

FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL: THE STATE OF GRASS-ROOT CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN 'POST-TRANSITION' GHANA*

Kwame Boafo-Arthur

Introduction

The role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in democratic consolidation and socio-political development cannot be overemphasized. This realization has assumed greater importance in Ghana since the transition to constitutional rule in 1993 after almost twelve years of military dictatorship. There has been heightened interest since then by scholars and donors who perceive strong and vibrant civil society organizations as crucial in consolidating the democratic process. The specific role CSOs should play has become an issue of great concern. The fact is, many of the CSOs, especially those operating at the grass-root, are laboring under structural, financial, legal and administrative constraints.

In general terms, CSOs could be seen simultaneously as "a product of and an input to the trajectories of nation-states."¹ Various kinds of socio-political organizations which seek to socially reproduce, to agitate for change, exhibit support or disagreement on socio-economic and political issues have contributed in shaping civil society worldwide.

Larry Diamond identifies seven of these groups, which include: 1) *economic* (productive and commercial associations and networks); 2) *cultural* (religious, ethnic, communal, and other institutions and associations that defend collective rights, values, faiths, beliefs, and symbols); 3) *informational and educational* (devoted to the promotion and dissemination--whether for profit or not--of public knowledge, ideas, news, and information); 4) *interest-based* (designed to advance or defend the common functional or material interests of their members, whether workers, veterans, pensioners, professionals, or the like); 5) *developmental*

* A significant portion of the second part of this paper dealing with the outcome of the fieldwork is drawn from a study commissioned in 1997 in Ghana by the International Federation of Electoral Systems (IFES). The views and interpretations are that of the author.

¹ Allan Fowler, "Strengthening Civil Society in Transition Economies--From Concept to Strategy: Mapping an Exit via a Maze of Mirrors," in Andrew Clayton (ed.) *NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracy in Transitional Societies* (Oxford: INTRAC Publications, 1996) 12.

(organizations that combine individual resources to improve the infrastructure, institutions, and quality of life of the community); 6) *issue-oriented* (movements for environmental protection, women's rights, land reform, or consumer protection); and 7) *civic* (seeking in nonpartisan fashion to improve the political system and make it more democratic through human rights monitoring, voter education and mobilization, poll-watching, anti-corruption efforts, and so on).²

In any democratic setting, civil society has become the locus from which regime legitimacy is sought. While this power to confer legitimacy on political regimes could easily be ascribed to CSOs in developed polities, the same cannot be said for many developing or underdeveloped societies for various reasons. In the first instance, the high levels of illiteracy make it difficult for a majority of the citizenry to realize the essence of their various constitutionally guaranteed rights, the need to fight for desirable changes in their living conditions, and their right to participatory roles in national decision-making. Second, leaders in many developing and underdeveloped countries tend to suppress the rights of citizens. This, in turn, marginalizes CSOs and thereby trivializes their various societal roles. Third, poverty constricts the ability of members of CSOs to strengthen their social/economic base. Some are therefore open to co-optation by political leaders thus subverting their independence. A corollary to this is the high cost of living that has consigned many members of CSO to the fringes of mainstream society. Consequently, the tendency has been to look for external support instead of marshaling domestic resources to develop.

This paper examines the state of grass-root civil society organizations in Ghana. By grass-root CSOs I am referring specifically to those civil society organizations which have a majority of their members in local communities. The general notion of CSOs seems to reflect those organizations whose activities and influences are felt in urban centers. The tendency has been to ignore the existence of associational groups with predominantly rural membership. A significant number of civil society organizations that project the interest of rural members could be found alongside the notable ones³ that are largely urban-based. The role of these

² Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5.3 (1994): 6.

³ The notable ones include the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), Association of Recognized Professional Bodies (ARPBS), the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS), the Christian Council of Ghana, The Ghana Journalist Association etc. These groups are based in the cities and

grass-root organizations in the struggle for democratic consolidation is yet to be accorded the necessary recognition.

Consolidating democracy is a difficult process and the role of grass-root CSOs is significant in the Ghanaian context. The fact is that the majority of the population is rural and illiterate; yet their votes are significant in determining who should rule the country. It is in this light that this research was undertaken with a view to assessing the democratic propensities of some of these organizations. The underlying assumption of this paper, therefore, is that Ghanaian CSOs at the local level are internally democratic, broad-based and largely self-sufficient. As such, prospects for democratic consolidation in the long term is bright if these CSOs are encouraged to improve upon their various roles.

The first part of this paper examines state-civil society relations in Ghana since 1988.⁴ The second part is divided into subsections and embodies the analysis of fieldwork aimed at assessing the state of grass-root civil society organizations with specific reference to their democratic inclinations. The objective is to find out about the democratic nature of these organizations and by implication their potential in the national struggle for democratic consolidation.

State-Civil Society Relations Since 1988

The history of civil society organizations in post-independence Ghana has been full of memorable incidents. Many CSOs had no autonomy due to co-optation while others had to recoil on account of governmental repression and intimidation. Yet, others could not function effectively on account of several constraints including poor organization and lack of focus.⁵

their activities rarely reflect the aspirations of a majority of Ghanaians living in the rural communities.

⁴ For discussions on the state of Civil Society before 1988 see Kofi Drah, "Civil Society and the Transition to Pluralist Democracy," in K. A. Ninsin and F. K. Drah (eds.) *Political Parties and Democracy in Ghana's Fourth Republic* (Accra: Woeli Publishers, 1993). See also E. Gyimah-Boadi (1994) "Associational Life, Civil Society and Democratization in Ghana" in Harbeson J. W. et. al. *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1994).

⁵ F. K. Drah, "Civil Society and the Transition to Pluralist Democracy," in K. A. Ninsin and Kofi Drah (eds.) *Political Parties and Democracy in Ghana's Fourth Republic* (Accra: Woeli Publishers, 1993); and E. Gyimah-Boadi, "Associational Life, Civil Society and Democratization in Ghana," in Harbeson et. al. *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1994).

Notwithstanding the various limitations faced by some of these groups in Ghana in particular, and Africa in general,⁶ their activities have tended to limit the power of the state especially during military regimes. In some instances, the active ones that operate at the national level, such as the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), have defied governmental interference over the years and continue not only to exist but also to play a very useful role in the struggle to consolidate democracy.

Across Africa the potency and vibrancy of CSOs in socio-political, cultural and environmental issues have been clearly identified. Various CSOs have succeeded in articulating societal demands along developmental lines in the social, political and economic fields. Regimes across Africa in general and Ghana in particular have developed a kind of love-hate relationship with civil society. The inescapable truth that many rulers have now recognized, however, is that popular acceptance as noted by Michael Bratton,⁷ "is manufactured by institutions of civil society." While conceding to the fact of complementary relationship between state and civil society with the social institutions of the latter serving "the hegemonic function of justifying state domination," Bratton equally recognizes civil society's potency for dissent. Conflict between civil society and the state arises anytime the former exercises its right of dissent.

