Uganda National NGO Forum

Providing a sharing and reflection platform for NGOs to influence governance and development processes in Uganda, and enhance their operating environment

ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY (2008/09 – 2011/12)

A PLATFORM FOR NGOS TO INFLUENCE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN UGANDA

Stakeholder Praise for the New NGO Forum Strategy

"The NGO Forum must be commended for walking the talk of engaging in a participatory and consultative process in developing this Strategic Plan. The process accorded it an opportunity to confront some of the uncomfortable issues which bedevil the NGO sector ".
Elizabeth Kharono, Centre for Land, Economy and Rights of Women (CLEAR - Uganda), Mbale

"…undertaking such an exhaustive, participatory and strategic renewal process (…) has resulted in a far reaching and comprehensive framework that will help to revitalise the NGO sector in Uganda in the years to come…"
Kevin Fitzcharles, Country Director, Care-Uganda

"…this strategic plan (…) is a kind of manifesto. NGO Forum, run with passion, run with determination, run until you get to the prize of a healthy NGO sector and a wealthy Uganda"
Warren Nyamugasira - MD, Africa Monitor, South Africa

"This strategy represents a soul-searching exercise which (…) will help the National NGO Forum service its constituencies better."
Richard Ssewakiryanga - Team Leader, UPPAP, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

"…the open feedback and discussion exhibited in the process will help NGO Forum to be more visionary, focused and relevant in a changing external environment…".
Charles Businge, Country Director, Action Aid - Uganda

"… one of the best handled NGO sector strategic consultative processes (…)and this must now be matched at implementation"
Alex Ruhunda - Director, Kabarole Research and Resource Centre, President, IACD

"…This National NGO Forum strategy provides answers for greater collective, coordinated and policy oriented action by the NGO sector in Uganda"
Michael Otim - Coordinator, Gulu District NGO Forum

"This new strategy represents the true aspiration that CSOs and NGOs have in Uganda (…) collective and timely action, information sharing and above all developing a strong civil society base…"
Stella Ayo-Odongo, Director, Uganda Child Rights NGO Network.

"The New NGO Forum's Strategic Plan marks a milestone in the quest to institutionalize the contested space of NGOs and civil society operations in Uganda…the challenge for the Forum's leadership is to certify the enthusiasm and optimism that the strategy embodies
Arthur Bainomugisha, Director of Research and Head Peace and Conflict Program – ACODE.

Foreword

This new National NGO Forum organisational strategy is the culmination of a consultation and reflection process spanning 8 months, from October 2007 to July 2008. It reflects the aspirations of the NGO fraternity to see the National NGO Forum provide a space and articulate a national voice for NGOs working on a collective agenda to improve Uganda's governance and development prospects.

On behalf of the entire NGO Forum family, we would like to thank all who have contributed to this strategy: NGO Forum staff who made insightful inputs and provided much needed administrative support for the process, the National Executive Committee of the NGO Forum who debated and concluded a number of issues, NGOs (both members and non members of the NGO Forum), NGO networks, individuals from the civil society fraternity and academia, representatives of political parties, the labour movement, government, professional associations, private sector organisations and development partners.

We particularly thank those who made up a specially constituted Reference Group that provided us with strategic oversight and intellectual guidance - Alex Ruhunda of the Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), Elizabeth Kharono of the Center for Land, Economy and Rights of Women (CLEAR-Uganda) in Mbale, Michael Otim of the Gulu District NGO Forum, Richard Ssewakiryanga from the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Stella Ayo of the Uganda Child Rights NGO Network, Prof J.B Kwesiga of DENIVA, Charles Businge, formerly with DFID, now with Action Aid Uganda, Arthur Bainomugisha from the Advocates Coalition on Development and the Environment and Kevin Fitzcharles of Care-International. In the same special way, we thank the Resource Team comprising John De Coninck and Arthur Larok for managing the various consultations and drafting the strategy.

Finally we thank DFID, DANIDA, the EU-Civil society Capacity Building Programme, Oxfam GB and Concern Worldwide who, as key partners during our transition phase, provided much needed funding for the strategy development process, as well as for vital activities and programmes within NGO Forum's Interim Institutional Responsiveness Plan.

This strategy document represents the dawn in a new era for the organisation and we will count on your continued cooperation and support as the 'New' National NGO Forum seeks to more effectively harness the resources and potential of NGOs in our country.

Warren Nyamugasira
Outgoing Executive Director

Specioza Kiwanuka
Chairperson

Adjunct by the Incoming Executive Director

Late last year, the National NGO Forum took a bold step of developing this strategic plan in a deeply consultative manner. What has emerged from this process is a document that is firmly grounded in the contemporary realities of NGOs in Uganda. For us who are charged with the task for rolling it out, this is an exciting as well as challenging opportunity.

I would like to extend my thanks to the outgoing Executive Director and the Reference Group for steering this process and handing over to me a product ready for use. With the team at the Forum, let me pledge that we shall do our best to bring this strategy to life in a manner that will fulfill the aspirations of our members and ultimately contribute to citizen satisfaction in Uganda as a whole.

Richard Ssewakiryanga
Incoming Executive Director

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Acronyms

ACODE	Advocates Coalition on Development and the Environment
AU	Africa Union
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CIVICUS	World Alliance for Citizen Participation
CLEAR - U	Center for Land, Economy and Rights of Women - Uganda
CSBAG	Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EAC	East African Community
DANIDA	Danish Development Agency
DENIVA	Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Associations
DFID	Department for International Development
EU-CSCBP	European Union - Civil Society Capacity Building Programme
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
FY	Financial Year
GCAP	Global Campaign against Poverty
GA	General Assembly
IACD	International Association of Community Development
ICSW	International Council for Social Welfare
KRC	Kabarole Research and Resource Centre
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NC	National Council
NDNSP	National District Networks Support Programme
NDP	National Development Plan
NEC	National Executive Committee
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NPA	National Planning Authority
OAM	Objective and Activity Matrix
AOP	Annual Operational Plan
PA	Programme Area
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PMA	Plan for Modernization of Agriculture
PMAU	Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit

QuAM	NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism
SAPRI	Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative
SMT	Senior Management Team
UCRNN	Uganda Child Rights NGO Network
UGMP	Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Programme

Summary

The contribution of NGOs to good governance and development is now widely acknowledged by citizens, governments and the international development community, even though this varies from country to country. In a world characterised by unequal development, social, economic and political injustices, conflict and marginalisation, many NGOs have emerged to challenge the status quo and provide hope to millions of people. NGOs not only deliver essential services to disadvantaged citizens, they also offer space through which political, social and economic pressure is built to challenge injustices.

In Uganda, the NGO contribution to the health and relative stability of the country cannot be underestimated: programmes and innovations in service delivery, advocacy and citizen empowerment, have been valuable. The NGO sector, and civil society generally, is however still perceived by government, political actors, development partners and even some sections of civil society itself to be either 'weak', fragmented, or too apolitical, and lacking in conviction and relevance to tackle fast changing social, economic and political dynamics. While this perception is partly informed by the lack of a systematic documentation of the value of the NGO sector in our country's development, it also points to the need for NGOs to do a lot more.

This strategy reflects both positive and critical views on the NGO sector. It recognises the need to consolidate its positive attributes, while seeking to overcome challenges that prevent it from realising its full potential. From the consultations that have informed our strategy making process, a clear demand emerges for more activism by NGOs, as well as for an improvement in the way the sector is organised, especially at the national level, to provide more effective leadership on strategic issues that concern all NGOs and which are of consequence to Uganda's democratic development.

This strategy therefore reflects a commitment to change, and presents the National NGO Forum with a fresh mandate to nurture an independent space for NGOs to share, reflect and act to strengthen the role of Ugandans in influencing key governance and development outcomes. The National NGO Forum thus defines itself as a national platform for NGOs, creating an avenue through which a 'national voice' of NGOs on collective agendas is developed, articulated and represented, through the following dimensions of its identity:

- A voice on cross-cutting issues concerning the 'NGO sector' and defender of NGO positions over collectively agreed matters.
- A platform for strategic and long-term reflection in a space where NGOs come together and interface with the wider civil society and other actors to debate and generate knowledge and options for development.

- An organisational vehicle to build solidarity amongst NGOs on issues where collective action and voice are essential for greater impact.
- An entity working at national level, but strengthening synergy with other networks at national, regional and district levels, as well as with other NGO coordination mechanisms for a better organised and networked NGO community.
- An avenue through which NGOs can engage with institutions, global movements and campaigns beyond Uganda, at regional, African and international levels.

Having reviewed the global, regional and national contexts, and the opportunities and challenges that relate to the NGO sector, this strategy re-affirms a belief in the growing importance in the social, economic and political value of NGOs. It articulates our desire to reclaim, consolidate and expand NGO space in Uganda to deepen democracy and contribute to the search for equitable and sustainable development. The strategy envisions an NGO sector whose contribution to the health, wealth and stability of the country is appreciated and acknowledged.

The National NGO Forum's strategy is anchored on four interlinked programme and institutional support areas:

1. **NGO Sector observatory and profiling:** building a comprehensive picture of the civil society landscape, with a focus on the NGO sector, so as to continuously articulate and influence policies and practices that contribute to its growth and nourishment. In this area, the National NGO Forum will:

- Undertake or commission regular research on key themes of relevance to the growth of a vibrant and engaged NGO sector in Uganda.
- Track the implementation of national policy and legal instruments that concern NGOs and ensure that NGOs play a lead role in shaping their own operating environment.
- Become a key reference point for information on NGOs: what they do, where they operate, their best practices, innovations and what impact they are creating. Where such information is not available at the National NGO Forum, it shall provide further direction.
- Play a public relations function for NGOs vis-à-vis the public, government, the private sector and other actors.

