on the link between empowerment and participation)

Thus since the early 1990s, discussions on how to alleviate poverty in poor countries has significantly shifted from 'government' to 'governance', which emphasizes the complementary roles of both state and non-state actors in the policy making processes. and how groups within a society organize to make and implement decisions on matters that affect their lives while making Institutions more responsive and accountable. .

The rights based approach to development is yet another justification. The 2000/2001 World Development Report establishes that across different socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts, the common elements that underlie poor people's exclusion are voicelessness and powerlessness. From the human rights perspective, participation is an inherent value because it empowers the poor by providing them with the opportunities to fight for the protection of their own rights. Indeed the importance of participation as a right has been recognized by such international development partners as the UNDP and DFID.

Increased participation of CSOs in policy making is one of the means by which the rights of marginalized groups will be protected. By their proximity to ordinary citizens, CSOs can assist marginalized communities in making their voices heard and in enhancing their involvement in the formulation and implementation of public policies. As Nyamugasira (2004:1-2) aptly puts it, "CSOs represent the realities of the poor and marginalized men and women and amplify the voices of those often excluded. They assist to build local ownership of public policy and improve the accountability of the development process and its outcomes"

But do civil society actors have the legitimate right to demand a say in policy decisions? It is increasingly asserted that CSOs "do not represent anyone except themselves" and "have no mandate", to represent the voices of the voiceless in society. This is to say that from the democratic legitimacy perspective, only democratically elected governments have the right to determine policy; in such cases the role of CSOs in policy making becomes questionable, as civil society actors are not elected by any defined constituency^{vii}. Moreover, there is growing concern that CSOs are largely accountable not to the people that their activities or interventions allegedly benefit, but to those who finance them - the overseas development partners.

In spite of these concerns, the evidence suggests that these organizations understand local conditions better and have a comparative advantage over national governments in shaping policies that are more reflective of popular desires. As a result, CSOs have found new support among national governments, development partners and ordinary citizens^{viii}. Not surprisingly, a recent opinion poll in Germany found that considerably more respondents said they trusted the NGO Greenpeace in articulating their interest than those that expressed trust in the German Federal Government (Paul, 2000). Similarly, Darkwa et al (2006:86) compared the levels of public trust for 8 selected public institutions in Ghana and found that civil society comes third after the church and the armed forces, performing even better than the presidency and the central government. More significantly, the study found that “there is hardly any real grievance of the poor that has not found voice among existing civil society actors in the country”^{ix}.

It is significant to recognize however that civil society comprises a vast terrain of organizations that engage in all kinds of activities – good and bad. Gyimah-Boadi (2006:6) argues that the primary basis of mobilization for most civil society organizations, particularly those organized along vertical lines such as ethnic, racial or religious, is group self-help and pursuit of group interest. In effect, “[w]hile civil organizations can promote social inclusion and political participation, they also can favor social exclusion and increase political marginalization” (United Nation Capital Development Fund, 2003:48).

Critics of greater civil society engagement further contend that an ‘efficient government’, defined here as “a government that produces the goods” (Lee, 1994 quoted in Chan, 2002)^x necessarily requires some degree of autonomy, and that individual rights, including the right to participate in decision making can sometimes impede economic growth and development. This belief, which has been labelled the *Lee Thesis* (named after Lee Kuan Yew, former prime minister of Singapore, who formulated it succinctly); holds that strong participatory supporters often make excessive and unrealistic assumptions about the ability of civil society to participate proactively in decision-making processes^{xi}. Indeed, rapid economic development and poverty reduction, the argument goes, has rarely been associated with participatory organization (Brett,

2000:11). The success of the Newly Industrialized Economies of East Asia, for example, is widely attributed to what Peter Evans (1998) called 'embedded autonomy' - the ability to shelter officials from pressures from social groups with vested interests, which might undermine rational economic decisions (Leftwich 1994). While this argument may not necessarily deny the need to engage CSOs in the policy making processes, it does caution against the very common portrayal of civil society participation in the policy process as an indisputably "good thing" (Van Rooy, 1998:30; see also Béné and Neiland, 2006). In sum, civil society participation in policy making is at best a mixed blessing.

State-Civil Society Relations in Ghana

There is a long tradition of civil society in Ghana, dating back to the pre-colonial era. Before colonization, there were several CSOs, mainly community-based organizations (CBOs) that had been established to champion the cause of the indigenous people against any possible encroachment on their rights by the British colonialists (Gyimah-Boadi, 2000 cited in Darkwa et al 2006:20). Some of these were the Fante Confederacy (1868-1874) and the Aborigines Rights Protection Society to protest against the annexation of the native lands by the British (WANEP, 2004).

During the inter-war period in the 1930s, Ghana, then called the Gold Coast witnessed an upsurge in associational life and protest movements. Voluntary self-help organizations and ethnic solidarity movements sprang up as part of the process of rapid urbanization and intense social mobilization of that period. The practice of associational protests also continued as society and economy were drastically transformed with the introduction of cocoa in the Gold Coast.

The presence of associational life and protest became even more pronounced in the post-World War II period during which a number of proto-nationalist organizations emerged and pressed for greater participation and representation and later for full-blown independence (Mohan, 2001:12). Ex-service men who fought the Second World War formed the Ex-Service men Association to fight for appropriate resettlement from colonial authorities and racial discrimination in the colony (WANEP, 2004). Following independence in 1957 up to the early 80s, the relations

between the state and civil society became fluid with different degrees of incorporation, co-optation and control. Civil society organizations operated generally in a repressive political climate which left them little room to participate in the public policy arena. Even in the early stages of the PNDC revolution, NGOs and other civil society organizations such as the churches were viewed not only as potential threats to the regime, but as political competitors struggling to secure power (Hutchful, 2002, cited in Whitfield 2002:40). Consequently, the Government adopted various strategies to co-opt existing CSOs (Smith, 1998 cited in Whitfield, 2002: 41), including sponsoring supposedly non-governmental organizations, such as the 31st December Women's Movement. It is worth noting that until the late 80s, most NGOs focused on service delivery and were not actively engaged in policy dialogue and influence.