In Kenya and Zambia, associational agitation provided the openings for political transformation in the former and transition in the latter. The different political outcomes in the two countries are symptomatic of the nature of civil society in each country. Ghana's own transition to democratic governance in 1993 cannot be meaningfully discussed without mentioning the role of CSOs.⁸ As early as 1982, many social organizations realizing the essence of democratic pluralism to national development demanded a return to constitutional rule after the coup of December 31, 1981 by Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings. Some of these demands were backed by strike actions, especially by the Ghana Bar Association (GBA). It is equally important to note that several of the CSOs played significant roles in Ghana's transition process by sending representatives to the Consultative Assembly which hammered into being the 1992 Constitution of Ghana.

⁶ See Harbeson et. al. *Civil Society and the State in Africa*.

⁷ Michael Bratton, "Civil Society and Political Transition in Africa," in Harbeson et. al. *Civil Society and the State in Africa*, 59.

⁸ K. Bofo-Arthur, "The International Community and Ghana's Transition to Democracy," in K. A. Ninsin (ed.) *Transition to Democracy in Africa* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1998).

The strength, success, and assertiveness of civil associations in Ghana relate positively to the nature of the state. Where the state becomes weakened, as under the Acheampong/SMC regimes, associational life gains vibrancy, but where the state resorts to its coercive, hegemonic and domineering power by whichever medium, civil associations lose their independence and assertiveness. As noted by Gyimah-Boadi "civil associations and civil society have been rather too dependent on the capabilities and predilections of state and regime". Consequently, "it has been difficult for civil associations to stand up to state and regime and get away with it."⁹

In Ghana, relations between civil society and the state became increasingly antagonistic due to the Provisional National Defense Council's (PNDC) intimidating tactics since it took over power in December 1981.¹⁰ Nonetheless, individuals and civil associational groups engaged in sporadic attacks on government policies and methods of governance. A notable example of an individual attack on the PNDC was on the occasion of the annual J.B. Danquah Memorial Lectures in 1988 delivered by Professor A. Adu-Boahen. In the said lecture, the PNDC's oppressive and dictatorial rule, its chaotic economic policies, its alleged ethnic inclinations and aversion to democratic government, as well as its brutal actions were vehemently attacked by Adu-Boahen. For sure, the eminent scholar became the subject of various forms of attack by the government in the state-controlled media.

By the late 1980s, some established civic associations¹¹ had been able to withstand the various pressures exerted on the rights of individuals and civic associations by the PNDC. Sadly, however, the notable Association of Recognized Professional Bodies (ARPB) had at the same time become a pale shadow of itself. It must be recalled that the ARPB

⁹ Gyimah-Boadi, 144.

¹⁰ For further discussion on these intimidating tactics of the PNDC see the following: Eboe Hutchful, "Military Policy and Reform in Ghana," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 35.2 (1997); A. Adu-Boahen, *The Ghanaian Sphinx; Reflections on the Contemporary History of Ghana: 1972-1987* (Accra: Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1992); James C. W. K. Ahiakpor, "The success and failure of Dependency Theory: The Experience of Ghana," *International Organization* 39.3 (Summer 1985); and Kwame Boafo-Arthur, "Ghana's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs): Interrogating PNDC's Implementation" *International Journal of African Studies* (forthcoming).

¹¹ These included the GBA, the University Teachers' Association of Ghana (UTAG), the Catholic Bishops Conference (CBC), the National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) and the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG).

played a pivotal role in the struggle against Acheampong's military dictatorship in the late 1970s.¹²

Many reasons account for the ineffectiveness of ARPB during the PNDC era. Quite apart from the regime's authoritarianism which led to the detention of some radical members of the association, other members went into voluntary exile for political and/or economic reasons. The most serious problem was the readiness with which some of the members accepted sinecure positions in the PNDC regime. In addition, some appeared to have compromised their positions by virtue of being direct beneficiaries of the IMF's structural adjustment programs (SAP).¹³

The point to be noted is that, during the period, many of the civic associations that were at the forefront in the struggle against military dictatorship in the late 1970s became completely docile. It must be underlined further that by virtue of the dominance of the state in so much of the formal sector of the Ghanaian economy, especially in the area of investment and employment, key social groups had become dependent on the government. They could therefore be manipulated. Most probably, the ARPB lost its dynamism and effectiveness because the PNDC adopted arm-twisting tactics which were worse than what Acheampong's SMC did.¹⁴

These notwithstanding, the association of orthodox Christian churches was comparatively stronger in their organizational set up, and could successfully oppose some of the policies of the PNDC. In 1989, the PNDC promulgated the Religious Bodies Registration Law (PNDC 221). Section 3 of Law 221 states that "every religious body in Ghana shall be registered ... and no religious body in existence in Ghana shall after three months from the commencement of the law operate as such unless it is registered under this law." The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the

¹² For details on the struggles between the Supreme Military Council I & II and the various associational groups see the references in footnote 4.

¹³ The beneficiaries of SAP include local agents of foreign business partners and consultants to such businesses and institutions providing specialized services such as hotels and advertising agencies; and top executives in private business who deal with foreign capital and have benefited from the injection of foreign capital into the economy. Many of these beneficiaries are incidentally members some of the civil society organizations. For further details see Kwame Bofo-Arthur "Ghana: Structural Adjustment, Democratization and the Politics of Continuity" *African Studies Review* (forthcoming).

¹⁴ E. Gyimah-Boadi (1990), "Economic Recovery and Politics in PNDC's Ghana," *The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 28.3. Works cited in note 4 also discuss aspects of the intimidating politics of the PNDC.

Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBC) felt the law was un-called-for and condemned it as an affront to religious freedom. The religious bodies refused to comply.

The Impact of Global Political Changes

The collapse of the communist bloc and the imposition of political conditionalities by donors on dictatorial and aid dependent regimes galvanized middle class associations, such as lawyers, university teachers, and students to intensify their demands for democratic changes in Ghana.

On August 1, 1990, a new civic association, The Movement for Freedom and Justice (MFJ), was formed. It was a broad and open nationwide movement with an overriding objective of campaigning for the restoration of democratic rule. Its chairman was Adu-Boahen, whose lectures in 1988 contributed significantly to the breakdown of the *culture of silence*. The movement castigated the government for the continued existence of the Newspaper Licensing Law (PNDCL 211) and condemned the existing atmosphere of fear, suspicion, intimidation and the culture of silence. These, they thought, were the direct outcomes of the imposition of oppressive laws. The movement therefore called for the repeal of the Preventive Custody Law (PNDCL 4); the Habeas Corpus Amendment Law (PNDCL 91); and sections of the Public Tribunal Law (PNDCL 78), which dealt with executions for political offenses.

