The State of Political Pluralism and Democracy at Local Government Level in Uganda

A Report from an Assessment of Seven Districts

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

UMDF

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A map of Uganda highlighting the seven districts where the assessment was conducted
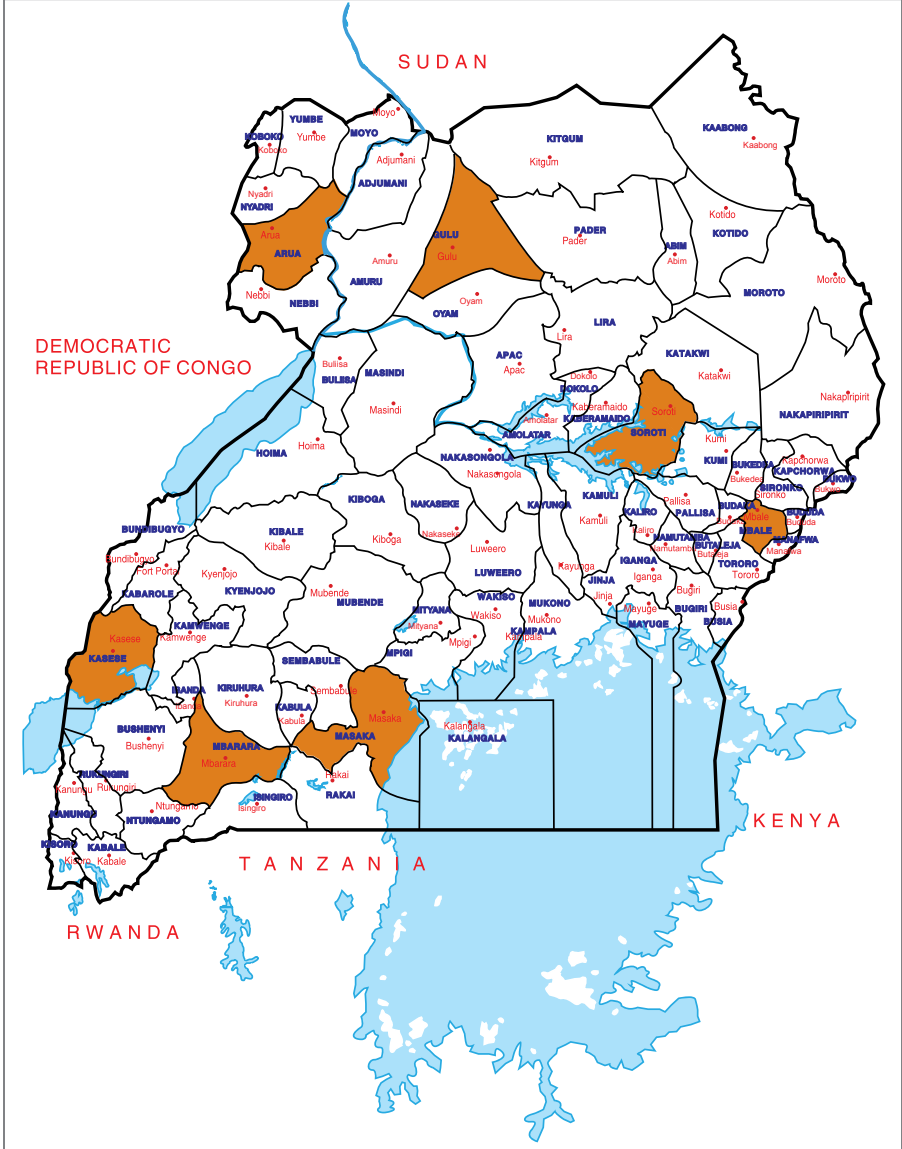
Acronyms/Abbreviations

CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CP	Conservative Party
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DBFP	District Budget Framework Paper
DDP	District Development Plan
DP	Democratic Party
EC	Electoral Commission
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EU	European Union
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GISO	Gombolola Internal Security Officer
HCMC	Health Care Management Committee
IGG	Inspector General of Government
JEEMA	Justice Forum (Justice Education Environment Morality African Unity)
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
KI	Key Informant
KVR	Kyoga Veritas Radio
LC	Local Council
LGA	Local Government Act
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRM	National Resistance Movement
PDC	Parish Development Committee
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
PWD	Persons with Disability
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Scientists
UMDF	Uganda Media Development Foundation
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
USE	Universal Secondary Education

Foreword

It was in 2005 that Ugandans, through a referendum, made the decision to be governed under a multi-party political system. Earlier attempts on multi-party governance had already been made at the onset of the country's independence but were unsuccessful for a number of reasons. This included the perception at that time that political parties served more as a dividing factor within the population than a uniting one. Uganda's history reflects how the practice of multi-party politics in the country hailed as the 'Pearl of Africa' was not all devoid of violence and exclusion, and of polls which did not meet the standards for free and fair elections and hence did not win the confidence of the citizens. Given this background, it is comprehensible that establishing a strong and sustainable democracy with meaningful citizen participation and effective representation was for quite some time not possible in Uganda. Nevertheless, the Ugandan people continued and still continue to demonstrate faith and confidence in multi-party democracy. The overwhelming choice of political pluralism over any other form of governance in the 2005 referendum supports this assertion.

The project "*Strengthening Civil Society, Media and Local Councils' Capacity to Promote Political Pluralism, Democratic Participation and Representation at the Local Government Level in Uganda*", implemented by KAS and UMDF with funding from the European Union (EU), looks at the issues which form the basis of any functioning democracy. A pivotal part of the project is the assessment which is presented in this report.

The project has been implemented in the seven districts of Arua, Gulu, Kasese, Masaka, Mbarara, Mbale and Soroti. The premise behind this project is the recognition that the concepts of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation are central to the practice of genuine democracy. There is indeed evidence that these concepts have been underscored by the Ugandan people, for example through the country's constitution which states in its first article that "power belongs to the people". However, after several years of working with both state and non-state actors in the promotion of democracy in Uganda, KAS realises that the concepts of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation are rather weak within the local government framework, while interventions to promote them at that level are also limited. It was out of the motivation to contribute towards promoting the three concepts at local government level that KAS and UMDF designed this project and solicited the support of the European Union (EU) to have it implemented. Three key actors in local governance are identified and

targeted in a series of interconnected activities to strengthen their capacity to promote political pluralism, democratic participation and representation at the local government level. These are: civil society, the media and local councillors. Through the closely linked project components, a handbook on the three aforementioned concepts has been published and widely distributed as reference material, while civil society actors, media representatives and councillors were also trained. In addition, network platforms for them to share information, ideas and experiences on the promotion of the three concepts have been established in each of the seven districts. There is hence evidence that this project has helped to build the capacity of key actors and to establish a framework that can be relied upon in the promotion of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation at the local government level.

KAS and UMDF, together with local actors in the seven districts, realise that if interventions to promote political pluralism and democracy at the local government level are to be effective, they have to be based on the actual state of affairs on the "ground". This brings up the question of what actually is the state of political pluralism and democracy at the local government level in Uganda. The present assessment has been conducted to provide answers to this question, together with the necessary explanations. In order to carry out the assessment, several indicators were identified to measure the basis upon which the state of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation in the seven districts has been established.

In designing the assessment exercise, KAS and UMDF were aware that governance assessments have frequently been conducted by external experts with limited involvement of the local people. The fact that this assessment was not only conducted but also led by local stakeholders in the districts could be reason enough for one to read this report and to trust the findings, although there are several other good reasons for doing so. Even then, as explained in the methodology, a clear balance between local control and professional scientific input was achieved in conducting the assessment.

In conclusion, this report presents a self-assessment by district-level actors undertaken in accordance with scientific standards. The presentation of results is aimed at fostering democracy not only in the seven districts where the assessment has been conducted but also in Uganda as a whole. It is my hope that this report will help the seven districts and others with similar challenges to appreciate the opportunities as well as the challenges they face in promoting pluralism, democratic participation and representation. Besides that, the report provides several meaningful recommendations which can guide future interventions of local, national and international partners in the promotion of democracy at the local government level in Uganda.

Last and by no means least, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Yasin Olum, Yusuf Kiranda, Mathias Kamp, Bernard Mukhone, John Bosco Mayiga, Jackie Kayitesi, the team leaders of the assessment teams, the assessors and the so many other persons involved, without whose dedication and knowledge this project and report would not have been successfully realised.

Peter Girke, KAS

Project Director

1. Introduction and Methodology

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), a German political foundation working in the areas of civic and political education, recognises the incontestable relationship between democracy and development and appreciates development as an unending pursuit through which nations and communities seek to improve the quality of people's lives. It is on this premise that KAS, together with its local partner, the Uganda Media Development Foundation (UMDF), an indigenous media training, research and policy advocacy NGO, focusing on strengthening the media's role in governance and democracy building in Uganda, has been engaged in democracy promotion in Uganda for over three decades now in much the same way as the foundation works in more than 100 other countries around the world.

