

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN LOCAL  
GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF UNITED CIVIL SOCIETY  
ORGANISATION OF NZEMA EAST DISTRICT

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LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY OF UNITED CIVIL SOCIETY  
ORGANISATION OF NZEMA EAST DISTRICT

BY

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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## **DECLARATION**

### **Candidate's Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Name: Richard Kojo Benneh

Signature:.....

Date:.....

### **Supervisor's Declaration**

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Francis Enu - Kwesi

Signature:.....

Date:.....

## ABSTRACT

In Ghana, civil societies have played important role in national development in an unco-ordinated manner. The aim of this study was to examine the contribution of United Civil Society Organisation of Nzema East District (UCSOND) to local governance in Nzemaland. The research assessed the activities of UCSOND at the grassroots, for example how its capacity enables it to play its role. The challenges facing the union were also examined.

Case study approach was used to assess UCSOND's contribution to local governance. The principal method used in the analyses of the data was interpretive inquiry. Tables and pictures were used to summarise UCSOND's activities at the grassroots, its capacity and ability to play its role. Most importantly, the challenges confronting the union were identified and ranked using Kendall's co-efficient of concordance.

The findings were that UCSOND has been instrumental in stimulating popular participation in local governance through civic events. Secondly, it has aggregated citizens voice and influenced policies and programmes. The study also reveals that UCSOND has a low organisational resource base. The conclusions are that the low resource base of UCSOND has impaired its ability to play the ascribed roles effectively. Furthermore, the weak institutional capacity has led to resignation and dwindling of membership. The recommendation is that UCSOND must strengthen its effort for support or resources aimed at institutional capacity development, engage in income generating ventures and collaborate with other civil organisations to gain insight into emerging governance issues.

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## **DEDICATION**

In memory of my late loving and caring parents, Elizabeth and Thomas

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## LIST OF ACRYONYMS

ASSI	-	Association of Small Scale Industries
CEMAGs	-	Community Environment and Advocacy Groups
CLUSA	-	Co-operative League of the United States of America
CSGs	-	Civil Society Groups
CSOs	-	Civil Society Organisations
DA	-	District Assembly
DEO	-	District Education Office
ECSELL	-	Enhancing Civil Society Effectiveness at the Local Level
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
GAIT	-	Government Accountability Improves Trust
GCRN	-	Ghana Community Radio Network
GONGOs	-	Government Non-Governmental Organisations
HDR	-	Human Development Report
IFES	-	International Federation of Electoral Systems
KKK	-	Ku Klux Klan
LDCs	-	Less Developed Countries
MoU	-	Memoranda of Understanding
NEDA	-	Nzema East District Assembly
NETCUS	-	Network of Civic Unions
NGOs	-	Non-Governmental Organisations
PWYP	-	Publish What You Pay

SAPs	-	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SIPA	-	Sanitation Improvement Platform of Axim
SNV	-	Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers
UCSOND	-	United Civil Society Organisation of Nzema East District
UN	-	United Nations
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development
WACSI	-	West Africa Civil Society Institute

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background to the study**

One of the major issues confronting the world today is how to achieve development. Development as known today is a post-World War II phenomenon that has passed through various forms and fashions (Morse, 2004). After the Second World War, development was primarily conceived as technological advancement, community development, and later economic progress.

In recent times, development is being seen comprehensively with the human being well placed in the centre of all efforts. In essence, development is about meeting the basic needs of human beings in terms of material wants, such as food, clothing and housing as well as social needs such as education, human right, positive work ethics and participation in social life through employment and political advancement. At the heart of development lies the desire for social justice and equality based on a concern that the material resources of a nation should be evenly distributed among its citizens (Boateng, undated).

If development is all about people, their progress in life, then it must envision poverty reduction, better nutrition and health services, access to facilities, improvement in infrastructure, reduction in unemployment and literate population. The rest includes technological advancement, access to information,

environmental consciousness, higher per capita income and proper resources utilisation. The Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations (UN, 2000) underscore critical development issues encapsulating eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, promotion of gender equality and women empowerment, education, environmental sustainability and health.

Poverty is considered as the greatest obstacle to the efficient achievement of sustainable development and good governance issues. It is closely associated with illiteracy and ignorance, resource depletion, lack of access to finance, inequalities and vulnerabilities, especially among women and children. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) (2010) Human Development Report (HDR) argues that dimensions of poverty go far beyond inadequate income to include social exclusion, poor health and lack of participation.

Empowerment of women, increasing the voice of the poor and the marginalised in matters that affect them, play a vital role in poverty alleviation. A United Nations HDR commented, for example, that, in the face of current challenges for development, people's participation is becoming the central issue of our time (Craig & Mayo, 1995). The language of empowerment and participation has now found its way into the agendas of the powerful agencies concerned with managing the world's economy as well as with social development (Craig, 2003). According to Fung (2004), the key to improving the lives of poor people is empowered participation. The World Bank has observed that community participation can be a means for ensuring that developing



countries' development projects reach the poorest in the most efficient and cost-effective way.

Capacity building, by far, remains a key ingredient for achieving both popular participation and empowerment, hence it is not possible to treat them as discrete. All UN summits call for capacity-building programmes for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and other social organisations (Eade, 1997). Capacity building seeks to empower people to tackle the injustice that stems from discrimination, so that they can realise their full potential, in a society that respects rights and values diversity. Since the 1990s, the Human Development Report series has argued that people are the real wealth of nations instead of macro-economic indicators such as per capita income.

For many decades now, the world has passed through several governance and development approaches from the economic growth orientation of the 1950's to structural adjustment, good governance and sustainable development of the 1980's, all aimed at improving living conditions. Post independence countries in sub-Saharan Africa invariably adopted republican systems of governance with national legal and law enforcement systems and centralised decision-making. The development model adopted was informed by modernization theory and built upon the basic tenets of positivism (Kendie & Guri, 2004). The result of this conventional approach to development in developing countries has been disappointing.

In contemporary times, the debate over development has intensified. The birth of good governance in the late 1980's as a paradigm for development and

politics was spearheaded by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) following the failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) globally. Analysis of good governance has ceased to be a matter of government only but the coalitions of all the three pillars of society; government, private sector and civil society. These actors play diverse complementary roles in development.

Korten (1995) points out the need for more holistic approaches to dealing with poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Mensah, Enu-Kwesi and Akorsu (2008) also make the point that the multifaceted nature of poverty and inequality presents a web of factors that cannot be resolved by interventions that focus on a single item or just one level of governance. From the literature, attempts at fighting poverty within the globalising world have centered on pro-poor growth, capacity building, gender mainstreaming, decentralisation, community-driven development and participation. Participation of civil society through a variety of grassroots organisations has reinforced the decentralisation process.

In the light of all these scenario, local governance became a preoccupation for achieving good governance and development. The World Development Report of 2000/2001 succinctly made it clear that the only way to secure the crucial local information as a necessary input for effective policy formulation is through popular participation in local governance (World Bank, 2001). The gains of some countries such as Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda and Ghana in democratic development are largely attributed to extensive grassroots participation. Botswana

for example has become a model touted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as one of the success stories of their programmes.

Local governance involves the private sector, local government and civil society. Citizens' involvement in local governance is a way of securing vital information and contributing to nation building. Research has revealed that local people believe that local government is the best solution to local needs. Local governments act more in accordance with the needs and priorities of local communities than would higher authorities (Klugman, 1994). The inability of government to accelerate the pace of development has variously been attributed to poor implementation performance due to the absence of required skills, the inappropriate scope of public sector responsibilities, and, in recent times, to poor governance (Kendie & Enu-Kwesi, undated).

The vital roles attached to civil society by social scientists, political analysts, policy makers and practitioners alike across Africa is reflected by the place it occupies in the global setting. Some think tanks have christened it the third sector; others the first sector in opposition to those who see it as nothing but the political side of society (Gyimah-Boadi, Oquaye & Drah, 2000). Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are important in the provision of services, functioning as watchdog, empowering weak or marginalized groups and promoting democratic governance. They are also suited for civic or political education, public awareness creation and advocacy in specific issues, because of the relative trust they possess vis-à-vis the state. In South Africa, for example, it was not only international

pressure and sanctions that ended Apartheid in the 1980s but also the activities of local Civil Society groups (Ottaway, 2001).

In Ghana, CSO's have been extremely proactive in playing complex and varied roles in democratic governance. They have spurred the onset of Ghanaian democratisation, articulated concerns and influenced national and civic affairs. Gyimah-Boadi et al. (2000, p. 9) states that "the latest addition to the Civil Society landscape of the 1990s are independent policy research and advocacy institutions and independent radio and television stations as well as newspapers". According to them, these political NGOs are focused on promoting basic human rights, democratic freedoms and democratic consolidation. Realising the vital contribution of CSOs in democratic governance, the International Federation of Electoral Systems (IFES) selected and trained some CSOs in the country. Among them was United Civil Society Organisation of Nzema East District (UCSOND) to begin the grassroots involvement in decentralisation.

The UCSOND is a non-governmental organization formed in 1999 by the civil society groups in the then Nzema East District. It is formed by indigenous groups and run by indigenous people. The rationale behind this umbrella organization is to develop and nurture a culture of local participation in democratic governance through an active and dynamic partnership between local civil unions and the District Assembly (DA).

UCSOND is made up of farmers, fishermen, dressmakers, public servants, distillers, artisans, beauticians, the youth and scholars. The organisation has a women's wing whose advocacy is tailored towards socio-economic emancipation

of women. Since its inception in 1999, it has partnered various developmental organisations like Co-operative League of United States of America (CLUSA), Care International and Sticing Nederlandse Vrijwilligers (SNV) to undertake numerous advocacy programmes in the district.

UCSOND, as a mouth piece of the people of Nzemaland has a mandate of advocating on social issues such as high ignorance and illiteracy rates that have culminated in poor waste management, low school enrolment, poverty, overloading of vehicles, unemployment, rape and other forms of social vices. As an agent of social change and a pressure group within the district, UCSOND often embarks on outreach programmes, capacity building workshop and awareness creation/ advocacy campaign as a way of educating the masses.

### **Problem statement**

UCSOND, since its inception in 1999, has championed the promotion of accountable good local governance and local level economic development within the then Nzema East District. It has also advocated on issues, geared toward poverty alleviation and efficient service delivery. All was well with UCSOND until partner NGOs which had provided technical and financial sponsorship for their programmes withdrew their assistance. With their exit, UCSOND has not been able to solely advocate on issues affecting the entire district, let alone organised adequate capacity building workshops to address the needs of members in the midst of growing poverty.

Nzema East District unlike most of the other districts has poor infrastructure base and inadequate road network. The district which covers an area of about 2,914 square km has a greater part of it extremely inaccessible because of the high rainfall patterns which render road construction and maintenance expensive (NEDA, 1996). Apart from the international road linking Cote d' Ivoire and Ghana, about 80 percent of the road network are in a deplorable state. This situation has resulted in ineffective communication among its membership which has not stimulated information sharing, dissemination and awareness creation (UCSOND, 2007).

Within UCSOND, there is increasing apathy, dwindling spirit of volunteerism and contentment. UCSOND cannot boast of a quorum at its meetings, social gatherings and other communal work, and its inability to finance expenditure on secretarial service and transportation cost for advocacy related programmes pose a challenge to the union. The low capacity and resource based has resulted in members' resignation (UCSOND, 2008b). Serious concern is also being raised about how UCSOND could:

1. Reach out to the civil populace of the entire district.
2. Function effectively with the NGOs no longer partnering them.
3. Continue to communicate and work with its CSOs in the Gwira Bansa Zone since Care International had pulled out from direct forest management.
4. Strengthen its advocacy work especially in the direction of poverty reduction, good governance and sustainable development?