The National Union of Ghanaian Students (NUGS) supported the broad objectives of the MFJ. On September 4, 1990, NUGS attacked the government's continued incarceration of political dissidents and the existence of oppressive laws in the country.

In May 1991, some leading members of the MFJ were arrested by the Bureau of National Investigation (BNI). They were released after some time. Due to the movement's popular appeal, the government adopted several other measures to stymie the MFJ's operation. On June 29, 1991, for instance, the police stopped a mammoth rally organized by MFJ on the grounds that it had no permit.

Not to be left out of the political agitation of the time, the GBA on June 11, 1991, at an emergency meeting, renewed its earlier call on the PNDC to set a clear time-table for a return to constitutional rule. It again

called for the repeal of all repressive and draconian laws that hampered the freedom of expression and undermined individual liberties.

The traders of Accra demonstrated the potency of associational groups when they defied the orders of the PNDC. Without any formal consultation, with the representatives of the traders, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) raised the annual fees levied on traders from 20,000 to 50,000 cedis. On July 2, 1991, the Ghana Union Traders Association (GUTA) organized about 1,000 traders to protest against the increase. They also called for the removal of the Metropolitan Secretary, Mr. E. T. Mensah, from office. A meeting between representatives of GUTA and the AMA officials led to a 20% reduction of the new fee. The payment of the revised fees was spread over one year. The general members of GUTA, however, rejected the deal accepted by their leaders and organized another massive protest on July 4, 1991. Consequently, the AMA rescinded its decision to raise the annual fees. The major casualty of the confrontation between GUTA and AMA was the Metropolitan Secretary who was replaced by the government.

Opposition to the government by civil society organizations intensified when the PNDC announced the timetable for a return to constitutional rule. Associational groups attacked the mode adopted by the National Commission for Democracy (NCD) to gather public opinion on the democratic future of the country. The organized regional fora that were believed to have been manipulated to keep away known opponents of the PNDC government came under severe criticism. The modus operandi was attacked by the GBA, NUGS, the CCG and CBC. In 1991, for instance, the CBC in a document titled "The Catholic Church and Ghana's Search for a New Democratic System," was highly critical of the vagueness surrounding a fixed date for return to constitutional normalcy. The NUGS further attacked the Chairman of the PNDC for failing to address very crucial issues in a speech he made on March 5, 1992. These issues were:

1. Repealing of the repressive laws; PNDC Laws 4, 78, 91, etc.
2. Granting of unconditional amnesty to political exiles;
3. The immediate release of all political prisoners.

In sum, it must be stressed that it was from 1990 that a congruence of domestic events, largely influenced by the landmark changes in the international system, strengthened civil society organizations to confront the ruling elite for democratic changes. The struggle involved various

social forces that often acted individually or in concert with like-minded forces to oppose the military regime. Unrelenting struggles by civic associations led to the emergence of the private press just before the ban on political activities was lifted on May 18, 1992. The vast majority of civic associations that opposed the government especially after the collapse of the Eastern bloc, were incorporated into newly-formed political parties.

Post-Transitional Developments

The transition to democracy in 1993 did not put a stop to individual and associational confrontation with the government. A typical example was the struggle for diversity in broadcasting. Article 162(3) of the 1992 constitution of Ghana provides: "there shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a license as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper, journal or other media for mass communication or information."

However, translating this constitutional provision in a post-transition era became problematic. Various civic organizations, including religious groups and the Independence Media Corporation of Ghana (IMCG), applied to the Frequency Board for frequencies on which to broadcast. The Frequency Board did not reply to any of the applications. Nonetheless, the IMCG went ahead to establish a private radio station called the *Radio Eye*. This private radio station started operating without a license after the Frequency Board had failed to grant it a license many months after it had applied for one. As a result, the police forcibly seized their equipment and closed the station down.

Some of the directors and operators of the station were charged with operating a private radio station without a license, contrary to sections 11 and 15 of the Telecommunications (Frequency Registration and Control) Decree, 1977 (SMCD 71). The Circuit Court imposed harsh bail terms on those charged. The IMCG, and those sympathetic to its cause, organized a demonstration to protest against what they thought was an infringement of the police on Article 162(3) of the Constitution. The protesters deemed the clamp down on the *Radio Eye* as an unconstitutional meddling with the right of freedom of expression, and the right to establish and operate an electronic media facility. In a follow-up application to the

High Court, those charged in the *Radio Eye* case argued that the compulsory closure of the radio station and the seizure of its equipment were a violation of their right to freedom of expression guaranteed in Article 21(1)(a) of the Constitution. It was argued that SMCD 71 that requires a license for the operation of a radio station is inconsistent with Article 162(3). In addition, Article 1(2) of the Constitution states: "This Constitution shall be the supreme law of Ghana and *any other law found to be inconsistent with any provision of this constitution shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void*" (my emphasis). The constitutionality of SMCD 71 is yet to be determined after the High Court had made an interim order prohibiting the Circuit Court from going on with the trial of the accused persons.

Another significant post-transition confrontation between the government and a civic association occurred on May 11, 1995. On March 1, 1995, the NDC government imposed a 17% Value Added Tax (VAT) on Ghanaians. A group that calls itself the Alliance for Change (AFC) composed of a cross-section of opposition parties, successfully mobilized many urban dwellers in Accra to protest against the VAT. Contrary to the constitutional provisions in Article 21(1)(d) that guarantees freedom of assembly including freedom to take part in processions and demonstrations, pro-government supporters allegedly, made-up of largely former CDR members, attacked the protesters. Four of the protesters were reportedly killed.

Earlier in 1993, in the case of the *New Patriotic Party versus Inspector General of Police*, the party had successfully argued against Sections 12 (c) and 13 of the Public Order Decree, 1972 (NRCD 68), which made it an offense to take part in a demonstration without a permit. One would have expected that two years after the transition, these clauses of the constitution would have been upheld, after a holistic appraisal of the unconstitutional implications of NRCD 68 and SMCD 71.

The point to be noted, however, is that the successful anti-government demonstration by a civic group against the introduction of a VAT in 1995, which led to its speedy withdrawal, was a watershed in the nation's constitutional evolution; and underlines the potency, vibrancy, and prospects of civil society organization. There is now the realization that civic associations could agitate for various socio-political and economic policy changes.

At the moment, CSOs appear to have different levels of vibrancy and health. It is also clear from the foregoing analysis that the various CSOs that engaged in several forms of agitation for democratic rule are urban-based. This is not good enough for the nurturing of democracy in Ghana. For sure, the state of health of grass-root organizations is crucial to a successful deepening of democracy in Ghana. A lot, therefore, remains to be done. It is precisely in this light that the activities of grass-root organizations become relevant. Fighting for democratic consolidation should not be left on the shoulders of only the urban-based associational groups, if only for the simple reason that a majority of the population lives in rural areas.