2. **Policy engagement and enhancement:** strengthening NGO engagement in policy processes where collective action is desirable and adds value. The NGO Forum will create or consolidate regular fora and platforms to galvanise the collective reflection, renewal, strategising and action of NGOs on cross-cutting socio-economic and political issues of interest to them and relevant to Uganda's governance and development. To this end, the National NGO Forum will:

- Strengthen NGO preparations for collective engagement in policy processes through a regular NGO development policy forum where they can develop ideas and positions for articulation in 'invited spaces'.
- Create or strengthen NGO collective platforms, such as the Civil Society Minimum Agenda, the Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform, the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group and others for greater collective impact.
- Facilitate regular sub-national regional platforms as a space for NGOs, political leaders and other actors to meet and focus on issues of development concern and interest at regional level, beyond partisan politics.
- Establish a 'rapid response strategy' to ensure a swift response by NGOs to emerging issues of importance to them and the nation as a whole.
- Facilitate regional and international networking on issues of importance to civil society, such as global campaigns against poverty, that transcend the scope of a single NGO.
- Organise and facilitate regular NGO leadership retreats, reflection sessions and fellowships for collective strategising, scenario building and long-term perspective planning.

3. **Members and other constituency servicing:** providing general and tailor-made information and support services to a range of service subscribers, relevant to their work and programming. In this regard, NGO Forum will:

- Promote the use of the NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QuAM) and participate in reviewing and strengthening the lessons and practices that ensue from it in order to contribute to the realization of a publicly accountable NGO sector.
- Provide a mechanism for enhanced solidarity among NGOs when their legitimate activities are threatened by internal and external factors in their operating environment.
- Provide innovative capacity enhancement to sharpen the skills of National NGO Forum members and other NGOs to effectively play their role.
- Act as an information and communication hub linked to various resources within the sector, among communities, with government and development partners to keep NGOs regularly updated on events and processes of relevance to their work and enrichment.

4. **Institutional Strengthening:** strengthening the National NGO Forum's internal capacity:

- Reform the NGO Forum governance structures to balance representation with expertise and ensure strategically focused and effective oversight.

- Improve internal management, policies and systems to ensure that the Forum becomes more transparent, democratic, responsive and accountable to its members and wider clientele.

- Strengthen its human resource in numbers and competence.

The successful implementation of the National NGO Forum's renewed agenda is expected to lead to the following strategic outcomes:

- An informed NGO sector that possesses the necessary information and capacity to effectively engage in and contribute to development processes.

- A networked NGO sector with strong internal and external linkages with other actors.

- An engaged and accountable NGO sector that engenders respect from government and citizens for the difference it makes to society.

Table 1: Financial forecast (all in Uganda shillings) to implement the Strategy

Programme/Institutional Support Area	Estimate for 3 Years	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
NGO Sector Observatory and Profiling	938,479,162	291,885,763	318,122,782	328,500,618
Policy Engagement and Enhancement	1,638,678,241	512,888,338	559,048,289	566,741,614
Members and other Constituency Servicing	1,012,547,918	316,916,406	345,438,883	350,192,629
Institutional Strengthening: Governance & Operations	1,710,167,180	640,578,147	530,490,180	539,098,853
TOTALS	5,299,872,501	1,762,238,652	1,753,100,133	1,784,533,713

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Uganda National NGO Forum was formed in 1997, to create a 'broad-based' national body for NGOs to come together in their diversity, in pursuit of a collective agenda of engagement with government and other development actors. It was meant as an inclusive national platform for NGOs to think and strategise on matters of mutual interest and, with increasing interest, especially from districts, it became a membership organisation. Despite tumultuous early years when the Forum's registration was delayed because of mistrust from the relevant authorities, we finally got registered with the NGO Board in 2001 and have since grown in strength and membership. From fewer than 50 members in 2001, we counted more than 400 members drawn from NGOs working in Uganda - local, national NGOs/NGO networks and international NGOs - by the end of 2007.

With its stated object of 'harnessing civil society's collective potential', the NGO Forum brand name has continued to attract interest from the NGO fraternity (including non members), the government and the donor community. The NGO Forum became a vital contributor to, and in some cases driver of, several collective efforts to improve its internal and external perception, through initiatives like the NGO Minimum Agenda, the NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QuAM) and other civil society coalitions. We also became an important focal point for collective efforts to influence the policies and practices of government and with this came more demands to venture into policy advocacy, capacity building, policy research, NGO mobilisation and coordination. The NGO Forum was thus instrumental in the multi-stakeholder Structural Adjustment Participatory Review Initiative (SAPRI) between 1997 and 1999, it became a front runner in the NGO sector's campaign for a facilitative operating environment, especially between 1999 and 2005 when NGOs sought to influence the 2001 NGO Registration (Amendment) Act. We also played a leading role in coordinating the participation of civil society in the PEAP revision exercise of 2003/04 and other policy processes thereafter. By 2006, the NGO Forum had thus become an important voice for CSOs in Uganda.

With increasing demand for our leadership in policy advocacy and other mainstream NGO programming areas, however, our focus and identity were challenged. With a lean human resource base, some initiatives that Forum steered were slow and not taken to their logical end. We came to be seen as too inward looking and without sufficient focus on the 'bigger picture'. By getting too embroiled in technocratic policy processes, our agenda also became too state-centric and dependent, leading to a perception that the Forum was being progressively co-opted and serving government and donor agenda at the expense of its primary constituency, NGOs and the people they serve.

1.2 The strategy development process

2007 marked the NGO Forum's 10th year of existence and the last year of its previous strategic plan (2004 - 2007). The Forum's National Executive Committee therefore called for a process to systematically reflect on the life path of the organisation and to look into its future, a strategy development process under the theme 'the quest for a more relevant and responsive National NGO Forum'. Reflecting a desire for inclusiveness and critical learning, this process was widely consultative and critical. An 11-person Reference Group of knowledgeable and experienced civil society actors, government and development partners provided strategic guidance to a 2-person Resource Team that facilitated the process and drafted the final strategy. Views were sought from NGOs across the country (both NGO Forum members and non members), representatives from academia, political parties, the trade union movement, the private sector, government officials, professional and local government associations. A critical review of literature on NGOs in Uganda[2] and elsewhere was conducted. For NGO Forum members, a dedicated questionnaire was prepared and we also benefited from a General Meeting where input from members was gathered. The process also involved 3 CSO reflection sessions on topical civil society issues[3], and 5 regional roundtable consultations with representatives of NGOs drawn from over 50 districts.

1.3 What is different?

This strategy brings to the fore new thinking and approaches to conducting business, including:

- Re-articulating the National NGO Forum's identity: The strategy represents a refined identity for the organisation in terms of its vision, mission, values, strategic objectives and outcomes.

- The value addition of NGO Forum to other NGOs and NGO Networks: To add value to the work of its members and other NGOs, and to avoid duplication and unnecessary competition for funding, space and profile, the National NGO Forum is strengthening its platform role, acting as a space for civil society to collectively share, reflect and strategise.

- Balancing 'invited' and 'created' spaces: While Uganda prides itself to have a fairly liberal policy regime where NGOs are invited to participate, the nature of the 'invited' policy space on offer often presents difficulties for NGOs. The strategy therefore provides for the consolidation of 'created' spaces and platforms where CSO ideas are subjected to prior scrutiny and processed to a level where they will add value in 'invited' and other spaces.

[2]For a summary illustration of this process, see Annex III
[3]These centered on: 'NGO networking and collective activism from a historical perspective' (tracing the circumstances that led to the formation of the National NGO Forum); the 'utility or not of having two national broad-based NGO networks (DENIVA and the Uganda National NGO Forum)'; and 'NGO leadership in Uganda: the crisis of renewal and development'

- Strengthening the interface between NGOs and other CSOs: While the primary constituency and owners of the National NGO Forum remain NGOs and their networks, we recognise the need to work more closely with other organisations in a 'civil society space'. The NGO Forum will provide an inclusive space and avenue through which NGOs can regularly interface with other associations and representatives of other disciplines on issues of national concern.
- The NGO Forum's primary scope is at the national level: The strategy recognises the existence and autonomy of NGO networks at national and district levels, some with greater comparative advantage in 'connecting' with district-based NGOs and the grassroots. We will strengthen synergy with these networks and configurations, rather than 'recreate' new structures.
- Strengthening the National NGO Forum's governance: our position within the wider civil society in Uganda demands that the Forum's governance guarantees accountability to its constituency as well as technical expertise to guide its strategic renewal. We therefore propose a new Board arrangement, with 2/3 of its members representing the Forum membership and 1/3 other actors who will add strategic and technical expertise to the organisation.

The strategic repositioning of the National NGO Forum dictates that we reconsider and, in some cases, abandon some of the interventions implemented in the past. These include:

- Direct activities at district level: Given the Forum's main operational scope at national level, we will refrain from implementing direct activities at district level. We will however strengthen our collaboration with other NGOs, NGO networks and other NGO coordination mechanisms at sub-national level for greater synergies. The NGO Forum will also continue to be part of the National District Networks Support Programme (NDNSP) which it presently hosts.
- 'Conventional' capacity building: The National NGO Forum will move away from its previous claim to implement conventional capacity building programmes - training, organisational development, etc. We recognise NGOs and other agencies with better expertise in this area and will link our members/wider constituency to them, where needed.
- Providing leadership on sector specific policy processes and inter-linked engagements: The National NGO Forum will no longer provide leadership or representation of NGOs in sector specific policy processes such as agriculture, trade, health, education, conflict resolution, etc. We acknowledge more relevant expertise in specific sectoral or thematic focused NGOs and NGO networks to provide leadership in such areas.
- Leadership in organising Social Forums: after 3 years of spearheading Social Forum processes in Uganda, we will no longer provide leadership for this area. Instead, under Programme Area 1 (NGO sector observatory), we will organise regular NGO national and regional symposia to foster learning and we shall highlight the contributions of NGOs to Uganda's development.