The significance of civil society organizations in local governance and the host of challenges confronting UCSOND, which could lead to the demise of this union, motivated this study.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of the study was to examine the contribution of UCSOND to local governance in the district. Specifically the study sought to:

1. Examine the activities of UCSOND at the grassroots level.
2. Assess UCSOND's capacity and ability to play its role.
3. Examine challenges facing UCSOND in its operations.
4. Make recommendations to strength UCSOND in its role of promoting local governance.

### **Research questions**

The questions that guided the study were:

1. What have been the activities of UCSOND at the grassroots level?
2. How does UCSOND's capacity enable it to play its role?
3. What challenges confront UCSOND in its operations?

### **Scope**

The research centred on UCSOND. The generalisation of the findings is limited by the fact that the study is only focused on the then Nzema East District, now Nzema East Municipality and Ellembelle District (NEMED).

### **Significance of the study**

The justification for this study lies mainly in the vital role attached to civil society organisations in nation building. It is hoped that the outcome of this study will add to existing knowledge and public policy input within Ghana. In terms of knowledge, it is envisaged that the study will enable citizenry to have a better understanding of civil society mission in democratic governance, in particular, its contribution to local governance, if democracy is said to grow strongest from the base.

With respect to policy formulation, the lessons to be learnt from the study will be consequential to policy makers in the following ways. First, it would apprise government on the need to embrace community participation in decentralisation and development, since popular participation is a prerequisite for good governance agenda. Furthermore, it would assist government to formulate policies that seeks to bring on board stakeholders of local level development management with the view of addressing economic, political and social systems which lead people to have limited opportunities and resources, thereby impoverishing them. For example, policies that build community institutions rather than numerous existing policies that will widen the gap between poor and rich societies.

### **Organisation of the study**

The study comprises five chapters. Chapter One forms the introduction to the research. It highlights a brief background of development, its related issues



and complexities and Civil Society Organisations attempt at fighting poverty. In addition to this, the problems motivating the study, research objectives, the scope and significance of the study are also discussed.

Chapter Two, which is literature review, dwells on the historical development, meanings, elements and types of Civil Society. The role of CSOs in democratic governance, strategies and impediments to its growth were examined. Chapter Three is a description of the methodology adopted to solve the research problems. It contains the study organization, study design, population and sampling procedures, as well as data collection procedures. Chapter Four is a discussion and analysis of data obtained, while Chapter Five carries the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The literature review is organised around the following sub-heading; the fuzzy nature of civil society; historical development of civil society; meaning of civil society, definitions of civil society, types of civil society and resources capacity base of civil society organisations.

The rest are the role of civil society in decentralised and democratic governance, strategies and tactics employed by civil society organisations; challenges facing civil society organisations in governance and the conceptual Framework.

#### **Fuzzy nature of civil society**

The concept of civil society has gained importance in social sciences (Keane, 1998) and has emerged as a central topic among policymakers and practitioners alike (Naidoo & Tandon, 1999). The term has a long history in political philosophy and its definition has altered with Roman, Lockean, Hegelian, Marxist and Gramscian interpretations long before it was resurrected in the 1990s (Van Rooy, 1998). To many different people, civil society means different things. The fuzzy nature stems from the fact that, its boundaries are

inherently vague and imprecise and identifying its features, roles and significant actors is subject to contestation. In addition, it has been applied to research, political discourse and policy formulation (Harpviken & Kjellman, 2004).

Harpviken and Kjellman (2004) however, extend their position by pointing out that developing consensus on a singular conceptualisation of civil society is perhaps somewhat unrealistic even under the best of circumstances. Although, the concept is complex and multifaceted, as a result of the divergent perspectives in mind, it had fallen in disuse and become an abstract notion, relegated to the confines of sociological theorising and social philosophy. According to them, it cannot be sidestepped, since civil society and its associations represent different voices, perspectives and values in a pluralistic society. As noted by Sachikonye (1995, p. 8) "the march toward democracy cannot be realised without the liberation of civil society from the clutches of an omnipotent state".

### **Historical development of civil society**

The concept of civil society is as old as human civilisation and can be traced back many centuries to the great Greek philosopher Aristotle. The term originated with Adam Ferguson, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Scottish social philosopher. Ferguson saw the development of economic state as a way to change what the Protestant Scots saw as the corrupt feudal order and strengthen the liberty of the individual (Ferguson, 1767). However, Ferguson did not draw the distinction between state and civil society, but rather chose to relate his concept far more

closely to the market. Other political theorists like the German philosopher George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1827) sought to refine their theories to reflect the emerging phenomenon of civil activism during the French and Industrial Revolutions.

Hegel, in the early 1900's, contrasted Ferguson's view by drawing a line between state and civil society in his book *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Hegel defined civil society as the space between the family and the state, where the individual becomes a public person and through membership in various institutions, is able to reconcile the particular and the universal. For Hegel, civil society was "the achievement of the modern world - the territory of mediation where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune and where waves of passion gust forth, regulated only by reason glinting through them" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1990, p. 3). Hegel's trichotomy is echoed in contemporary conceptions of the third sector.

According to Kaldor (2003), the definition of civil society was further narrowed in the twentieth century by the Italian scholar Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci identifies civil society with realms outside the power of the state. He acknowledges the definition by incorporating the idea of political liberalism. Gramsci's definition of civil society in relational terms is not restricted to the relationship between state and family but to the realm outside the market, state and family or better still the inclusion of culture, ideology and political debate.

## **Meaning of civil society**

According to Gyimah- Boadi et al. (2000), political analysts have identified two broad sets of definitions of civil society; these are the associational and the political. In their discussion they point out that the associational approach dwells on Bratton's (1994) conceptualisation of civil society as that sphere of social interaction between the household and the state, which is manifest in norms of the community co-operation, structures of voluntary association and networks of public communications. From this, the elements of this definition are:

- i. Norms of civic community like trust, inclusion and tolerance.
- ii. Structures of associational life, which are voluntary in nature and vary from informal local associations through to formal national and international political (human rights) advocacy groups.
- iii. Networks of public communication including internet, electronic and print media.

Bratton (1994) is quick to enter a number of caveats. First, civil society should not be perceived as an arena where conflicts are always settled amicably; secondly, civil society is not monolithic entity. Thirdly it cannot exist without the state, even though it is distinct. Lastly, civil society does not only oppose the state but more essentially it usually influences, legitimises and supports the political status quo.

On the other hand, civil society is usually viewed in relation to the state. According to Bayart (1986), civil society is society in its relations with the state, insofar as it is in confrontation with the state. Bayart takes a view that the concept

entails the process by which society seeks to breach and counteract the simultaneous totalisation unleashed by the state. Hutchful (1995) points out that the political approach may be best exemplified in Bayart's pioneering conceptualization of civil society. Chabal (1994), cited in Gyimah –Boadi et al. (2000), recognised the merits of the term political by extending his assertion that civil society is a vast ensemble of constantly changing groups and individuals whose only common ground is their potential opposition to the state. Thus, the concept encapsulates the process, by which society struggle for social space, as the state arises from society.

In sum, even though the associational and political approaches to the conceptual development of civil society differ in perspectives and orientations, they are not necessarily rival. By contrast, they are mutually reinforcing or the same in principle.

### **Definitions of civil society**

It is very difficult to have one standard definition of the term civil society since in literature there are two broad dichotomisations in the definitions of civil society; namely political and voluntary associational life. The definition of civil society in political sense is primarily in terms of the relationship vis-à-vis the state and the society.

Tester (1992) defines civil society as the social relationships which involve the voluntary associations and participation of individuals acting in their private capacities. In a simple and simplistic formula, civil society can be said to

equal the milieu of private contractual relationships. In the words of Gellner (1994), civil society is the set of institutions, which is strong enough to counterbalance the state, and, whilst not preventing the state from fulfilling its role of peace and arbitrator between major interests, can, nevertheless, prevent the state from dominating and atomising the rest of society. Similarly, Fukuyama (1995) regards it as the realm of spontaneously created social structures separate from the state that underlie democratic political institutions.

Another way of defining civil society is to situate it in the context of associational life. Habermas (1992) sees civil society as spontaneous created associations, organisations and movements, which find, take up, condense and amplify the resonance of social problems in private life and pass it on to the political realm or public sphere. Abutudu (1995) maintains that the institutions of society become civil society when they struggle to preserve their autonomy from the state. Gang (1998) refers to it as institutionalisation of the former. Fowler (2002) describes civil society as an arena for voluntary formal and informal collective citizen's engagements distinct from families, state and profit seeking organisations.

Within the social sciences, however, there are a number of methods of conceptualising and defining civil society. The London School of Economics (LSE, undated) has also provided one of the working definitions: They regard civil society as an arena of uncoerced collective action formed around shared interests and values, distinct from the state, family and market, though in practice, its boundaries between state, family and market are often byzantine and blurred.

According to Wood (2007), the definition brings to light four vital tenets. First, civil society involves people acting collectively as opposed to individualisation. Secondly, individuals must be able to join or exit from CSOs based on their own volition. Thirdly, civil society is theoretically distinct from the state, family and the market. Finally, its civic system encompassing its roles, decisions and policies interacts and overlaps with both socio political and socio-economic systems.

While not contesting LSE's definition, Edwards (2004) the director of Governance and Civil Society at the Ford Foundation in New York, maintains that LSE's definition is insufficient for a proper understanding of the interaction between collective action and healthy politics. Following this, Edwards was quick to add that the definition ought to be augmented by two additional meaning. First, he argues that civil society as a good society is a kind of society that treats people with respect, cherishes reasoned discourse, provides security and material needs of their citizens. Secondly, Edwards hinted that civil society as the public sphere denote a description of a society where civil society relates to a buffer zone strong enough to keep both state and market in check. Thus, civil society becomes a home of all our collective action such as arena for debate, networking, guarding of democratic spaces, monitoring of government and private sector performance.

Closely related to civil society are civil society organisations (CSOs), organisations or associations formed to represent civil society. Others see it as organisations within the 'arena' of civil society. Van Rooy (1998) regards CSOs as organisations active in shaping developmental and democratic goals in their countries. CSOs are non-state, not-for-profit, voluntary organisations formed by



people within the social sphere of civil society. Community, neighbourhood, work, social and other connections constitute its membership (WHO, 2002). CSOs operate at all levels from grassroots levels at village and community to national and international levels (Commonwealth Foundation, 2004).

### **Types of civil society**

One may identify two broad types of civil society according to literature. These are the corporatist and voluntary-pluralist or pluralist (Gyimah –Boadi et al., 2000). Corporatist civil society consists of organisations that are linked to the state ruling party. They depend on public or government funds as well as aid from international sources. They are euphemistically called Government Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs). The pluralist civil society covers a rich variety of civil organisations, which are voluntarily formed to compete with one another to pursue their socio-economic interests, without in the process, overlooking cross-cutting interests.

Diamond (1994) has classified pluralist civil society organisations into seven kinds based on their objectives and membership. These are

1. Economic (commercial entities and networks);
2. Cultural (religious and recreational organisations);
3. Informational and educational (organisations concerned with the production and circulation of ideas and information-universities, publishing houses);

4. Interest-based (concern with the promotion of members interest-workers, professionals);
5. Developmental (organisations like local and foreign NGOs and self-help community based groups);
6. Issue-oriented (advocates on issues of mutual concern like environmental protection, poverty reduction, unemployment, the rights of women and children, minorities, the handicap and the aged among others.
7. Civic (seeks to improve democratic governance by strengthening the fabric and interaction among all stakeholders in the political system through voter education campaign and election monitoring, human rights promotion, public fora, capacity development services, anti-corruption drives and inculcating democratic values.

One point worth noting is that proponents of the pluralist approach argue on the basis of historical experience that within democratic context, it is this type of civil society organisation that is more proactive in facilitating the onset of democracy, promoting democratic transitions, as well as consolidating and sustaining it. Such claims have not gone uncontested. Gyimah –Boadi et al. (2000) acknowledge that one major criticism of the pluralist approach is the propensity of its advocates not explicitly acknowledging that a pluralist perspective can blind them to the danger of elite pluralism in the society where resource-rich interests dominate.