The government encouraged NGOs (believed to be donor pressure) to fill the service delivery gap created as a result of cuts in government expenditure. At a donors' conference in 1987, to approve the Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) bilateral donors requested that NGOs assist in delivery because "the Government of Ghana" lacked the necessary "institutional capacity" to implement such a large program (Gray, 1996:157). PAMSCAD provided the first opportunity for the formalization of linkages between the state, development partners and civil society organizations. However, the modus operandi of PAMSCAD was more of a top-down approach in which the multilateral banks and key state ministries devised the framework while CSOs were mainly asked for their views on particular issues (Darkwa et al 2006).

Perhaps the most concerted effort to control CSO activity in Ghana came in 1995 when the government unilaterally formulated an NGO Bill which required all NGOs - both foreign and local - to register with an Advisory Council. In the Bill, NGOs were described as non-political entities, perhaps in an attempt to narrow the political space for policy interventions by CSOs (Mohan, 2001). This Bill however encountered intense resistance on the grounds that it was a direct attack on the autonomy of NGOs. The Integrated Social Development Centre (ISODEC) for example perceived it as "a mechanism designed to get them [CSOs] to fit in with government's designs" (ISODEC quoted in Gray 1996:162). Even-

tually, the government withdrew the bill. Whatever the reason was for this action, “[t]he immediate impact of the withdrawal of the Bill was that both Governments and NGOs felt they had to hang together...” (Adu, 2005:2).

A Vibrant Civil Society in Ghana?

The number of CSOs in Ghana has grown substantially since the early 1990s. Available statistics indicate that the number of registered civil society organizations (NGOs and CBOs) in Ghana rose from about 80 in the 1980s to 652 in 1996. By 2000, there were about 1211 CSOs rendering different types of services to the poor and marginalized sections of the Ghanaian society (MSW, 2000 cited in Aseidu, 2003:6-7). The 1990s also witnessed the emergence of new types of CSOs such as think tanks, policy centres and research institutes^{xii}. As civil society has grown in number and size, its scope and influence have also grown. If in the 1980s CSOs were largely regarded as “the ‘hands’ carrying out charity work” (Gray, 1996:58), today they are expanding their work to include advocacy activities aimed at addressing public policy issues, and increasingly defining the nature of the development landscape in Ghana.

The National Economic Forum convened in September 1997 was a watershed in the growth of the Ghanaian civil society sector as it provided the first formal opportunity for the public, including opposition parties, independent research institutions and civil society to input into economic policy (Abugre, 2001:3). However, one critical milestone in opening the policy space to CSOs during the 1990s was the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI). Largely inspired by its desire to improve its public relations with the NGO community, the World Bank launched SAPRI in 1997 in 13 countries as a tripartite process between the Bank, governments and civil society to evaluate the impact of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). In 1998, Ghanaian CSOs formed the Civil Society Coordinating Council (CIVISOC) for the purpose of representing ‘civil society’ in the SAPRI exercise in collaboration with the World Bank and the Government of Ghana. While many scholars, among them Killick and Abugre (2001:28) have questioned the quality of civil society participation in SAPRI, the exercise nevertheless presented to CSOs a mechanism for organizing truly nation-wide civil society coalitions.

tions – cutting across labour unions, religious associations, NGOs, as well as organizations of teachers, farmers, women, the disabled and so on – institutionally represented by CIVISOC. More significantly, for the first time in the history of Ghana, SAPRI provided a broad structure for institutionalised policy dialogue among CSOs, government and the World Bank (Whitfield, 2002; Killick and Abugre, 2001).

The role of civil society in the policy making processes further increased in 2001 when the NPP administration convened a National Economic Dialogue (NED) which drew a much broader public participation. Here again however, the effectiveness of this as a mechanism to foster civil society participation in the policy process has been challenged by a variety of factors, including the size of the fora (at least 200 participants) which defied effective debate, and challenges of institutionalizing it as a permanent mechanism for promoting government-civil society interface.

Perhaps the single most important factor that explains the increasing role of civil society in policy making since the 1990s has been the improvement in the legal and institutional environment within which CSOs operate. The democratic transition in the 1990s drastically changed the environment, enabling civil society actors to assert themselves more proactively in the policy-making processes. The 1992 Constitution, does not only provide the safeguards that enable the operation of more politically-oriented organizations, such as freedom of expression, association, assembly and movement. Also, it specifically recognized the role of non-state actors by, *inter alia*, mandating their representation on the governing boards of several statutory bodies (Gyimah-Boadi and Oquaye, 2000:10-12). More significantly, the directive principle of state policy enjoins the state to enact appropriate laws to ensure: “the enjoyment of rights of effective participation in development processes including rights of people to form their own associations free from state interference and to use them to promote and protect their interests in relation to development processes, rights of access to agencies of the State necessary in order to realise effective participation in development processes...” [Article 37 (2a)]. Thus, since the promulgation of the constitution in 1993, no government has openly opposed the development of the civil society sector

in the country, but rather encourage their engagement in the public policy making processes^{xiii}.

