



Gender Transformation & Empowerment



Photo Courtesy of the Daily Monitor

A POLICY BRIEF ON DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP: PARTISAN VERSUS NON PARTISAN POLITICS.

2020

A Policy Brief On Democratic Leadership: Partisan Versus Non Partisan Politics.

© UWONET 2019

Edited by: Rita H.Aciro-Lakor

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION4

BACKGROUND5

In search of the Understanding5

Forms of Political Organization8

Partisan politics9

What are NGO..9

Myths and Facts on NGO participation
on Politics... ..9

Common Questions Citizens ask... ..9

Can CSOs be partisan while doing
Nongovernment work?.10

RECOMMENDATIONS11

An Overview13

Effects of partisan and nonpartisan
politics on non-government organizations14

How we are political15

Fear to be political..17

How Non-government organizations
Remain Non-partisan19

How do NGOs remain relevant in the times
of conflicts, challenges?20

CONCLUSIONS22

WAY FORWARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS 23

INTRODUCTION

This document is developed after discussion held over time as to whether individuals who work with NGO and be partisan and how this would affect their work or how they are perceived. The document is also intended to create understanding amongst pollution on the matters here discussed. To digest these issues, UWONET organised a think tank of members from Women's rights organisation to discuss and draw and understanding. This document therefore, focuses on drawing the thin line and understanding and the balance between Partisan versus and Non-Partisan Politics, a notion that has led to many to disengage with serious socio-economic and political matters of livelihood and development in the matters of national governance. This notion of being "Political" is even more difficult for Non-Government Organisations (NGO) in context of a **"young"** democracy or misunderstanding/ lack of it.

This misunderstanding often times has led to tension and suspicion in society and between government and NGO's. The intention of this policy brief is to make an attempt to clarify and draw the difference and relations between no partisan politics and partisan politics, discuss and analyse whether non-government organisations can be partisan or non-partisan and whether they should remain in the latter positions if at all. This is to help organizations, staff and Board members of Non-Governmental rise above their partisan and individual level opinions while exercising Non-Government Organisational work. The policy brief gives tips and recommendation and draws conclusions.

BACKGROUND

In search of the Understanding

Politics is who gets what, when, and how. This is the famous definition of Harold Lasswell. The definition underscores the reality of “scarcity” in the society. While human needs and wants are so diverse and numerous, the resources are always limited. The struggle involved in allocating the scarce resources, and determining what to produce, how to distribute, and use them is said to be politics. Modern political theories conform to this definition as it establishes the unique connection of politics and power. Power creates structures and explains the struggle among individuals or groups of individuals. It is in this sense that politics deviates from ethics inasmuch as any means could be used to get whatever is desired and whenever it is desired for as long as it serves the purpose.

Politics is the realm of public affairs or the state.

Traditionally, “**public**” refers to the institution of the state which is funded by the people at large through their taxes to satisfy their common interest. This is contrasted to “**private**” which refers to the civil society that is privately funded to support their own interest. As the Greek used the term, state transactions (public) characterize the term political. When the Greek philosopher Aristotle said “**man by nature is a political animal,**” he means that man is naturally inclined to live in a society. Aside from his private life, man must have a public life, for this perfects his essence and gives him the “**good life.**” In addition, the social theorists even argued that the common good could only be attained through the active participation of the citizens. Education as well as moral and intellectual enlightenment, are among the few things that result from the public life. It must

be noted that while there is a dichotomy of public life and private life, these two are intimately connected in that they mutually depend on each other. And under this traditional sense, politics (realm of the public/state) is intertwined with ethics (realm of the private/individual).

Politics is the science of government. As a science, it is a systematic body of knowledge that deals with the government and regulation, maintenance and development, defense and augmentation of the state. It also deals with the protection of the rights of its citizens, safeguarding and enhancement of morals, and harmony and peace of human relations.