1.1 Background

In 2008, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung received a grant from the Delegation of the European Commission to Uganda to carry out actions that would contribute to the strengthening of the role of civil society in promoting human rights and democratic reform, in supporting the peaceful conciliation of group interests and in consolidating political participation and representation. Specifically, the grant was for KAS, in partnership with UMDF, to implement a project entitled: *"Strengthening Civil Society, Media and Local Councils' Capacity to Promote Political Pluralism, Democratic Participation and Representation at Local Government Level in Uganda"*.

The project encompassed a number of activities, including the production of a handbook on the three concepts as well as training workshops on these concepts for civil society, the media and local councils. But more importantly for this purpose, the project had a chapter on assessing and reporting on the state of political pluralism and democracy in the districts of Arua, Gulu, Kasese, Masaka, Mbale, Mbarara, and Soroti. This chapter had the twin objective of assisting civil society and the media in developing greater cohesion and capacity for working on political pluralism, democratic participation and representation, as well as promoting the responsiveness and accountability of political leaders. This report, which contains indexed information on the state of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation in the seven assessed districts, is the product of this pursuit.

1.2 The Three Assessed Dimensions

The findings in this report are presented along three dimensions which have been identified as the cornerstones of any functioning democracy and which also formed the conceptual framework of the EU-funded programme: Political Pluralism, Democratic Participation and Representation.

In general, the term "pluralism" describes the existence – and acknowledgement - of diversity. In any societal context the basis for a successful guarantee of pluralism is a consensus on common values which tie together the different groups in society and on how to manage diversity without conflict. In this context, mutual respect and tolerance can be identified as core values that ensure free and peaceful coexistence and interaction among the diversity of groups and individuals. Such values are an indispensable ingredient of a functioning pluralistic society in which differences and conflicts may naturally arise out of divergent interests and positions.

The concept of **political pluralism** refers to a component of democracy where a multiplicity, diversity or plurality of opinions exists and where groups are free to express themselves within a political system. The link between pluralism and democracy is crucial: democracy requires that all people – with all their differing ideologies, opinions and values – be free to connect to government. Ideally, pluralism requires that no single group has a special claim to be heard before any others or to silence others. In this sense, democracy affirms that all groups and opinions in a society must be free to compete for attention and for followers.

In the Ugandan context, political pluralism means, simply, that Ugandans are free to form and belong to different political parties and to hold different political ideologies. The different political parties or groups are free to compete for political positions (power) at all levels, national or local. In addition, the people are also free, whether as individuals or as political organisations (parties), pressure groups, or social, cultural and economic institutions, to express their opinion on different aspects of politics and governance.

Participation is a component of democracy which refers to the processes through which people act in political ways to connect themselves to government and thus become self-governing. **Democratic participation** can occur in two ways: First, people can participate through the established structures of the adopted forms of democracy, mainly through elections, which have to be free and fair, and, in some instances, through referenda on major political issues. Secondly, they can participate through alternative channels provided by an active civil society in which people organise themselves in civil associations and put forward their interests and concerns. Participation in such associations is important as they help to protect group interests and raise awareness about specific issues. Furthermore, participation through such associations and groups eliminates individual isolation and strengthens the people's position in engaging leaders for their own interests and those of the community in general.

Except for the grassroots level, the implementation of full-scale direct participation can be very difficult, since the vast number of citizens cannot always be gathered in order to directly participate in all decision-making processes. The concept of representative democracy provides an answer to

this dilemma. **Representation** is defined as the process by which political power and influence which the entire citizenry or a part of it might have upon governmental action is exercised on its behalf by a small number of elected individuals. Those representatives make decisions on behalf of and with the expressed or implied approval of the community. The decisions made thus have a binding effect upon the whole community that is represented. However, the ultimate power in a representative democracy (under a representative government) always lies with the people. The representatives are chosen through periodical elections and have to be accountable to the citizens in all their actions and decisions and have to stand the critical judgement of their performance by the people. Thus, the power exercised by representatives is delegated, temporary and conditional.

1.3 Focus on the Local Government Level

The concepts described above are pivotal to any democratic political system, not only at national but also at local-government level. It has to be noted that while the principles and standards for a functioning democracy are the same at both national and local level, the challenges in ensuring their effective implementation and sustainability are different in many respects.

This assessment has an explicit focus on the local-government level, more concretely on the district level, which in the Ugandan context forms the highest sub-national level of governance.

The decentralisation process and the resulting local government system is a cornerstone of the Ugandan democracy and is often described as a success story that has contributed to poverty reduction, improved service delivery, enhanced popular participation and led to reduction of conflict. Even external observers, including scholars and western politicians, have hailed the Ugandan decentralisation efforts as a remarkable example in the African context. However, the starting point for this assessment is the awareness that despite these laudable efforts there are still numerous challenges at local government level in Uganda with regard to the effective promotion and implementation of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation. The guiding question therefore relates to how far these concepts have effectively reached the local government level, particularly considering the fact that the opening up of the political space, including the introduction of multi-partyism, has only taken place quite recently.

1.4 The Overall Assessment Approach

This assessment was designed to be based on a highly participatory process which was owned and led by local actors within the seven districts. This approach is a result of the awareness and conviction that, in order for it to be meaningful and effective, this type of governance assessment requires active participation and full ownership by local stakeholders. The exercise

was therefore conducted as a self-assessment by district-level actors – an approach which moves away from the common practice according to which such assessments are conducted by external actors.

The assessment exercise was primarily carried out by a research team of five members from each of the seven districts, so all together 35 assessors were involved. The team in each district comprised representatives of civil society, the media and local councillors. These were involved in the process from the start: first, through the earlier project interventions, particularly the training on the three concepts of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation. This

Key aspects of the assessment approach

- Self-assessment by district level actors
- Multi-stakeholder involvement
- Local ownership of the action, process and outcomes
- Participatory – local actors defined the process
- Perception based – perception of selected actors on the indicators but checked with views gathered from the grassroots
- Scientific – application of scientific methodology & professional statistical analysis
- Comparable results - between districts based on a score
- Feedback – presentation & discussion of results with actors at district and national levels

guaranteed that they were informed about the aspects to be assessed. Later the groups, with the financial and technical support of KAS and UMDF, held a joint workshop where the content scope of the assessment was defined and where the indicators and methods to be used in the assessment in all the seven districts were agreed upon. It was on the basis of the outcomes of this workshop and the decisions made by local actors that the assessment tools were developed by KAS and the consultant. These tools were, however, not to be finalised without wider consultations and inputs by several stakeholders from the districts. For this reason, a series of consultative workshops were held (one in each of the seven districts) with participation of a multiplicity of stakeholders, notably civil society, the media and local councillors, who were by now the "traditional target groups" under this project. The other actors involved in the consultative workshops included civil servants, particularly the Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) or their representatives, the Resident District Commissioners (RDC), religious and traditional leaders and representatives of the private sector. It is important to emphasise here that the aspect of local ownership has been key in undertaking this assessment.

1.5 The Methodology

Three concepts have been the major focus of this assessment. These include political pluralism, democratic participation and representation. In order to

measure their state at local-government level, the concepts were further divided into sub-dimensions. A set of indicators was then selected for each sub-dimension and used to conduct the assessment fieldwork. The results for the different indicators are presented under the section on findings in this report. In addition, Annex I presents the summary of **indicators** and results per sub-dimension as used in this assessment.

The **collection and analysis of data** for the assessment employed scientific methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The main method used – and which also served as a basis for generating the score of the different indicators within the districts – has been a *perception-based* quantitative survey. Respondents to the quantitative questionnaire were mainly district-level political actors, namely

> **Key aspects of the Data Collection and Analysis**
> - Combination of qualitative and quantitative methods
> - Use of quantitative survey to generate a score
> - Use of scientific data analysis
> - Use of qualitative instruments (questionnaires, FGDs and document reviews) to explain and compare results from the quantitative survey)
> - Comparable results - between districts based on a score
> - Feedback – presentation & discussion of results with actors at district and national levels

political leaders (including councillors), civil society members, journalists and civil servants. They also included the RDCs, religious and cultural leaders, political party leaders and representatives of the business community. Opinion leaders at the community level also responded to the quantitative questionnaires. A total of 651 questionnaires were administered across the seven districts.