One significant development within civil society in Ghana under the aegis of the 1992 Constitution has been the emergence of a relatively independent media. From near state monopoly over the broadcast media by 1995 (Gyimah-Boadi, 2008:3), Ghana now has more than 135 newspapers, including two state-owned dailies; six TV stations (five of which are privately owned); and approximately 110 FM radio stations, of which only 11 are state-owned (Freedom House 2008a: 82). Ghana also has a relatively free and vibrant media, with the BBC recently identifying Ghana as “one of the few countries on the [African] continent where the media seemingly operates without fear of systematic harassment by the authorities- second out of 48 African Countries (Freedom House 2008a, 2008b). With its high level of freedom, the Ghanaian media has been active in promoting democratic political culture in the country, particularly since the repeal of the criminal libel and seditious laws in July 2001.^{xiv}

The above discussion is however far from suggesting that the environment within which civil society operates in Ghana is absolutely conducive as a number of politico-economic constraints still persist. For example, the absence of a Freedom of Information Act still limits CSO access to information, and *ipso facto* undermines their capacity to engage in policy processes. Moreover, the country still lacks a comprehensive framework for promoting effective state-civil society interface at both the national and local levels (Akwetey, 2005).

Does the improvement in the legal and institutional framework correspond to the effective engagement of CSOs in the policy processes? In a recent *Civil Society Index* study in Ghana, Darkwa et al (2006:54) found that the environment within which CSOs operate in Ghana is largely conducive. In their survey, the vast majority of respondents (79.3%) did not find any significant legal barrier on CSO activity in the country. However, the same study concluded that Ghanaian CSOs have generally not been successful in influencing public policies^{xv}. To a large extent, the limited impact of Ghanaian CSOs on policy outcomes leads to two assumptions: first, that establishing an enabling legal and/or political environment for civil society actors is only but one of several factors necessary for enhancing CSO effectiveness in policy making. A variety of

other obstacles such as limited information on government policies, limited CSO capacity, absence of effective structures for engagement as well as inadequate commitment on the part of the political elite to genuinely engage civil society can easily frustrate the intent of even the most permissive and supportive legal and/or political environment. Second, the new development paradigm is yet to 'empower' Ghanaian CSOs to enable them claim 'ownership' over public policies in the country.

The crucial questions then are: why is the impact of CSOs on policy outcomes limited despite the relatively favourable legal and political environments? If the new relationship among the State, CSOs and Development Partners is not amenable to greater civil society input in the decision-making processes, has the new development paradigm empowered the state to enhance "government-ownership" over development policies in Ghana? Or has the new development paradigm empowered neither CSOs nor the state? Has it rather reinforced the dominant position of development partners in the policy process? These questions are addressed by examining the degree of civil society engagement with the GPRS II.

Civil Society and Ghana's Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS II: 2006-2009)

In the 1980s, the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) were largely hailed, at least by the World Bank and the IMF, as the panacea to the poverty and debt crises of developing countries. By the mid-1990s, however, these policy reforms had become associated with limited economic growth, increased income inequalities, increased poverty and in some cases, reduced access to health care and education. For many low-income countries, the *social costs* of adjustment were so high that Ricardo Hausman (cited in Abugre, 2000:4) compared it to military tanks that roll through a nation, creating collateral damage. In response to the global outcry over the devastating impact of the SAPs, the IMF and World Bank jointly introduced the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), initially as the basis for poor countries to receive debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). Subsequently, PRSPs was extended to other low-income countries to enable them access concessional

loans. Conscious of the fact that the SAPs were largely criticized for being donor-driven and a violation of national sovereignty over economic policy making, the PRSP speaks of a “broad-based participation of civil society and the private sector in all operational steps and also of the coordinated participation of donors (bilateral and multilateral) and non-governmental partners....” (Schmitt et al, 2001:12).

Since the PRSP was a requirement for debt cancellation for heavily indebted nations, the Government of Ghana responded by hastily preparing an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy in June 2000.^{xvi} The Interim PRSP was duly endorsed by the Boards of the IMF and World Bank and preparation of the full PRSP (the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy [GPRS I]) started in July 2000. The GPRS I (2003-2005) reflected a policy framework directed primarily towards the attainment of the anti-poverty objectives of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] (NDPC, 2005:2). Having attained relative macroeconomic stability at the end of GPRS I (NDPC, 2005), Ghana’s PRSP changed in focus in the preparation of the Growth and Poverty Reduction Paper (GPRS II) with an overarching goal of accelerating “...the growth of the economy so that Ghana can achieve middle-income status” (NDPC, 2005:35)^{xvii}. In pursuance of this goal, the GPRS II focused on three major thematic areas, namely, *accelerated private sector growth, vigorous human resource development, and good governance and civic responsibility*.

In line with the requirements of the PRSPs, and in order to forestall one of the criticisms leveled against the GPRS I, the GPRS II policy framework underscores the need for the program to be owned and driven by Ghanaians. To this end, the NDPC broadened its consultations to cover several stakeholders including government institutions, Ministries, Departments, District Assemblies, CSOs, Research Institutions and Think Tanks, NGOs, CBOs and the Private Sector. The planning processes began with the formation of multi-stakeholder working teams known as Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPGs) to discuss the five thematic areas under the GPRS I. After the various consultations at the national level, the NDPC held district consultations through focus group discussions, seminars, and district and community level workshops to explain the policies of the GPRS II and to take on more suggestions for improvement. According to the NDPC, with the intention of deepening ownership over

the process, it publicized, raised awareness and collected views from segments of the population through the print and electronic media. There was also the intention to produce the document in the major local languages, increase sales and distribution outlets of the document and ensure an effective coordination of the dissemination of GPRS II and its Annual Progress Reports (NDPC *ibid*: 12).