However, other political scientists prefer to define politics as the art, rather than the science, of government. It is an art because it involves the exercise of control or authority within the society through the creation and enforcement of consensus arrived at by the leaders. It involves the process through which the government skillfully addresses the needs of the

society by carefully allocating benefits, rewards, and penalties. This is what David Easton means when he defined politics as the **“authoritative allocation of values.”** Under this definition, politics takes place only within the polity or the machinery of the government. In other words, only the processes and events that happen in the government bureaus, departments, and offices are said to be **“political”** while those outside, like businesses, religion, and family, are **“non-political.”** It is in this sense also that politicians and political parties are said to be **“political”** while civil society is said to be non-political.

According to Ponton and Gill, **politics is the way in which social affairs are understood and ordered, and by which people acquire greater control over the situation.** The definition puts to light the different political ideologies and philosophies that underlie societal structures. **“Order”** and the **“understanding of reality”** are shaped by the political orientation of the people. That by which people view and organize the world is said to be politics. Without politics,

there is anarchy and a state of constant war. But its existence establishes order in various forms. It gives rise to different kinds of governments: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. That the society should be ruled by a single individual, by a selected few, or by all is a matter of preference that depends on the temperament of the affected group of people. What is important is that politics helps the people acquire greater control over the vagaries of their existence.

A Political party seeks to achieve goals common to its members through the acquisition and exercise of political power. While there is some international commonality in the way political parties are recognized, and in how they operate, there are often many differences, and some are significant. Many political parties have an ideological core, but some do not, and many represent very different ideologies than they did when first founded. In democracies political parties are elected to run a government by the electorate. Many countries have numerous powerful political parties, such as Germany and India and

some nations are one party system, such as Uganda between 1986 and 2005 and China.

Political parties play a key role in promoting women in political processes. Political parties nominate candidates to their party lists, provide campaign funding to its candidates, rally voters, and create national platforms. Julie Ballington, iKNOW Politics Expert and Programme Specialist at IPU, adds that: “Political parties also formulate policy and set governance priorities and are therefore strategically placed to address the concerns of women.” (Ballington, J. Expert Opinion. 2009) Given the important role of political parties, it is critical that parties promote women in their candidate lists, provide women candidates with appropriate training and support have women on the party leadership and allocate campaign funds equally. The system of elections based on proportional representation (PR), for example, has resulted in three to four times more women being elected in countries with similar political cultures, for example, Germany and Australia. Generalizations

such as this are valid so long as there are cultural similarities that are similar levels of social and economic development, between countries. Political parties are among the most important institutions for promoting and nurturing participation and leadership of women in the parties. With less than 20% of the world's Parliamentary seats occupied by women, it is clear that political parties need to do more and should be assisted in those efforts to support women's political empowerment. Globally, although 40% to 50% of party members are women, women hold only about 10% of the leadership positions within those parties. Ensuring women's equal participation in the decision making structures of parties is essential for promoting gender equality within them and, ultimately, within society as a whole.

A political party is an organization of people which seeks to achieve goals common to its members through the acquisition and exercise of political power.

While there is some international commonality in the way political parties are recognized, and in how they operate, there are often many differences, and some are significant. Many political parties have an ideological core, but some do not, and many represent very different ideologies than they did when first founded. In democracies, political parties are elected to run a government by the electorate. Many countries have numerous powerful political parties, such as Germany and India and some nations are one party system, such as China.

Forms of Political Organization

There are many forms of political organization, including states, non-government organizations (NGOs) and international organizations such as the United Nations. States are perhaps the predominant institutional form of political governance, where a state is understood as an institution and a government is understood as the regime in power.

Partisan politics

A partisan is a committed member of a political party. In multi-party systems, the term is used for politicians who strongly support their party's policies and are reluctant to compromise with their political opponents. **"Partisan"** has come to refer to an individual with a psychological identification with one or the other of the major parties.

A political party is a group of dedicated people who come together to win elections, operate the government, and determine public policy.

If you're a partisan, it means you adhere firmly to a political party, faction, idea or cause.

What are NGO

What the different legal and Policy provisions on the participation of NGO

Myths and Facts on NGO participation on Politics

Internal debates and the effects on NGO participation in national policy and development processes.

Common Questions Citizens ask.

Guiding questions

- * How do we remain relevant in the fears of miss conception and laws in place?
- * How do we remain visible in this circumstance?
- * How do we speak to power-government on gender equality?
- * What do we need to do to remain not of the two? If possible.