Another point of departure is the view that some CSOs are home of 'uncivil' values. For Bayart (1986), there is no teleological virtue in the notion of civil society. Civil society may flourish without democratic principles. The most commonly cited example of such CSOs with negative impact on governance is the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) (Putnam, 2000). Besides, it is pointedly remarked that some CSOs are unabashedly racial or ethnic or selfish. The notorious Rwandan Interahamwe for instance was an agent of genocide rather than democratic governance (Wood, 2007).

Stemming from these acute factors, political analysts and practitioners have identified certain criteria which organisation must satisfy for inclusion as pluralist civil society. The first common argument is that CSOs must be endogenous and autonomous in processes. That is, CSOs must not come under the control of either the state or market. They should be able to take independent decisions, recruit leaders and manage resources effectively. Another element is that pluralist civil society must be democratic in structure and functioning. The third common argument relates to the accountability of civil society organisations leaders to its entire membership, in terms of policies, decisions and actions. Lastly, pluralist civil society organisations must have an open recruitment of individuals so as to reflect social and national integration (Gyimah-Boadi et al., 2000).

Similarly, Ghaus-Pasha (2004) seems to believe that the key feature of a successful civil society includes the following. First, civil society is separated from the state and market. Secondly, it is formed by people who have common

needs, interests and values. Lastly, civil society development activities is fundamentally through endogenous autonomous process which cannot easily be controlled from outside.

### **Resource capacity base of civil society organisations**

Civil society organisations exist to mobilise people through voluntary associations in order to shape social order (Scholte, 1999). Such mandate requires that CSOs are equipped with adequate resources, namely:

- a. Human resource (technocratic endowments) – knowledge, skills and experience, ability to work, informed leadership on good governance, technical and managerial expertise.
- b. Financial resource- funds,
- c. Social resource- networks, time, energy, public will, access to organisations, social cohesion. Or again as Ashman (2005) contends that research on successful CSO networks highlights the importance of pre-existing relationships between CSO members.
- d. Physical/ Material resource- logistics, machines, office equipment, transport etc.

Most of CSOs' resources are members own personal resources, gifts via donations and other forms of support. For CSOs to advocate for better governance and to ensure involvement of the citizenry in the decision-making process for sustainable development or seen as catalyst for poor people's autonomy, there should be effective management of resource capacity base in terms of planning,

monitoring, evaluation and financial procedures. Similarly, administration which includes information gathering, storage, retrieval and analysis goes a long way to keep CSOs work in line. Studies have revealed that availability of resources may either strengthen or weaken an organisation. Eade (1997) takes view that the way in which an organisation handles its resources is affected by its values and structures.

According to Morse (2004), the 1980s and the 1990s were the age of micro- intervention and people oriented approach to development, and that development was seen as a human activity, which needed to be solved by the people themselves. Morse further observed that fashionable terms such as empowerment and partnership were given much impetus.

Emerging in the late 1980s was capacity building as an approach to development. Along with empowerment, participation and gender-equity, capacity-building is viewed as an essential element if development is to be sustainable and centred in people (Eade, 1997). Eade argues further that generally most people would place capacity-building somewhere on a spectrum varying from helping people to help themselves, at a personal, local or national level, to strengthening civil society organisations in order to foster democratisation and building strong, effective and accountable institutions of government.

In Thompson's (1995) view, training has to be linked closely to the internal change processes if it is to have a lasting impact. In support of this, Scholte (1999) draws some important lessons and insights related to capacity building. According to Scholte, capacity building needs to be carefully targeted,

inter alia at staff training in advocacy tactics, public speaking, cross-cultural communication, and leadership skills. Scholte further draws attention to the need for civic associations to develop modes of organisation that most effectively inform and mobilise their constituencies and at the same time most successfully advance their policy goals vis-à-vis governance and market actors.

### **Strategies and tactics employed by CSOs**

The ability of the non-profit sector to play a meaningful role in democratic governance has been widely acknowledged in literature. Covey (1994), cited in Ghaus-Pasha (2004) provides five strategies which CSOs employ to influence national policy. These strategies are education, persuasion, collaboration, litigation and confrontation.

First, CSOs use education as a strategy to provide information, analysis and policy alternatives to the government, development partners, private sector, the media as well as citizens. Secondly, using persuasion as a strategy, CSO acts like a pressure group to pressurise government and other offending parties to ensure that appropriate policies are enacted and implemented. Thirdly, they work in unison with government to facilitate development. This is in the form of private-public partnership, sharing of resources and information, networking, joint meetings and co-ordinated activities. Furthermore, CSOs employ the use of law courts to press for policy change. Lastly, Where CSOs perceive insubordination and creeping authoritarianism on the part of government and other offending

parties, they employ the use of vehement protests usually in the form of speeches of condemnation, demonstrations, civil strife and destruction of properties.

Based on Covey’s (1994) classification of strategies used by CSOs to influence policy, Ghaus-Pasha (2004) has provided a summary of strategies along with the tactics and skills that are required to influence national policy. These strategies are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Some strategies and tactics employed by CSOs**

Strategies	Tactics	Skills
Education	Meetings, media, workshops, conferences, Commissions	Research, information, analysis, dissemination, communication and articulation
Collaboration	Building relationships, co-operate with government and others CSOs, links	Communication, organisation, mobilisation
Persuasion	Meetings, workshops, coalition, lobbying, media, demonstration	Organisation, motivation, communication, negotiation, commitment and vision
Litigation	Use of courts	Legislation, communication
Confrontation	Demonstration, public gatherings, speeches	

Source: Ghaus- Pasha, 2004

## **The role of civil society organisations in decentralised and democratic governance**

The role played by civil society in governance has been acknowledged internationally. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have become a major player in global development (Church, 2003). The World Bank (2007) asserts that CSOs have become important channels for the delivery of services, advocates and overseers of policy makers in Africa (Daily Graphic, 2009).

Over the years CSOs actors have supported policy reforms in education, governance, agriculture, health, trade, fiscal and monetary policy measures, private sector development and public financial management. They are also important in creating awareness as well as playing active policy influencing role on issues that affect utilities, employment, infrastructure, natural resources and environment, housing and energy. Another important insight is CSOs mandate of giving voice to varied women and children rights, peace and security, water and sanitation, human rights and wealth creation issues using several channels at grassroots, national and international levels. These varied roles are consistent with Anheier and Salamon's (1998) and Ghaus-Pasha's (2004) views that CSOs are engaged in a wide range of activities.

Similarly, Clayton, Oakley and Taylor (2000) also argue that even though providing social services has been a critical role that CSOs have traditionally played, the key change that has taken place is that CSOs are no longer just providing services that the state has failed to provide, but they are now far more in the mainstream of development activities. From the global view point CSOs have



a lot to showcase. CSOs actors have been instrumental in pressing for greater accountability in the World Bank especially in terms of project and policy issues. The Bank's own literature and research show that civil society participation in projects significantly improves project design, quality of service, and public support (Rukuba- Ngaiza, Lubis, Cullen & Mausolff, 2002). It did also increase transparency and accountability in contracting and procurement, while improving relationships between citizens and their public agencies (World Bank, 2002).

Ghaus-Pasha (2004) points out that the role of CSOs in governance centres on economic development and poverty reduction, good governance and advocates of policy change. He considers facilitating new enterprises, livelihood and capacity building programmes and delivery of social services as being interconnected. Ghaus-Pasha draws attention to accountability, participation, empowerment and responsiveness as pillars of good governance being championed by civil society. But Ghaus-Pasha bemoaned that without an appropriate governance structure, developing countries will not be able to achieve poverty reduction. Ghaus-Pasha also points to the advocacy role of civil society. He accepts that CSOs can further their advocacy through providing information, identifying problems and bringing them to public attention, protecting human rights, giving voice to the marginalised and creation of social capital.

The next important role of CSOs in governance is their contribution to anti- poverty strategies. For instance, Kamara and Yeboah (2005) argue that the Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa formed the HIPC Watch to mobilise the Ghanaian civil society organisations to take part in

demanding transparent and equitable distribution of the HIPC fund. The influential United Nations Millennium Project Report, 'Investing in Development' emphasises that, a strong civil society engagement and participation are crucial to effective governance (UN, 2005).

McNeil and Mumvuma (2006) identified four main areas in which civil society have achieved some notable results. These are enhanced citizen awareness and participation, increased civil society influence, upgraded analytical and financial reporting capacity and improved government practices. This further reinforces already held views that vibrant civil society engagement is essential to effective governance. Thus, as a new paradigm shift, good governance has become a necessary condition for development.

### **Civil society and democratisation in Africa**

Ndegwe (1996) and Makumbe (1998) have argued that the concept of civil society on the Africa continent gained scholarly writings in the mid 1990s, when agitations on the streets placed democracy on the political agenda. However, Blankson (2002) observes that the conceptualisation of civil society to an African context has itself been problematic because scholars, regrettably, have conceptualised civil society in the traditional western sense, thus setting expectations contextually incompatible with the realisation of African civil society. But Berge (2002) takes a positive view that since the conceptualisation of civil society for Africa has several limitations it needs more nuanced articulation.

The role of civil society in creating democracy and democratic consolidation in Africa has been emphasised in many studies. For example, Gyimah-Boadi (1996) posits that among the forces that dislodged entrenched dictatorship and brought about the onset of formal democracy on the continent in the early 1990s were the resourcefulness, dedication and tenacity of domestic civil societies. He conceded that African civil societies can take a larger credit for the following, first, opening of the once-forbidden debate on new political direction; secondly, decriminalisation of dissent and the acceptance of pluralist politics; thirdly, convening of sovereign national conference and constituent assemblies and lastly, preparations for competitive elections and eventual installation of elected government.

Commenting on the contribution of civil society to democratic consolidation, Diamond (1999) observes that CSOs can perform diverse role. First of all, civil societies can be instrumental in checking, monitoring and restraining the exercise of power by the state and holding it accountable. Secondly, by stimulating political participation, CSOs can help sustain democracy. For instance, CSOs can encourage people to serve as political party agent during national elections. Thirdly, civil society organisations can play a vital role in making the elites and the mass public more committed to democracy by disseminating democratic principles and ideas. Furthermore, through organising and empowering people to fight more effectively for their rights and interests CSOs can help sustain democracy. Finally, civil society organisations also can mold and train future political leaders to deal efficiently with political challenges.

According to Kelemen (2000), individuals and civic organisations can be especially important in the role as watchdogs of the implementation. Braithwaite and Drahos (2000) argue that CSOs have better information about compliance and enforcement than states and international organisations.

Reflecting this, Blankson (2002) argues, and correctly so, that the categorisation of Africa as a weak civil society may be true in the past. But with the significant social and political developments, following the 1990s liberal and democratic reforms in Africa, such characterisation do not accurately reflects emerging democracies in Africa.

### **Governance for development**

The term governance has its origin in Greek language which means steering. In more simple terms governance is the act of steering people's development. The World Bank (1992) sees governance as the use of power in the management of a country's economic resources for development. For its part, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997) also equates governance with the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs at all levels. According to the UNDP, governance embraces all the methods, good or bad, that societies use to distribute power and manage public resources and problems. By implication governance can either be good or bad. Good governance may be defined as the effective management of a country's social and economic resources in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable and equitable (Khan, 1998).

One of the newest orthodoxies that dominate governance is its multifaceted nature which entails institutions, processes, structures, procedures, practices and relationships. The UNDP (1997b) distinguishes four types of governance. These are economic governance, political governance, administrative governance and systemic governance. From the literature, governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, environmental governance, international governance, national governance and local governance. Kauzya (2000) refers to local governance as the exercise of authority at local community level. Shah and Shah (2006) also define local governance as the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level. In other words, local governance means making the local people at the grassroots level take control of their destiny.

