



Concept Note

Theme:

‘Act Together, Shape the Future: Civil Society in Uganda at 50 years.’

Introduction

Overall, Uganda’s development context has been characterized by historical and structural inequalities, few development choices, vulnerability especially of women, children, people with disabilities and other minority groups of our population, raging conflicts for resources and political power and thus, Civil Society Organizations have emerged as important actors providing essential services as well as space and voice for authentic democratic expression and desire.

Cognizant of the limited understanding of the civil society sector among key stakeholders such as government and the general public, the maiden CSO fair was held from the 6th -7th of June 2011, at Hotel Africana with profound success and impact. It was officially opened by Ambassador George Kangwagye the chairman of the NGO Board and attended by over 500 NGOs and civil society organization from across the country and over 5000 participants. In his opening address, Amb. Kangwagye noted *that the government has recognized and cannot down play the role CSOs have played in the development of Uganda, especially over the last 25 years and pledged to strengthen the relationship between CSOs and the state.*

The Civil Society Fair 2012 will be held from the 31st May- 1st June and will build on the experience and best practice of the 1st edition but also in the overall mood of Uganda’s 50 Years golden jubilee celebrations. The CSO Fair 2012 will seek to attract over 10,000 participants from both public and private sector providing a platform for all actors to engage in multiple events organized and conducted simultaneously to reinforce each other including parallel discussion sessions, interactive displays, panel debates and roundtable discussions, artist interactions, mini campaigns and social processions including a variety of open air entertainment and an exhibition of products and services that are of critical contemporary social and economic focus to Ugandans.

The CSO Fair 2012: A Brief Description

The CSO Fair 2012 is being organized under the theme, *'Act Together, Shape the Future: Civil Society in Uganda at 50 years.'*

Specific objectives:

- To share CSOs programmes, plans and activities with government, development partners, private sector and the general public
- To showcase Civil Society innovations and development approaches for appreciation by all stakeholders
- To consolidate stakeholder linkages, synergy and networking for greater impact and cohesion

Key outcomes

The CSO Fair will create an opportunity for different actors in Uganda to appreciate the work of CSOs, build mutual trust, confidence and strategic alliances for Uganda's development. A final communiqué for collective commitment to Social, Political and Economic transformation of Uganda will be issued at the end of the Fair, followed by a detailed report of all events for extended learning and impact.

Structure of the CSO Fair

The fair will feature four plenary sessions on crosscutting issues, over 20 parallel sessions on topical issues and an exhibition.

Plenary Sessions

These will be collective sessions that are designed for participants to engage on crosscutting issues including the opening ceremony, closing ceremony and two specific interactions with government and development partners. At the time of plenary sessions, no parallel sessions will be held. The opening ceremony will feature a key note address by the Chief Guest the Rt. Honorable Speaker of Parliament, Hon Rebecca Kadaga and a tour of the exhibition. The closing on day two will provide space for a Communiqué and press release by the CSO Fair organizers on salient issues that will have emerged. To crown off the event a dinner will be hosted together with the Rt. Hon Prime Minister where CSO Leaders will interact and engage constructively on key governance issues.

Parallel Sessions

Parallel Sessions are designed to run concurrently for a maximum of two hours around topical issues in on and about the work of civil society organisations in Uganda and will be hosted by conveners in collaboration with Lead Agencies or jointly between interested organisations. The format of the parallel sessions will be flexible to allow innovation and but reflection and forward looking recommendations. Each parallel session will have a facilitator and a special rapportuer to document and make separate reports and pick lessons for the plenary and learning.

The Exhibition

The Civil Society fair will also feature exhibitions of cutting age innovative work and models for civil society in Research, Livelihoods, Governance, Human Rights, Elections Monitoring, Culture and Religion among others. Exhibitions will run simultaneously alongside parallel sessions organized and scheduled conveniently to allow participants to attend both segments of the CSO Fair with ease. For all that desire to exhibit, organisations will be required to book space at a very modest fee per day.

The Process leading up to the CSO Fair

The CSO Fair is designed as collective enterprise that brings together CSOs in their diversity to prepare for, lead and convene sessions. It is an event that requires a high degree of preparation and cooperation amongst civil society, if it is to succeed. For this reason, the Uganda National NGO Forum will provide a secretariat to support Lead Agencies and Conveners to steer the preparation of the event. Weekly meetings will be held to enrich collective ideas as the momentum for the CSO Fair grows up to the 31st May 2012; the National CSO Fair Day.

For further information on how to get involved in preparations and participate at the Fair, please contact Uganda National NGO Forum, P.O. Box 4636 Kampala, Tel: +256(0)414510272, E-mail: info@ngoforum.or.ug. For details and updates visit: www.ngoforum.or.ug

Below: Some exhibition pictures for 2011 National CSO Fair at Hotel Africana, Kampala (6th-7th June)