The State of Grass-Root Associational Groups

The assessment below is based on fieldwork carried out in the ten administrative regions of Ghana. The survey covered 121 professional or trade associations, 10 advocacy groups, 41 service providers and 37 community development organizations.

The range of associational groups interviewed is very broad. This is because civil society encompasses a vast array of organizations, formal and informal. The activities of grass-root civil society organizations, however, overlap in the Ghanaian context. This is due to the fact that a developmental association may at the same time carry on advocacy activities.

The focus was on questions meant to find out whether CSOs are democratic, broad-based, and/or self-sufficient. Relevant questions meant to ascertain the state of the organizations were posed and the answers coded. The underlying supposition of this segment of the assessment, as noted above, is that Ghanaian CSOs at the local level are internally democratic, broad based and self-sufficient. Democratic values could therefore be consolidated in the long-run if the grass-root organizations continue to educate members and non-members alike.

In terms of their democratic inclinations, it could be argued on the basis of the fieldwork, that grass-root organizations are potent and vibrant, though a lot remains to be done to ensure effective education of the rural communities about democratic norms or values.

Are Grass-Root Civil Society Organizations Democratic?

The democratic nature of any organization is crucial for its own survival and the ability to infuse a democratic ethos into its members. Larry Diamond argues:

The internal democratic character of civil society itself affects the degree to which it can socialize participants into democratic -- or undemocratic -- forms of behavior. If the groups and organizations that make up civil society are to function as "large free schools" for democracy, they must function democratically in their internal processes of decision-making and leadership selection. Constitutionalism, representation, transparency, accountability, and rotation of elected leaders within autonomous associations will greatly enhance the ability of these associations to inculcate such democratic values and practices in their members.¹⁵

To ascertain the democratic nature of local CSOs, the following issues were taken into consideration in formulating and administering the questionnaire to the respondents:

- promotion of democracy by CSOs
- CSOs' concern about issues of social justice
- the method for the election of leaders
- the nature of the decision-making process of CSOs
- how CSOs elicit opinions from their members

Analyses of responses of CSOs to questions based on the foregoing issues are examined below.

a) *Promotion of Democracy*

A major finding by the study is that almost all local CSOs showed the willingness to promote democracy and actually engaged in activities aimed at promoting democracy in their localities or among their constituent

¹⁵ Larry Diamond, 12.

members. Though the capacity of CSOs in the promotion of democracy varies from each group depending especially on the nature or type of CSO, invariably a significant majority of them have contributed in more than one way to the cultivation and inculcation of democratic norms in the body politic.

Some of the CSOs routinely carry out aspects of the following activities in order to promote democracy:

1. Advising members to get involved in politics and also to exercise their franchise.
2. Attending political rallies and other democratically-oriented education programs for organized groups.
3. Attending briefing sessions organized by the Electoral Commission (EC) and the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE).
4. Participating in education programs organized for the electorate by the EC and the NCCE especially in the villages.
5. Encouraging members to interact with officials of District Assemblies (DAs), especially the local assembly members in order to advise and also make the wishes and expectations of the members of CSOs known by the assembly.
6. Participating in District Assembly (DA) sessions as observers.
7. Affluent CSOs such as the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU) release vehicles on polling day to convey voters, officials, and voting materials to polling centers in some districts.
8. Educating their members on the need to ensure peaceful elections at all times.
9. Educating their members on their civic rights, duties and obligations.
10. Presenting of memoranda by some of the CSOs to the consultative Assembly which drew up the 1992 constitution (e.g. the Manya Krobo Youth Association).
11. Taking custody of election materials in the absence of a functional police station (e.g. the Dademaitse Union of Asewewa in the Eastern Region).

12. Involving members of some CSOs in the supervision and management of the elections.
13. Inviting the Electoral Commission (EC) and NCCE officials to visit members and educate them on political tolerance, and how to vote.
14. Organizing educational programs on the rights of children (e.g. the Suntaa Nuntaa of Wa in the Upper East Region).

A simple interpretation of these varied activities normally carried out by various CSOs demonstrate lucidly the willingness of such organizations to promote democracy by not only instilling democratic norms in their members but also advising them to exercise their democratic rights.

This apparently strong propensity to promote democracy is a common feature of a majority of grass-root CSOs surveyed as Table 1 indicates.

TABLE 1: CSOs And the Promotion of Democracy

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	151	72.2
No	53	25.4
<u>Don't know/no response</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2.4</u>
TOTAL	209	100.0

Out of 209 respondents, 151 which represent 72.2% answered 'Yes' to the question: "In the past, has your organization acted in the District to promote democracy in Ghana?" Fifty-three (53) or 25.4% answered in the negative. Indisputably, the various means through which a majority of the CSOs promote democracy (as enumerated above) and the high 72.2% of CSOs which actively promote democracy augurs well for the nation's efforts at democratic institutional building and democratic consolidation.

What must be of concern to stakeholders in the quest for democratic consolidation are the reasons offered by some of the CSOs whose agenda do not encompass activities aimed at promoting democracy. First, their organizations are apolitical and since the promotion of democracy is necessarily a political activity, any such activity would conflict with their long-term objectives. Second, partisan politics by nature tend to polarize societies. To maintain cohesion within their organizations,

political discussions and activities geared towards the promotion of democracy must be kept at a minimum. Third, apart from exposing some members to danger, active promotion of democracy may also threaten the existence of the organization because members have different political orientations.

What seems to have been lost to those organizations which offered the foregoing reasons is that political education could be carried out in a very neutral manner by harping on commonalities such as respect for the rights of the disadvantaged in the society, rights of the individual, etc. However, one has to appreciate the position of these organizations in light of the nature of Ghanaian politics as well as ground rules for donor support. It seems the positions taken by such organizations were influenced by the fear of being branded a political organ of a political party. Such a charge may compromise their assumed neutrality and in the case of those organizations that are dependent on external funding may affect their sources of finance.

An interesting phenomenon that emerged from the study is that the correlation analysis of the variables pointed to the fact that groups with more women members tend not to promote democracy. It could be assumed then that most of the 25.4% who are not interested in the promotion of democracy are women's groups. A very strong negative correlation and an equally strong negative association between a group actively promoting democracy and the size of women in that group are also evident. That is, the more women there are in the group the weaker the propensity to promote democracy.

Another significant finding is the strong negative correlation, and an equally strong negative association, between the promotion of democracy and a group's geographical location. CSOs in the northern part of the country comprising the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions, have low propensities towards the promotion of democracy. Overall, however, strong CSOs such as the GPRTU with large national membership tend to promote democracy. The organization routinely carry out most of activities listed above.

b. *Concern about issues of social justice*

Social justice is a cliché of politicians — a favorite theme of political platforms — almost the summary definition of the accepted goals of modern society. Justice is both a legal and moral concept. However, it is crucial to conceptualize social justice not only as a matter of morality, but it must be equally construed as something contingent upon the social processes operating in society as a whole. As a democratic concept, social justice encompasses the citizens' concern for the rule of law, respect for the fundamental human rights of citizens, respect for minority rights, equality of the sexes, equity in the public allocation of national resources, empowerment of women and other disadvantaged groups, etc.¹⁶

A proper democratic setting or a group that claims democratic credentials must be equally concerned about issues of social justice. Thus, for democratic consolidation to be a reality, the pillars of democracy, i.e. civil society organizations, must be seen to be overly, and genuinely concerned about issues of social justice. The findings of the field work as Table 2 indicates supports the view that CSOs at the local level are concerned about social justice.