The qualitative approach involved three methods: the administration of qualitative questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGDs), and obtaining information from documentary sources. Ten qualitative questionnaires were administered to ten key informants (KIs) in each of the seven districts. The KIs, including both males and females, were purposively identified based on their experience and the positions they hold in the district. Each of the KIs had also answered the quantitative questionnaire. The idea behind the qualitative questionnaires was to back up and crosscheck responses from the quantitative questionnaires by seeking justifications as to why respondents responded to the latter in the way they did. The ten KIs were the following: one Speaker LC V, one Chairperson LC V, one CAO, one RDC, one religious leader, one traditional leader, one businessperson, one trained councillor, one trained CSO representative, and one trained journalist. One assessor

administered the qualitative questionnaire to each respondent. A total of 70 KIs answered the qualitative questionnaire across the seven districts.

FGDs of approximately ten to fifteen members each were held at village level in four villages selected from two sub-counties (two villages per sub-county) in each of the seven districts with one FGD being held per village. In addition, one FGD was held in each of two urban divisions in each district. Therefore, a total of six FGDs were held per district and all together 42 FGDs were held across the seven districts. The villages, sub-counties and urban divisions in each district were selected randomly. Largely owing to resource constraints, only two sub-counties were selected per district and two villages selected per sub-county. Care was however taken to ensure, for purposes of comparison, that both rural and urban/semi-urban sub-counties in each district were represented. In each village, FGD members were identified by the respective LC I Chairperson who knew the local people well. These members were selected on the basis of their sex, age, ability and availability to respond to the issues under investigation. Two assessors conducted each FGD in which one assessor served as a moderator by posing the questions to the FGD members from a pre-designed interview guide while the other assessor recorded the proceedings. Where the need arose, the FGD questions were translated into the local language for ease of understanding by the members.

Relevant information from documents was also obtained from political parties (e.g. party programmes and manifestos), Electoral Commission offices (e.g. election results, voter turnout in previous elections), Councils (e.g. handling of Council business, work-plans of Councils, and input from the ruling party and opposition parties), CSOs (e.g. activity plans), and media reports (e.g. activities of CSOs, political parties, and local leaders).

The data generated through the above methods was analysed by use of scientific methods. The quantitative data was analysed electronically by use of the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) while the qualitative data has been analysed through thematic and content analysis and triangulations. Once the data had been analysed, the respective district teams wrote a report that was presented and discussed at dialogues held in each of the regions where the assessment was conducted. The dialogues were mainly intended to generate feedback and to ensure the sharing of results with stakeholders.

The findings of this assessment are presented primarily based on a **score**. The score represents the response on each indicator in the quantitative questionnaire. It is presented on a scale of 1 – 5, with one being the highest and five being the lowest possible scores respectively.

Each indicator was formulated as a positive statement in the questionnaire, which allowed the respondents to express their agreement or disagreement with the statement. The scale was designed to correspond with the five

categories of answers provided in the questionnaire, which are (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) uncertain, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. In order to allow for easy overview, separate colours have been allocated to each score and used in the diagrams presented in this report (see table below).

Answer:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
Score:	1	2	3	4	5
Colour:					

On the basis of the responses, a score was generated for each indicator (by aggregating the scores given by all respondents and then calculating the average). Based on the indicator scores, overall scores for each sub-dimension and concept were generated in a second step for each district as well as for the overall synthesis (aggregated data from all seven districts).

It is important to note here that the score represents the ratings of indicators according to the *perception* of respondents who answered the qualitative questionnaire. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the state of democracy, the assessment compared the results from the quantitative score along with the reasons advanced in the qualitative and the findings from the focus group discussions and documentary reviews.

1.6 Limitations

Largely because of resource constraints, this assessment was limited to seven districts, mainly at the district-capital level, and spread out to two sub-counties within the district. This could make it a challenge to argue that the findings of this assessment can be a reliable basis for generalised statements on the state of political pluralism and democracy at the local-government level in Uganda. The project team has nevertheless been aware of this challenge from the start. While efforts to undertake related studies in each district are encouraged, this assessment can in many ways be a reliable tool for judging the state of political pluralism and democracy at local-government level in Uganda. First, the "few districts" had been well selected considering the representation of all the major regions of Uganda and also the assurance of a balance between districts dominated by the ruling party and those dominated by the opposition. Many other districts in Uganda obviously face the same or similar challenges with regard to political pluralism and democracy. The findings of this assessment are therefore considered useful also for other districts across the country.

2. Findings

After nearly two and a half decades and resulting from the referendum held on 28 November 2005, Uganda shifted from the movement political system to multi-partyism. It was anticipated that this shift would deepen democratic governance in the country. The movement system had been viewed by many political activists as a one-party political system that was quite exclusionary and which did not accord all Ugandans the opportunity to exercise their freedom of political association. Political pluralism, argued its proponents, is a participatory type of governance in which politics is built around the needs and priorities of citizens. Henceforth, with the widespread approval of multi-partyism in the 2005 referendum, most of the legal barriers were removed and political parties in Uganda were once again free to contest for political power. It can as well be said that the decision to return to multi-partyism reflects the unrelenting aspiration of the Ugandan people for a more democratic society where democratic values are exercised and enjoyed at all levels. These values include, among others, pluralism, participation and representation. In this respect, the findings presented in this report are categorised under three themes, i.e. political pluralism, democratic participation and representation. These findings are based upon the responses to the quantitative and qualitative questionnaires, the FGDs conducted in the seven districts and the analysis of related documents. The discussion will present the findings in each of the themes in turn, starting with political pluralism, then continuing to democratic participation and finally to representation.

2.1 Political Pluralism

A critical requirement for the realisation of greater democratisation in any society is the practice of genuine political pluralism which also can be manifested in the embedment of a full-blown multi-party political dispensation at all levels of that society. In the case of Uganda, being governed also under the decentralised system, such a basis would require that political pluralism is not only practised at national but also at local-government level. For political pluralism to be successful, the environment in which it is to practised has to be one which allows it to work, i.e. there should be in existence *a basis for multi-party politics*. Secondly, the people need to be enjoying their civil and political liberties. Equally important, political pluralism requires that political parties not only exist at the local level, but also that they exercise internal democracy and have the strength to organise well and effectively at that level. Lastly, the role of civil society is important in promoting and ensuring the success of political pluralism. The foregoing arguments thus provided the basis of the sub-dimensions upon which the state of political pluralism in the districts was assessed and are hence also the framework in which the findings are presented.

2.1.1 Basis of Multiparty Politics

Figure 1: Political Pluralism: Basis of Multiparty Politics
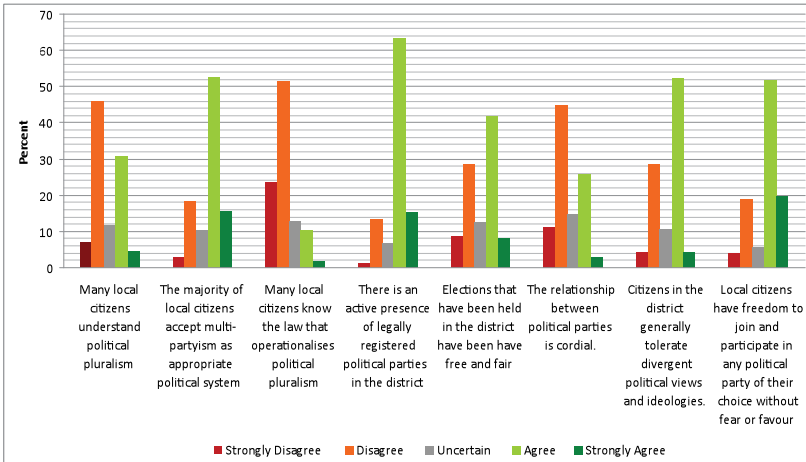
| Indicator: | Many local citizens in the district understand the meaning of political pluralism |

Figure 1 shows that, on average, the majority (53 %) of the respondents in the seven districts disagreed that many local citizens understood the meaning of political pluralism, while a significant minority (35%) agreed with the statement.[1]

Scores for the indicator: "Many local citizens understand political pluralism"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.84	2.95	2.56	2.89	2.84	2.66	2.9

These statistics are not surprising since the new multi-party system has been in existence for barely four years. Furthermore, the younger generation, particularly comprising those born in the 1980s or later, do not have any previous experience of multi-partyism. The fact that on average more than half of the respondents think that the local citizens do not understand what political pluralism means is troubling because it implies that people's engagement in the political process is not based on actual knowledge and is more likely to be on a trial-and-error basis. Under such circumstances, the people can easily be manipulated in the political process. They can, for example, be unknowingly driven into unprincipled political and electoral

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[1] For the sake of easy analysis, disagreed here takes the sum of the percentage of participants who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed. The same approach has been used through the report even in cases where agreed is used i.e., it also combines participants who agreed and those who strongly agreed.

conflicts, something which was reported to have in fact prevailed in all the districts and which has also occurred throughout the country since the inception of multi-partyism.