2. Environmental Scan

2.1 The wider social, economic and political context

NGOs operate in a dynamic environment. Today, they face strong global influences resulting from a dominant neo-liberal ideology driving the international economy. These influences have conditioned many developing country governments and NGOs to be reactive rather than proactive in shaping their economic and political choices. Extreme power imbalances that shape the international economy are reflected at country level: poverty and deprivation co-exist with wealth, powerlessness exists with the transformative potential of citizens, and severe socioeconomic and political injustices reign, when a more equitable distribution of resources is possible. The rise of 'new' development players, whose practices give scant regard to rights and good governance, is beginning to account for increased depletion of natural resources, accelerating conflicts and multiplying emergencies and displacements. Thus, private sector-led growth has weakened the capacity of the state to respond to such unbalanced development, leading to widespread social disruptions that threaten the soul of many African nations.

It is in this context that hope is often found in NGOs: actors that not only provide essential services to the more disadvantaged sections of society, but also offer space where social and economic pressure can be nurtured to challenge social injustice.

2.2 NGOs and civil society in Uganda

The National NGO Forum belongs to Uganda's wider civil society and we consider NGOs in their diversity as our primary constituency. NGOs are defined as 'independent development actors existing apart from (but operationally linked to) governments and corporations, operating on a not-for-profit basis, with an emphasis on voluntarism, and pursuing a mandate of providing development services, undertaking communal development work or advocating on development issues'[4] . With growing influence, visibility and numbers (about 7,000 in 2007 from fewer than 300 in 1989), NGOs have however become such dominant actors on Uganda's civil society landscape that the term "NGO" is often equated to "civil society". Following CIVICUS, we define 'civil society' as 'the free associational arena existing outside the family, the state and the market, where people come together to deliberate on and advance common interests'. NGOs therefore occupy only part of that arena. Further, while it may be possible to distinguish between different actors in civil society, the state and the private sector, at individual level, the boundaries are usually blurred: values and lifestyles are often similar, as NGO managers, for instance, move to Parliament or into

[4]See Michael, S. (2004): Undermining Development: The absence of power among Local NGOs in Africa, p.3

business practice. It is therefore important that the National NGO Forum internally reflects and externally promotes a set of values that safeguards the distinctiveness, autonomy and values of NGOs, as defined in initiatives such the QuAM, the Minimum Agenda and other NGO reflection reports.

2.3 Strengthening networks and collaboration

Uganda's NGOs are heavily networked: there are two national 'apex' organisations, thematic and sectoral networks, issue-specific coalitions, district networks and fora, and regional networks. Despite this, effective networking remains a challenge. NGO networks often face similar challenges, including ineffective servicing of their constituencies, lack of a common understanding of the benefits of networks to members, competition for funding with members and in some cases inability to provide decisive leadership in areas of collective action.[5] The existence of multiple networks articulating their mandates in a similar fashion and with unclear mechanisms on how they relate also continues to cause confusion among NGOs and other actors, including government and some development partners. In some cases, the confusion at national level translates to even more profound polarisation in the districts. During our consultations for this strategy, many respondents shared a desire to have a national body for NGOs that would advance, defend and protect collective interests and whose mandate complements others. The National NGO Forum's new disposition attempts to address this.

NGO networking with other actors, including within the wider civil society, is also weak. Consultative meetings with academia, labour unions, media, political parties, the private sector and professional associations are neither consistent nor structured. Discussions with representatives of professional and private associations, such as the Law Society, the Private Sector Foundation, the National Organisation of Trade Unions and the Uganda Local Government Association all confirmed a desire for increased networking with NGOs, both on issues of common interest and perspective, as well as where there may be divergent views. This networking would help NGOs build alliances in their work and appreciate alternative views to the positions they espouse. The National NGO Forum will deliberately facilitate this outward networking agenda.

Despite these constraints, we notice an increasing trend, among NGOs at least, towards collective thinking and action in areas of mutual interest. Initiatives such as the Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform, Minimum Agenda, Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group, Civil Society for Peace in Northern Uganda, the Civil Society - Parliamentary Forum being developed and other policy platforms in which the National NGO Forum plays an active role, are emerging as new forms of networking and collective action amongst NGOs. The challenge however remains the lack of sustained leadership for nurturing and effective coordination. Support to and participation in such emerging network forms will therefore be a key aspect of NGO Forum's future agenda.

[5]See DENIVA (2006): Civil Society at the Crossroads, p. 32: only 43% of respondents saw NGO networks as effective, with 32% unclear and 13% indicating that networks are largely ineffective.

The National NGO Forum recognises the existence, contribution and importance of DENIVA and other networks and coalitions in fostering greater NGO collaboration. Our proposals and choices take into consideration the role of NGO networks at national, regional and district level so that complementarity is enhanced, while minimising duplication and unhealthy competition. As a membership organisation, we will maintain an open and constructive relationship and share information with DENIVA and other networks, alliances and coalitions in response to demands from the wider NGO fraternity and for the common good of the NGO sector. Our priorities and programme areas have been designed in the light of this imperative. Beyond Uganda, the effects of globalisation increasingly justify the need to strengthen supranational networking. The NGO Forum and other NGOs already belong to regional and international networks, often as part of global civil society campaigns. The case for regional networking for Ugandan NGOs is also strengthened as countries in East Africa move towards regional integration, if the risk of "a big head, small middle and no legs" is to be contained. We thus acknowledge the importance of supra-national networks and commit to provide an avenue for NGOs in Uganda to collectively engage with institutions at regional, African and global levels, as well as with international movements and campaigns, provided these are in line with our vision and our capacity.

2.4 Improving NGO governance and public legitimacy

Good governance, whether in government or civil society, is a prerequisite for public legitimacy. NGOs have often been identified as important agents of good governance and many have assumed the role of 'watchdogs' for increased transparency and accountability by the state and the private sector. As NGOs seek to consolidate this role, they must internally practice and be seen to reflect the very outlook they expect from others. At present, some NGOs and NGO networks suffer governance and democratic deficits which threaten to erode their claim as credible agents of good governance. One for instance notices a crisis of leadership amongst NGOs and the sector is failing to renew itself: many NGOs have struggled to replace departing leaders. Most NGOs are also heavily dependent on external donors, at times compromising their autonomy, the sustainability of their programmes and their objectivity. This is partly because NGO-donor relations are frequently characterised by unequal power relations in favour of the latter. Lastly, the failure to systematically document and communicate NGO work is leading to questions about their development impact.

To their credit, NGOs have acknowledged the dangers of not renewing their commitment to good governance and have initiated an NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QuAM) - an instrument for self-assessment, governance and regulation which, if effectively adhered to, has the potential to redress deficits and thus lead to better service delivery and enhanced credibility before their stakeholders

[6]This may be redressed by the National NGO policy, currently being developed under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister.

and the public. The regional round-table consultations we held for this strategy indicated demand for, and hope in, the QuAM. We therefore commit to promoting and actively participating in initiatives to improve NGO public legitimacy and leadership renewal. We will also advocate for more empowering relationships between NGOs and donors as an important part of our future agenda. This will include promoting donor appreciation of the values of NGO autonomy and self-sufficiency and having these reflected in their policies and procedures for support to NGOs.

2.5 NGO - Government relations

To understand the nature of their relations, it is important to recall that both NGOs and Government are not homogeneous, that their relationship is not static and that it is often shaped by external considerations. Despite the long absence of a comprehensive cooperative framework between NGOs and government,[6] both parties increasingly recognise each other' role, as the recent draft National Policy for NGOs attests. While government recognises the existence of the diversity of NGOs, the dominant understanding, appreciation and comfort, beyond the yet-to-be-realized ideals in the NGO Policy, tends to be with service delivery NGOs, rather than with advocacy oriented ones (especially where governance and human rights are concerned). This is largely because the former offer services that complement government's work, while advocacy NGOs, despite the increasing appreciation of their role, are generally viewed as agitators, especially by politicians at district level. Many advocacy NGOs are thus accused of lacking accurate information, of being largely reactive to government processes, even of being ineffectual. In addition, the 'political fear factor' has conditioned many NGOs to avoid engaging with issues of power and politics. Many uncritically occupy policy spaces in what has become the 'politics of presence' rather than influence. They have thus largely remained politically insignificant players.

While the space for advocacy NGOs has largely been open, recent analysis by NGOs also point to its progressive narrowing. NGOs contend that the review of the NGO Registration (Amendment) Bill process and its outcome, the 2006 Act was a roll-back on constitutional guarantees of autonomy and freedom and represents a threat to their operating space. Similar fears of increasing state heavy-handedness are reported by the media, political parties and other civic groups. Trends in the last 5 years also seem to suggest that the hitherto inclusive nature of the policy process, especially at national level, is becoming exclusive to government and its external 'partners' and less predictable. The National NGO Forum therefore commits itself to focus on reclaiming and consolidating spaces for NGO action to better engage in 'invited spaces' by government. We will also foster greater solidarity amongst NGOs when their legitimate activities are threatened by a restrictive operating environment.