TABLE 2: Concern About Social Justice

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Very	167	79.9
Somewhat	18	8.6
Not very	19	9.1
Don't know/no response	5	2.4
TOTAL	209	100.0

Out of the 209 respondents, 167 or 79.9% indicated that they are very concerned about social justice; 8.6% and 9.1% respectively were somewhat concerned or not very concerned.

In line with their concern for social justice many of the CSOs engaged in arbitration of cases among their members. They also interceded where necessary to withdraw cases from the courts. Some of the groups

¹⁶For further and more informative explication of the concept see the following: Francis J. Beckwith and Todd E. Jones (eds.) *Affirmative Action: Social Justice or Reverse Discrimination* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 1997); and Bruce A. Ackerman, *Social Justice in the Liberal State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

fight against the imposition of higher taxes that in their view will lead to the erosion of earned profits by their members. The concern for social justice compelled the Manya Krobo Youth Association to petition the President of Ghana to effect some political changes in the Manya Krobo District.

Expression of concern about the rights of the disabled came, not surprisingly, from the Ghana Association of the Blind (Nadowli District) and the Federation of Disabled Persons Association as well as Action on Disability and Development in the Upper East and Upper West Regions. The expression of concern about social justice by the Cattle Dealers Association in Navrongo revolved around the negative impact of cattle rustling. Cattle rustling is perpetrated by a syndicate controlled by wealthy local individuals, and supported by people in high authority, especially in the Upper East and West Regions. The desire for social justice has equally undermined the respect local people have for the police. The police allegedly set free cattle thieves who are arrested. Another grievance is that even those brought before the courts are often treated with leniency. This has also undermined trust and faith in the legal and judicial process. In sum, the concept of social justice, so far as most CSOs are concerned, could be reduced to the aphorism "each is his brothers' keeper". The rationale is that the development of one individual affects all.

However, the issue of social justice could well have been articulated more forcefully by advocacy CSOs. The weakness or non-existence of the advocacy groups creates a big vacuum in the functioning of civil society especially at the local level. Many individuals are not aware of their rights. Such advocacy groups could effectively champion this struggle and offer the most informed suggestions and opinions at the local level with respect to rights and responsibilities of individuals. These advocacy groups should be encouraged to join with the national Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) in various districts to champion the cause of peoples' rights. It augurs well for the nation that the NCCE is currently doing its best to open offices in all districts to augment those already existing in the ten regional capitals. In the final analysis, CSOs' concern about social justice, and the struggles to ensure peoples' rights could be attained if the efforts of advocacy groups are complemented by the NCCE and CHRAJ.

c. *Internal Democracy*

How do members of the surveyed CSOs elect their leaders? To what extent are the mechanisms for the selection of leaders relevant to the promotion of democracy in Ghana? An attempt to promote democracy by CSOs will fail unless the CSO in question is itself democratic. Being internally democratic confers some level of moral authority to lead other groups or teach others the norms or ethos of democratic governance.

The issues raised and observations made by various CSOs exhibited adherence to internal democratic principles. First, almost all of them have written constitutions. The implication is that the members of the organizations as well as the elected leaders performed their roles in line with constitutional provisions. The assumption is that the errant elected members could be sanctioned if found to be operating the organization contrary to constitutional stipulations. Second, many of them operate some form of formal management system and are therefore accountable to members in financial matters. For sure, the issue of good financial administration is equally crucial in any organization. Thus the existence of formal financial management practices among the grass-root organizations also exhibit their seriousness and the determination of members to ensure transparency and accountability. Third, a majority of the grass-root organizations surveyed have acceptable mode of changing their leadership. This is normally through democratic elections. In some instances, representatives of the Electoral Commission supervise elections to executive positions.

However, the tenure of elected executive members, i.e. president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, vary from CSO to CSO. While some hold office for two years, others prefer three-or-four year tenures. In other cases, officials are elected at delegate conferences to be approved at general meetings by all members. In sum, the key point is that officials are mostly elected by CSOs (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: Selection of Officials

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Elected	194	92.8
Non-elected	10	4.8
<u>Don't know/no response</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2.4</u>
TOTAL	209	100.0

Out of the 209 CSOs surveyed, 194 representing 92.8% have elected officials. Only 10 or 4.8% have non-elected officials. Thus, the internal democracy of local CSOs is not in doubt. The implication then, is that, the elected officials are bound to be responsible and accountable because of institutionalized periodic elections for executive members.

One interesting phenomenon that emerged is the relatively few women who contest for executive positions in most of these CSOs. Apart from the predominantly women's organizations like the Bakers and Hairdressers associations, few women participate in executive decision-making in most of the organizations.

d. *An Open Decision-Making Process*

A democratic system must have an open decision-making process. This will ensure transparency, accountability, and the fostering of members' faith in the system being operated.

The CSOs showed open decision-making. The democratically elected executives meet to make decisions. However, every executive decision is subject to ratification by members at a general meeting. In some instances, when there is an emergency issue to be discussed the executive meet and decide on the issue. If it is not an emergency issue, it is discussed at a full meeting of the membership and the executive.

At times too, the executives make major decisions but often in consultation with the relevant traditional authorities. This mode of open decision-making is a characteristic of the Queenmothers' Association. The rationale would seem to be that because Queenmothers are repositories of traditional norms and practices, major decisions concerning the institution must have the concurrence or support of the Traditional Council or the Regional House of Chiefs. The process of consulting the Traditional Council or the Regional House of Chiefs becomes imperative when the issue at stake affects the culture of the people they represent. By implication, decisions arrived at are bound to have wider acceptance because of the input made by Traditional Councils, which to some extent are the spiritual heads of the areas concerned.

TABLE 4: Persons Making Decisions

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Fewer than five	34	16.2
Five or more	173	82.8
<u>Don't know/no response</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1.0</u>
TOTAL	209	100.0

In sum, Table 4 clearly shows that no decision is arbitrarily made and imposed on the members of any CSO. From the survey, only 16.2% or 34 out of the 209 CSOs' leaders interviewed have fewer than five people taking decisions. As many as 173 out of 209 CSOs or 82.8% have five or more persons making decisions. This clearly shows that decision making in the CSOs is not arbitrary. It is always the outcome of participatory deliberations by many members of the organization.

e. Eliciting Opinions From Their Members

A democratic organization must have an acceptable means of eliciting opinions and suggestions from the general membership. The local CSOs surveyed adopted formal and informal approaches to garnering information or opinions from the general membership.