> Indicator: The majority of local citizens in the districts accept multi-partyism as an appropriate political system

While the finding that the majority of local citizens at the local level do not understand the meaning of political pluralism can be a worrying phenomenon, an encouraging finding is the perception that the majority of local citizens in the districts accept multi-partyism as an appropriate political system. This is indicated by the scores in the table below.

Scores for the indicator: "The majority of local citizens accept multi-partyism as an appropriate political system"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.77	3.73	3.94	3.79	3.68	2.93	3.41

As clearly indicated in Figure 1, over two-thirds (68%) of the respondents agreed that the majority of local citizens accepted multi-partyism as an appropriate political system, while only 21% disagreed. This positive perception was particularly strong in the eastern and northern districts, with Soroti reaching an outstanding score of 3.94 out of 5 on

Diverging Opinions on Multi-partyism from Arua District:

"*For us, the multi-party system gives an opportunity for others to give their view and provide alternatives. If you eat one type of food everyday you lack other things and fall sick one day.*" (Participant during a Focus Group Discussion in Arua district)

"*These people of parties are causing us problems. They are always criticizing the government and we do not want them.*" (Individual interviewee in Arua district)

this indicator. The respondents were more sceptical in the western districts, particularly in Mbarara where the majority actually did not agree with the statement, leading to an indicator-score below the minimum threshold of 3 (2.93).[2]

There is evidence from the qualitative interviews and FGDs that most of those who do not agree that the multi-party system is an appropriate system of governance still cherish the movement type of politics. In Mbarara district, where the majority of the councillors are NRM members, including the independents who have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NRM, the idea of a movement political system appears to still be dominant.

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[2] In the analysis of the assessment report, the median, which is 3 marks the minimum threshold for the results to be considered acceptable. Thus, an indicator score below 3 can be referred to as being weak.

On the other hand, the perceived support for the multi-party system in all the other districts was attributed by respondents to the fact that it allows citizens to vote for a leader and a party of their choice, unlike under the movement system where there were no party-based alternatives.

The results concerning the acceptance of the multi-party system can be considered a good sign, since the support for and identification with a political system is a basic foundation for embedding that system within any given society. Therefore, the general acceptance of multi-partyism as an appropriate political system can be understood to reflect the existence of goodwill, which also is a good basis for strengthening pluralism and ensuring that it gets embedded at local-government level. However, it has to be emphasised that in this case many citizens are accepting a system which they probably do not fully understand. This also undermines the citizens' active involvement and, as already argued, puts them at risk of being misled or manipulated by political leaders or anti-democratic forces.

Indicator:	Many local citizens know the law that operationalises political pluralism

In this context, it is to be emphasised that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (75%) disagreed that many local citizens know the law that operationalised political pluralism in Uganda. This is reflected in the extremely weak scores for all districts (average: 2.15), with Masaka scoring the weakest (1.84).

Scores for the indicator: "Many local citizens know the law that operationalises political pluralism"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.03	2.57	1.97	2.12	1.84	2.1	2.39

In Baruku cell in Arua, a KI observed: "We are always (only) told about the law when opposition parties attempt to organise their activities in the district… They do not tell us the law, and this law only seems to apply to certain people and not others." In other words, the Arua case indicates that the dissemination of the law is partially done in a selective and twisted manner to suit the interests of those involved in passing it on to the local citizens rather than making them understand what the laws say.

An overwhelming majority (79%) of the respondents agreed that there is an active presence of legally registered political parties in the districts. The respondents usually identified four parties, namely: the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the Democratic Party (DP) and Uganda People's Congress (UPC). A rather small number of respondents identified also Justice Forum (JEEMA), the Conservative Party (CP) and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) although they still stated that these are hardly visible at local-government level. The other registered parties which total 32 at national level were never mentioned, which implies

that they are not present at the local level and obviously therefore do not have structures at the lower levels and are not reaching out to the local citizenry.

| Indicator: | Elections that have been held in the district have been free and fair |

On average, half (50%) of the respondents agreed that elections that have been held in the districts have been free and fair. The positive responses were highest in Mbarara district (66%) and lowest in Mbale district (29%).

Scores for the indicator: "Elections that have been held in the district have been free and fair"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.45	3.02	3.22	2.56	2.87	3.53	3.17

It can be noted from the above figures that there are mixed perceptions ("agree" versus "disagree") of the fairness of elections in the districts. In Mbale district where there is a clear disagreement, the challenge can be clearly noted. If the people do not believe in the freeness and fairness of the electoral process, the risk of them losing confidence in that process becomes eminent. This in turn can lower willingness to participate in the elections, which directly means declining participation in the democratisation process.

The key factor that emerged from the FGDs to support the argument that elections have not been free and fair is the existence of electoral malpractices such as vote rigging, bribery and violence. These vices were said to be practised by all political sides, including both the NRM party and the opposition. However, some respondents noted that elections in their areas were conducted peacefully. In Arua, for example, one interviewee noted: "For us, when somebody loses fairly, he waits for the next election because our elections, especially the non-presidential elections, have been very open and transparent." However, on the question of presidential elections, the same interviewee noted that "when it comes to presidential elections, these people always find excuses to under-serve ballot papers for the president in one area and take excess to another and we do not know what happens with the excess." This submission is an indicator that even in instances where electoral processes are perceived to be generally satisfactory, there are still points on which the citizens remain rather unsatisfied. This indicates also that in practice the elections still fall short of the benchmarks for free and fair elections.

| Indicator: | The relationship between political parties in the districts is cordial |

The assessment revealed a rather worrying picture concerning the interaction and competition style of the political parties in the districts. On average,

more than half (56%) of the respondents disagreed that the relationship between the political parties in the districts is cordial and only 29% agreed. A significant minority (15%) were uncertain. At 77%, the disagreement rate was highest in Soroti, leading to an extremely low score of 2.09 and a gap compared to the other already low scores of the other districts.

Scores for the indicator: "The relationship between political parties is cordial"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3	2.7	2.09	2.54	2.93	2.49	2.81

In explaining of the lack of cordiality amongst the political parties, all the FGDs cited the repeated clashes that transpire between members of the ruling NRM on the one hand and the opposition (especially FDC, DP and UPC) on the other, usually on the eve of and during elections. A classic example was reported in

> *"The parties relate relatively well, but some individuals from different parties are not cooperative."* (Individual interviewee in Mbarara district)
>
> *"The parties are at war with each other. They treat each other as enemies."*
> (Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

Soroti district, where some women wearing NRM party colours were nearly undressed and humiliated by FDC youths in Kigandani cell, Kengere ward. Apart from such clashes, FGD participants in all districts mentioned negative practices such as defamation and insults in public, including verbal attacks on individual party representatives. The general impression generated is that the party activists see the democratic competition as a "war" in which political opponents become "enemies" as opposed to being respected competitors. In Masaka district, it was observed that whenever NRM supporters pass through some villages in the NRM T-shirts, the locals hurl

> *"There is every sign of immaturity in tolerating people with different ideologies. Several times clashes between members of different parties have turned personal."* (Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

insults such as "*Twakoowa!*" ("We are tired of you!") at them. The unprincipled clashes and insults indicate that, generally, political pluralism is yet to mature in the minds of some citizens.

> Indicator: Local citizens in the districts generally tolerate divergent political views and ideologies

Despite the perceived lack of cordiality between the political parties, more than half (57%) of the respondents agreed that local citizens in the districts generally tolerate divergent political views and opinions. A significant minority (33%) disagreed. The perceived level of tolerance was highest

in Kasese (66% agreed) and Mbarara (64%) districts and lowest in Mbale district (44%). In an FGD held in Baruku cell in Arua, a participant put the issue of tolerance this way: "For us, these political parties are like football clubs like Arsenal and Manchester United. When you win, you celebrate, when you lose, you go home without a fight." This analogy is extremely poignant regarding the question of tolerance and mature politics. If all the voters could emulate this simple but powerful illustration, then elections in the country would be peaceful.

Scores for the indicator: "Citizens in the district generally tolerate divergent political views and ideologies"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.45	3.19	3.15	2.94	3.15	3.36	3.41

"For us, these political parties are like football clubs like Arsenal and Manchester United. When you win, you celebrate, when you lose, you go home without a fight".
(Participant during a focus group discussion in Arua district)

Indicator:	Local citizens in the districts have the freedom to join and participate in any political party of their choice without fear or favour

In spite of the lack of cordiality among the political parties, the majority (71%) of the respondents agreed that local citizens have the freedom to join and participate in any political party of their choice without fear or favour, while only 23% disagreed. However, this perception emerging from the quantitative responses was contested during FGDs in most of the districts. In many of the FGDs, some participants observed that joining or being a member of an opposition party could lead to exclusion from receiving benefits from local development programmes such as the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). This fear was given as the reason why some voters were said to be having more than one party card. It was reported, for example, that one can have a card for an opposition party of which one is a genuine member and the same person would possess a card for the ruling NRM party which they keep as a "safety net" so as to benefit from government programmes as well as to shield themselves from possible political harassment.