[7]For a detailed discussion, see Larok (2007): Civil Society and Politics: A Niche for CSOs in the revived multiparty political system in Uganda.
[8]Larok, ibid.

2.6 NGOs' role in Uganda's multi-party system

NGOs have grown and operated for 20 years under a 'no-party' Movement System, during which they played 'the diversity role'. With the re-introduction of a formal multiparty system, which some NGOs advocated for and welcomed, it is now important that their agendas focus on initiatives that consolidate political pluralism in the country. Some challenges come with this political change, particularly when there is a dominant ruling party, weak older parties, and a number of less established political players. In a multiparty configuration, NGOs are part of the political system, with a role that adds value to it,[7] ensuring that multiple voices shape alternative choices for citizens and enhance accountability.

The National NGO Forum will prioritise the consolidation of the role of NGOs in our political system by promoting initiatives to strengthen citizen agency, widening policy engagements beyond the policies of the government in power, and influencing every political party manifesto so that they reflect citizen needs and priorities. In particular, we will work with other NGOs to develop a 'Ugandan Dream' - 'a set of common national interests incontrovertible and defendable by all'[8] .

2.7 An appraisal of the NGO Forum in the last 10 years

The National NGO Forum, as any other organisation, has faced influences from the wider environment in which it exists. At times, it has positively contained these environmental forces and t has faced challenges at others. The table below summarises what different stakeholders' opinions of the National NGO Forum in the last decade.

Table 2: 10 Years of NGO Forum - A summary of strong and weak attributes

Strengths and Opportunities	Weaknesses and Threats
• Clout to mobilise and provide leadership in NGO engagements in multi-stakeholder policy processes, such as the PEAP, PMA, budget, etc. at national level • Provided leadership and coordination on issues related to NGO operating environment • Flexible to take on new, emerging initiatives for which many NGOs have neither the time nor the capacity to lead on.	• Weak membership [constituency] 'connection' and support system • Lean human resource infrastructure leading to ineffectiveness • Weak governance organs with inadequate technical and strategic oversight capabilities • Unclear strategic 'niche'; agenda too state 'centric' or 'donor inspired'

• Has ensured a consistent presence of NGOs at various policy and public fora • Provided a first point of reference for information about NGOs and their work • Earned the respect and recognition of key government departments and donors as a 'representative voice' for NGOs • Draft NGO Policy recognises the need for an instrument like the NGO Forum	• Management system too centralised and focused on strong personalities at the Secretariat • Often operates like any other NGO network and thus a competitor for funding, profile with its members, other NGOs and networks • Weak financial base/dependence on a narrow donor base, resulting in risk of donor influence • Possible threat of a potentially restrictive legal and regulatory regime by the state through the 2006 NGO Act and Regulations

The National NGO Forum will consolidate its positive attributes and put in place mechanisms to improve its response to the challenges. Through its proposed programme areas, we will also work with other NGOs to mitigate external threats to the NGO operating environment. The implications of the environmental scan have guided our strategic choices: the Forum has refined its mandate, identity and operational scope. It has sharpened its vision and mission and has committed to participate and promote a more active involvement of NGOs in deepening democracy in Uganda. The priorities it has identified add value to the work of other NGOs and NGO networks.

The sections that follow present details of how it has translated the environmental analysis into a renewed identity and programming priorities, and we present a risk analysis associated with implementing this strategy in Annex V.

3. The National NGO Forum's New Identity

Our new strategy presents the National NGO Forum as an instrument for better collective thinking, strategizing and action, better synergy, representation and support within the NGO 'sector'. The Forum's identity is underpinned by a demand for an all-embracing national representative body for NGOs, the need to secure NGO space, identity and autonomy in independently contributing to development, the need for greater internal networking and external interface with the wider civil society fraternity and with other actors.

The National NGO Forum is an independent and inclusive national platform for NGOs in Uganda. Its primary constituency and owners are NGOs in their diversity and configurations. The National NGO Forum Platform is however open to other interest groups within a broadly defined civil society.

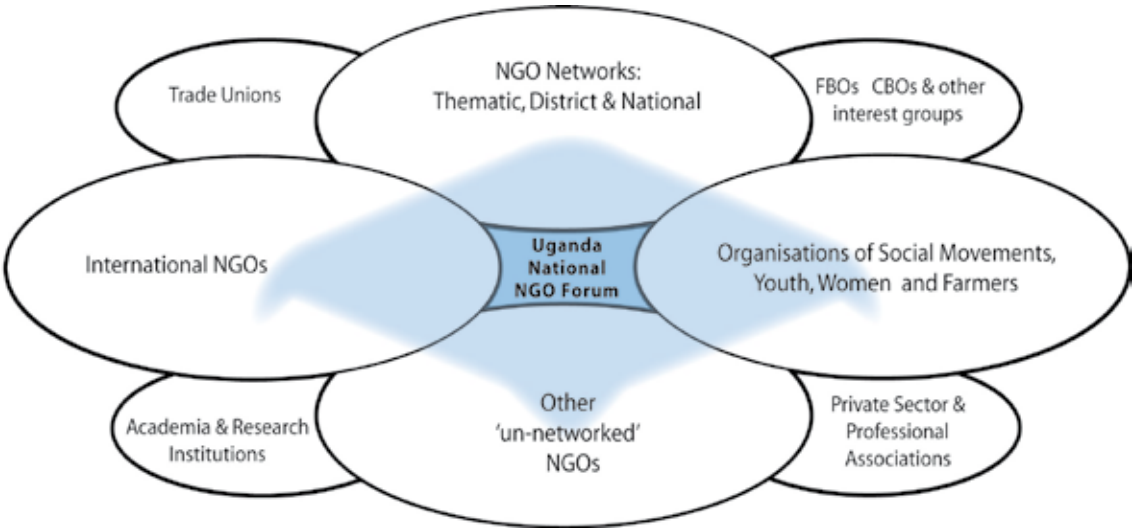
The NGO Forum's operational scope is at national level, with a focus on issues and processes that concern NGOs across the board. We recognise the independent existence of national thematic NGO networks and of district networks and fora as other important NGO coordinating mechanisms with complementary comparative advantages. Where NGO coordination mechanisms are insufficient, we shall facilitate better NGO networking and collective action, preferably through existing NGO structures, to harness NGO perspectives in promoting pro-poor, pro-people development policies, while maintaining a national character.

3.1 National NGO Forum Membership

The National NGO Forum is an all-inclusive NGO membership organisation. Its members are NGOs and their networks as well as 'un-networked NGOs' in their diversity, active in Uganda and which subscribe to and support the organisation's vision, mission and values.

In its new configuration (Figure 1), the Forum is presented as a national NGO platform servicing inner and outer circles: first its primary constituency ("NGOs") and secondly other organisations in the wider civil society, which are not defined in the narrow sense with which the term "NGO" is often used, but which account for the overall strength of Uganda's civil society.

Figure 1: National NGO Forum's Platform and its positioning in the wider Civil Society



3.2 Vision and mission

The NGO Forum's vision and mission commit the organisation to dedicate its resources in contributing to achieving an NGO sector that is respected, coherent, independent and accountable.
Its vision is a coherent, respected and well-informed NGO sector in Uganda, actively contributing to citizens' wellbeing and safeguarding their rights

Its mission is to provide a sharing and reflection platform for NGOs to influence governance and development processes in Uganda, and enhance their operating environment

3.3 Values and working principles

True to the Forum's identity and position within civil society, we intend to live by the following set of values:

- Social justice and equity - we will work with other NGOs to promote equality, dignity and a more just society, especially with regard to the poor and marginalised.

- Gender and diversity - we recognise the need for our work to reflect and promote respect for gender and diversity issues

- Autonomy - we must ensure that we strive for and safeguard the rights for NGOs to existence and independence at all times.

- Accountability - we hold ourselves accountable to the highest level of ethical behaviour and responsibility for our actions, while maintaining integrity in our performance.

- Collective action and solidarity - we strive for joint action and cooperation whenever justified by our mission, and stand with and by other NGOs and CSOs when they are faced with challenges in their work.

- Unity in diversity - we believe in and celebrate diversity in the NGO sector but will strive to achieve unity amongst NGOs and with other like-minded actors

- Self -sufficiency - as NGOs we strive and work towards sustainable development outcomes

Within the National NGO Forum team members, we shall also honour the following working principles

- Respect for all, appreciation of one's limitations and mutual support
- Service orientation
- Innovation and continuous learning
- Equal Opportunity
- Integrity and honesty
- Time consciousness

4. Strategic Outcomes, Objectives and Programme Areas

The National NGO Forum's new strategy is guided by a desire to consolidate NGO space and capacity to influence governance and development processes, strengthen networking within the sector and with other development actors, and enhance the public legitimacy of NGOs. Its successful implementation is expected to lead to the following outcomes:

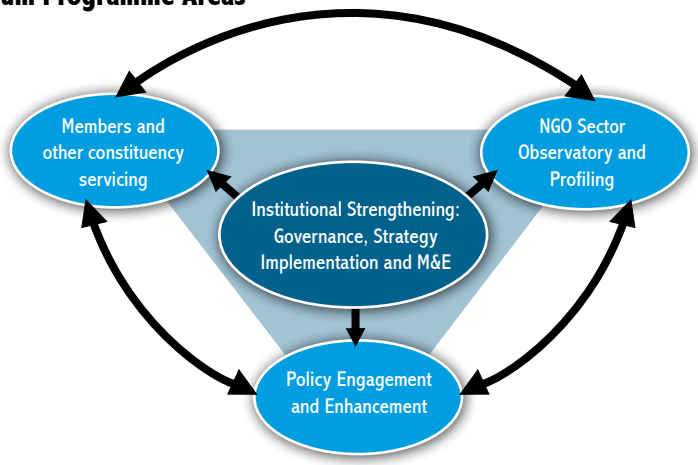
a. An informed NGO sector that possesses the necessary information and capacity to effectively engage in and contribute to development processes.

b. A networked NGO sector with strong internal and external linkages with other actors.

c. An engaged and accountable NGO sector that engenders respect from government and citizens for the difference it makes to society.