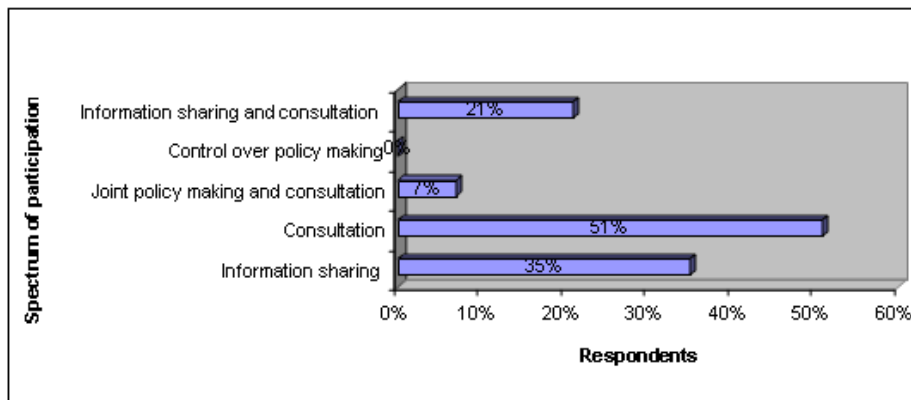
Level and Scope of CSO Participation in GPRS II

While the efforts outlined by the GPRS II policy framework appear impressive and well on the way to ensuring effective participation in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of the policy, CSOs and coalitions surveyed in this study expressed different opinions. Both civil society organizations involved in the CSPGs as well as those that were not invited to participate were displeased with the level of CSO involvement in the process for a number of reasons. Those who served on the CSPGs felt strongly that their role in the process was limited to validating draft documents already prepared by the technical groups of the NDPC. Within their own ranks, CSOs felt civil society presented a fragmented position on critical policy issues during the process. Nonetheless, over 90 percent of the organizations surveyed indicated that they were familiar with the contents of the GPRS II. This represents a significant improvement over the GPRS I because in an independent report on 'Civil Society and the PRSP', Sheehy (2000:15) concluded that as at April 2000, civil society seems largely unaware either of the Poverty Reduction Strategy process or of how government was proposing to substantively engage them in the process. Indeed in the case of the GPRS II, civil society was not only familiar with the policy document, but also a vast majority of the organizations surveyed (72%) indicated that they had participated in at least one aspect or stage of the GPRS II - the design and drafting stage, the legislative stage, implementation, or the review stage. Those who had participated did so through a number of platforms. Generally, CSOs that belong to umbrella organizations such as Private Enterprise Foundation (PEF), the Ghana Employers Association (GEA) or the Ghana Association of Private and Voluntary Organizations in Development (GAPVOD), participated indirectly through their representatives on these coalitions.

Others indicated that they had been consulted once or twice in a non-consistent manner by the NDPC to participate in thematic groups of the CSPGs.

The data shows that most of the GPRS II-related activities in which CSOs are engaged, seem to be part of the review process of the GPRS I thematic areas which were undertaken in preparation for the drafting of GPRS II. A few organizations such as the SEND Foundation, independently engaged in participatory monitoring and evaluation of the GPRS II. SEND further engaged in the process by submitting reports based on facts and data collected from the field (communities) as well as reports from interface activities between citizens and policy makers. Other organizations responded to invitations from the NDPC to contribute papers to various aspects of the GPRS II drafting process. More than 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they participated in the process by collaborating with other CSOs to form networks such as the Growth and Poverty Forum, (GPF) to harness efforts and increase impact. A few organizations, whose activities fall within the implementation stage of the GPRS II, indicated that they independently use the GPRS II as the basis for their work. Those respondents, who had not participated at all in the GPRS II process, about 28% said they were not invited by the NDPC to any of the GPRS II meetings. This could mean therefore that civil society organizations were not proactive enough but only waited for government to participate in the policy.

Figure II: CSO Participation in the GPRS II



For those who participated, slightly over half of them (51%) described their experiences as consultation; 35% described it as information sharing. While a mere 7% of the respondents placed their participation within the category of 'joint decision making', virtually no single CSO conceived of its engagement with the GPRS II as 'initiation and control' over policy making. Thus cumulatively, more respondents placed their participation within the 'consultation' and 'information sharing' categories; fewer respondents described the process as 'joint decision making'. This form of participation is inadequate for effective ownership of the policy process, implying that CSO participation in the policy process acquires substance when it occurs within the 'joint decision making' and 'initiation and control' end of the spectrum. It was because of this inadequate form of participation that almost all the CSOs surveyed expressed misgivings about the NDPC consultative processes.

For some respondents, the inadequate form of participation prompted strategic networking among CSOs. Prominent among these was the GPF comprising about 30 civil society organizations including the Ghana Trade Union Congress, GAPVOD, Faith Based and Private Sector Organizations. The Forum was formed in April 2005 in the wake of the formation of the CSPG. As explained by members of the Forum, by the time of its formation, initial reports for each thematic area of the GPRS II had been prepared by the CSPG working groups and consultants, and had been reviewed by the Steering Committee made up of NDPC members^{xviii}. The objectives of the GPF therefore included the following:

- i. contribute to the policy frameworks and plans in the formulation and implementation of the GPRS II,
- ii. deepen awareness and understanding of growth and poverty reduction issues among all stake holders in Ghana and
- iii. serve as liaison between state and civil society in the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of growth and poverty reduction policies and programs.

As part of its efforts to deepen civic participation in policy dialogue and create purposeful and equal partnership between the State, Civil Society

and Development Partners, the Forum organized regular meetings among its members as well as between the Forum and policy makers.

It was also significant that a few organizations that operate in areas such as education, an area expected to be guided by the objectives of the GPRS II, were unfamiliar with this document. Yet, most of these organizations are involved in critical areas of development such as service delivery that may contribute to the overall achievement of the GPRS II. It is even more alarming where some of such organizations are umbrella bodies for a number of organizations. Once such umbrella organizations are excluded or fail to participate in the process, many more organizations and citizens' groups are inevitably excluded from the policy process, and by implication from the entire development process. The question therefore arises as to what could account for the exclusion of some organizations and coalitions working in critical areas of the GPRSII?