Scores for the indicator: "Local citizens have the freedom to join and participate in any political party of their choice without fear or favour"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.72	3.55	3.4	3.44	3.68	3.72	3.94

2.1.2 The Presence of Civil and Political Liberties

Figure 2: The Presence of Civil and Political Liberties

Figure 2 shows that, on average, half (50%) of the respondents agree that local citizens freely enjoy their civil and political rights. A significant minority (39%) disagreed with the statement. The agreement was highest in Kasese district (69%) and lowest in Masaka district (41%). Nevertheless, in most of the FGDs held in the districts, no single respondent mentioned that they were prohibited from enjoying their civil and political rights – contrary to some coverage by the media that such prohibition in fact took place. Nevertheless, as indicated in section 3.1.1, some voters stated that they kept more than one party card, giving the reason that they feared possible persecution by some people linked to the NRM. This assessment was unable to take steps to find out if such persecution actually ever occurred. What is important to note here is the fact that only half of the respondents perceive local citizens as being free to enjoy their civil and political rights. This allows the conclusion that the entrenchment of political pluralism and democracy, which enables people to fully enjoy their civil and political rights, has not yet been fully achieved. The findings under this category somehow contradict earlier findings in section 3.1.1 where a high majority (71%) of the respondents observed that local citizens have the freedom to join and participate in a political party of their choice without fear or favour.

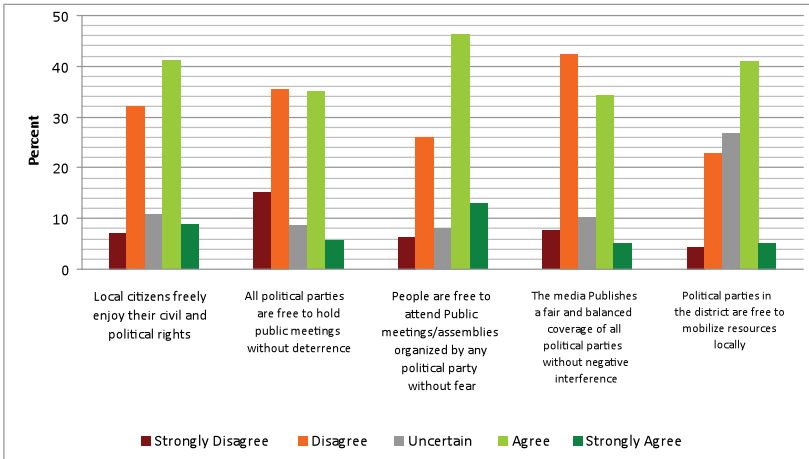| Scores for the indicator: "Local citizens freely enjoy their civil and political rights"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.12	3.02	2.83	3.04	2.95	3.33	3.58

Indicator:	All political parties are free to hold public meetings without deterrence

On average, slightly over half (51%) of the respondents disagreed that all political parties are free to hold public meetings without deterrence. Soroti (79%) and Masaka (67%) districts had the highest number of respondents who disagreed with this statement. The districts of Arua (40%), Mbarara (34%), and Kasese (24%) had the lowest disagreement rates.

Scores for the indicator: "All political parties are free to hold public meetings without deterrence"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.93	2.66	2.04	2.83	2.48	3.23	3.45

Most of the active opposition parties, especially FDC, UPC and DP, were reported to face challenges when they organise public meeting. They always have to obtain permission from government departments and sometimes this permission is difficult to get. In some instances, these challenges have involved failure on the part of the parties to hold public meetings altogether or having meetings already organised by them stopped. For example, in Masaka, a rally meant to be addressed by DP President Norbert Mao was not permitted by the police, while a rally to be addressed by UPC President Olara Otunnu at Pingire in Soroti was dispersed by the same organ. The issue of public meetings by political parties is quite a challenging one in the case of Uganda. On the one hand, the opposition has on several occasions complained about restrictions on holding public meetings imposed on them by the government, yet on the other hand, the government has cited failure by the opposition to organise such meetings in accordance with the law as the reason for restriction, whenever such restrictions have occurred. Given such a scenario, understanding the law that operationalises political pluralism and other relevant laws pertaining to the exercise of multi-party politics generally and public meetings in particular becomes important. If followed by both the government and the opposition parties, the laws set

Freedom of assembly: Diverging opinions

"Intimidations from government organs like police have always interfered with party meetings."
(Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

"Political parties are free to meet but most are only motivated to hold public meetings to provoke state organs so as to gain popularity."
(Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

"There is too much intimidation by the security agencies. The parties have to seek for permission from police. This is not granted at times."
(Individual interviewee in Mbale district)

"The opposition parties do not follow proper procedures and the law."
(Individual interviewee in Mbarara district)

the benchmarks upon which the meetings of all parties, be it the ruling party or those in the opposition, can be held or stopped. The challenge reported at the village level is that political meetings held in the villages are normally meant to be cleared by LC chairpersons. However, under political pluralism, the LCs, being occupants of political offices, also have a "side"; in most villages, they were reported to belong to the NRM. There are, therefore, concerns that LCs have not been very objective, especially when it comes to taking decisions regarding public meetings organised by the opposition, and that they always unjustifiably fail to clear such meetings to take place. Secondly, *Gombolola* (sub-county) Internal Security Officers (GISOs) are also involved in the clearance of political meetings but the opposition members have argued that these too view themselves as being on the side of the NRM and are thus unable to treat decisions regarding opposition meetings with necessary objectivity. Opposition parties being stopped from holding meetings at lower levels has been attributed in part to the above factors.

Indicator:	People are free to attend meetings organised by any political party without fear

On average, a relatively big majority (60%) of the respondents agreed that people are free to attend public meetings/assemblies organised by any political party without fear, with Kasese and Mbarara districts being the two districts scoring highly on this indicator and Mbale (52%), Masaka (50) and Soroti districts being the lowest.

Scores for the indicator: "People are free to attend public meetings/assemblies organised by a political party without fear"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3	2.7	2.09	2.54	2.93	2.49	2.81

The above scores confirm the existence of freedom for political participation according to one's choice. It should, however, be noted that the extent to which people are free to attend meetings of the political parties can only be satisfactorily measured if the meetings do not take place in the first place or, at least, not frequently. It can also be considered that the perceived existence of individual freedom is not translating to institutions (political parties) since, as it has been discussed earlier, the parties face challenges in organising public meetings.

Indicator:	The media publishes a fair and balanced coverage of all political parties without negative interference

On the role of the media in promoting political pluralism and democracy in the districts, on average less than half (40%) of the respondents agreed that the media publishes a fair and balanced coverage of all political parties without negative interference. Masaka (2.71) and Soroti (2.26) districts got the lowest scores on this indicator, while only Mbarara and Kasese reached

scores above 3. These statistics point to some level of interference with the media with regard to coverage and reporting about political parties.

Scores for the indicator: "The media publishes a fair and balanced coverage of all political parties without negative interference"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.97	2.79	2.26	2.93	2.71	3.18	3.25

These findings are essential because the media is crucial in disseminating information for purposes of mobilising the public on issues of political pluralism and democracy. If the media is not free to give balanced reporting, as the perception among respondents in all the seven districts indicates, then the local citizens will find it difficult to access information on political issues, including the parties' programmes, strengths and weaknesses. In turn, participation by uninformed citizens will result in an incoherent practice of pluralism, as has been the case in some of the districts. The media is partially perceived as not being free to perform its role of promoting democratic governance because of being interfered with by some state organs and by the restrictive laws. A case in point, according to participants in an FGD in Soroti, was the closure of Kioga Veritas Radio (KVR) and the harassment of journalists or moderators of talk-shows perceived to be anti-government. The Voice of Teso and ETOP are viewed by opposition supporters as pro-government radios while KVR is regarded by NRM supporters as an "opposition" radio. A similar situation regarding the media's operations exists in Arua district. There, it is alleged that radios such as Arua One FM, Voice of Life and Radio Pacis do not engage in fair and balanced reporting on the activities of the different political parties. Arua One FM is said to focus more on the activities of the NRM while Voice of Life and Radio Pacis are said to concentrate more on the FDC.