- * How do we deal with these issues on personal level or board members who are active in political engagements?
- * Are NGOs political, and if so what does this mean.
- * How do NGOs remain political and non-partisan at the same time?
- * Can individuals with NGOs engage in non-partisan politics. (staff, board members) if yes how do we distinguish.
- * At what level shall we be able to determine whether partisan or non-partisan.

Can CSOs be partisan while doing Nongovernment work?

Because they have been termed as partisan already, CSOs should just remain in limelight where it's not seen supporting political parties or candidates but provide assistance on political matters to the citizens and government. CSOs should also remain doing the right thing of advocacy and speaking for the marginalised, follow the law by registering their existence and protect democracy.

The following is what non-governmental organisations should do in this case;

- i. Non-government organizations should stick on Service delivery in mostly all areas that need improvement for example health, education, food and nutrition etc. this will help NGOs remain relevant in the communities.
- ii. Non-government organizations should be Conscious of what they do, they should be aware of all and respond to their surroundings, there should be knowledge of at least something to better understand the extent of the problem in context.
- iii. People mostly organization staff/members should learn and be conscious of how to craft messages using the modern available communication channels like face book and twitter. What one communicates, if not handled well might represent an organization yet both have got different interests. All this can cause questions on kind of support Non-government organizations provide.

- iv. Non-government organizations can remain partisan if they brand themselves and even remain consistent in all situations. There is need to create a strong, positive perception of an NGO, its services in the stake holder's mind with elements such as logo, design, mission statement, and a consistent theme throughout all its work and communications.
- v. In terms of communication and information exchange between government and NGOs, it should be used to show our stand on the matters of leadership. This if done well can prevent mistrust between parties, it reduces conflicts and arrests of staffs or closure of organizational offices.
- vi. Involving political leaders and representatives in activities carried out by NGO programmes, e.g. invite them to attend the inauguration of a new programme or events celebrating the International Days- political leaders and representatives will want to be seen as contributors to the well-being of their constituents, and organizations need to take advantage of this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Civil society organisations in times of political activities should provide advice on legislation, electoral systems and best practices that can advance women's participation in the electoral process;
- ii. Assist in the training of candidates mostly the disadvantaged like women;
- iii. Provide training to political parties, journalists, security forces and others to convey the importance of political participation and gender sensitivity;
- iv. Help establish and support cross-party cooperation and networks
- v. Provide support and training to those who have been elected to office to enable them to function more effectively in their new roles.
- vi. Identify women willing to run for office;
- vii. Lobby to ensure issues of special concern to women are addressed in party platforms;

- viii. Lobby for legislative changes to advance citizenly empowerment;
- ix. Develop and disseminate gender-sensitive messages for voter and civic education;
- x. Advocate improved media coverage of women's issues and women candidates;
- xi. Persuade international donors to support projects aimed at advancing women's political participation

In a think tank meeting on Democratic Leadership, Partisan Versus Non Partisan Politics organized at Uganda Women's Network secretariat in Dec 2019, participants recommended the following on this same matter as follows;

- i. Non-government organizations must speak truth to power or central government/political in order to forge friendly ties to smoothen the working environment. This will build trust between stakeholders and prevent future political conflicts.
- ii. It's very ok for any non-government organization or members and staff to be partisan so long as there

is practice of constitutionalism understanding the line the separates individual politics from organisational issues.

- iii. The members and individuals of these organizations should be aware of the environment they are working in, and be keen on what and how they communicate to the public. Their views and values should not represent the organization in certain circumstance in discussions concerning politics.
- iv. Non-government organizations should Work with each, and other stake holders. And they should find means upon which government will reduce on its hostilities against NGOs, and not demonize nor compete but partner.
- v. There should be an action made for training non-government organizations on partisan politics. A training manual needs to be produced and uniformly be used to train the all NGOs/CSOs

An Overview

People have inter mingled politics with multiparty democracy. A multi-party system (democracy) was defined as a political system in which multiple political parties across the political spectrum run for national election, and all have the capacity to gain control of government offices, separately or in coalition. Political participation however includes a broad range of activities through which people develop and express their opinions on how they should be governed, and try to take part in and shape the decisions that affect their lives. It can be loosely defined as citizens' activities affecting politics.