The inability of CSOs to engage the GPRS II process on their own was attributed to capacity constraints. Our survey indicates that International NGOs (INGOs) played more significant roles in the process than their local counterparts. Some international NGOs such as Action Aid and CARE International indicated that their expertise in critical areas such as management of governance projects and programs facilitated their participation in meetings on the GPRS II. It was also clear that the private sector, especially through its umbrella organizations such as PEF and the Employers Association participated more consistently in the GPRS II compared to others. This could be attributed to the better organized nature of the private sector compared to the NGO sector as well as the government's commitment to the private sector as the engine of growth.

Effect of CSO participation in the GPRS II

It is now important to assess the impact of CSO participation in the GPRS II. Asked whether their input into the formulation and implementation of the GPRS II was found useful, about 40 percent of those who had participated in the process were not certain whether their input was useful. Some however thought that it was possible those views had been taken on board without their notice given that there were aspects of the GPRS II

document that matched some of their positions and aspirations they had presented to the NDPC. The other 60 percent who responded 'yes' to this question, were more certain about the extent to which their views had been included in the GPRS II. The Ghana Employers Association (GEA) for instance indicated that some of the concerns raised by the Association in a memorandum to the NDPC on issues concerning business in Ghana were addressed in the document. Others, particularly INGOs, felt that their participation helped to generate knowledge that enhanced the entire GPRS II process and helped to support CSO initiatives such as the GPF.

The GPF itself, as a coalition, has made some strides in its drive to effectively participate in the GPRS II process. The quest for civil society participation in the GPRS II led to a meeting between the Forum and high level officials of the NDPC which culminated in a decision by the officials to invite the Forum to the August 2005 review and validation prior to the presentation of the draft GPRS II document to Cabinet in the same month. In preparation for this review meeting, the GPF constituted technical committees to examine each of the thematic areas of the GPRS II, followed by workshops. The result was the drafting of a position paper which was presented to the NDPC as the Forum's contribution in the review process. A major recommendation made by the Forum in its paper was that the NDPC should review and broaden its consultation process to include parliament, CBO's as well as the private sector. The position paper particularly emphasized that Parliament, representing the aspirations of Ghanaians, did not only have limited time to review and validate the GPRS presented to it; it also lacked the necessary structures and expertise to appreciate the technicalities involved in the thematic areas (GPF Activity Report, 2006). Subsequently, the GPF held a knowledge building workshop for the Parliamentary Committee on Poverty Reduction in November 2005 to discuss the GPRS II. The Committee has since tapped into the expertise of the GPF to review policy documents related to the GPRS II. Through these processes, the GPF managed to persuade the NDPC that an effective participatory process will ensure ownership of the GPRS II, and more especially, enhance the attainment of the goal of poverty reduction in the country.

Overall, CSOs surveyed described their involvement in the GPRS II process as encouraging. One organization summed it up like this: "Our

experience has been positive". Perhaps more important was the realization that as the process of policy formulation unfolded, civil society input and potential to contribute to the GPRS II has been recognized by both the state and development partners. As some respondents noted, CSOs become increasingly appreciated as valuable partners in the policy process once they got organized through networks such as the GPF, and their front appeared more harmonized.

Over 70 percent of respondents noted that CSO participation in the GPRS II process was an improvement over its participation in past development processes. For some the GPF initiative in particular deepened CSO involvement in the formulation of the GPRS II compared to that of GPRS I. Although some CSOs still remain uncertain about the extent to which CSO recommendations have been included in the GPRS II document, they noted that more effort was made by the ranks and file of civil society to influence the policy document. This category of respondents further observed that CSOs were less organized during the GPRS I compared to GPRS II. Commenting on the efforts by the NDPC, the CSOs asserted that the NDPC's consultation with CSOs in the GPRS II process was broader while it made greater efforts to tap into the experience of CSO actors. All respondents were of the opinion that CSOs played a more visible and significant role in the GPRS II process. Almost all the respondents who thought the experience had been positive were also quick to add that there is still more room for improvement.

Local ownership of GPRS II and development policies in Ghana

Figure III shows that all the respondents described the GPRS II as enjoying either low or moderate ownership; none of them claimed that there was full ownership of the process. This is not surprising given that CSOs' level of participation was limited largely to information sharing and consultation rather than at the 'joint decision making' and 'initiation and control' end of the participation ladder.

On the efficiency of the GPRS II as a poverty reduction instrument, given the level of CSO participation, less than 25 percent of respondents were confident that it was; about half of the respondents said they were

not sure, explaining further that poverty reduction would depend on additional factors besides CSO participation.

Figure III: Local Ownership of the GPRS II



In deed half of the respondents were skeptical about CSO participation as a factor that would enhance poverty reduction efforts. Within this group, some expressed the view that while CSO participation was critical if the GPRS II would to lead to poverty reduction; it was not the only factor. They emphasized that a more consistent role in policy dialogue underpinned by equal partnership would rather promote greater ownership and effective implementation of poverty reduction programmes.

The Changing Role of Civil Society in Policy Dialogue

In line with the apparent changes in the role of CSOs in policy dialogue, the study sought to find out the implications of the shift to equal partnership among the major stakeholders in Ghana’s policy processes namely the State, CSOs and Development Partners.