However, it is important to bear in mind that, not every governance system that is practised at the grassroots constitutes local governance, as Kauzya (2000) points out that it is possible to have central governance or even foreign governance at the local level. According to Kauzya, what determines whether governance is local or not is the extent to which the local population is involved in the steering. In this sense local governance occurs when the local people are involved in decision-making, and in determining the direction of development according to their needs and priorities. Kauzya observes that local governance is being promoted in a number of African countries because it is believed that it provides a structural arrangement through which local people and communities can participate in the fight against poverty at close range.

Dollery and Wallis (2001), and Goss (2001) have all argued that the presence of vast network of entities beyond government makes it unrealistic to regard local government as a single entity. In discussing this, Shah and Shah (2006) maintain that this concept encompasses the direct and indirect roles of formal institutions of local government and government hierarchies, as well as the roles of informal norms, networks, community organisations such as UCSOND and neighbourhood associations.

Shah and Shah (2006) argue that good local governance is not restricted to providing a range of local services but entails preserving the life and liberty of residents, creating democratic participation/ civic dialogue, supporting market-led and environmentally sustainable local development and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents. Shah and Shah conclude by pointing out that the analytical recognition of this broader concept is critical to developing a framework for local governance that is responsive, responsible and accountable.

### **Institutional frameworks for NGOs/ grassroots participation in local governance**

The arduous mandate placed on modern governance system has made it extremely difficult for government alone to proceed with development through its macro-level policies. In cognisance of this, and to support the process of decentralising the administrative machinery of government for people at the grassroots, the Directive Principles of State Policy in Ghana's 1992 constitution enjoins the state to stimulate the involvement of ordinary citizens in national

development process. It states succinctly in Article (35) section (6d) that the state shall take appropriate steps to “make democracy a reality by decentralising the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts and by affording all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision making at every level in national life and in government”.

Additionally, the Local Government Act, Act 462 of 1993, Ghana’s Vision 2020: The First Step, 1996-2000, National Development Planning System Act, Act 480, 1994 and Ghana Agenda 1996, underscores the significance of grassroots participation in local governance. Thus, democracy was conceived to evolve through a bottom- up approach. This has amply been demonstrated through the creation of district assemblies and its sub structures in 1988. However, resource constraints and weak capacity of local government officials have hindered the effective institutionalisation of democracy.

Robinson and White (1997) contend that both the state and CSOs should utilise their respective strengths and responsibilities of each other to ensure better delivery of service. In this regard CSOs need to use their synergy to build effective partnership with the state in order to create economic arrangements that support human development, economic growth and poverty alleviation. Thus CSOs, bringing together both the good governance agenda and participatory approaches to development, are an effective means of ensuring local level development management.

### **Challenges facing civil society organisations in governance**

There are many factors that have led to the weakness of civil society organisations in governance especially in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). These setbacks have greatly influenced civil society's ability to deliver basic services and more importantly holding government accountable. Research has revealed that the scale and nature of civil society arena is affected by cultural, historical, social and political environment.

An important factor hindering the growth of civil society organisations especially in rural areas is their inability to mobilise. Khan (1988) an advocate of rural development insists that the rural poor lack power and voice and they are geographically scattered with limited transport and communication means. They cannot spontaneously organise themselves and so may require an outside catalyst agency to promote their organisation. In support, Ninsin (1998) and Gyimah-Boadi et al. (2000) observe that the most enduring and formidable civil society organisations are by far middle class and urban based.

Citing the work of Salamon and Anheier (1997), Ghaus-Pasha (2004) identified decades of entrenched authoritarian rule as having accounted for the fragile nature of CSOs in LDCs. Ghaus-Pasha maintains that in Africa for instance, most pre-colonial societies were governed by chiefs who exercised dominant control. Ghaus-Pasha argues further that some governments consider CSOs role in governance as tantamount to political opposition hence it often resort to the use of bureaucratic registration procedures to tame their formation. A further impeding factor is the aggravating poverty and underdevelopment. This



situation does not encourage participation as most people are preoccupied with how to earn a living. Lastly, scarcity of resources limits the scale and functioning of CSO's significantly, impairing their ability to deliver and maintain services considering the enormity of its development, civic and democracy support tasks.

Gebre-Egziabher (2002) maintains that the lack of awareness on the issues of human rights and the constitution have contributed to the weakening of the public sphere in developing economies. Gebre-Egziabher argues that because of ignorance people fear the state and this has negative impacts on the democratisation programmes of CSOs as communities tend to shy away from authentic participation. Gebre-Egziabher continues that in instances of arbitrary rule and dictatorship the judiciary is often coerced to pronounce judgment studiously for government in contravention of the constitution. This situation discouraged CSOs from mounting legal challenge against the state, government or ruling party for constitutional violations.

James and Malunga's (2006) discussions on the organisational challenges facing CSOs in Malawi identified leadership challenge as a factor facing CSOs. They emphasized that the strength of CSO networks will largely reflect their membership. If they have strong, high performing members with secure funding bases, a CSO network is likely to mirror that. The reverse, however, is also true and perhaps more common. In addition, they point out that as CSOs gain strength, members tend to slip back into a common role of sitting back waiting for their leader to tell them what to do. Another factor they identified is lack of strategy to co-ordinate members' activities, build members' capacity and to facilitate

members funding. In their view advocacy will be undermined if members have insufficient capacity, technical understanding and even time to contribute.

Besides these constraints, Eyikor (2008) also sees the following as persisting challenges confronting civil society especially in West Africa. These can be summarised as weak and underfunded co-ordinated mechanisms, limited conflict prevention skills and poor organisation among actors. Lastly, Eyikor noted further that the absence of proper documentation culture has compromised the contribution of CSOs to nation building.

### **Conceptual framework of CSOs role in local governance**

The framework for the research was informed by the definition of the concept civil society which is rooted in alternative political and voluntary associational life philosophies. However, in spite of the different perspectives in definitions, civil society is widely recognised as an essential third sector holding the state and market actors accountable to citizens.

Civil societies share some common features. In particular, they are distinct from the state, voluntary and democratic in structure and functioning, self governing and non- commercial organisation. In respect of their objectives and constituencies, civil society encompasses enormous diversity. These include economic, civic, cultural, informational and educational associations. The rest are interest-based, development and issue-oriented organisations.

In order for civil society to play their ascribed roles in governance, they ought to be well resourced with human capital, social and financial resources so

as to mobilise in support of their long-term initiative. In terms of strategies and tactics employed by CSOs, a wide variety of means are used. They used strategies like education, persuasion, collaboration, litigation and confrontation to influence both government and market actors in policy and service delivery.

Even though CSOs can be very useful in tackling many social problems, by their nature they can also generate problems and dilemmas that inhibit their capacity and ability to perform their social mission. Some of the challenges that subvert their mandate includes: limited funding, weak leadership, government and donor influences, sector fragmentation and parochialism among others. The array of challenges becomes daunting. How then does CSOs influence policies within existing political system to ensure pro-poor development? CSOs need to be resourceful, ethical, tenacious and resolute in its quest to liberate human society. Networking, research, advocacy and participation are powerful tools for influencing policies and combating societal problems.

The promotion of these social values can lead to CSOs playing varied roles in a decentralised democratic governance system. For instance civil society plays a critical role in the fight against poverty and injustice through livelihood and empowerment programmes, efficient service delivery, capacity building and economic infrastructure provision and maintenance. Additionally, they have also contributed to sustaining good governance in most LDCs through their watchdog role as well as fighting for appropriate governance structure- participation, inclusion, accountability and transparency.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter contains discussions on the research procedures that were used in data collection and analysis. It consist of description of the study organisation, research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection techniques and the methods used in data processing and analysis.

#### **Study organisation**

UCSOND, formed in 1999, has its headquarters at Axim. It was formed from community based organisations, and farmer based organisations and trade/artisans associations in the then Nzema East District. The group members are part of the communities and are invariably the beneficiaries. The idea of UCSOND was conceived in 1998, when the International Federation of Electoral Systems (IFES) selected and trained fourteen civil society groups through the project dubbed "Enhancing civil society effectiveness at the local level (ECSELL)" (UCSOND, 2005). This programme was fully implemented in 2001 when IFES gave way to the Co-operative League of the United States of America (CLUSA) in the programme Government Accountability Improves Trust (GAIT) with funds from United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

UCSOND's vision is voice for a better life while its mission statement read "we exist to unite Civil Society Organisations in the Districts to improve the practice of good governance for the benefit of members and communities". In terms of objectives and constituencies, UCSOND is a civic, development and issue-oriented organisation (Diamond, 1994).

UCSOND was formed primarily to serve as the mouth piece of Nzemaland. Since its formation, the union has been proactive in educating members and the communities on importance of girl child education, environmental cleanliness, government policies as well as district assembly concept and programmes and provision of internal economic and welfare services to members. Its mandate also includes influencing legislation which could affect the professional activities of members and the entire district as well as protecting, strengthening and developing the cherished traditions and institutions of democracy.

For the purpose of effective administration, UCSOND is divided into four zones. The four zones (Sub- Districts) are Axim, Esiama, Aiyinasi and Gwira Bansa. The zones meet separately to elect seven leaders (Sub- District Executives). The zonal leaders form an Electoral College to elect eleven District Executives referred to as UCSOND Executives to steer the affairs of the union. It is headed by a chairperson called President. UCSOND has a Women's Wing whose chairperson is the automatic Vice President of UCSOND. The eleven UCSOND Executives are as follows;

1. President

2. Vice President
3. Secretary
4. Assistant Secretary
5. Treasurer
6. Financial Secretary
7. Organizing Secretary
8. One representative each of the four zonal areas.

UCSOND is governed by the Supreme Council composed of UCSOND Executives, Zonal Executives and Co-opted members. Its mandate is to lay down broad policies for the organisation to follow.

### **Study design**

The methods and procedures for the research must be clearly described if the findings of the research are to be accepted. In this section, a case study research was applied. The selection of this approach was informed by the theoretical underpinning of the study objectives, the nature of the research problem, how data would be analysed, interpreted and presented as well as the scope of the study. Stakes (1981) asserts that good case studies can provide more valid portrayals, better basis for personal understanding of what is going on and solid grounds for considering action.

In Merriam's (1988) view, case studies have become a mainstay of educational research and evaluation. Case study research raises questions about the boundaries and defining characteristics of a case. Such questions help in the

generation of new thinking and theory. For example, Walton (1992) claims that case studies are likely to produce the best theory. He argues further that the logic of the case study is to demonstrate a causal argument about how general social forces shape and produce results in particular settings.

According to Vaughan (1992), case studies help researchers connect the micro level or the actions of individual people, to the macro level or large-scale social structures and process. Yin (1994) observes that case studies are appropriate when investigators desire to define topics broadly and not narrowly, cover contextual conditions and not just the phenomenon of study, and rely on multiple and not single sources of evidence. Yin then defined case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Neuman (2003) also posits that a case study approach examines in depth many features of a few cases over duration of time. It therefore attempts to present an in-depth coverage of a narrow topic. It is a detailed examination of specific individuals, groups, organisations, moments, events or geographic units. Neuman further asserts that case study uses the logic of analytic instead of enumerative induction, in which the researcher meticulously selects one or few key cases to illustrate an issue and analytically study it in detail, focusing on how its parts are configured.

The selection of case study approach was informed by the following considerations. First, the researcher wants to come into close contact with

UCSOND. Secondly, case study gives rich insight that cannot be obtained from mere statistics. Thirdly, it can help to explain the link between CSOs, local governance and development. Finally, UCSOND is one of the few Civic Unions currently engaged in local governance. UCSOND's unique position makes it imperative for it to be used as a case study for investigating the link between civil society organisations and local governance. Having been in local governance for over ten years, UCSOND has relevant achievements and documentation essential for the study. For instance, Yin (1994) concludes that case studies enable the researcher to deal with a full variety of evidence- documentations, artifacts, interviews and observations.