Partisan –persons who have come together and the main objective is to take over power. They have an agenda, ideology, membership and therefore subscribe to a political party.

She said there is a miss conception among population of what nonpartisan and partisan politics mean. But the way people miss understand these terms

draws effects on how we work. Its therefore a non-government organizations effort to see that we mobilization, advocate and organize in general the populace to tell them the meaning of these two terms through trainings, sensitizations and awareness.

The miss conception has led to a lot of questions regarding the relevancy of Civil Society Organizations in partisan or nonpartisan politics. Now people fear spaces of politics and the role of non-government organizations in such spaces is not understood. While the constitution recognizes the 4th estates which including non-government organizations, its challenging to de-link our work from partisan.

There Is lack of knowledge amongst populace on the nature of the Non-government organizations work. Also the populace doesn't understand the delicacy of partisan politics and its effect on the existence of CSOs.

However, the chairperson noted that the problem in such situation is that at times information is not well received and shared and it affects the law of Non-government organizations. This leads also to missing information that troubles trust between political and nonpolitical (CSOs).

The misconceptions within communities that being partisan is bad is not right and lacks knowledge. There has been development of some forms of hindrances to CSO work i.e. the public order management act. There is need to discuss how and what we can do to remain relevant in our spaces constitutionally.

And lastly if there is no change in terms of political parties, can there be change in terms of governance system? This is because change is no change some times. How then can we remain relevant there in such situations?

Effects of partisan and nonpartisan politics on non-government organizations

People tend to disassociate with us thinking we are always bought off by the side we fall to. This creates a situation of miss trust in some organizations.

The partisan side is considered to be a no go area for Civil Society Organizations by the population despite the work we do politically as discussed in this report bellow.

Non-government organizations being political, positively gain prominent positions in negotiations, especially in advocacy activities for human rights, peace, and environment.

There is no way one can say that we are fighting for human rights and then you think we are not political. This it influences our decisions in certain instances. We have done this regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. We

advocate for this in area that include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, equality and many more.

The effect of being partisan is that people think that NGOs no longer talk on their behalf or listen to or consider their interests, they think we are bought off by the side we shall always support or side with.

With being partisan if not handled well, Non-government organizations might develop into or be seen as competitors. This is because of NGO work of informing them (government) that this right or not right, we do this or the other.

Non-government organizations have done a lot to the development of our country in partnership with the central government. Therefore, the central government should see us as partners but not competitors.

How we are political

The political position of non-government organizations was greatly defended by multiple participants. Not being political is a bad idea according to the discussants. This action (political) means a set of activities associated with the governance of a country, state or an area. It involves showing interests and influencing decisions that apply to groups/members. It's an issue of achieving and exercising your position on governance.

We are political because for so long we have provided the alternative voice. If we talk to the central government we do this on behalf of everyone in the country. Those that are responsible for this like members of parliament have not spoken on behalf of their constituents. Therefore, we cover this gap politically.

We have been on forefront in asking for quality services from the political side (central government). This has helped communities in rising standards of living and prevention of more problems. We have done a lot in the health sector and education, our contribution is enormous.

We have advocated for the basic social services to meet local people in all regions of Uganda. These range from health, education and access to clean water.

We build consciousness amongst people on matters arising in the country, we train people on political and development matters and we make independent decisions on development and important matters. UWONET for example did a lot of work in Busoga region about GBV, this raised the level of consciousness of the local people. Northern is further better than the other regions because of the NGO work that we do there. We train politicians (sub-county councilors) in almost every district.

Non-government organizations are political because they entail people who subscribe to certain political parties. NGOs also advise politicians in most of the situations depending on the knowledge and experience they have in certain fields, and so they are political because they work closely with the political side.

Non-government organizations are all political because they sensitization local people on matters of leadership. This is the root cause of the real politic side thinking we are against them. According to one participant Jasper ***'even missionaries used to challenge things that were not right in communities'*** Therefore our sensitization of communities is attributed to the persistent problems that have failed to be solved by the political side.

Non-government organizations shape leaders through trainings. Most of the women councilors, LCII and LCIII have been trained by UWONET in more than 45 district.