Informally, members and the executive frequently consult each other outside formal meetings. The executive also encourages informal interaction with a view to eliciting opinions from members. This is an advantage for members that are not good public speakers. Though they may have very good suggestions they may not be able to articulate them through the formal mode of general meetings. In most cases, however, opinions of the membership are expressed at meetings where suggestions are subjected to general debates before their acceptance or rejection.

Broad-Based CSOs

The following factors were taken into consideration in ascertaining whether a particular organization is broad-based or not, to gauge their democratic propensities: i) size; ii) conduct of membership drives; iii) willingness to mobilize volunteers for specific activities; and iv) co-operation with other organizations. These factors are examined in detail below.

The assumption as indicated in the omnibus hypothesis is that local CSOs are broad-based. Being broad-based implies coverage of wider constituents, which also implies the offering of services to many people. An organization with limited membership or membership made up of family members cannot qualify as a genuine civil society organization. Membership in such an organization will then be foreclosed to those outside the family circle.

The findings under this sub-heading show that local CSOs are broad-based and equally multifaceted in focus. That is, most CSOs perform more than one function. It is therefore very common to see professional associations advocating the interests of their members; advocacy groups providing services; and service providers engaging in community development. These activities are carried out in addition to a particular CSOs special interest or function.

On the basis of the broad-based nature of local CSOs other relationships were found. For instance, a group with many members tends to have the following features: a) smaller percentage of women; b) large overall budget; c) less monetary contribution per member; d) is consulted by the District Assembly; and e) largely located in the southern part of the country. For the purposes of this research the southern part of the country comprises the nine districts visited by the fieldwork teams in Western, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, and Southern Volta regions.

It was also found that a CSO with predominantly women members tends to have the following characteristics: fewer members; not much concern about social justice; and little interest in the promotion of democracy.

a. *Size*

The nature and orientation of certain CSOs determine the size of their membership. For instance, the Queenmothers' Association is by implication restricted because, by its very nature, others who are not queenmothers cannot join. Again, where a particular organization operates could also determine its size. Professional associations in populous areas are bound to have many more members than in less populous areas. Membership of the various CSOs range from 12 as for instance, for the Bakers Association of Asokwa in Ashanti, to 1,000,000 members of the

Ghana National Association of Farmers in New Edubiase, also in Ashanti. The median number of membership for the 209 CSOs interviewed is 60, but the average number is about 10,500. The explanation is that a few groups having huge memberships pushed the average up.

Again, some CSOs are predominantly male and others predominantly female. This could be explained by the fact that certain professions such as carpentry is a male preserve while hairdressing seems to be the preserve of women. The median figure of women members of the CSOs is, however, 38.

Furthermore, some of the CSOs have links with an overall National Association. Very good examples are the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU), Pensioners, and the Ghana National Association of Farmers and Fishermen (GNAFF). Others, by their nature are district-based. A typical example is the Dadematseime Union of Asewewa in the Manya Krobo District of the Eastern Region. It is a farmers' group in the district without any links whatsoever to the national body. Groups in the north also tend to have fewer members. Overall, the percentage of women members tends to be smaller across the country.

What must be noted further is that not all of the CSOs are broad-based. With the exception of a few like the GPRTU, Ghana National Association of Garages (GNAG), GNAFF, Hairdressers, etc., the rest are peculiar to particular districts and regions. All of them are broad-based if one takes the district as big enough to constitute a sufficient base for such organizations.

b. *Membership Drive*

A viable and dynamic CSO intent on sustaining its existence ought to engage in intense membership drives. Such membership drives where successful are bound to broaden the base of the organization quantitatively and financially.

Some associations engage in serious membership drives because of competition with other associations for membership by the same group of people. For instance, the GPRTU competes with the Ghana Co-operative Transport Association and Progressive Transport Owners Association for the membership of drivers. Memberships of certain organizations are by implication compulsory (e.g. Distillers Association). For those whose membership is compulsory, it is mandatory for one to obtain a license from

the national or district body before operating. Due to the nature of some groups (e.g. Town Development Committee), no membership drive is made because every adult inhabitant of the town is deemed to be a bona fide member.

Interestingly, a high 74.6%, which represent 156 out of the 209 CSOs interviewed, claim that they conduct membership drives; 23.4% representing 49 out of the total number conduct no membership drives (see table 5).

TABLE 5: Conducts Membership Drives

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	156	74.6
No	49	23.5
<u>Don't know/no response</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1.9</u>
TOTAL	209	100.0

A major explanation for the high percentage of membership drives is that many of the CSOs depend on membership dues as their main source of income. It is therefore necessary to conduct membership drives so as to widen the financial base of the organization. In instances where membership confers certain advantages such as loans from the banks or funding agencies, it becomes relatively easier to entice members to the organization. For instance, members of the GPRTU benefit from government-guaranteed loans for the purchase of vehicles. Farmers' associations in various districts also help each other by engaging in collective farming or the hiring of bullocks for the plowing of members' farm, etc. Hairdressers and tailors associations also help each other by contributing to buy supplies in bulk, thereby reducing costs.

Overall, engaging in membership drives is crucial to the survival of some CSOs. Some members of professional or trade associations are equally aware of the benefits of membership and thus embrace the organization's activities wholeheartedly.

c. Mobilization of Volunteers for Specific Activities

The relevance of CSOs in any democracy is not gauged solely by its ability to mount civic education programs but also in its ability to convince

and mobilize people in the community to carry out specific voluntary activities. Thus, one of the yardsticks for assessing the democratic nature of CSOs is its propensity to mobilize others to engage in activities that are beneficial to the society at large. In the survey, however, it came to light as Table 6 shows that about half of the CSOs do not mobilize outside support for public activities. This does not mean that such CSOs do not undertake activities beneficial to the society.

TABLE 6: Mobilization of Volunteers

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	104	49.8
No	101	48.3
<u>Don't know/no response</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1.9</u>
TOTAL	209	100.0

While 49.8% of the organizations surveyed claim that they mobilize outside support for specific activities, 48.3% claim that no such mobilization is done.

In fact, some of the groups mobilize the members of other CSOs for communal labor. For instance, the Africa Youth Network of New Edubiase in Ashanti often mobilized the members of 31 December Women's Movement (DWN), National Youth Council, Market Women's Association and GPRTU for communal labor such as general cleaning, building of schools, construction of places of convenience, etc. The Dademantsei Union of Asewewa in the Manya Krobo district of the Eastern Region mobilized the people to seize the market, to remove the District Chief Executive, and for various kinds of communal labor. There have been instances where members of civil associations as well as non-members mobilized to protest against tax increases by the District Assemblies. The Ghana National Association of Garages (GNAG) mobilized photographers, hairdressers, and dressmakers to appeal to the district administration to reduce taxes. In sum, there have been instances of both intra-association and inter-association mobilizations. Whilst in some cases the mobilization is motivated by group interest, most forms of intra- and inter-organizations' mobilization are for general developmental purposes unrelated to the specialized function of the association but beneficial to the community at large.

d. *Co-operation with Other Organizations*

As shown in the preceding section, some of the associations could at times mobilize others who are not of the same association for communal activities. This becomes necessary when the members of various organizations have common or overlapping interests. It could be said on the basis of the findings indicated in Table 7 that there is a high level of co-operation among CSOs.