### **Population and sample**

The unit of enquiry was UCSOND. The civic union has a membership of about 180 people. Women constitute about 60 percent of the entire membership. However, since the study was only a case study of an organisation, the population size and sampling procedures did not matter or was not necessary because based on literature, qualitative research which seeks to clarify and deepen understanding of social life can be obtained from relatively small samples, even single cases (n=1) done purposively. Respondents for the interviews were selected UCSOND executives.

Sampling of the UCSOND executives was purposively done because such respondents can provide important information which is not likely to be obtained from the rest of the membership. Studies have shown that under particular



settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices. Additionally, focus group discussion was constituted for some selected pioneer members of UCSOND. There was also informal discussion with ordinary members of UCSOND.

Participant observation strategy was also selectively applied to gather data on frequency of meetings and workshops, projects activities as well as members' commitment to voluntary related activities like communal labour. This was done through the use of checklist, pictures and community visits. Douglas (1976) an eminent American investigative social researcher, commenting on participant observation strategy maintains that when one's concern is the experience of the people, the way that they think, feel and act, the most truthful, reliable, complete and simple way of getting that information is to share their experience. Similarly, the advantage of observation as captured by Patton (1990) is one which discovers issues no one else has really paid attention to and also enables the researcher to move beyond the selective perceptions of others.

### **Ethics**

Permission to undertake the study was sought by the researcher from UCSOND leadership before the commencement of the data collection. The rationale behind the study was made known to them. They were informed that the study is primarily for academic purposes, and all responses will be treated confidentially and with anonymity.

### **Data collection techniques**

The research employed interview guide to generate primary data. This was augmented with focus group discussion and field observation of UCSOND activities. This enabled the researcher to document hard to-quantify objectives. The use of primary data sources in the research helped to determine the frequency of UCSOND activities at the grassroots level, its capacity and ability to play the required role as well as its challenges.

Secondary data was obtained from sources such as photographs of UCSOND activities, minute books and financial records of UCSOND, journals, books, magazines, newspapers, internet, articles and research papers on CSOs both within and outside Ghana.

### **Fieldwork**

The study employed several methods and techniques to gather data. This was done through interviewing, observation and documents analysis. For instance, interview guide was used to interview two key informants separately at Awiebo and Axim in February, 2011. Focused group discussion was constituted for seven UCSOND members at Esiana Secondary Technical School in March, 2011. The selection comprised three females and four males. They were purposively sampled from different CSOs because of their commitment and in-depth knowledge of UCSOND activities.

Participant observation also took place on Saturday, 23<sup>th</sup> April, 2011 at Awiebo Catholic Church where UCSOND executives were busily putting

together a concept paper to bid for Management Systems International's small grants for innovative activities in governance programme. Similarly, the researcher also observed joint professional association meeting of beautician and dressmakers (Esiama Zone) at Esiama. By using the combination of interviewing, observation and document analysis, the researcher was able to validate and cross-check information sources.

### **Field challenges**

Unlike most social research, this study did not yield much challenges, since the respondents were prepared to divulge information. The key informants and focus group discussants showed a high degree of optimism during the interview sessions. However, the vast nature of the districts and the different location of the focus group discussants made it a bit tedious for them to converge on time for the start of the discussion.

Another, limitation was that UCSOND did not have much documentation to validate some of its claims or achievement; hence, the researcher had to resort to triangulation of qualitative data sources. In endorsing the notion of triangulation, Trend (1978) maintains that it is vital to assemble a variety of data and methods to bear on the same problem.

Finally, the researcher could not observe some of UCSOND activities, events and behaviours. One reason adduced was the unwillingness of UCSOND members to attend programmes.

## **Analytical procedures**

Qualitative analytical procedure was used to analyse the data collected. In using qualitative analysis, the main objective of the research was examined looking at the specific objectives. Responses generated from interviewees and discussants were transcribed, reduced and organised to bring out the major themes and trends for interpretations.

Analysis of observational data was mainly descriptive, in addition to the use of photographs where necessary. The first step in qualitative analysis is description (Patton, 1990). Description of critical key events, programmes, issues and incidents observed over time were chronologically captured from beginning to end.

However, in a union plagued by numerous challenges, the most noteworthy was identification and ranking of its challenges. This informed the used of Kendall's coefficient of concordance ( $W_c$ ), after the perceptions of UCSOND members was derived from the in-depth personal interviews and focus group discussions. The members were asked to rank the constraints with the highest being ranked as number one. A pretest was conducted to identify the major constraints confronting UCSOND.

The Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance ( $W_c$ ) is a measure of the degree of agreement/concordance among  $m$  sets of  $n$  ranks. It is an index that measures the ratio of the observed variance of the sum of ranks to the maximum possible variance of sum of ranks. The essence of this index is to find the sum of the ranks for each constraint being ranked and to examine the variability of this sum. If the

rankings are in perfect agreement the variability among these sums is said to be a maximum (Greene, 1997). The higher the value of Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance ( $W_c$ ), the stronger the association between the constraints. The analysis is a statistical technique that is used to identify and rank a given set of constraints from the most critical one up to the least critical one and then measures the degree of agreement between these constraints.

More often than not, the identified constraints are ranked according to the most critical to the least critical using numerals such as 1, 2, 3...n, in that order. The constraint with the least sum score is ranked as the most critical whilst the one with the highest score is ranked as the least critical. The computed total rank score is then used to calculate the  $W_c$ . The value of  $W_c$  is positive in sign and varies from 0 to 1. It is 1 when the values assigned by one judge (ranker) are exactly the same as those assigned by other judges (rankers) and is 0 when there is maximum disagreement among the judges (rankers). Three groups of judges (rankers) were asked to produce independent ranking of the problems cited. They comprised two key informants interviewed separately and focus group discussants that constituted one group.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of data obtained from the study. It examines the contribution of UCSOND to good local governance and local level development management. The study sought answers for the following questions:

- What have been the activities of UCSOND at the grassroots level?
- How does UCSOND's capacity enable it to play its role?
- What challenges confront UCSOND in its operations?

The principal method used in analysing the data was interpretive inquiry. Tables and pictures were employed to summarise issues for the first objective that sought to analyse UCSOND's activities at the grassroots. The second objective also used tables to examine UCSOND's capacity and ability to play its role. The third objective, which addressed challenges confronting civil society organisations was, identified and ranked using Kendall's coefficient of concordance.

#### **Activities of UCSOND at the grassroots level**

The study examined programmes that UCSOND undertakes as well as its role in local governance. UCSOND's role in governance is in three folds. The

first part deals with UCSOND's role as advocate of quality development and services. The second part examines local economic development and poverty reduction role of UCSOND, while the third part discusses UCSOND's promotion of good governance (Ghaus- Pasha, 2004).

The study revealed that UCSOND is involved in a host of activities. This is consistent with Anheier and Salamon's (1998) view that CSOs perform diverse activities. A summary of their activities is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Summary of UCSOND activities**

Activity	Issues/ topics	Targets
Parliamentary candidate debate	Governance, development, welfare	Politicians, community
Question & Answer fora	Service delivery	Service provider, citizens
Advocacy Campaign	Current & emerging issues- HIV/AIDS, health, jobs, education, sanitation	Community, NGO's, Local government, Market actors
Town meetings	Specific community needs- Electricity, roads, accidents	Local government, community
Training & Capacity building Workshops	Training/ skills development, institutional capacity building, research	UCSOND executives/ members
Participatory review clinics	Domestic violence bill, right to information bill, national health insurance bill	Local government, CSOs, community
Stakeholders Strategic forum	Community development, local government policies, Strategic planning, citizens Participation in governance	CSOs, traditional rulers, local government, private sector

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

Table 2 clearly shows the activities used by UCSOND to promote citizens participation in local governance within its catchment area. UCSOND often uses civic events like town meetings, questions and answers fora, information sharing and advocacy campaigns to convey messages to citizens. Besides these activities, it was learnt that UCSOND also disseminates information on domestic violence bill, national health insurance scheme, local government policies among others. The main sources of data were from two personal interviews conducted and focus group discussions comprising seven pioneer members of UCSOND. The discussion indicates that UCSOND develops its competencies through training and capacity building activities. Capacity building is vital for organizational development and has been cited by Eade (1997) as a critical variable for strengthening civil society organisation for improved governance.

The key informants of UCSOND claimed that before UCSOND came into existence, advocacy issues that require civic engagement with development actors received little attention. They posited that advocacy is generally seen as the primary role of CSO, hence, the need for UCSOND to manage the voices of local people for better life. This view affirms the assertion by Ottaway (2001) that CSOs are suited for public awareness on issues because of the relative trust they possess vis-a-vis the state. Ghaus- Pasha (2004) also concedes that the role of CSOs in governance centres on advocates of policy change. UCSOND derived its advocacy agenda based on districts and community needs. An obvious observation is that since its formation, UCSOND has played a lot of advocacy roles which are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.



The then Nzema East District, like most districts in Ghana, had been stifled by a host of socio-economic problems. Among these were communication difficulty and high cost of transport fares, especially taxi. This situation arose because of deteriorating and inaccessible road networks, dense vegetation cover and heavy rainfall. The district had a total of 154.1 and 249 kilometres of trunk and feeder roads respectively as at 1999. Out of this 62.4 and 26.2 kilometres of roads were tarred and rehabilitated respectively. The rest (228.8km) were not rehabilitated. This situation compelled drivers to charge high fares. Following this background, UCSOND initiated an advocacy campaign for a reduction in fares. Additionally, excessive speeding on Ghana - Cote d' Ivoire trans-highway and overloading has been reduced. The success was attributed to collaboration with the District Assembly (DA), community and local transport unions.

With regard to education, a key informant stressed that the value placed on it was one of the major reasons for the existence of the union. UCSOND instrumentality in forming partnership with stakeholders like District Education Office (DEO), Parent-Teachers' Associations and communities has recorded success in girl child education enrolment, awards of scholarships to the needy but brilliant pupils, truancy and school dropout. For instance, video cinema centres nowadays prohibit school children from patronising. Secondly, through its outreach programme UCSOND was able to advocate for the teaching of Nzema language in most schools. This was a major step towards the development and usage of the Nzema language. Finally, through UCSOND's collaboration with the

DEO, indiscipline among some first cycle school teachers has been greatly improved courtesy monitoring and supervision.

This confirmed earlier assumption that CSOs are organisations which aggregate citizens' voice. Plate 1 shows a group of some Muslim women being apprised of the relevance of sending their female children to school.



**Plate 1: Meeting with muslim women on girl child education at Kamgbunli**

Photo credit: UCSOND, 2007

In attempt to reduce the spread of HIV/ AIDS, the Awiebo scholars union, a youth wing of UCSOND sourced funding from Ghana Aids Commission in 2005 (May-September) and launched a campaign on the dangers of the disease. Activities that were organised included quiz competitions for primary and junior high school children, HIV/ AIDS drama and video shows in some communities. According to a key informant, such efforts helped to change mindsets of the youth

and communities within its catchment area. Plate 2 shows a section of Awiebo community folks watching HIV/ AIDS drama.



**Plate 2: A section of Awiebo adults and children watching HIV AIDS drama**

Photo credit: UCSOND, 2005

One remarkable outcome from UCSOND’s advocacy is a Town Meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2005. The event was held to find solutions to frequent accidents on Kikam–Ankobra stretch of the Elubo highway after the 36<sup>th</sup> person died on the road. The event which was well patronised by the community and people from nearby towns had representation from the DA, NGOs, media and the Ghana Police. The elders of Kikam sought permission from the District Education Office to enable school children stay out of school and attend the function. A key informant explained that the event was widely broadcast on Radio Ghana Current Affairs programme “Ghana Today”, Twin-City Radio News and other radio

stations in Sekondi-Takoradi. The interviewee noted that exactly a month after the event, the Ghana Highway Authority erected speed limit, sign posts as indicated in Plate 3. Since then, there has been success in preventing road accidents.