Indicator:	Political parties in the districts are free to mobilise resources locally

With regard to resource mobilisation by political parties, it is only the respondents in Masaka (59%) district who largely agreed that parties are free to mobilise resources locally. A significant minority of respondents in nearly all the districts (Kasese, 36%; Gulu, 32%; Mbarara, 29%; Mbale, 25%; and Arua, 20%) were uncertain. This perception shows that political parties are not realising revenues locally, which also implies that the parties are experiencing difficulties in executing their local plans because they lack sufficient resources. In fact, the local citizens in a number of the FGDs revealed that businesspersons and business firms are reluctant to openly support any opposition party for fear of putting their businesses at risk. This may explain the current situation in which nearly all political parties face challenges in establishing structures down to grassroots level and their fragility right from the time political pluralism was introduced.

Scores for the indicator: "Political parties in the district are free to mobilise resources locally"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.3	2.99	2.89	2.84	3.58	3.38	3.41

2.1.3 Internal Democracy and Organisational Strength of Political Parties

One fundamental factor for the effective functioning of political pluralism is the institutionalisation and functional performance of political parties. Two key aspects to consider in this context are their internal democracy and their organisational strength.

Figure 3: Internal Democracy and Organisational Strength of Political Parties
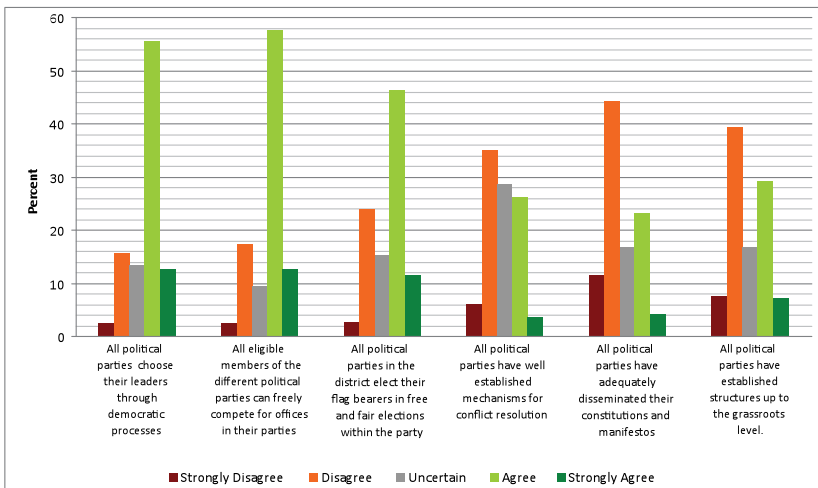
Indicator:	All political parties choose their leaders through democratic processes

Figure 3 shows that, on average, the majority (68%) of the respondents agreed that all political parties choose their leaders through democratic processes. These statistics here tend to indicate that elections held within political parties are democratic. However, media reports that reveal numerous instances of rigging by candidates in almost all the political parties as well as the high number of independents raise some significant concerns regarding the extent to which the perceived democracy within the political parties is real. Indeed, findings from the FGDs and other relevant sources indicate that the top leaderships of most of the parties fix party elections in favour

of preferred candidates. In general, perceptions about internal democracy seem to vary among the key stakeholders at district and at grassroots levels, with the stakeholders at the grass roots being much more sceptical about internal party democracy.

Scores for the indicator: "All political parties choose their leaders through democratic processes"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.98	3.45	3.98	3.65	3.49	3.66	3.66

Indicator: All eligible members of the different political parties can freely compete for offices in their political parties

On average, a significant majority (70%) of the respondents agreed that all eligible members of the different political parties can freely compete for offices in their parties. It is only in Soroti district where this score stands at 48% while in all other districts the extent of agreement is above 60%.

Scores for the indicator: "All eligible members of the different political parties can freely compete for offices in their parties"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.93	3.53	3.93	3.63	3.48	3.85	3.77

The high scores here indicate that political parties provide a platform for their members to contest for leadership within their parties which also can be a springboard for them to aspire for leadership positions within local governments. However, having the freedom to compete is different from having in place a fair system in which the best candidate wins. As discussed above, there are evidently concerns that although internal party democracy might be perceived to exist, it may not necessarily be working to the satisfaction of all party members and local citizens.

Indicator: All political parties in the district elect their flag-bearers in free and fair elections within the party

Over half (58%) of the respondents agreed that all political parties in the districts elect their flag-bearers in free and fair elections within the party. With the exception of Mbale (50%) and Masaka (42%) districts, more than half of the respondents in the rest of the districts agreed with that statement. However, in most of the districts, a sizeable number of the respondents (about 15%) were uncertain. Secondly, the perception that political parties elect their flag-bearers through free and fair elections also somehow contradicts some realities on the ground. As earlier discussed, although the parties go through the internal process of electing their leaders and flag bearers, those

elections are not necessarily free and fair. It is, however, commendable that at least there is in place one of the basic requirements (internal party elections) for democracy, which allows room for improvement.

Scores for the indicator: "All political parties in the district elect their flag-bearers in free and fair elections within the party"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.73	3.57	3.73	3.26	3.09	3.47	3.51

Indicator: All political parties have well established mechanisms for conflict resolution

One of the most serious hindrances to the proper functioning of any political party can be its susceptibility to internal instability, which normally occurs as a result of internal conflicts. Political parties therefore ought to have effective mechanisms for conflict resolution. However, on this indicator, less than half (41%) of the respondents disagreed that all the parties have well established mechanisms for conflict resolution. A significant minority (30%) of the respondents agreed and a sizeable number (29%) of respondents were uncertain.

Scores for the indicator: "All political parties have well established mechanisms for conflict resolution"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.01	2.87	3.01	2.8	2.9	2.99	3.08

The scores here are an indication that the different political parties are not successful in creating well functioning conflict resolution mechanisms. Yet, it would have been prudent if they had such mechanisms to manage any form of conflict that is bound to emerge. In fact, the lack of sound conflict resolution mechanisms explains, among others, the phenomenon of politicians 'crossing' from one party to another, as well as factionalism within the parties – with nearly all the major parties being factionalised.

Indicator: All political parties have adequately disseminated their constitutions and manifestos

In order for political parties to function normally, they ought to ensure that their members and supporters are well informed about their operations. Moreover, the citizens as potential voters need to know about the programmes of the political parties if the parties are to effectively fulfil their democratic function of

"The parties are not bad but their leaders make it bad by confusing the people. Some leaders want to overstay in power."
(Participant during a focus group discussion in Mbale district)

providing alternative choices. However, when it comes to the dissemination of their constitutions and manifestos, over half (56%) of the respondents disagreed that all political parties have adequately done so while a significant minority (17%) was uncertain.

Scores for the indicator: "All political parties have adequately disseminated their constitutions and manifestos"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.61	2.81	2.61	2.82	2.93	2.86	2.64

As the indication is that the parties do not inform the electorate about their constitutions and manifestos, it can also be stated that the people are not informed about what the parties stand for in terms of ideology as well as the parties' positions on specific programmatic areas. Evidence obtained at community level confirmed the failure of parties to disseminate vital information to the electorate. In Mbarara district, for example, most respondents observed that they had seen only the NRM manifesto and not the manifestos of other parties. However, in the perception of some respondents in Mbarara, this was partly due to the fact that the NRM has the advantage of being able to use government channels for spreading their ideas and programmes. While it can be argued that Mbarara is largely an NRM haven, the fact that the respondents had not seen the manifestos and constitutions of other political parties could equally be attributed to the lack of proper dissemination of vital information by the parties themselves. It was repeatedly stated during interviews and FGDs across all districts – and again during the public debates

> *"No party has bothered to educate citizens about their agenda or ideology. The people just go with the faces."*
> (Participant during a focus group discussion in Mbale district)

on the assessment results at district level – that the parties are generally failing to provide clear programmatic options and are mainly perceived to be vehicles for individuals to pursue their personal political ambitions. Thus, the elections are perceived to be more about individual names and faces rather than about the programmes and policy options provided by political parties.

Indicator: All political parties have established structures up to the grassroots level

Almost half (47%) of the respondents disagreed that all political parties have established structures to the grassroots level, with another 17% being uncertain.

Scores for the indicator: "All political parties have established structures up to the grassroots level"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.76	2.92	2.76	3.02	2.89	2.84	3.05

The perceptions of the respondents regarding the lack of structures at grassroots level (sub-county, parish and village) on the part of all the political parties demonstrate the parties' weak organisational capacity and their concentration in urban areas. Hence, these factors can also explain why some parties put up a weak performance during local and national elections. The failure of political parties to organise and establish structures at grassroots level can partly be attributed to a lack of the necessary human and financial resources to do so. On the one hand, the parties lack a broad membership base and are hardly succeeding in adequately mobilising active supporters at grassroots level. For example, in many cases opposition parties even fail to field candidates for local elections, which ultimately limits the choices available to the voters and thus reduces democratic competition. On the other hand, financial resources that would be required for improving local party structures and channels for mobilisation are extremely scarce for all parties. This constitutes a major constraint for the parties in their effort to fulfil their essential democratic functions in the pluralistic system.