More than 90 percent of the respondents claimed that that there have been improvements in CSO participation over the past few years. Further, about 71 percent of the respondents observed that CSOs have become

significant partners in public policy making processes. Among the reasons given for this assertion was the fact that CSOs were engaged in mitigating the negative impacts of public policies. They were to a large extent independent and most likely to give objective views on issues. Additionally their policy recommendations were based on practical experience from their respective areas of operationalisation and therefore expressed the interest of the poor. It could be informed from this that CSOs served as Respondents were satisfied that the value of CSO inputs have been duly recognized by development partners and the State, and was demonstrated in the growing interactions between CSOs, the state and development partners. A major achievement that was mentioned in this regard was CSO participation in the Consultative Group (CG) meeting, which is one of the highest collaborative platforms on Ghana's development agenda and directed by the GPRS II policy framework. In 1999 and 2002, civil society actors were admitted only as observers only to the Consultative Group (CG) meeting, because the CG meeting was considered the preserve of Government of Ghana and its development partners. But since 2006, civil society has participated fully in the dialogue largely as a result of the advocacy work of the Growth and Poverty Forum (Akwetey 2007).

There was however about a third of the respondents who did not think CSOs were significant partners in public policy dialogue in spite of the increasing roles they seem to be playing in policy processes such as the GPRS II. This group of respondents was of the view that CSO input into government policy was sought only in the final stages of the process, and that this practice reduced the weight of their engagement. Others noted that while civil society play a role in the public policy making process in Ghana, such involvement often came at the behest of a donor and was often "cosmetic", an "afterthought". This situation was attributed to the lack of laid down, systematic and institutional mechanisms for engaging civil society in the policy process. Such respondents maintained that meaningful collaboration or partnership cannot be realized if these lapses were allowed to persist. It was in light of these shortcomings that the GPF called for the opening up of the entire (CG) process to civil society during its appearance at the 2007 CG meeting.

Partnership between the state, civil society and development partners:
The GPF experience

A major effort of the Forum in promoting partnership among the three major stakeholders namely the State, Civil Society and Development Partners

The GPF has participated in the Consultative Group (CG) meetings since 2005. The CG served as a strategic platform for civil society to present a harmonized position to the other two major stakeholders namely Government and its funders. Participation in the CG gave an opportunity to civil society to validate government priorities and verify whether stated priorities are anchored in the needs of the Ghanaians.

In May 2006, the group met many of Ghana's development partners to harmonies partnership in support of the GPRS II. These efforts have not only helped in bridging the gaps in policy dialogue but also fostered stronger partnership and ownership of development process.

The CG in 2007 invited 41 CSO to participate in the meeting. This was a significant improvement from the previous year where the GPF was the only civil society representation.

Mechanisms and Framework for Effective Policy Dialogue and Partnership

Respondents (over 90 percent), who felt there has been improvement in CSO participation in policy dialogue cited various reasons that could account for this trend. Most respondents named the return to multiparty constitutional democracy and as a major reason for the improvement. Respondents considered government's inclination to engage CSOs as the least of the reasons for improved participation in the policy process.

Significantly, all the respondents said 'yes' to the question on whether the state provides enough structures and mechanisms for engagement in policy dialogue. This was based on the fact that various MDAs as well as District Assemblies have developed programs in partnership with CSOs. The Ministry of Manpower Youth and Employment, for example, engages CSOs regularly on social protection issues, labour issues, NGO

regulation, HIV/AIDs, and so on. The Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs was also cited as one that engages gender CSOs while the Ministry of Health was mentioned regarding the promotion of mental health legislation and other activities of Works of the Ministry. In 2005, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning also introduced an open-door policy aimed at encouraging civil society to make inputs into the preparation of the national budget. In line with this 'new budgetary approach', the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MOFEP) now invites civil society actors through open advertisements in the print and electronic media to submit memoranda on issues that could inform the prioritization of resource allocation in the national budget. Beyond the open advertisements, MOFEP also organizes thematic and sector-based forums to engage civil society and the private sector to solicit their inputs in the preparation of the national budget (Akwetey 2007:7). Other avenues for civic participation include invitations to present memoranda on critical policy issues such as, the decentralization policy and national education sector annual review; stakeholder consultations and workshops as well as establishment of specialist advisory bodies with CSO representation.

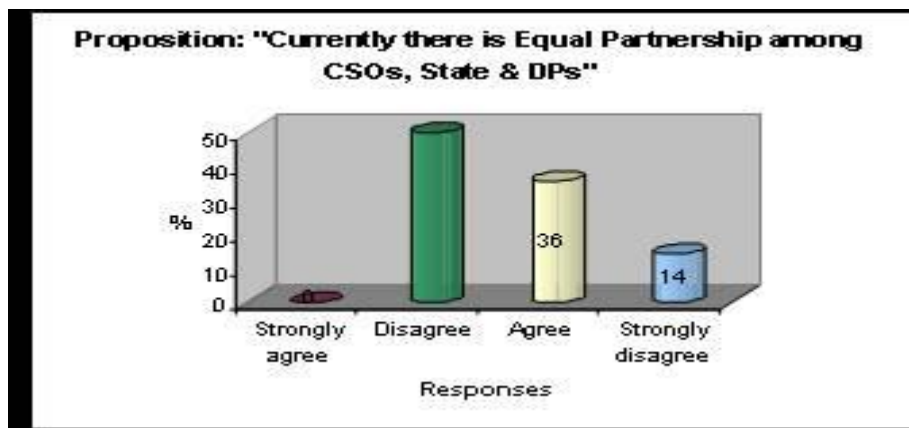
In spite of these areas of engagement, almost every respondent indicated that the various platforms for participation in the policy process fail to encourage equal partnership among the actor, viz., s that is government, donors and CSOs. As one respondent observed "There is asymmetry of power in the state-CSO relationship". This situation was attributed to the fact that the interaction between the two is not institutionalized and therefore lacks formal rules to regulate the partnership. The absence of guiding principles means that government does not feel obliged to share information or include CSOs in policy dialogues. A working framework that will recognize CSOs as equal partners, and include them in all processes from the conception of ideas to implementation and monitoring is therefore required for an effective civil society engagement in policy processes.