Our strategy articulates three interlinked programme areas that define the Forum's renewed focus, with an additional aspect of enhanced institutional capacity to enable it deliver its mandate. The three areas are: a) NGO Sector Observatory and Profiling; b) Policy Engagement and Enhancement; and c) Membership and Constituency Servicing. The choice of the 3 areas was shaped by the need to identify strategic and value-adding priorities which complement rather than compete with members and other NGOs and NGO networks; provide a platform and space for NGOs, rather than directly implement conventional programmes that other NGOs do; and foster greater synergy, rather than isolated action. Figure 2 below illustrates the links between the 3 programmes areas, which are explained in turn.

Figure 2: NGO Forum Programme Areas



4.1 Programme Area One: NGO Sector Observatory and Profiling

Objective: To build and update a comprehensive picture of Uganda's civil society landscape, with a focus on the NGO sector, and to showcase the socio-economic and political value of NGOs to the country's development, in order to continuously articulate and influence policies and practices that contribute to the NGO sector's growth and nourishment.

The NGO Sector Observatory and Profiling programme area strengthens the work our previous work on the quest for an enabling operating context for NGOs in Uganda. Drawing inspiration and experiences at local, national and international levels, this programme area seeks to: a) influence internal and external (including global) contextual dynamics to ensure a positive environment for NGO operations; b) collect and synthesise information and experiences of NGOs in their work in order to inform strategies in (a) above; and c) document and showcase the social, economic and political value of the NGO sector to Uganda's development aspirations.

Our understanding of a conducive operating environment goes beyond the legal and regulatory space as defined by the state, to include emerging lessons from the work of NGOs locally and internationally to inform NGOs operations. It also includes public support for NGO work, leading to greater public legitimacy; the fast changing policy making process and implications for advocacy; as well as the unequal power relations in the aid industry, the changing face of international aid, donor policies and practices. All these have a bearing on the activities and sustainable impact of NGO work.

Strategies and key undertakings. To build a comprehensive and updated picture of the NGO sector in particular and the civil society landscape in general, the National NGO Forum will:

a. Undertake or commission regular research on key themes of concern and relevance to the growth of a vibrant and engaged civil society in Uganda. The research focus will be on generic civil society issues, with a particular emphasis on environmental and contextual changes with national, regional and international dimensions.

b. Participate in the popularisation, implementation and monitoring of the national policy for NGOs, the NGO Act, 2006 and attendant legal and administrative regulations to ensure that they support, rather than militate against NGO and civic enterprise.

c. Establish an information unit as a Key Point of Reference for information on NGOs; what they do, where they operate and what impact they are creating. As part of this, we shall also document and share best practices and innovations in the NGO sector for collective benefit and greater impact. If some information is readily available, we shall supplement it to meet the frequent demand for information on NGOs in Uganda by hundreds of national and international agencies and individuals.

d. Play a public relations function for NGOs vis-à-vis the public, government, the private sector and other actors on the role of NGOs in our country's development, using, where appropriate, field experiences. In so doing, the National NGO Forum will become a 'national voice' documenting, profiling and defending the collective achievements of NGOs.

4.2. Programme Area Two: Policy Engagement and Enhancement

Objectives: To offer interactive reflection spaces for the effective coordination of collective policy engagement by NGOs, on cross-cutting social, economic and political issues of interest to NGOs and relevant to Uganda's development, as well as for long-term perspective planning.

This programme area reflects the NGO Forum's experience in mobilising, coordinating and participating in NGO policy advocacy and engagements in key policy processes, such as the PEAP, the National Development Plan (NDP), Plan for Modernization of Agriculture (PMA), the budget process and other processes of national importance. The Forum's value lies in 'bringing together' NGOs to participate in multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral policy processes, to elicit the value of collective organising and action, and inspire activism and solidarity. In consolidating NGO participation in policy spaces, including the 'invited policy spaces' mentioned above, we shall focus on creating platforms and spaces for reflection, critical review and appraisal of collective NGO positions on a range of social, economic, political and other issues of interest to NGOs and of consequence to the nation, so that NGO views, knowledge and perspectives are better harnessed to contribute to better governance and development.

Strategies and key undertakings:

a. Policy engagement: to foster better policy engagement by NGOs, the National NGO Forum will establish a regular NGO policy and development forum where issues of interest to NGOs are developed before articulating them in more formal policy spaces. As a 'national voice' for NGOs on collective issues, we will represent and articulate their interests in key discussions with policy makers and other actors. On issues of thematic, sectoral or issue-specific nature, through our collective platform, the most appropriate NGO representative will be identified and mandated to represent NGO positions, with clear feedback and accountability channels.

b. Lobby platforms: the National NGO Forum will encourage the formation of lobby platforms for synergy building and collective action. Examples of platforms that we will work with others to strengthen or re-vitalise include the CSO Minimum Agenda Platform to spearhead the work towards a 'Ugandan Dream',

the Uganda Governance Monitoring Platform (UGMP), the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) and others that may emerge for which the NGO Forum's institutional infrastructure may be appropriate. We will thus provide an institutional home for collective NGO processes and formations, whose scope goes beyond a single sector or theme.

c. 'Rapid response strategy': this will be established to ensure a swift response by NGOs to emerging issues of importance to their work, especially as they relate to their operating environment and to issues that define their programming. While we seek to strengthen anticipation through long-term thinking and scenario building, the National NGO Forum will operate with flexibility to respond and mobilise NGOs to act decisively on emerging issues. Where circumstances demand, we will provide transitional leadership and a home for emerging collective engagements that no other NGO is able to take on in the first instance. We will mobilise other NGOs to nurture such processes, so that leadership can be handed over to appropriate organisations.

d. Facilitating horizontal, regional and international networking: the National NGO Forum will first work with appropriate district or regional NGO coordination mechanisms to facilitate regional platforms for NGOs, for political leaders from all parties and for other relevant actors to meet and focus on development issues of particular concern and interest in a region of Uganda. Opportunities for inter regional exchanges will be explored. Second, given the consequences of globalisation on nation states, we will also focus on actions at supra national level. We will pursue membership of strategic regional NGO and civil society networks, alliances, coalitions and global citizen movements to advance social justice issues at the international level. Drawing from NGO experiences in Uganda, we will seek to influence the agenda of supra-national institutions, such as the EAC, AU and global alliances to make them responsive to the realities of the poor. The NGO Forum will for instance continue to be part of the Global Campaign against Poverty (GCAP) which it has hosted for the last 3 years. We will ensure that such involvement adds value to national processes and benefits from local knowledge. We will challenge the use and abuse of power at national and global levels in a sustained manner, rather than focus on high cost and low return events-based campaigns.

e. NGO leadership retreats and reflection sessions: The National NGO Forum will continue in the tradition of NGO leaders' retreats, but ensure more inclusive participation, with a careful mix of current and potential future leaders, and a regular reflection agenda. Such sessions will focus on strategic issues emerging from changing national political and economic contexts. These will be used for reflective learning, strategic and long-term thinking, coalition building and action planning. The NGO Forum will also seek partnership and collaboration with actors within and outside Uganda to develop a fellowship programme for NGO staff, to enhance their contribution to civil society work.

4.3 Programme Area Three: Member and other Constituency Services

Objective: To provide general and tailor-made information and other support services to a wide range of NGO Forum service subscribers to inform their work and enhance their capacities.

We acknowledge that, for any membership organisation to remain useful, it must manage and satisfy to the extent possible, expectations from a diverse group of members and other actors. This programme area presents the National NGO Forum as a service organisation providing regular and specialised services to members, other NGOs, civil society and a wide range of other actors that demand information and other support services. These include students, government, private-sector and development partners. The aim of this programme area is to provide both general and tailored information and other support services to a wide range of NGO Forum service subscribers to enhance their capacities and inform their work.

Strategies and key undertakings:

a. Promoting the wide use of and constant review and renewal of the QuAM: The NGO Quality Assurance Certification Mechanism (QuAM) is a self-governance instrument for NGOs that aims at promoting their adherence to generally acceptable ethical standards and operational norms. It was developed for and by NGOs in Uganda through a participatory process. The idea was born out of recognition that for NGOs to have the moral high-ground to demand accountability from other actors, they needed to 'walk the talk'.

   The NGO Forum will continue to support and participate in the roll-out of QuAM, promote its wide use among NGOs, and contribute to its review and improvement. We believe that while the underlying expectation is that the QuAM will promote greater transparency and accountability within NGOs, an important dimension to emphasise is the prospect of the QuAM process showcasing the work of NGOs, reconnecting them with their constituency and acting as an instrument to generate the social will needed to deepen democracy in Uganda.

b. Building Solidarity: A common concern raised by NGOs in consultations to develop this strategy was the fear of a narrowing space for NGO operations, including threats and victimisation. As a national organisation for NGOs, the NGO Forum will mobilise and stand in solidarity with NGOs that may be illegally threatened for their transparency and democracy promotion work. It will consider linking members, other NGOs and individuals with legal services where their rights have been violated. The NGO Forum will also ensure that up to date notices for legal interpretation of policies and laws that affect NGOs are provided.