The chairperson mentioned that Non-government organizations work on legal matters in the country, we influence legislation and policy agendas at national level. There is nothing wrong being political. We set the agenda and influence governance systems.

Fear to be political

A large proportionate of discussants pointed out that there is always fear within members of organizations and organizations to be partisan, and the reasons for this is as a result of the way the environment is shape and societal miss conceptions about the nature of our work. ***“Organizational interests in most cases conflict with personal interests and that’s why we are always looked at as competitors”*** one of the participants noted. The following are the reasons for fear to be political.

Participants agreed that the environment is too tough for non-government organizations to work freely and or sometimes advise the government merely because of what they think we do. The NGO act coupled with

the Public Order Management Act largely limits a lot of our work.

We seem be competitors to the other, non-government organizations are continuously looked at as competitors yet we are working to see that what the government has not done is done with the fewer resources (donor money) available and the unfavorable harsh environment.

We are looked at as watch dogs to government failures, because of our continuous work of advising and sometimes informing the government on what is right, there has been development of miss conception about what we are doing. But we do this to make sure that the right thing is done mostly in areas of human rights.

Also the society has been crippled in one way or the other and this has scared us, one of the participants said that “ideologically thinking that it is only the government to solve issues or problems” is a problem its self towards our work. The people in our societies

thing that it is only the government to do development issues but not non-government organizations. This ideology has left our communities vulnerable because they are waiting for the government to do what they think community people and NGOs can't do. In actual sense some of these things can be done.

There has developed a bad perception on political candidates, this perception is miss conceptualizing. Because members of the organizations support some of the good politicians who work for the development of all, when an individual supports a candidate then the blame is put on the organization for not remaining nonpartisan. But still when a candidate comes from the NGO (former staff) still the blame is on the organization for nurturing the opponents. This persists fear to be political.

Ignorance amongst communities is also another bottle neck to actively being partisan, because most people do not understand the kind of work we do, they fail

to know where we stop. This keeps on blames on NGOs for what they are doing.

History and experiences have also limited non-governmental work. For the last years, NGOs and individuals that have come up to disagree on certain issues with the government for the purpose of development, where arrested. The public order management act that was passed has also largely changed the way we work. Those arrested include professor Stella Nyanzi and some organizations closed on police order.

Civil Society Organizations might be breeding areas for opponents, because the staff become knowledgeable and professionalized in some specific fields. They sometimes decide to join politics, but then the blame is not put on the individual but organization, –but why this blame? That's where fear emanates from.

How Non-government organizations Remain Non-partisan

The chairperson opened this session by pointing out that being a leader doesn't matter which political party you belong to. We just need to have an understandable line between our political orientation from that of the organization. The following according the partisans is how non-government organizations can remain non-partisan.

Non-government organizations should be accountable; we should basically be answerable to a for all that we do and that that doesn't conflict with the laws. Accountability refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. NGOs are required or expected to justify actions or decisions or responsible to all stake holders in the country. This build the level of trust to avoid problems that may arise.

Non-government organizations should stick on Service delivery in mostly all areas that need improvement for example health, education, food and nutrition etc. this will help NGOs remain relevant in the communities.

Non-government organizations should be Conscious of what they do, they should be aware of all and respond to their surroundings, there should be knowledge of at least something to better understand the extent of the problem in context.

Awareness is another factor that can make Non-government organizations Remain Non-partisan. Awareness is the state of knowing something, such as the awareness that there is need to follow the law. This concern well-informs interests of an individual or organization in a particular situation or development. It helps organizations plan well for complex environment that might cause problems.

People mostly organization staff/members should learn and be conscious of how to craft messages

using the modern available communication channels like face book and twitter. What one communicates, if not handled well might represent an organization yet both have got different interests. All this can cause questions on whether Non-government organizations are Non-partisan.

Non-government organizations can remain non-partisan if they brand themselves and even remain consistent in all situations. There is need to create a strong, positive perception of an NGO, its services in the stake holder's mind with elements such as logo, design, mission statement, and a consistent theme throughout all its work and communications.

How do NGOs remain relevant in the times of conflicts, challenges?