2.1.4 The Roles of Civil Society in Promoting Political Pluralism

Civil society is widely accepted as an indispensable (non-state) actor in the promotion of democracy. With regard to promoting a political system, which in this case is pluralism, in an ideal situation, civil society plays a vital role in educating citizens about a political system and their roles and responsibilities in that system. Furthermore, in a functioning pluralistic democratic system, civil society is, among others, part of those actors that connect the citizens to the leaders (and institutions including political parties). On the premise of the foregoing, for the purposes of this assessment, the presence within the districts of CSOs which are actively engaged and which understand and perform their role in promoting political pluralism was considered. This, together with other aspects, formed the basis of indicators for assessing the role of civil society in the promotion of political pluralism as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The Roles of Civil Society in Promoting Political Pluralism

Figure 4 shows that on average, less than half (45%) of the respondents agreed that there is an active presence of CSOs working on political pluralism and democracy promotion in the districts. A significant minority (39%) disagreed while another 16% were uncertain. A relatively high percentage of positive responses was generated in Soroti (66%) and Mbarara (55%). The districts of Gulu (39%), Arua (34%) and Masaka (28%) scored lowest.

Scores for the indicator: "There is an active presence of CSOs working on political pluralism and democracy promotion in the district"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.91	2.98	3.43	3.16	2.5	3.29	2.97

There is clearly a perception that CSOs, although present in the districts, are not actively working on the promotion of political pluralism. Such a perception also tallies with the observation that not many of CSOs are active when it comes to pluralism and democracy-related topics and even those that are engaged in this area were noted to be doing so only at a limited level. According to participants in the FDGs – and this was admitted by several civil society members – most CSOs are more involved in different development programmes such as income-generating projects, HIV/AIDS, and education.

The engagement by CSOs in politically related matters, including the promotion of political pluralism and democracy, is quite limited or, at least, it is not as sound as the activeness of CSOs in the "non-political" development areas. The reason that was advanced by CSO members for not being very active in political affairs is the fear that this might result in them being perceived as engaging in partisan politics. This, according to the CSOs, would be likely to set them on a collision course with the political leaders and probably also affect their work on other development programmes. In fact, it was reported during the FGDs that when the CSOs try to engage in what can be termed highly political issues they might be attacked by the local politicians or at least attempts may be made to influence them to act in the interests of the local political elite – a situation that greatly compromises their independence once they comply.

"CSOs are doing nothing to promote political pluralism because they operate in a non-partisan procedure." (Individual interviewee in Masaka district)

"CSOs have played a watchdog role and functioned as whistle-blowers in case there is any form of discrimination against any political group." (Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

Indicator:	CSOs in the district understand their roles in the promotion of political pluralism

Less than half (45%) of the respondents agreed that the CSOs in the districts understand their roles in the promotion of political pluralism. A significant minority (30%) disagreed. Yet another significant minority (25%) is uncertain. With the exception of Soroti, where 63% agreement with the statement was recorded, the extent of agreement in the other districts was below 40%.

Scores for the indicator: "CSOs in the district understand their roles in the promotion of political pluralism"

Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.99	3.14	3.53	3.09	2.72	3.45	3.01

The low scores for this indicator can also be understood in the context of the scores for the indicator immediately above, i.e. if the CSOs are not actively working on political pluralism, it would be difficult for the local citizens to know if they understand their role in its promotion. Nevertheless, during the public dialogues held in the regions, the participating CSO members demonstrated knowledge which confirmed awareness of their role in promoting political pluralism, although they still admitted to having been unable to satisfactorily do so.

Indicator:	CSOs in the districts have contributed towards raising awareness on civil and political rights among local citizens

Slightly over half (51%) of the respondents agreed that CSOs in the districts have contributed to raising awareness on civil and political rights among local citizens while a significant minority (30%) disagreed and 19% were uncertain.

Scores for the indicator: "CSOs in the district have contributed to raising awareness on civil and political rights among the local citizens"

Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.98	3.35	3.69	3.33	2.6	3.35	3.27

The scores here contradict the results discussed earlier where only a minority (45%) agreed that CSOs understand their role in the promotion of political pluralism. This raises the question: If CSOs do not understand their role in promoting political pluralism, how then can they significantly raise awareness about the concept? In this respect, the number of respondents agreeing with the statement was particularly low in Arua (33%) and Masaka (26%) and it is only in Soroti that the extent of agreement went above the 60% mark. The interviewed local citizens who acknowledge the contribution of CSOs cite the sensitisation seminars on voter education that CSOs have conducted as being responsible for enabling them to exercise their civil and political rights during general and local elections.

> Indicator: CSOs in the district have been proactive in ensuring that the
>   concerns of local citizens are addressed by elected leaders

Even when there is agreement that local citizens are sensitised by some
CSOs, on average only less than half (48%) of the respondents agreed that
CSOs have been proactive in ensuring that the concerns of local citizens are
addressed by the elected leaders, while 30% disagreed.

Scores for the indicator: "CSOs have been proactive in ensuring that concerns of local citizens are addressed by the elected leaders"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.91	3.41	2.89	3.25	2.87	3.37	3.47

In spite of the low scores on this indicator, in some FGDs participants
acknowledged that CSOs have been visibly engaging communities and are
believed to be forwarding people's views to the leaders; thus the CSOs can
be credited with helping in narrowing the gap between elected leaders and
their electorate. Nonetheless, participants still expressed concern that this
engagement by CSOs has not resulted in people's concerns being addressed
by the leaders. This allows the conclusion that the awareness-raising work of
the CSOs is not sufficient to create an environment in which elected leaders
can address citizens' concerns. This poses a challenge to the
effort to enhance citizens' participation in governance. If
the people's perception is that their views are of little or no

> "CSOs are failing to bring concerns of local citizens to the attention of elected leaders."
> (Individual interviewee in Mbarara district)

consequence to the governance chain, they are more likely to be discouraged
from participating in governance issues.

> Indicator: Elected leaders in the district have a cordial relationship with CSOs

A slight majority (54%) of the respondents agreed that civic organisations in
the districts have a cordial relationship with elected leaders. This particular
indicator received quite good scores from the respondents, except in the
case of Kasese.

Scores for the indicator: "Elected leaders in the district have a cordial relationship with CSOs"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.32	3.52	3.6	3.52	3.68	3.61	2.6

The results here are, however, not surprising. As already discussed above,
the CSOs are not actively engaged in what they consider "sensitive" political
areas. This implies that they are unlikely to get on the wrong side of the
politicians (leaders). In the same context, as the CSOs will not be critical

of the work of political leaders, they are less likely to find themselves at loggerheads with the leaders. Therefore, the good scores for this indicator may not necessarily portray a desirable situation.

Indicator:	CSOs in the district perform their functions in a free and non-partisan manner

What reflected some kind of vote of confidence in the ability of CSOs to promote political pluralism is the agreement by 58% of the respondents that CSOs in the districts perform their functions in a free and non-partisan manner. Again, it is only Kasese where the score for this indicator fell below 3.

Scores for the indicator: "CSOs in the district perform their functions in a free and non-partisan manner"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.26	3.62	3.49	3.75	3.75	3.72	2.85

These scores can be considered as a vote of confidence because being non-partisan is a prerequisite for an actor in the category of a CSO to be able to work on political pluralism. The work of CSOs requires that they are able to reach out to all people irrespective of their political ideology or affiliation.

The existing confidence therefore gives the hope that the opportunity can be available for the CSOs to contribute more to the promotion of political pluralism and democracy in the districts.

2.2 Democratic Participation

A critical prerequisite for any society to exercise genuine democratic governance is the popular participation of citizens in the governance process. This participation has to be meaningful. In the first place, it should be one which guarantees that the citizens decide by themselves how and by whom they should be governed, normally doing so through regular, free and fair elections. Secondly, citizens' involvement has to go beyond elections and ensure that they have effective control of all decisions which affect them. This assertion was especially presented as one of the reasons why Uganda adopted the decentralised system of governance. In this context, therefore, citizens' participation in the electoral process and their participation in decision-making are two of the three sub-dimensions assessed under democratic participation. The third aspect covered is the development of civic organisations since they are considered to play an essential role in guaranteeing effective democratic participation beyond electoral processes.

2.2.1 Participation in the Electoral Process

Elections are an integral ingredient of democracy. The extent to which the citizens are allowed to participate in the electoral process reveals a lot about the state of democracy in that particular country. Elections are generally accepted as a key and basic mechanism for democratic participation. The

Ugandan constitution in its very first article.[3] In this assessment, participation in the electoral process was thus considered a key indicator of democratic participation.