[9]A revised schedule of the GA duties will be detailed in the Constitution of the National NGO Forum

c. Acting as a communication and information hub: The NGO Forum will establish a functional communication strategy to promote knowledge sharing between NGOs, other CSOs, government and other actors at national and sub-national levels. We seek to become a vital information hub for NGOs, by facilitating the flow of information and ideas that are relevant to collective engagements, through e-platforms, discussion groups, regularly produced information briefs/newsletters and web-based information sharing. The NGO Forum has already become a conduit for the distribution of key policy documents to other NGOs, such as for the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Unit (PMAU) and the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP). Information on donor events, programmes and funding opportunities will be sought and shared widely. As members and other actors appreciate the centrality of the NGO Forum, they will be encouraged to share their research, experiences and opportunities through our information and communication infrastructure.

4.4 Institutional Strengthening: Governance, Strategy Implementation and M&E

Objective: Strengthen institutional organs, staffing and systems to ensure continuous learning, an effective, transparent, democratic and accountable National NGO Forum

The institutional enhancement component of this strategy aims at creating an all-round supportive environment to enable the National NGO Forum deliver on its core mandate. Interventions under this component must lead to continuous learning and an effective, transparent, democratic, responsive and accountable organisation.
The three areas of emphasis under this component are:

a) institutional governance,
b) human resource development and staffing, and
c) monitoring and evaluation.

a. National NGO Forum Governance:
We believe that effective governance of the organisation will ensure that the policies, values and systems by which the National NGO Forum manages its affairs continue to shape transparent, accountable and responsible decision making at strategic, management and programme levels. The National NGO Forum undertook a governance reform in 2005: it now needs to consolidate the gains and undertake further change in the quest for innovative ways of achieving and maintaining a governance regime that is simple and effective. This strategy recognises:

(a) the need to balance legitimate membership representation at all governance levels with eminence and technical capacity, especially on the Board, so that it has a mix of personnel with expertise to provide strategic guidance and to foster public confidence in the institution;

(b) the need to have a competent but 'hands off' board that can effectively oversee the Secretariat and ensure that it delivers efficiently and effectively on agreed policies and programmes; and

(c) the need to have a viable, lean and efficient governance structure, whose work will not be hampered by lack of finances. The new strategy therefore provides for a two tier governance structure:

- General Assembly (GA): This is the supreme governance organ for the organisation and will comprise all paid-up members of the National NGO Forum. It meets annually to play a strategic oversight role, approve organisational policies, deliberate on issues of strategic importance and holds the Board and Secretariat accountable for agreed decisions[9] .

- National NGO Forum Board: The Board is the penultimate governance organ of the organisation. It is appointed by the GA with a 2/3rd members' representation and 1/3rd independent members. The 2/3rd members representation is constituted through an elaborate constituency-based elections system, while the 1/3rd is by invitation and approval of the GA. The Board will normally meet thrice a year.

b. Human Resource Development and Staffing:

One of the major impediments to NGO Forum's responsiveness in the past has been its lean human resource at the Secretariat, especially at programme level. For the National NGO Forum to effectively deliver on its renewed commitment to be more responsive to the demands and expectations of its growing constituency, the quality and quantity of human resources at the Secretariat need to be strengthened. This strategy provides for a reconfigured human resource and commits the organisation's management to recruit, deploy, retain and retrain professional, competent and passionate staff who will deliver.

c. Strategy Implementation, accountability and M&E:

Our institutional set up (see Annex IV) provides for a separation of roles into three levels: policy and strategy development; management and strategy implementation; and programmes and operations. An Executive Director will head the Secretariat and assume the responsibility of overall Accounting Officer and Results Manager. A new configuration however provides for an equal focus on strategy development and public relations. A competent programme team will take full charge of programme delivery, monitoring and reporting at management and operational levels. Provisions are made for a the position of Director of Programmes, and two programme coordinators to provide team leadership for Programme Area Two and Programme Area Three respectively.

A comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation System will be developed around which a learning agenda for the organisation will be anchored. The M&E system will facilitate systematic capture, documentation

of results, changes and lessons that the organisation records in the implementation of this strategy. The day to day function of M&E falls under the portfolio of the Director of Programmes. Other instruments for strategy implementation, monitoring and evaluation will include:

- An Annual Operations Plan (AOP) clearly outlining activities for the year, important internal and external dates and deadlines. The AOP will also outline the roles and responsibilities for delivery of the strategy at programme, management and governance levels.

- All staff will produce monthly programme and operations reports, while the organisation will produce a mid year and annual report.

- The strategy will be evaluated externally through a mid term evaluation process in 2009/10 and an end of programme evaluation in 2011/12.

5. Implications of the new Strategic Directions

Our new organisational strategy has a number of implications for the management, governance and current activities of the National NGO Forum. This last section outlines a number of implications and reform actions to be considered.

5.1. NGO Forum Membership

- To manage expectations from a potentially diverse membership, a membership charter and membership guidelines will need to be developed, stipulating members' entitlements and responsibilities.

- As a national voice for NGOs, the Forum needs to develop a quick and cost effective mechanism to consult with its members on critical issues for which consensus may need to be reached for prompt action. A membership polling system has been suggested.

- An interface mechanism between the 'inner circle' – our primary constituency - and the 'outer circle' of the wider CSOs and clientele needs to be agreed for the inclusiveness of the National NGO Forum to become a reality.

5.2. Governance Reforms

- The appropriate governance and management organs of the Forum will need to prepare an amendment to the Constitution of the organisation to reflect the new strategic direction.

- In order to conform to the new direction, the Forum has committed to strengthen and simplify its governance. The current National Executive Committee (NEC) needs to develop detailed guidelines on how the 1/3rd membership to the Board will be constituted for approval of the GA.

- Given the importance of the QuAM, the National NGO Forum will need to strengthen the Code of Conduct Committee to provide leadership in ensuring the immediate implementation of the QuAM at institutional level and progressively within the membership.

- The National NGO Forum needs to review the configuration of its present thematic areas and their role in defining governance, especially as the strategy commits to strengthening synergy with existing NGO thematic networks.

- Other institutional policies and systems, in particular the Human Resource and Financial policies, will need to be reviewed to reflect the changing national context and new strategic direction of the organisation, as will be the need to develop a comprehensive M&E system.

5.3. Strengthening Staff Capacity

- The Secretariat will need restructuring to ensure that the right quality of staff are recruited, appropriately deployed and a functional working team created.
- A staff development strategy needs to be instituted to ensure the regular identification of gaps in existing and future staff and to develop appropriate responses.

5.4. Fundraising

- The National NGO Forum must develop an aggressive strategy to raise resources to implement programmes and other initiatives that will ensue from this strategy.
- A fundraising strategy should be built on clear principles of partnership, autonomy and mutual accountability.
- The fundraising strategy will need to be robust and diverse, prioritising local sources of income and external funding, and providing for the creation of an Institutional Reserve and or an Endowment Fund.

Annex I: Objective and Activity Matrix (OAM)

Programme Area (PA) and Strategic Objective	Key Undertaking (s) & Indicative Activities	Expected Outputs
PA1: NGO Sector Observatory To build and regularly update a comprehensive picture of Uganda's civil society landscape, with a focus on the NGO sector, and to showcase NGOs' socio-economic and political value to the country's development, so as to continuously articulate and influence policies and practices that contribute to the NGO sector's growth and nourishment.	Undertake or commission regular research on the NGO sector Activities: • Research on the nature and trends of space for NGO operations in Uganda: external (policy, legal, donor trends, etc), internal in NGOs (capacity, values, etc) • National survey on the value of the NGO sector to Uganda's economy • Set up an NGO sector observatory mechanism that regularly monitors/tracks what is happening in the NGO sector	• 1 research study per year on NGO sector operating environment related issue • 1 robust national survey that depicts the value of NGO sector to Uganda's development and linked thematic researches • Quarterly NGO Sector Watch reports and updates produced and disseminated
	Participate in the popularisation, implementation, monitoring and reviews of the NGO Policy and related legislative instruments Activities: • Draft popular and illustrated versions of all legal, admin and regulatory instruments for NGOs • Organise national and regional discussion and dissemination events to deepen NGO understanding of such instruments • Organise and facilitate advocacy initiatives that consolidate a facilitative environment for NGOs	• Accessible, concise and precise IEC materials on various instruments • National & Regional round tables on legal & regulatory frameworks for NGOs • National advocacy sessions targeting key agencies and support regional campaign and advocacy initiatives
	Play a public relations function for members and other like NGOs Activities: • Organise media events to articulate NGO positions on various issues in the country • Represent NGOs in various public forums where our role is central • Organise 1 national/regional NGO symposia per year to profile their work	• Quarterly media events in a year • Effective representation of NGOs and feedback to them • Annual NGO profile and showcase reports/updates for various audiences