Non-government organizations can remain relevant when they remain consistent on what they do. In addressing issues, we should remain consistent in whatever we do to avoid wondering around and even go astray from the strategic plan.

Non-government organizations must demonstrate effectiveness in all its work. Effectiveness is the capability of producing a desired result or the ability to produce desired output. When something is deemed effective, it means it has an intended or expected outcome, or produces a deep, vivid impression. Therefore, effectiveness can result into organizational importance in addressing problems.

Non-government organizations should remain mobilizing, preparing and organizing (communities, staff and members) for active service delivery.

Non-government organizations can remain relevant if they continue sensitizing communities on different contemporary issues arising in the different communities. Sensitization can be done through trainings and creating awareness in order to make someone/people/group familiar with something such as a problem or bad situation.

Non-government organizations are relevant when they continue Lobbying, this attempt by individuals/

organizations or private interest groups is done in order to influence the decisions of the central government. Efforts must be done by NGOs to influence the legislations, motions, budget allocations etc.

Non-government organizations should work closely and keep good friendly ties with each other. This will help them share learnings and challenges, and all set targets that are not conflictual or un lawful. This will build capacities of all NGOs to remain relevant as they learn from one another's work.

Non-government organizations will remain relevant in the times of conflicts and challenges if they are a collective voice for people (the vulnerable most especially). Those at risk lack a collective voice that will make the central government accountable and sometimes understand what they need for development or equality.

Service above self (conviction to serve above self), NGOs should work for all and not like some of the individuals who work for themselves. This will keep

us in the game and remain relevant and among all our work will be need based.

Non-government organizations should practice and respect the Rule of law/constitutionalism in all situations. Seen as an exceedingly elusive notion, rule of law is a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. This approach shall help NGOs respond to the needs of individuals and groups and their meaningful participation from the outset, paying particular attention to those historically marginalized and at risk of being left behind. It includes prevention of serious violations of human rights, achieving credible accountability for those responsible at national and international levels and empowering individuals and communities to make use of justice mechanisms to protect their fundamental human rights.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the participants in this think tank meeting stressed that non-government organizations are partisan and have got interests in good governance. However, with such a good interest, they should prove consistence in the kind of work they do and brand themselves, but never the less follow the law.

Government should understand and respect what non-government organizations are contributing to the development of our country. Non-government organizations can also ease tension from other stake holders mostly government by documenting their roles for example producing annual reports and disseminating them, holding press conferences and sharing meaningful information.

There is still lack of knowledge and understanding of the line and how to differentiate between organizational and personal politics. The situational problem is people's failure to differentiate Personal politics from institutional.

Women movement seem to be dead to most of the people. It has been pressed onto the walls. Therefore, we should document and put this in the shelves so that people can read but also accessible. This movement has helped many women to develop, they enjoy some level of human rights and the right to engage in participation.

WAY FORWARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Non-government organizations must speak truth to power or central government/political in order to forge friendly ties to smoothen the working environment. This will build trust between stakeholders and prevent conflicts.

Such think tank meetings with topics on issues concerning non-government organizations versus partisan or nonpartisan at least should be organized on quarterly basis. This will strengthen our thinking and consciousness about this delicate subject matter. There are a lot on NGOs that don't understand what to do in situations of partisan or nonpartisan.

It's very ok for any non-government organization or members and staff to be partisan so long as there is practice of constitutionalism.

The members and individuals of these organizations should be aware of the environment they are working in, and be keen on what and how they communicate to the public. Their views and values should not represent the organization in certain circumstance.

Non-government organizations should Work with each, and other stake holders. And they should find means upon which government will reduce on its hostilities against NGOs, and not demonize nor compete but partner.

There should be an action made for training non-government organizations on partisan politics. A training manual needs to be produced and uniformly be used to train the all NGOs/CSOs

With Support from



Uganda Women's Network

Plot 710, Block 216, Mirembe Close

Bbuye-Kigowa, Ntinda, Kampala

P. O. Box 27991-Kampala, Uganda

Phone: +256 414 286 539,

Email: info@uwonet.or.ug

Website: www.uwonet.or.ug

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/uwonet>

Twitter: [@uwonet](https://twitter.com/uwonet)