**Plate 3: Ankobra- Kikam stretch of road with sign post**

Photo credit: Author, 2011

Another important achievement of UCSOND as per the view of discussants is in the area of malaria prevention. Statistics given by UCSOND from the office of the District Director of Health Service indicated that in the year 2000 malaria used to be one of the top five causes of out-patient-morbidity in the district. This assertion is supported by the statistics in Tables 3 and 4.

**Table 3: Five top causes of out-patient morbidity in 2000**

No.	Disease	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Malaria	16,134	58.8
2.	Intestinal Worms	3,701	13.5
3.	Pregnancy & Related Complications	3,045	11.1
4.	Diarrhoea Diseases	2,439	8.9
5.	Disease of the skin ( including ulcers)	2,114	7.7
Total		27,433	100

Source: UCSOND, 2000

From Table 3, malaria was identified as the major cause of out- patient morbidity. Out of the total 27, 433 out- patient morbidity cases reported 16, 134 were malaria. This was attributed to poor sanitation standards, inadequate drainage system and illiteracy. Intestinal worms recorded 13.5 percent; pregnancy related complications had 11.1 percent, while diarrhoea and skin diseases accounted for 8.9 and 7.7 percent respectively. According to a key informant, with the coming into being of UCSOND, there has been a sharp decline in malaria related disease. The statistics presented in Table 4 affirm it.

**Table 4: Five top causes of out-patient morbidity in 2009**

No	Disease	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gastro Enteritis	3,507	51.5
2.	Anaemia	1,134	16.6
3.	Measles	852	12.5
4.	Hepatitis	815	11.9
5.	Malaria	504	7.4
Total		6,812	100

Source: UCSOND, 2009

Table 4 shows that there was a sharp decline in malaria diseases. Out of a total of 6, 812 reported cases Malaria accounted for 504 cases. This shows that there has been a decrease of 51.4 percent. This can be traced back to improvement in environmental cleanliness and waste management. From the responses gathered during the field work, it was learnt that other diseases like diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid which are caused by poor sanitation and hygiene conditions have been controlled. UCSOND indicated that their vigorous advocacy campaign has greatly reduced the prevalence rate.

In April 2004, a meeting of UCSOND District Executives was held to examine how UCSOND could reach out to the entire populace. When the union was formed, the problem of communication arose since membership was spread across the vast District with its poor road network. It was resolved that the most efficient way of dealing with the issue is the establishment of community radio

station. Following this, UCSOND quickly registered with Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN), an NGO, to assist her in frequency acquisition and technical assistance. UCSOND is now waiting for a Frequency from National Communications Authority to start its test transmission. The establishment of community radio station affirms the assertion by Clayton et al. (2000) that CSOs are no longer just providing services to people that the state has failed to reach, but they are now far more in the mainstream of development activities.

From the study, it came to light that the then Nzema East District had only 12 public toilets as of 1996. This compelled coastal dwellers to use the beaches as their place of convenience. Arguably, this inadequacy of toilet facilities destroyed the beauty and hygienic conditions of the beaches. Nevertheless, through the conscious effort of UCSOND more toilets have been provided. Improper waste disposal also posed serious health threat to the inhabitants. This situation persisted because refuse in the urban council areas were disposed of anyhow since there were no proper waste disposal sites and facilities. The severity of the situation in Axim for instance, gave birth to Sanitation Improvement Platform for Axim (SIPA), in 2002 with UCSOND as an active stakeholder. A key informant explained that through SIPA's initiative sanitation menace in Axim has been brought to the barest minimum, thus bringing joy to the lives of people.

Similar experience occurred at Gwira Bansa where illegal cutting of timber was fast destroying the rich forest reserve in Ghana. The area is remote and poorly accessible. UCSOND again gathered the concerns of these forest

dependent people for redress by duty bearers. This gesture by UCSOND has helped saved the forest and its products from total extinction.

As regards this role, the study found out that UCSOND is actively engaged in promoting local enterprise development in the district, even though not very much has been achieved. The Nzema East Municipality and Ellembelle District are predominantly a farming community with most families owning coconut farms. UCSOND contribution to improving local businesses is seen in the following ways.

First, UCSOND has collaborated with several NGOs like Care International to widen livelihood sources for its members and the entire communities. One such intervention was in the agricultural sector where UCSOND in 2003 collaborated with Care International on renewable forest management in the off reserve forest communities of Gwira Bansa basically because the area is an agrarian society and the enterprise which sustains their socio-economic life is farming. The project generated over 100 employment avenues for inhabitants of these forest fringed communities. Tree crops like teak, rubber, cocoa and voacanga were extensively cultivated by the rural folks. The project facilitated the formation of several agricultural based groups like Black Pepper Group, Onua Do Group-Jampere and Voacanga Group. This buttresses the already held view that CSOs are useful in generating anti-poverty strategies.

Secondly, UCSOND's effort in mobilising Civil Society Groups (CSG) served as conduit for the Association of Small Scale Industries (ASSI) to commence their operation successfully. ASSI which started its operation in 2002



had to rely on civil society groups mobilised by UCSOND for its micro-finance activities. ASSI has a membership of about 500 with two-thirds being UCSOND members. This role of UCSOND does not support Khan's (1988) observation that rural people lack power to mobilise people.

Thirdly, the discussions indicated that UCSOND has been instrumental in the training and development of its members towards viable income generating activities. Between the years of 2001 to 2006, UCSOND liaised with CLUSA GAIT, SNV and Care International to carry out several workshops on business plan development, proposal writing, book keeping/ accounting among others for its members. These findings are consistent with the position of Thompson (1995) who argued that training ought to link closely with the internal change processes if it is to have lasting impact.

Since UCSOND's formation, it has championed the promotion of good governance issues. Notable among them is its role in organising two successive Parliamentary candidates' debates for aspiring parliamentarians in the year 2000 and 2004 respectively. The debate which was funded from USAID with technical assistance from CLUSA GAIT was very successful in 2000. In 2004 there was high demand for the debate which was also successful. The debates helped voters to learn from the candidates so as to make an informed choice. As CSOs can sustain democracy through stimulating political participation (Diamond, 1999), it is important that local people are integral part of development activities from agenda setting till the putative end of the project.

On participation, UCSOND in 2001 organised a stakeholder's strategic workshop for opinion leaders, traditional rulers and local government officials. The event which received financial and technical support from USAID and GAIT II Program gave direction to local government policies. Analyses revealed that this gesture has tremendously influenced policy decisions. It was made clear by discussants that UCSOND's positive gesture sets the tone for the active inclusion of civil society in district development agenda. Although, UCSOND was not the foremost advocate of development in Nzemaland, its contribution is unique, as Craig and Mayo (1995) posit that people's participation has become the central issue of our time.

Thirdly, UCSOND was also instrumental in creating a platform for women to participate in local governance, advocate on issues affecting their welfare and the development of their communities through the formation of Women's Wing in June, 2005. The Women's Wing of UCSOND has achieved success in respect of advocating against rape and defilement, teenage pregnancy, unfair terms of trade, malnutrition, social injustice, lack of job opportunities and micro-finance for women. For instance, in 2005 the Women's wing vehemently protested against illegal fees demanded from sellers by Environmental Health Department of the then NEDA, Aiyinasi office. Plate 4 depicts a formal inauguration of Women's Wing of UCSOND in June, 2005.



**Plate 4. Inauguration of UCSOND women’s wing**

**Photo credit: UCSOND, 2005**

Further inquiries revealed that UCSOND’s leadership now participates in the planning and budgeting process of the District Assembly. These include fee fixing consultations, public budget hearing, revenue mobilisation training workshops and tax education campaigns. This affords UCSOND’s leaders the opportunity to seek explanation for critical development issues for further dissemination to members and communities. Thus, in so doing, governance and decentralisation are brought to the door step of the people.

Finally, UCSOND often uses civic events like questions and answers fora for services providers and town meetings to facilitate accountable and transparent governance. The study showed that such events have received laudable support from local government since officials use such opportunity to respond to the demand of the citizens and also spell out their activities to them. Paramount issues

usually discussed include contracts bidding and awards, management and disbursement of Poverty Alleviation Fund, award of scholarships, districts development plans and citizens' participation in project implementation. Clearly, the examples affirm the assertion by Kelemen (2000) that CSOs are more prevalent in implementation processes.

### **UCSOND capacity and ability to play its role**

The study examined UCSOND's membership trend, approaches towards the achievement of its objectives, strategies and tactics. The resource capacity base of UCSOND and an evaluation of UCSOND's performance and competency over the years were also analysed. The discussions are structured linking results to issues listed above.

Membership of UCSOND cuts across the four zonal areas, namely Axim and Gwira Bansa zones for Nzema East Municipality and Esiam and Aiyinasi zones for Ellembelle District. UCSOND has a total of sixty- five CSOs across these zonal areas as member groups. Membership of UCSOND is gained through becoming a member of any of the CSOs in the four sub-districts. The union has many youth associations, but none can match Awiebo Scholars Union in terms of articulating concerns and influencing development issues. In terms of its membership, Axim Fishermen Association is the largest. Also worth mentioning is Axim District Council of Labour whose members laid the solid foundation for the birth of the union. These CSOs can be further sub-divided into the following occupations illustrated in Table 5.

**Table 5: Civil society organisations under UCSOND**

CSO	ZONE
1. Bakers Association	Aiyinasi, Axim, E
2. Co-operative Distillers Union	Aiyinasi, Axim, E, GB
3. Beautician/ Tailors/ Dressmakers Association	Aiyinasi, Axim, E, GB
4. Pig/ Poultry Farmers Association	Aiyinasi, Axim, E, GB
5. Vegetables/ Field Crops Farmers Association	Aiyinasi, Axim, E, GB
6. Coconut/ Tree Crops Farmers Association	Axim, Aiyinasi, E, GB
7. Teachers Association	Aiyinasi, Axim, E
8. Ghana Private Road Transport Union	Aiyinasi, Axim, E
9. Civil Servant/ Christian Mothers Association	Axim
10. Fishermen/ Fishmongers Association	Axim,
11. Mechanics / Carpenters Associations	Aiyinasi, Axim, E
12. Women's Wing Association	Aiyinasi, Axim, E
13. Market Women Cooperatives	Aiyinasi, E
14. Youth Association	Aiyinasi, Axim, E

Source: Field Study, 2011

\* GB means Gwira Bansa, E = Esiamia

The membership of the various Civil Society Groups forms UCSOND. UCSOND is non-commercial, non-partisan and non-sectarian in structure and functioning. It does not come under the control of local government. It is formed by indigenous groups and run by indigenous people based on democratic tenets.

Table 6 Shows UCSOND membership status from its earlier inception in 1999 to 2008.

**Table 6: Membership of UCSOND in the four zones (1999-2008)**

Year	Zones				Total
	Axim	Aiyinasi	Esiamama	Gwira Bansa	
1999	25	-	-	-	25
2000	56	-	-	-	56
2001	70	-	-	-	70
2002	90	35	25	-	150
2003	138	42	30	15	225
2004	166	53	39	22	280
2005	180	57	45	30	312
2006	232	76	51	41	400
2007	201	63	51	35	350
2008	66	60	40	14	180

Source: UCSOND, 2009

The study found out that membership into UCSOND is by open recruitment of individuals who share common needs and values. This is consistent with the earlier findings of Gyimah-Boadi et al. (2000) and Ghaus-Pasha (2004) that civil society is marked by pluralism and diversity reflected by people within the social sphere.

In Table 6 it is very clear that UCSOND's membership has gone up significantly over the years. For instance, it moved from 25 members in 1999 to 400 members in 2006. The discussants attributed it to UCSOND's effective

mobilisation of local people for its advocacy programmes over the years. In 2006, there was a sharp increase in membership status. This was attributed to increased publicity of UCSOND's activities. However, there was a decline thereafter by 50 in 2007. In 2008, the trend was even worse, because the drop-out rate was 48.6 percent. Reasons assigned for this had to do with apathy, dwindling spirit of self-help and inadequate sponsorship traced to exit of partner NGOs. Some members also complained that the impact of the several capacity building workshops is not being felt.