PA2: Policy Engagement and Enhancement To offer interactive and reflection spaces for long term thinking and more effective coordination of collective policy engagement by NGOs in multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder policy processes.	Collective NGO Policy Engagements Activities: • Undertake mapping exercises to establish multi-sectoral policy and other processes where NGO participation is vital • Organise NGO policy reflection meetings to strategize for NGO policy engagements • Organise regular Development Policy Forums as NGO spaces to incubate policy ideas and positions • Coordinate NGO participation in multi-stakeholder policy processes like the PEAP, NDP, Budget process and other emerging policy processes	• Policy mapping report to be updated every year • 3 NGO policy reflection meetings a year with clear action plans • Quarterly development policy forums and NGO position papers developed • NGO Lead Agencies supported to engage in and produce issue papers for the NDP, Budget and other vital policy processes
	Put in place a rapid response strategy for collective NGO action Activities: • Critically and continuously scan Uganda's political, governance and economic contexts and establish areas where NGO action is desirable • Mobilise NGOs to engage with emerging policy and decision making processes and outcomes of government • From the continuous scan above mobilise NGOs to initiate and act proactively in processes that matter to citizens	• Quarterly scanning reports detailing the justification for NGO action • NGO meetings relating to processes/spaces that are not open to other actors • Number of follow up action and engagements initiated by NGOs
	Strengthening NGO Lobby Platforms Activities: • Strengthen UGMP, Minimum Agenda, CSBAG, the CSO - Parliamentary Forum and others • Organise reflection, planning and action meetings for the above NGO Platforms • Organise public/citizen debates and discussions on topical issues emerging from CSO platforms • Media engagements to publicise and market NGO platform generated issues	• Quarterly meetings of NGO platforms held • Bi-annual citizen debates for each platform • Press Releases and Radio/TV stations

	Facilitating regional, supranational and international networking Activities: • Organise regional solutions providers' forums with NGO, political party and other leaders to provide ideas and solutions to regional problems • Mobilise NGOs using a thematic approach to engage in the Global Campaign against Poverty (GCAP) • Membership to Supranational NGO networks and groupings • Participate in and support members and other NGOs to international campaigns and alliances events	• 1 regional forum p.a. in eight regions of Uganda • 8 thematic groups supported to engage in the GCAP campaigns • Subscription to IACD, CIVICUS and ICSW • 8 international trips per year for a staff member or selected NGO
	NGO Leaders' Retreats/Reflections Activities: • Organise regular NGO sector reflections to discuss topical issues of interest and concern to NGOs • Organise mentoring and coaching sessions for Young and upcoming NGO Leaders • Facilitate long term thinking and scenario building retreats for NGO leaders	• A multi-disciplinary and strategic thinking group formed • One, 3-day mentoring and coaching event organised per year • 1 NGO Leaders' Retreat per year with concrete follow up actions
PA 3: Members and other Constituency Servicing To provide general and tailored made information and other support services to a wide range of NGO Forum service subscribers to enhance their capacities and inform their work and programming.	Promote the wide use, review and renewal of the QuAM Activities: • Organise an Annual QuAM Forum to reflect and review QuAM implementation • National Stakeholder Event to recognize certified NGOs • Organise Regional QuAM Seminars • Undertake QuAM related studies	• Annual QuAM Forum organised • Annual stakeholders event workshop held • Regional QuAM Seminars held in collaboration with other NGOs • Study Reports per year documenting the general and specific challenges and experiences of NGOs in the QuAM process

	Building Solidarity with other NGOs and CSOs Activities: • Organise solidarity public/citizen action through mass mobilization and peaceful demonstrations in support of NGOs/ civil society • Facilitate and follow up mediation meetings between the affected NGO/ CSO, Individuals and Government and other stakeholders • Work and engage the Media: Publicizing the role of civil society in ensuring transparency and democracy and Organise Solidarity press conferences; • Issue collective Solidarity Declarations, Petitions and Statements in support of affected NGOs/Individuals. • Conduct quick, fact finding research, analysis and investigations; and report on specific allegations on members, other NGOs and individuals.	• TV and Radio Talk shows held; Newspaper Supplements published • Solidarity Press Conferences held. • Statements/Declarations/ Petitions in support of NGO operations published and presented to key Gov't Agencies and Individuals • Reports on specific NGO allegations produced, disseminated and used for solidarity engagements
	Improving Communications Activities: • Develop and implement the NGO Forum Communication Strategy • Develop and make accessible a comprehensive NGO electronic Database and Directory • Redesign NGO Forum Website • Production and dissemination of a regular Quarterly Newsletter for members • Production of the NGO Forum Annual Report	• NGO Forum Communication Strategy in place and functional • A functional searchable electronic NGO Forum members database • NGO Forum Members Directory annually updated and utilised by members • Redesigned, regularly updated and publicised website • Quarterly NGO Forum Newsletters published and disseminated to members, other NGOs and stakeholders • Annual Report published and disseminated to members, other NGOs and stakeholders

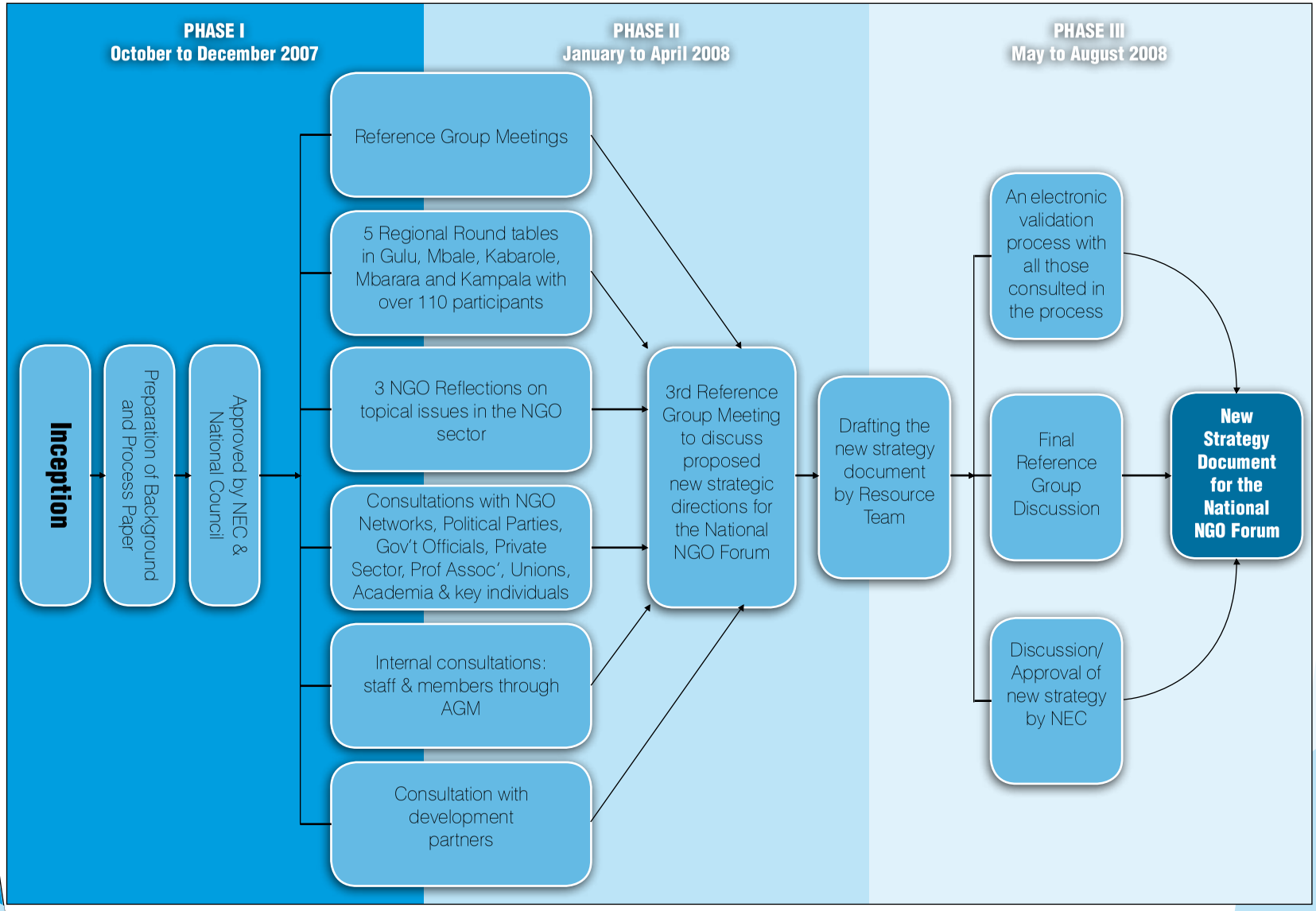
	Regular Information provision Activities: • Organise an Annual Members Symposium to showcase their work • Collect, document and disseminate information on 'best' engagement practices for NGOs • Download and Repackage relevant Information from the Internet • Collect, update and disseminate an inventory of Funding opportunities • Organise and attend to meetings with sub-national, national, regional and international visitors and respond to their inquiries • Collect and distribute the relevant information from members, clients and other stakeholders	• Annual members symposium organised • Inventory of funding opportunities. • Relevant documents distributed
	13. Mobilisation of Members to participate in NGO Forum lead activities	• 100 members supported every year to participate in NGO Forum Policy processes • Support to at least 5 members' activities yearly
PA: 4 Institutional Strengthening: Governance, Strategy Implementation and M&E Strengthen institutional, organs, staffing policies and systems to ensure a more transparent, democratic and accountable National NGO Forum	Review and amend the National NGO Forum Constitution and internal policies Activities: • Prepare a constitutional amendment • Organise meetings to approve and have the amendments endorsed	• Constitution amended
	Recruitment, deployment and training of appropriate staff Activities: • Staff training and appraisals	• 2 staff trained per year • Staff appraisals undertaken annually
	Procure, utilize and maintain organisational equipment & assets Activities: Purchase essential assets and equipment	• 2 new cars in place, 1 new photocopier and other assets