TABLE 7: Cooperates with other Organizations

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	137	65.6
No	67	32.1
Don't know/no response	5	2.4
TOTAL	209	100.0

Of the CSO interviewed 65.6% cooperate with other CSOs. They cooperate to undertake some of the following activities:

- (a) cleaning of the community, including the weeding of water courses where there are no pipe-borne water systems
- (b) constructing schools, markets and places of convenience
- (c) tree planting/ forestation
- (d) protesting against what some term as arbitrary increases in artisan registration fees by some District Assemblies.

It could be assumed, then, that majority of CSOs have no problem interacting among themselves for common purposes. This high level of co-operation among CSOs augurs well for the building of grassroots democracy.

Are CSOs Self-Sufficient?

Self-sufficiency in this context implies financial independence. This is necessary in any organization that intends to maintain autonomy. It may be necessary under certain circumstances to obtain external funding to carry out specific activities without necessarily compromising a group's

autonomy. That is, financial self-sufficiency is likely to ensure that no external group(s) unduly influence the CSOs in question to the point of undermining its focus or original objective. The tendency has usually been for financial supporters of certain organizations to dictate the mode of operation and objectives of such dependent organizations.

Under this heading the following factors or issues were considered: a) sources of funding; b) ability to borrow money; c) budget size; d) access to external sources of funding; and e) ability to meet set objectives with their resources.

a. *Sources of Funding*

A financially self-sufficient organization is able to carry out its projects without much difficulty. When, however, an organization is bereft of financial resources the attainment of set objectives becomes a problem. Thus, the funding of CSOs is crucial to its expansion, development, sustainability and relevance in the society. The ability to carry out set objectives whether social, political or economic depends on effective funding.

Most of the CSOs surveyed, as Table 8 demonstrates, have more than one source of funding for their activities.

TABLE 8: Number of Sources of Funding

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
One source	98	46.9
More than one source	104	49.8
Don't know/no response	7	3.3
TOTAL	209	100.0

Only 3.3%, or 7 of the 209 CSOs surveyed, indicated that they did not know the source of funding or did not respond to the question: "What are your sources of funding?"

Those CSOs with only one source of funding depend on the monthly dues of members. Additional sources of funding for those with more than one source of funding include dues, donations, proceeds from enterprises, harvests, appeal for funds, fees charged on those absent from meetings and communal labor, etc. It must be noted in sum that, a group with more than one source of income tends to be a service provider or development

organization. It also emerged that such a group has fewer members and tends to mobilize support outside its members whilst at the same time receiving funds from external sources. There is therefore a close correlation between the type of CSO and the mobilization of outside support as well as external funding.

The GPRTU has the most consistent and most effective means of internal funding of their operations. The organization charges 10% commission per passenger fare for each trip. Drivers pay the fee before they leave their respective stations with passengers.

b. *Ability to Borrow Money*

Some of the CSOs depend on their own resources and borrowing. Such organizations are not many as Table 9 shows.

TABLE 9: Ability to Borrow Money

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	38	18.2
No	166	79.4
<u>Don't know/no response</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>2.4</u>
TOTAL	209	100.0

Only 18.2% or 38 of the number surveyed borrow money from the banks or the co-operatives. On the other hand, 79.4% or 166 of those interviewed do not borrow money from any source. This may seem to imply that majority of the CSOs are financially self-sufficient. This, however, is not the case because some of them (as section (d) below indicates) receive external funding.

It could be argued, however, that the more an organization depends on its own resources for development, the less dependent it is. From the figures therefore one can say that a majority of the CSOs (79.4%) do not borrow from the banks because they are self-sufficient and independent.

c. Budget Size

Budget size may be determined by several factors such as the resources available or mobilized; resources or funds expected either from internal or external sources; and the nature of project to be initiated or implemented.

One would have expected that with the high percentage of CSOs not borrowing from the banks or co-operatives many of them would be self-sufficient. The contrary, however, is the case. Most of the CSOs have a small budget that is insufficient for their needs. Table 10 makes it very clear that only 4.8% of the CSOs surveyed have budgets that are sufficient for their needs. A high 83.7% do not have enough resources for their operation and therefore have very small budgets.

TABLE 10: Budget is Sufficient for Needs

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	10	4.8
No	175	83.7
Don't know/no response	24	11.5
TOTAL	209	100.0

A major explanation is that many of these CSOs have only one source of income, that is the payment of membership dues. Even those with more than one source of income do not have enough to cater for their needs. It is not surprising therefore that the budget sizes are very skewed. For instance, while the Rural Women's Association of Navrongo, Upper East Region has a budget of 2.1 billion cedis, Action on Disability and Development 448 million cedis, and Suntaa Nuntaa 162 million cedis, others have a budget which is as low as 20,000 cedis per annum.

All the groups with a large annual budget tend to have more members. However, the skewed nature of CSOs' budget, with a median of 240,000 cedis, and an average of 24.875 million cedis is due to the huge external funding that some of the CSOs receive.

d. Access to External Sources of Funding

As Table 11 indicates, only 28.2% of the CSOs interviewed receive outside sources of funding. A high 64.1% receive no outside funding at all.

TABLE 11: Receives outside funding

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	59	28.2
No	134	64.1
<u>Don't know/no response</u>	16	7.7
TOTAL	209	100.0

It ought to be noted that it is those with outside sources of funding which tend to have large budgets. A majority of the CSOs surveyed in the "South,"¹⁷ and "Central,"¹⁸ depend mainly on monthly dues and others revenue sources such as fund raising, harvests, etc. On the other hand, most of the CSOs in the "North"¹⁹ have high doses of external funding. The high concentration of foreign NGOs and development agencies in the North seems to account for this. Another explanation is that the "North" is generally perceived as economically deprived. This explains the high infusion of external funding to some CSOs in this area by organizations such as the Adventist Relief Agency (ADRA), UNDP, Charity Project of UK, DFIND of UK, USAID, DANIDA, Catholic Relief Service, Red Cross, and IFAD.

For instance, the Rural Women's Association of Navrongo UE/R has an annual budget of 2.1 billion cedis. Apart from membership dues, it receives grants from external donors such as UNDP, CRS, and Red Cross. This tremendous assistance has enabled the organization to establish and run a credit scheme, embark on forestation, organize educational programs on outmoded cultural practices such as female genital mutilation etc. While the Upper Telania Women's Association receives grants from the UNDP and ILO, the Ananoore Development Association of Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region gets funding from ADRA and IFAD.