The Issue of 'Equal Partnership'

Fowler (2000) has argued that "[a]uthentic partnership implies a joint commitment to long-term interaction, shared responsibility for achieve-

ment, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and a balance of power [among the State, CSOs and Development Partners]". It was therefore necessary to investigate whether there was an equal partnership among the State, DPs and CSOs, in the formulation of the GPRS II in particular, and in public policy making in general.

Figure IV: Partnership among CSOs, development partners and the state



Our survey (see figure IV) indicates that majority of respondents (64%) disagree that there is equality among the three actors. Most respondents argued that even though both civil society and development partners make inputs into the policy making processes, power is skewed towards the state, thereby ensuring 'government ownership' rather than 'national /country ownership'. Respondents were of the view that the Government of Ghana is in the driver's seat in determining national policies and that there can hardly be equal partnership unless the state demonstrates full commitment to the involvement of civil society in the policy process. Such commitment, among others, would require the state to clearly define the role of civil society in policy making and further create the necessary space and structures for their engagement.

For those who disagreed with the above proposition, there could not be an equal partnership among these actors so long as Development Partners continue to operate as 'donors' while the State acts as the recipi-

ent. . The current role of Development Partners as donors and in some cases as the ones who determine the development agenda places them in an influential position in the policy process, and does not augur well for efforts at equal partnership. Not surprisingly, almost half of the respondents in the survey alleged that the World Bank and IMF influenced the GPRS II more than CSOs. Clearly such perception could have a negative impact on the partnership as well as ownership of the nation's development agenda.

Challenges to Effective CSO Participation in Policy Dialogue

Limited CSO Capacity to Engage in Policy Dialogue

Effective participation calls for adequate capacity. The capacity constraints encountered by CSOs, according to respondents, encompass technical know-how and skills as well as paucity of resources challenges, particularly financial and human resources. With the exception of a few, most CSOs lack the capacity for policy analysis and research abilities needed to facilitate proactive engagement with the State and her development partners. They noted they are so stretched that they are often unable to make sufficient preparation to understand the issues at stake in the policy process. About 86 percent of respondents indicated that CSOs do not have enough funds to effectively monitor and evaluate the GPRS II. This weakness further makes it difficult for CSOs to build capacity of grass roots organizations for effective policy dialogue below the national level. CSOs participation in the policy process at both the national and sub-national levels is therefore often limited.

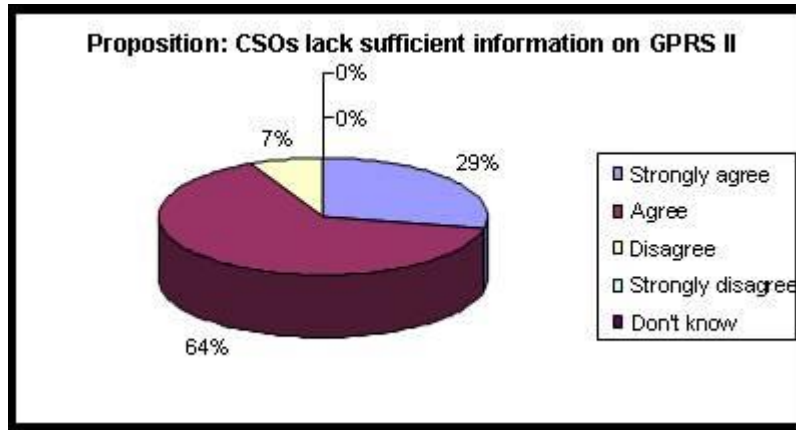
A Fragmented Civil Society

Ghanaian CSOs are further weakened by their fragmented ranks: this makes it difficult for them to speak with a common voice. CSOs lack a coordinated front to engage with Government effectively and government sometimes does not seem to know which CSO body to deal with in the policy arena. CSOs seem more pre-occupied with their individual

goals than with collective national goal. The drive to achieve private goals also makes CSOs pursue the same sources of funding in such an uncoordinated manner that often lead to the wastage of scanty resources and outright duplication. Despite the fact that all CSOs are striving towards the same ultimate goal of effecting purposeful social change to enhance the wellbeing of people. In pursuit of their private goals, CSOs have spread themselves thin and as a result many are unable to address issues thoroughly enough for optimum results.

State Commitment to Partnership

Expatriating on the *role of the State in enhancing policy dialogue*, about half of the respondents indicated that the State is not genuinely committed to engaging CSOs in the policy process. Although there are some efforts at working in partnership, respondents said government still pays lip service to effective collaboration and fails to appreciate the need for a more comprehensive partnership. For example, although a considerable number of respondents described their engagement with Government on policy issues as information sharing and consultation, most CSOs complained that there is a lack of regular flow of information on policy issues (see figure V). When information is eventually shared with them, it is late, inadequate or obsolete. The limited commitment of the State to effective partnership is further understood by the absence of a framework to govern state-civil society relations. The several futile attempts at creating such a framework from NGO policy to the more recent Trust Bill does not demonstrate credible government commitment.