The study solicited views on UCSOND's approach to effectively participate in local governance. A key informant indicated that UCSOND's major approach is directed towards building partnership and networking through signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with development organisations, local government and other CSOs. The idea here is networking technical capabilities as a basis of building trust and relationships needed to improve democratic governance and human resource development. Clearly, this approach affirms the assertion by Eade (1997) that capacity building is an approach to development.

It was also gathered from the interviews that UCSOND shares cost of some programmes with partner NGOs and local government. Another approach pursued by UCSOND is members and community driven advocacy plans. Finally, in respect of its training and development policy, UCSOND is using internal resource persons trained by NGOs. These people used to train UCSOND's members at village unit level so that they can mobilise people for advocacy. The

essence of this approach has been summarised by Scholte (1999) to mean that capacity building needs to aim at teams of leaders at the unit level.

Interviews with leaders reveal that UCSOND uses education, persuasion, collaboration and confrontation in their attempt to influence policies and programmes (Covey, 1994). It was found out that UCSOND often resorted to the use of education and collaboration to influence local businesses, community, District Assembly and its allied departments in terms of policy formulation, participation and services delivery. Ghaus-Pasha (2004) has noted that strategies and tactics influence the kind of success a coalition can achieve. Ghaus-Pasha argues that effective grassroots education and organising efforts help to sustain and strengthen the institutional base essential for holding governments accountable.

A very important factor that can influence the ability of any organisation to play its role in modern governance is the educational attainment and literacy level of its membership. Formal education equips people with knowledge, skills and techniques to improve competencies aimed at increasing the productive capacity of the population. As illustrated in Table 7, it can be inferred that more of UCSOND's members are illiterates. A key informant explained that majority of these are females in occupation like hairdressing, dressmaking, petty trading, vegetables and tuber crops trading. This situation of high illiterate membership has contributed to low self-esteem and increasing mental dependence. The big issue is that members depend to a great extent on the few leaders.



**Table 7: Occupational and educational attainment of UCSOND's membership in 2008**

		Major occupations				Total
		Agriculture	Trading	Artisan	Teaching	
	Tertiary	5	0	0	0	9.5
Educational background	Secondary	12	8	6	6	21.5
	Elementary	17	11	13	0	27.7
	Illiterate	41	11	9	0	47.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>50.7</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>18.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: UCSOND, 2008

In discussing leadership, Diamond (1999) contends that CSOs can deal effectively with political challenges through mentoring of future leaders. However, UCSOND seems to be doing very little in this regard.

Secondly, among the major occupations, agriculture happened to be the dominant one. Most of the people are actively engaged in fishing and farming (animal rearing inclusive) with most households owning coconut farms, 20.3 percent are in trading (majority being petty traders and fishmongers), while 18.9 percent represents artisans. The artisans were seamstresses, tailors, hairdressers, mechanics, carpenters and masons. The remaining 10.1 percent are into teaching.

As illustrated by Table 7, illiteracy rate, as per the major occupation is highest for agriculture (50.7 percent). This scenario has constrained UCSOND's ability to advocate effectively since most members do not appreciate the use of symposia, rallies, conferences, letter writing campaigns, meetings and other adept

means of mobilising general public for action. In addition, this disables majority of its members from doing policy analysis. In effect the higher the degree of illiteracy, the lower the probability of having greater control of the development process. This tendency agrees with literature that the availability of resources may either strengthen or weaken an organisation.

The study gathered information on the source of funds available to UCSOND. It came to light that UCSOND derives its funds from partner NGOs sponsorship and membership dues. The discussants agreed that in terms of financial resources UCSOND is not better off. This predicament began in 2007 when NGOs pulled out of the then Nzema East District principally because they had completed the phase of their programme. Secondly, UCSOND was unable to source funds from development agencies to continue its programmes. This concern arises partly because of their inability to write proposal writing and make the necessary follow-ups. Thirdly, payment of quarterly dues by members has significantly reduced. Most of UCSOND's members are in the informal sectors and do not earn stable and regular income. Thus, when it comes to contributing money they are not able to and some rather prefer withdrawing their membership.

The organisational malaise of UCSOND, lately as compared with the early 2000s, may be inferred from UCSOND's financial records on the ratio of enrollment to the payment of membership dues. In 2000/1, UCSOND had an enrollment of 80 members, out of which 73 members paid up. In 2003/4, 243 (86 %) members out of 280 paid their dues. By contrast, only 52 out of 350 members paid up in 2006/7. This declining trend in payment of dues persists up to now,

with only 27 out of 180 (15%) paying in 2007/8. A key informant explained that because generally business activities are low, payments of quarterly dues have become a problem. The importance of finance has been summarized by James and Malunga (2006) to the effect that the availability of funding sources and sizes evidently influence how CSO behave. Thus UCSOND's inability to perform some activities can be attributed to paucity of funds.

For UCSOND to effectively deliver and maintain services, issues of logistics ought to be tailored to its objectives. The study found that UCSOND does not have a printer, photocopier and a fax machine for secretarial duties and no vehicle for errands, public address system, projectors and video camera for advocacy campaign. However, it has been able to acquire an office at the Axim Kundum Park through the assistance of the DA, one Pentium IV computer, and a motor bicycle donated by the CLUSA GAIT. However, the secretariat is poorly furnished. UCSOND does not have permanent workers for its secretariat. This situation has resulted in intermittent closure of the office. Also, the absence of a typist to carry out organisational and secretarial duties leads to high expenditure and loss of time through queuing to have documents processed at secretarial centres.

Information gathering, storage and retrieval are a big hindrance, eroding UCSOND's capacity and ability to advocate and respond quickly to correspondence needs of the union. Administration in any organisation is important for improved performance (Eade, 1997) since it is inextricably linked with performance.

On the networks, values and norms that enable UCSOND to cooperate with one another for the good of all, the findings of this study reveal that UCSOND belongs to four civil society networks in the country, namely;

1. Ghana Community Radio Network (GCRN) as an affiliate member.
2. Network of NGO's in the Western Region.
3. Network of Civic Unions (NETCUS).
4. Civil society platform on oil and gas.

NETCUS serves as a federation where various CSOs with considerable autonomy merge.

Furthermore, with the discovery of Oil and Gas in offshore Nzemaland, UCSOND has been collaborating with NGOs like Friends of the Nations and Publish What You Pay (PWYP) on the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative. Under this, UCSOND has collaborated with Friends of the Nation and Community Environment and Advocacy Groups (CEMAGs) to organise series of workshops for coastal communities on the monitoring of some of the effects that are likely to occur from the activities of the oil field and the management of community expectations. UCSOND is a member of Western Region Platform for Oil and Gas, a platform that seeks to advocate for transparency and accountability in oil revenue management. Ashman (2005) found significance in pre-existing relationships among CSO members as a linchpin of successful CSOs.

Table 8 is an illustration of UCSOND's performance and competency over the years. Data used were mainly obtained from FGD and other documents during field research.

**Table 8: Opinion on UCSOND performance**

No.	Variable	Performance score		
		key Informant 1	Key Informant 2	FGD
1.	Knowledge of Field	4	3	4
2.	Intellectual Ability	4	3	3
3.	Work Habits	3	3	3
4.	Resourcefulness & Initiative	3	3	4
5.	Leadership Qualities	4	4	3
6.	Motivation to work	4	4	2
7.	Social Commitment & Involvement	3	2	2
8.	Adaptability to New Situation	3	3	3
9.	Professional Potential	2	3	3
		mean = 3.3	mean = 3	mean=3

Source: FGD (2011), variables adopted and modified from Ford Foundation IFP  
\*5 means Excellent, 4(Very Good), 3 (Good), 2 (Average), 1(Below Average)  
Weighted Average (Mean) = 3.1

Table 8 shows UCSOND’s performance in local governance. A grading scale on nine key variables based on grades 1-5, where five is interpreted to mean excellent and one below average was used. The highest score was four and the lowest two (very good and average respectively). It can be seen from the table 8 that the first key informant graded the performance of UCSOND as slightly above good (3.3). The second key informant and focus group discussants all graded the performance as good (3.0). On the whole a weighted average of 3.1 indicates that the overall performance of UCSOND was good. Thus UCSOND is playing a role in local governance. This reinforces the already held view that the categorisation

of Africa as a weak civil society does not accurately reflect emerging democracies in Africa (Blankson, 2002).

### **Challenges facing UCSOND in its operations**

Although, UCSOND has made substantial inroads into good governance issues in the area they operate, such successes have been constrained. The union is plagued with varying degrees of problems. This part discusses the challenges confronting UCSOND in its attempt to improve living standards.

In an in-depth personal interview and FGD with pioneer UCSOND's members, they alluded to a host of challenges and ranked them based on the severity of the problems with the most serious problem taking the top of the table. Table 9 depicts that UCSOND is bedevilled with human resource constraints. This situation arises partly because of illiteracy and low educational attainment of most members. As a result advocacy and participation have been compromised. Due to the weak capacity of its members to demand for transparency and accountability, many projects are executed by assemblies without their concern. James and Malunga (2006) have bemoaned that CSOs advocacy will be undermined if members have insufficient analytical and technical capacity. The low capacity has disorganised UCSOND, made their activities largely ad hoc, erratic, ineffective and not targeted at improving members' welfare.

Secondly, inadequate sponsorship posed a threat to the smooth operations of UCSOND. A key informant explained that the withdrawal of technical and financial assistance by development organisations like CLUSA GAIT, SNV and

Care international have undermined UCSOND ability to organise capacity workshops and outreach advocacy campaign programmes. Even though most of the members are workers they expect the union to remit them. Some also misconstrued the financial and technical assistance by NGOs to mean “sharing of money”. Ghaus- Pasha (2005) in discussing the factor hindering the ability of CSOs to deliver services alluded to the role of financial resources. In the case of UCSOND, between 2002 and 2005, ten out of 45 CSOs have been inactive. Ghaus-Pasha also hinted that funding constraints affects coalition-building, institutional building and local capacity building.

Inadequate logistics and poverty levels among members occupy the third and fourth places. The study revealed that UCSOND had no printer, photocopier and fax machine for secretarial duties and no vehicle for errands, public address system, projector and video camera for advocacy campaign. The absence of vehicle for advocacy campaign coupled with poor communication network has affected UCSOND’s activities especially in the Gwira Bansa area where accessibility and information flow were facilitated by Care International. But with their exit, ineffective communication has resulted.

Further inquiries indicate that poverty and low income levels of members have not energised members to fully participate in UCSOND’s activities. A key informant was quick to add that “survival” is the greatest challenge that has consumed members’ energies; hence, there is little time for participation, inability to pay quarterly dues and the ambivalence towards UCSOND’s activities. It was learnt from the study that most of UCSOND’s members are peasant farmers, petty

traders and artisans with little or no income, hence, their limited role. On this issue, Ninsin (1998) and Gyimah-Boadi et al. (2000) have observed that the most enduring and formidable civil society organisations are those with middle class professionals.

One draw back in the process of stimulating participation of members is dwindling spirit of volunteerism and philanthropism, non-commitment and unwillingness to partake in UCSOND's activities. It was learnt that more than two-thirds of the entire members are not very active when it comes to attending meetings, social gatherings and communal work. This condition prevails in varying degrees in UCSOND's activities. Arguably, they do not appear to have the time and or energy to invest in capacity building workshops, meetings and other advocacy programmes. Others also perceived UCSOND with political eyes hence their lukewarm behaviour. This show of apathy is exacerbating the demands on and reducing the capacity of an already weak union. The lack of commitment and time exert a very negative influence on UCSOND's ability to mobilise members for advocacy campaign, its core mandate.