	Regular governance, management and staff meetings & retreats Activities: • Organise Board meeting and GM • Organise regular staff meetings and annual staff retreats • Organise Board inductions as appropriate	• 3 Board meetings and 1 GM held every year • Monthly staff meetings held and annual staff retreats • Boards inducted and trained
	Develop a comprehensive M&E System for the organisation Activities: • Hire a consultant to develop an M&E for the organisation • Organise M&E training and induction for staff	• M&E System in place • Training in M&E for staff undertaken
	Undertake a Mid Term and End of Programme Evaluation Activities • Conduct a mid term evaluation and appropriate briefings • End of Programme Evaluation and updating NGO Forum's strategy	• Mid Term Evaluation • End of Programme Evaluation

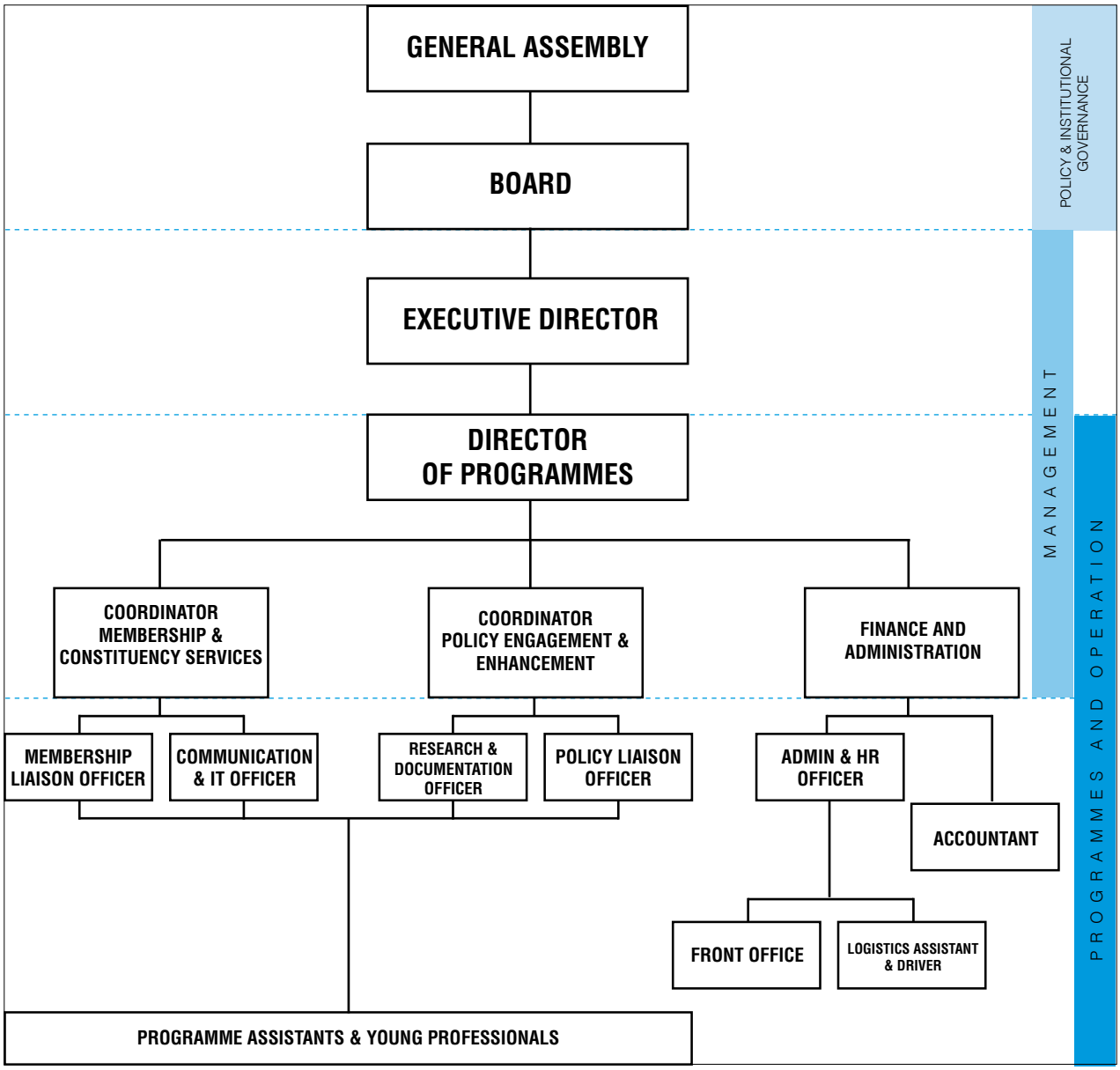
Annex II: Summary Costing of the Strategy (All figures are in Uganda Shillings)

Programme/ Institutional Area	Key Undertaking (s)	Projection for Year 1 (2008/09)	Projection for 3 years for the entire Programme Area
NGO Sector Observatory and Profiling	• Undertake or commission regular research on the NGO sector	116,548,800	**938,479,162**
	• Participate in the popularization, implementation, monitoring and reviewing of the NGO Policy/other linked legislative instruments	81,425,000	
	• Programme Area One Management/Staff Costs	41,592,763	
	• Play a public relations function for members/other like NGOs	52,290,000	
Policy Engagement and Enhancement	• Collective NGO Policy Engagements	123,738,000	**1,638,678,241**
	• Rapid response strategy for collective NGO action	35,967,000	
	• Strengthening NGO lobby platforms	47,109,000	
	• Facilitating regional, supranational and international NGO Networking	130,066,000	
	• NGO leaders' retreats and reflections and Young Leaders' mentoring sessions	36,812,000	
	• Programme Area Two Management/Staff Costs	139,196,338	
Members and other Constituency servicing	• Promote the wide use and review and renewal of QuAM	45,503,000	**1,012,547,918**
	• Building solidarity with other NGOs and CSOs	54,784,000	
	• Improving Communication	77,930,000	
	• Regular Information provision	25,250,000	
	• Programme Area Three Management/Staff Costs	97,949,406	
	• Mobilise members to participate in NGO Forum initiatives	15,550,000	
Enhanced Institutional Capacity to deliver	• Salaries and remuneration for admin functions + other staff time	152,953,387	**1,710,167,180**
	• Staff benefits	57,653,817	
	• Other benefits	10,800,800	
	• Overhead Costs	185,545,429	
	• Capital Equipment	174,740,000	
	• Board Operations and other Sub Committee Meetings	37,118,814	
	• General Assembly and other Governance meetings	21,766,700	

Annex III: Summary of the Strategy Preparation Process [October 2007 to June 2008]



Annex IV: NGO Forum Institutional Set Up[10]



[10]Details of the functions and roles of each governance organ are provided for in the Constitution of the National NGO Forum

Annex V: Risk Analysis Matrix

Risk					Risk Management Strategy				
Impact Analysis				Gross Risk	Strategy		Action Plan		Net Risk
Programme Area (PA)	**Key Risk Identified**	**Significance**	**Probability**		**Strategy**	**Effectiveness**	**Action Plan**	**Responsibility**	
PA1: NGO Sector Observatory	• The Operating environment for NGOs becomes more restrictive • Competition from other NGOs claiming similar spaces • NGO agendas compromised by donors and government	High Medium Medium	Medium High High	High Medium Medium	• Intensify campaign for a better operating environment • Strengthen collaboration with all NGO networks • Effectively implement the QuAM and highlight "value" of NGOs	Medium High High	• Continuously highlight the value of NGOs to Uganda • Challenge restrictive instruments in law • Joint planning with other NGOs • Enhance NGO Forum visibility • Widely publicize and promote the QuAM and lessons • Undertake and disseminate research on "value of NGOs"	Director of Programmes Executive Director and SMT Coordinator, Membership Servicing and SMT	Medium Low Low
PA2: Policy Engagement and Enhancement	• An increasingly closed (non participatory) policy and decision making process • Dramatic changes in the political context	High High	Medium Medium	Medium	• Engage more effectively in shaping the policy agenda • Long term thinking and scenario building	Medium High	• Research and advocacy • Organise several NGO leaders' reflections/thinking sessions	Coordinator, Policy Engagement, Executive Director, SMT and the NGO Forum Board	Medium
PA3: Membership and Constituency Servicing	• Abuse of the QuAM process by the state, NGOs and donors • Increased state restriction of citizen mobilization initiatives	High High	Medium High	Medium High	• Ensure that the QuAM remains an NGO managed process • Promote greater unity and solidarity amongst NGOs	High Medium	• Widely publicise the QuAM and continuously document its value and best practices • Implement intra and inter NGO solidarity initiatives	• Coordinator, Membership Servicing and SMT and DENIVA • SMT, Board and other NGOs	Medium Medium
PA4: Institutional Strengthening	• Resistance to some governance reforms by some members	High	Medium	Medium	• Adopt a progressive rather than a quick fix approach	High	• Introduce the idea first to NEC, then National Council and finally GM	• Current NEC and then the future Board	High

Risk					Risk Management Strategy				
Impact Analysis				Gross Risk	Strategy		Action Plan		Net Risk
Programme Area (PA)	**Key Risk Identified**	**Significance**	**Probability**		**Strategy**	**Effectiveness**	**Action Plan**	**Responsibility**	
	• Failure to identify the right calibre of persons for the 1/3rd Board provision	Medium	Low	Low	• Develop sound criteria and guidelines	High	• Have face to face meetings with high calibre and competent persons	• Executive Director and NGO Forum Board	Low
	• Failure to realise adequate and the right type of resources to support various institutional programmes	High	Medium	Medium	• Develop a robust fundraising and marketing strategy	High	• Mobilise money from diversified donor groups and members • Improve NGO Forum bargaining power	• Executive Director, supported by SMT • Finance Sub Committee • Executive Director and SMT	Low Medium Low

A PLATFORM FOR NGOS TO INFLUENCE GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN UGANDA

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