Figure V: CSO Capacity for Policy Engagement

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

This paper has argued that Ghana has witnessed a major paradigm shift regarding the relationship among the state, development partners and civil society organizations over the past two decades. Until the 1990s, government viewed civil society organizations as obstacles in the process of governance, and therefore applied harsh legal measures to curb their participation in the decision making processes. However, with the emergence of the 'good governance agenda', the return to multiparty constitutional democracy in the early 1990s and the introduction of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the country has witnessed significant inclusion of civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of policy decisions. This is epitomized in the fact that the GPRS II was far more opened than its predecessor, reaching a broader and more diverse category of civil society than ever before. Despite these improvements, however, the preeminence of government and the development partners in policy discussions is yet to be substantially altered by the new development paradigm. This confirms Lister's (2000:235) assertion that one of the effects of the discourse of partnership is "the adaptation of the power framework and the creation of a slightly changed reality, which

serves to hide the fundamental power asymmetries within development activities and essentially maintain the status quo". Indeed as the case study aptly demonstrates, the Ghanaian state and her development partners remain the most powerful actors in the policy making processes. Civil society engagement still remains shallow, limited to information sharing and consultation rather than joint decision making or policy direction, initiation and control.

Arguably, the limited impact of civil society participation is embedded largely in the fact that Ghanaian CSOs often engage with the policy making processes, in this case the GPRS II, without being adequately equipped with requisite information, resources and skills for effective participation.. In other words, participation often occurs without the power to influence policy. Therefore, for an effective civil society participation to occur in Ghana, CSOs must first of all be equipped with the requisite tools for genuine participation through various capacity building efforts even before getting to the 'participation table'. Without the necessary capacity, civil society participation is likely to be used only as a guise to building legitimacy for government policies rather than inviting new thinking and options in the policy making processes.

Notes

ⁱ Defined as such, examples of traditional CSOs in Ghana will include the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Ghana Bar Association (GBA), the Ghana Chamber of Commerce (GCC), the Association of Recognized professional Bodies (ARPBs), the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGs), and the University Teachers Association of Ghana (UTAG).

ⁱⁱ We borrow the phrases ‘makers and shapers’ and ‘users and choosers’ from Cornwall and Garventa (2000) in their paper entitled “From users and choosers to makers and shapers: Repositioning Participation in Social Policy” *IDS Bulletin* 31 (4):50-62

ⁱⁱⁱ It is indeed from this literal perspective that Page (1999) defined empowerment as “a multi-dimensional social process that helps people to gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important”.

^{iv} With the exception of the World Bank’s view, the perspectives of Rifkin, Hart and Brdenaye on participation are adopted from Kinyashi (2006:4).

^v This definition is similar to that of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in March 2005 which defines ownership to mean that partner countries exercise effective leadership and control over development policies and co-ordinate development activities

^{vi} Writing on Ghana’s Structural Adjustment Programs, Obeng (1996) also argued that one of the benefits of the “involvement of all parties in the decision making process” was that “as a people, we achieved a sense of ownership of the economic program, a greater acceptance of the consequences of the program, and a stronger commitment to implement”.

^{vii} This remark was made by Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General and CEO of CIVICUS in a lunchtime address on the topic “Civil Society Accountability: “Who Guards the Guardians?” April 3, 2003, UN Headquarters, New York

^{viii} Expressing this optimistic and glowing vision of civil society actors in general, and NGOs in particular in meeting the welfare needs of the poor and empowering local communities, the World Bank (1989:182) notes in its report *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Development* that:

Most NGOs are committed to addressing the problems of developing societies and the needs of their poorest members in a manner not matched by government officials. NGOs have learned how to work with grassroots organizations and how to put together projects

with minimal financial and external technical assistance, thus helping poor people to help themselves....NGOs have demonstrated a flexibility and dynamism within the donor community that is comparable with that of communities with which they work....They have found new support in donor countries, partly because they are seen as helping poor people directly – without the costly bureaucratic intermediation of donors and recipient governments and without the danger of assistance ending up in the pocket of the rich, the military, or the corrupt.

^{ix} For a detailed discussion on how a number of Ghanaian CSOs have significantly influenced public policies in the country, see *Ghana: Democracy and Political Participation*, A Review by AfriMAP and Open Society Initiative for West Africa, 2007, pp.52-54

^x This definition is in sharp contrast with the views of the Bretton Woods Institutions whose perspectives of good governance emphasize freedom, accountability, public service management, a legal frame work for development, participation and transparency in the development process.

^{xi} For further discussion on the Lee Thesis and its limitations, see Sen (1999, chapter 1).

^{xii} Examples of these research and policy think tanks include ABANTU for Development (1997/1999), Institute for Democratic Governance (1998/2000), Third World Network – Africa (1994), Centre for Policy Analysis – CEPA (1993)

^{xiii} For example, the draft I-PRSP in Ghana emphasizes capacity building for civil society, access to public information, capacity building and transparent legal framework for responsible media practice and enhancing the ability of rural folks to influence policy making beyond elections.

^{xiv} In the recent elections in December 2008, as in previous elections, for example, private FM stations provided live reports of events at various polling stations across the country; informed electoral officials on where to send additional voting materials in order to alleviate shortages; gave continuous live updates and reports on election results from constituency to constituency; and notified the security agencies of potential and actual trouble spots to promote peaceful and credible elections.

^{xv} Significantly this problem is not only limited to Ghana, but rather cuts across many countries in the developing world. For example, a recent study carried governance assessment in 16 developing countries accounting for 51% of the world's population. In general the study found that CSO context (freedom of expression and freedom of association) were rated as quite open. However governance stakeholders noted that CSO input into policy making was generally low. Similarly, a survey by CIVICUS (2004) found that civil society impact on policy issues remains low in many countries

^{xvi} Civil society participation in the I-PRSP was not a requirement, however.

^{xvii} For details, see Volume 1 of the Policy Framework on the “Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy

(GPRS II: 2006-2009), NDPC, November 2005

^{xvii} According to the GPRS II document, by April 2005, a zero draft of the document had been drafted by the CSPG core groups and consultants and validated by Policy Management Teams of MDAs, Development partners and specialists and further submitted to Parliament, after which regional and national level consultations began.

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