In some instances, a few of the CSOs receive external funding from the District Assembly Common Fund which is used in building new schools, constructing roads, and digging of wells or the provision of bore

¹⁷ For the purposes of the survey the districts covered were divided into South, Central and the North. The South comprised of nine districts in the Western, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra and Southern Volta Regions.

¹⁸ Central was made up of five districts in the Brong Ahafo, Ashanti and Northern Volta Regions.

¹⁹ The North comprised of six districts in Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions.

holes. The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) also supports some of the organizations financially.

In sum, most of the CSOs do not receive outside funding. A majority of the 28.2% that receive outside funding are found in the North of the country. It appears that this may be due to the large concentration of foreign NGOs in the area, and the generally accepted view by Ghanaians and foreigners that the northern parts of the country are comparatively under-developed. All other groups have to depend on internal resource mobilization.

From the survey, it emerged that providers of services and development organizations tend to have more than one source of funding and mobilize financial support from outside the membership. On the other hand, professional and advocacy groups tend to have only one source of funding and do not normally mobilize support outside their membership.

c. Ability to Meet Set Objectives

Given the paucity of resources, many of the CSOs are not able to meet their set objectives. This does not augur well for the long-term viability of such organizations. This contrasts with the service providers and development organizations that get sufficient external funding.

Conclusion

That grass-root CSOs in Ghana have a long way to go in sensitizing their members on democratic norms cannot be over-emphasized. Even though many of the CSOs have acted in some ways to promote democracy, a lot remains to be done. The major problem so far seems to be the attitude of associational groups in the Northern part of the country where members of CSOs fear to embark on activities aimed at the promotion of democracy. Their fears are based on what they perceive as the divisive nature of politics on the one hand, and the dangers they may expose themselves to if they engage in activities geared toward the promotion of democracy. Another disheartening feature is that those CSOs that are women-dominated do very little in the area of promoting democracy.

A lot of work needs to be done in order to conscientize these groups to know the overall benefit the organization, in particular, and the nation, in general, stand to derive from democratically vibrant CSOs.

Again, the women's groups do not only not promote democracy; they are equally unconcerned about issues of social justice. The implication is that if more of such women-dominated groups emerge, the issue of sensitizing people to know their democratic rights and be each other's keeper may also be wishful thinking. The issue of overall justice must be of concern to all CSOs, irrespective of the gender of that group. It appears, however, that the women's organizations are yet to draw a distinction between issues of social justice and partisan political activities. The lack of interest in issues of social justice may be attributed, among other factors, to the dominant and domineering role of the 31 December Women's Movement (DWM). This movement is under the leadership of the First Lady Nana Konadu Agyeman Rawlings. Although the movement is registered as a non-governmental organization (NGO) it has become a de facto women's wing of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC). The movement purports to educate members in particular and women in general about their fundamental rights, obligations, and issues of social justice. Because of the movement's immense political clout other women's organizations are cautious about embarking on certain programs. Many of them do not want to indulge in socio-political activities that may overlap with what the DWM has been doing for fear of incurring the wrath of the First Lady.²⁰ This may explain to some extent why the women's organizations confine themselves to issues deemed not to have political undertones.

There is also a very strong correlation between internal democracy and the type of CSOs. Professional and trade associations as well as advocacy groups are internally democratic. This means that these organizations elect their officers and have acceptable methods of learning about the opinions of their members. It is normally through meetings that are formally organized, and through informal interactions between elected executive members and the rank and file that the opinions of members are known.

²⁰ The 31 December Women's Movement under the crusading leadership of the First Lady has succeeded in hijacking the functions of older apolitical women's groups such as the National Council for Women and Development (NCWD). Assertive and independent women's organizations are likely to incur the wrath of the First Lady if their activities are not in sync with that of the DWM. None of the women's groups would like to be seen as a rival organization to that of the First Lady. To be on the safe side such organization refuse to indulge in anything that, in their view, has political implications.

Furthermore, a majority of the local CSOs could be deemed to be self-dependent, but they may not necessarily be self-sufficient. Only 59 or 28.2% out of the 209 groups receive some form of external funding. Thus even though not all of them are able to attain their set objectives, the fact that 64.1% depend on their own resources, however insufficient, they could, to a large extent, be deemed to be self-dependent in some way.

Local CSOs are also broad-based. They comprise professional or trade associations, advocacy groups, service providers and community development organizations. However, professional or trade associations form the bulk of CSOs. They represent 57.9% of the CSOs covered by the survey. It appears that their functions overlap. A professional organization may play an advocacy role apart from fighting for the interest of the group concerned. Many of the professional associations too are community development oriented and go out of their circumscribed confines to engage in the provision of services, and at times pursue community development objectives that may theoretically conflict with their status as professional or trade associations.

Finally, financial resources obtained through the payment of dues by members and grants through external sources are skewed. Whereas service providers and development organizations receive a lot of external funding especially from foreign government agencies and NGOs, advocacy groups and professional or trade associations are left to their fate. Again, whereas most of the external funding goes to service providers and community development organizations in Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions, those in the South are normally left to fight for survival. They depend mainly on their inadequate internal resources.

From the analysis, however, it is appropriate to state that local CSOs are internally democratic and broad based. However, a majority of them are not self-sufficient. Their resources are inadequate and not constant. Overall, the CSOs surveyed had average revenue of 24.851 million cedis per annum; this is not a fair representation of the financial strength of the organizations. The median figure of 240,000 cedis per annum makes sense although many of them have annual budgets less than 100,000 cedis per annum.

In light of the above findings it is suggested that service providers and development organizations in the South must be trained on how to write and submit proposals for external funding. This will assist such organizations to diversify their sources of revenue collection and be able to

attain their set objectives. Second, foreign NGOs ought to realize that many areas in the South also need external funding. Thus they have to pursue an even-handed policy in terms of the disbursement of funds for CSOs in the country. The propensity of the foreign NGOs and donor agencies to concentrate much more on northern CSOs than on southern CSOs is likely to undermine the potential of such southern CSOs. This is more crucial because CSOs in the South are comparatively more serious with the promotion of democracy than their northern counterparts. So, if the consolidation of democracy is the ultimate goal of such foreign NGOs and agencies, then it stands to reason that much more assistance is granted to those organizations with proven commitment towards the promotion of democracy. Third, foreign sponsors of northern CSOs must include on their agenda the education of those predominantly female CSOs that are averse to the promotion of democracy, and unconcerned about issues of social justice. Fourth, education must be mounted for CSOs to realize the essence of social justice in the democratic process. This is important because even though majority of the CSOs claim they are concerned about social justice only a few could articulate how these concerns are; and what they have been able to attain along those lines.