Again, the discussants identified leadership challenge as a factor that has militated against the union. They argue that apart from the President and few other UCSOND's executives who are knowledgeable and can analyse policies, draft sponsorship and project proposals, business plan and other documents useful for securing assistance, majority of the members are incapable off that. The discussion further indicated that most members are unable to act on their own; hence, they often rely on executives for directives. This dependence on leaders



affirms the assertion by James and Malunga (2006) that the strength of CSO's network largely depends on its members. This implies that weak leadership is unlikely to secure assistance, motivate members, make time for advocacy campaign as well as strategise to co-ordinate members' activities.

Another, plausible challenge confronting UCSOND is the lack of strategy and tactics to co-ordinate activities. The study revealed that co-operation and information dissemination among members are relatively low. In particular, CSOs in the Gwira Bansa area for a very long time have been ineffective when it comes to UCSOND's activities. In the opinion of the discussants, the livelihood activities of most UCSOND's members conflict with that of UCSOND's. They lamented that most members had no options but to forgo UCSOND's activities. The result is that UCSOND stands to be weakened. Inadequacy of strategy to motivate members and also network with other CSOs for the good of all, have resulted in dwindling membership. More than 40 percent of UCSOND's members have left the organisation.

It was also realised that the union faces challenges pertaining to improper records keeping, unawareness of governance issues and limited conflict prevention skills. A large majority of UCSOND members do not understand the concept of decentralization particularly with respect to their roles and responsibilities. As Robinson and White (1997) have pointed out that both the state and CSOs should use their synergy to build effective partnership to ensure better delivery of service. A good collaborative relationship will create economic

arrangements that support human development, economic growth and poverty alleviation.

The Kendall's coefficient of concordance was employed to ascertain if there was agreement among the challenges ranked. The chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) calculated is greater than the tabulated ( $\chi^2$ ) value indicating that there is an agreement among the constraints.

**Table 9: Challenges facing UCSOND in its operations**

Challenges	N	Total Scores	Mean Rank	Standard Deviation	Ranking
Human resource constraints	3	5	1.67	0.577	1
Inadequate sponsorship	3	8	2.67	0.577	2
Inadequate logistics	3	11	3.67	4.619	3
Poverty	3	13	4.33	0.577	4
Apathy	3	16	5.33	1.155	5
Leadership challenge	3	18	6	1.732	6
Lack of strategy & tactics	3	21	7	0	7
Improper documentation	3	22	7.33	1.155	8
Lack of awareness on governance issues	3	23	7.67	4.041	9
Limited conflict prevention skills	3	28	9.33	0.577	10

- $W_c =$  Kendall's coefficient of concordance = 0.639
- Chi-square = 17.255       $\chi^2_{cal} > \chi^2_{table}$

From Table 9 Kendall's coefficient of concordance ( $W_c$ ) was found to be 0.639 (63.9 %) indicating a moderately high agreement between the rankings

made by the rankers (two key informants and focus group discussants) concerning the relative importance of the stated problems. This implies 63.9 percent of the challenges were correctly ranked in the same order by the rankers.

A mean rank of 1.67 for human resource constraints indicates that of the ten challenges, it is the most critical/ important while a mean rank of 9.33 meant limited conflict prevention skills is the least critical/ important. A standard deviation of 0.000 (Max of 7, Min of 7 and Mean of 7) for lack of strategy and tactics in particular shows that it was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> out of 10 challenges by all the three independent rankers. Across all the three rankers' poverty, inadequate sponsorship, human resource constraints and limited conflict prevention skills were the problems that were ranked with same uncertainty by the rankers. This is seen from their equal standard deviation (0.577). The analysis again revealed that inadequate logistics had the highest standard deviation of 4.619 meaning it had the highest discordant across the rankers.

In sum, it is worth mentioning that a mean rank of 1.67 for human resource constraints shows that it is the most important of all the ten challenges. Hence, if that is tackled there is a chance that it will have a positive effect on the other challenges.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study. The study examined the contribution of UCSOND to local governance in Ellembelle District and Nzema East Municipality. In addressing the above fundamental objective, the study solicited responses on three broad research objectives. These are as follows:

- the activities of UCSOND at the grassroots level.
- UCSOND's capacity and ability to play its role.
- Challenges facing UCSOND in its operations

UCSOND was the focus of the empirical study while the units of enquiry were some selected pioneer members of UCSOND. The principal method used in analysing the data was interpretive enquiry. This was augmented with tables, pictures and Kendall's coefficient of concordance.

#### **Summary of findings**

With regards to activities of UCSOND, the research found out that the union has been of professed benefit to the districts. The contributions are in fourfold.

- First, UCSOND through its advocacy and technical inputs has to a larger extent influenced policies and programmes beneficial to its people. These include identifying unattended problems and bringing them to public attention, giving voice to the marginalised and women.
- Secondly, UCSOND has been instrumental in stimulating popular participation in local governance through civic events and disseminating information on local government policies.
- Furthermore, UCSOND is proactive in keeping local government in check through its monitoring role and has been particularly helpful in improving service delivery and transparency in resource allocation. Thus, the existence of the union can be taken as a good omen for the consolidation of local governance in Ellembelle District and Nzema East Municipality.
- Finally, UCSOND has played no mean role in mobilising, empowering and networking grassroots' organisations through institutional capacity building workshops. Indications are that through this, UCSOND is encouraging local enterprise development and poverty alleviation. Evidence suggests a moderate gain.

In respect of UCSOND's capacity and ability to play its role, four broad issues were identified.

- First, UCSOND has a low organisational resource base.
- Secondly, the low resource base has resulted in organisational weakness.
- Thirdly, the few committed and active members of UCSOND are those with appreciable educational or literacy and income levels.

- One of the key findings, which emerged from the study, is that there is a relationship between literacy and effectiveness of UCSOND.
- Also, the member groups of UCSOND are populated by female professional groups like beauticians, dressmakers, fishmongers and market women association who lacked access to information and therefore are not able to influence policy directions let alone participate effectively.

With regards to challenges, the study found out that UCSOND is confronted with a number of them.

- The obvious challenges are human resources constraints, inadequate sponsorships and logistics, poverty and apathy.
- Other challenges are leadership challenge, lack of strategy and tactics, improper records, limited conflict prevention skills and lack of awareness on governance issues.
- The study also revealed that there is a strong association between the challenges. Thus, one problem may result in another problem or one problem affect the occurrence of another problem. This was ascertained through the use of Kendall's coefficient of concordance.

## **Conclusions**

This study has portrayed the significance of civil society organisations in local governance considering the enormous task placed on nations by modern governance systems. With regards to UCSOND activities, the research conclusion is that the union has contributed immensely to stimulating citizen's participation

in local governance, promotion of anti-poverty strategies and improved governance.

In respect of UCSOND's capacity and ability to play its role, the study concluded that the low resource base of UCSOND, has impaired its ability to play the ascribe roles effectively. Furthermore, its main liabilities are human and financial constraints and mental dependence on few broadminded leaders. However, despite the internal organisational health weakness the union is still contributing its quota to accountable local government.

Finally, the conclusion to be drawn from the findings on challenges confronting UCSOND is that the low resource base has not allowed the institutional capacity of UCSOND to develop in formal terms. Secondly, its weak institutional capacity has led to resignation and dwindling membership.

### **Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings and the resultant conclusions, the following recommendations are made to UCSOND, CSOs and others.

#### **UCSOND**

- UCSOND must strengthen their effort for support or resources aimed at institutional capacity building. For instance, research and public policy. This will limit the dominant role played by government in development policy making.

- UCSOND should liaise with West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI) to strengthen its expertise in proposal writing and sourcing of funds for increased advocacy and poverty reduction programmes.
- In order for UCSOND to ameliorate the paucity of funds confronting it, the union should embark on income generating activities to make it vibrant and effective.
- UCSOND can improve on its communication and information sharing with members through adept public relations strategies like phone text message, music, publications, website and e-mail messages.
- UCSOND should set up a monitoring team to evaluate its impact on local governance with the view of documenting their successes and pitfalls, so that the union can be in a position to develop new strategies to enhance grassroots participation in governance. Also, such experience can be used as an effective case study.
- UCSOND leadership should use their knowledge and experience gained from local governance to advocate effectively at regional and national level, with the obvious implication that their success model would not have been localised.
- UCSOND leadership should intensify their public education on good governance, sustainable development and human right. Also, they must ensure that members have regular and free access to up to date public information.



## CSOs

- CSOs through the Government of Ghana initiated National Governance Programme can further stimulate citizen's participation in governance by sharing their experiences and forging linkages with other CSOs especially nascent grassroots organisation.
- CSOs must recognise District Assemblies as genuine partners in development. Thus, they can establish a variety of mechanisms such as policy, MOU and regular consultations to manage development.
- CSOs in Nzemaland should co-ordinate their effort to secure funding for democracy and development.
- CSOs should take delight in international meetings to gain insight into emerging governance issues.

## Others

- Researchers should conduct further research to examine the role of United Civil Society of Nzema East District in local governance in particular and all CSOs in Ghana in general.
- Independent research organisations must facilitate meetings and consultations with CSOs on challenges facing them as well as the way forward.
- Regular seminars/ workshops on proposal and report writing, project management, research, data management and analysis must be organised to build the capacity of CSOs for improved governance.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **A: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR UCSOND EXECUTIVES**

#### **Introduction**

The rationale behind this interview guide is to help the student fulfill a requirement of the Institute for Development Studies of University of Cape Coast for the award of Master of Arts Degree in Governance Sustainable Development.

In view of this objective, the student finds it useful to examine the role of civil society organisations in local governance, a case study of UCSOND. This study is primarily for academic purposes, and all responses will be treated confidentially and with anonymity.

#### **Section A: UCSOND ACTIVITIES AT THE GRASSROOT**

- UCSOND formation
- Activities ( events, selection mechanism, outcomes, assistances)
- Advocacy (issues, developing advocacy plans, time outcomes, financing)
- Strategies and tactics are employed by UCSOND
- Financing UCSOND activities
- Role of UCSOND activities

#### **Section B: UCSOND'S CAPACITY AND ABILITY TO PLAY IT'S ROLE**

- Organisational resources
- Sources of resources
- Relevant training
- Technical capacity of UCSOND

- Analytical capacity of UCSOND
- Effects of technical and analytical capacity on activities
- Advocacy skills and experience
- Membership (total, CSOs categories, educational and occupational background, commitment level)
- Networks
- Community/ members mobilization
- Impact of UCSOND programmes

#### Section D: CHALLENGES FACING UCSOND IN ITS OPERATIONS

- Challenges confronting UCSOND
- Ranking of challenges confronting UCSOND
- How can UCSOND be salvage
- Building commitment level of your members

## **B: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

### **Section A: UCSOND ACTIVITIES AT THE GRASSROOT**

- Activities of UCSOND ( programmes, selection mechanism, frequency, impact/outcomes, cost, support for programme)
- Advocacy Campaign ( issues, frequency, time, outcomes, assistance)
- Community participation ( civic events, communal work)
- Collaborative relationship with DA, NGOs, CSOs
- UCSOND involvement in DA activities ( programmes, frequency, outcome)
- Income Generating Projects (project type, returns, viability, sustainability)

### **Section B: UCSOND'S CAPACITY AND ABILITY TO PLAY IT'S ROLE**

- Resources ( human, financial, physical, social)
- Availability of resources
- Membership ( participation/ commitment level of members, barriers to participation,
- Means of mobilisation/ communication with members

### **Section C: CHALLENGES FACING UCSOND IN ITS OPERATIONS**

- What are some of the problems UCSOND face in its activities?
- challenges involve in stimulating participation of members and community in UCSOND activities
- Ranking of challenges confronting UCSOND
- UCSOND – local government relationships
- Major setbacks that militate against the smooth running of UCSOND?

- How do you overcome challenges
- How does UCSOND increase performance



## **C: CHECKLIST**

### **Section A: UCSOND ACTIVITIES AT THE GRASSROOT**

- Activities at meetings
- Projects implemented
- Logistics
- Secretariat
- Staffing
- Impact of activities
- Management systems
- Community participation