Figure 5: Democratic Participation: Participation in the Electoral Process
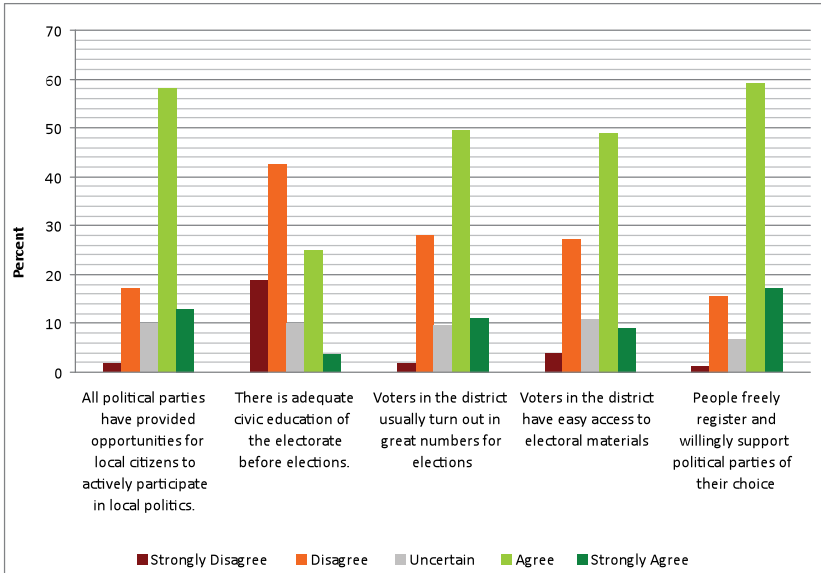
Indicator: All political parties have provided opportunities for local citizens to actively participate in local politics

Figure 5 shows that, on average, more than two-thirds (71%) of the respondents agreed that all political parties have provided opportunities for local citizens to actively participate in local politics. Only a small minority (19%) disagreed. On this subject, Kasese had the highest (71%) agreement rate compared to Masaka with the lowest (65%).

Scores for the indicator: "All political parties have provided opportunities for local citizens to actively participate in local politics"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka		Kasese
3.56	3.66	3.42	3.72	3.67	3.57	3.81

In the FGDs and KI interviews the respondents mentioned the political party primaries and competition for leadership in local party organs (although these are only active at district level) as some of the opportunities for political participation provided by the parties to local citizens. This finding indicates that an opportunity exists for the political parties to promote participation and to nurture political pluralism and democracy in the districts. The onus is

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[3] Article 1 (3) of the Ugandan constitution states: "The people shall express their will and consent on who shall govern them and how they shall be governed, through regular, free and fair elections or their representatives or through referenda".

on the local citizens (party members) to take advantage of this opportunity and participate more effectively in the affairs of the political parties. An increase in the participation of citizens in party processes, including party elections, would offer the people some level of control over the political parties and their leaders which is necessary if the parties are to be made accountable to and serve the interests of the local people. The possibility of participation in party processes further presents an opportunity that can be used to promote, within the multi-party system, the interests of special groups such as the women, youth and persons with disabilities. Such groups can also seize the opportunity to push their interests on to the agenda of political parties. They can, for example, do so by encouraging their members to contest for positions in the parties or by supporting candidates who offer to better represent their interests.

Indicator:	There is adequate civic education of the electorate before the elections

One critical ingredient needed for elections to be held freely and fairly is civic education. Effective civic education guarantees that the electorate is aware of what to do before, during and after elections are conducted. It is thus a basis for ensuring the participation of informed citizen in the electoral process. In spite of its significance, the findings of this assessment indicate that the level of civic education in the districts is low. The majority (61%) of the respondents disagreed that there is adequate civic education of the electorate before elections, while only 29% agreed. Soroti (71%), Mbarara (68%), Gulu (60%) and Masaka (65%) had the highest disagreement rates.

"The local citizens are only participating through elections. They are largely ignorant about their rights."
(Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

Scores for the indicator: "There is adequate civic education of the electorate before elections"

Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.31	2.56	2.17	2.9	2.37	2.39	2.93

By and large, as multi-party politics is rather new in the country, local citizens would be expected to have comparatively low levels of awareness about the key tenets of multi-party elections. For example, the citizens may not necessarily know the procedures and processes involved in a multi-party election and how these are different from elections held under a movement system which they are familiar with. They would also need to be fully sensitised on the rights, roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the multi-party elections, i.e. the voters, candidates, political parties, government departments etc. Thus, educating local citizens about

political pluralism in general and multi-party elections in particular is an urgent necessity. This makes the finding regarding the perception that the civic education conducted in the districts is inadequate a matter of interest. This finding indicates a significant gap also, considering what has been argued in several reports pointing to low levels of civic education as one of the limitations to free and fair

> *"There have been attempts to raise awareness on political and electoral rights but there is no systematic civic education."*
> (Individual interviewee in Mbarara district)

elections in Uganda.[4] The failure to educate the people and ensure a good level of awareness tends to water down the significance of elections in a democracy. If elections are the ultimate opportunity for citizens to define their power over those who govern them, then a lack of adequate civic education before elections clearly deprives citizens of the opportunity to exercise that power meaningfully and effectively from an informed perspective.

Indicator:	Voters in the districts usually turn out in great numbers for the elections

The perception among respondents is that voters in the districts turn out in large numbers for the elections. To this effect, the majority (61%) of the respondents agreed that voters usually turn out in great numbers during elections while 30% disagreed. Ten percent were uncertain. The statistics for Mbarara (85% agreement) and Kasese (79%) were the highest and those of Mbale (42%) and Arua (44%) were the lowest.

Scores for the indicator: "Voters in the district usually turn out in great numbers for elections"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.19	3.25	3.39	2.98	3.46	4.06	3.82

These results can be viewed as an indication that the citizens are eager to exercise their democratic rights through the electoral process. They are also supported by other findings. For example, in an interview with a CSO representative in Arua, the observation was made that "people are enthusiastic during elections of the president, followed by parliamentary elections. Other elections do not attract as many voters". However, electoral records in the possession of the district offices of the Electoral Commission (EC) and in the EC headquarters indicate that a dismal percentage (about 10%) of the voters turned up for local elections in the recent past (2008 and 2009). This is a clear contradiction of the expressed perception and presents evidence of low voter turnout in the elections

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[4]   The argument that lack of adequate civic education has limited the freeness and fairness of elections in Uganda has been made in reports by several actors, including by the Electoral Commission itself, the courts of law and international election observer missions, including the European Union mission

On average, only slightly more than half (58%) of the respondents agreed that voters in the districts have easy access to electoral materials while 31% disagreed. On this indicator, the districts of Kasese (81%) and Mbarara (83%) had significantly high agreement rates while, Gulu (38%) and Arua (39%) had low rates of agreement.

Scores for the indicator: "Voters in the district have easy access to electoral materials"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.01	2.96	3.11	3.08	3.01	3.86	3.71

The scores here, especially in the case of Masaka and Kasese, show some challenge with regard to the provision of relevant electoral materials in the districts. If citizen participation in the electoral process is to be encouraged, then the adequate provision of electoral materials in a mechanism that is perceived by them to be simple and convenient is necessary. The challenge is that if citizens feel that access to electoral materials is not easy, the possibility of a decline in their interest and willingness to participate in the electoral process cannot be ruled out.

A significantly high majority (76%) of the respondents agreed that people freely register and willingly support political parties of their choice and only a minority (17%) disagreed. Of all the districts, Kasese (86%) and Mbarara (83%) had the highest agreement rates, whereas Arua had the lowest (69%).

Scores for the indicator: "People freely register and willingly support political parties of their choice"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.73	3.72	2.57	3.61	3.87	4.06	3.86

It should to be noted that the freedom for people to support a party or candidate of their choice in an election is an important measure of the extent to which the electoral process is free and fair. It is also a measure of the extent to which political liberties are respected. Therefore, the perception that people in the district can register and support any political party of their

[5] Electoral materials in this case on the one hand refers to those items that enable to conduct the exercise of voting e.g. registering and getting a voters card, access to the polling station, getting the ballot paper and other materials related to casting the ballot etc. On the other hand, it also covers those materials that inform voters about the election, in particular, civic education materials and other information relating to the election e.g. dates etc.

choice is to be positively considered. However, as earlier presented, there is a feeling among some local citizens in the districts that they are not entirely free to belong to and support a party of their choice. The reason, as already presented, is fear on their part of possible exclusion from development programmes or, even worse, the possibility of persecution.

However, the qualitative interviews conducted with KIs in all districts exposed the perception that the local citizens are not intimidated to join a particular party. In an FGD in Manibe sub-county, in Arua district, a respondent was of the view that "for people here, it is through voluntary choice and participation. Some of these people hold two or more cards just for convenience, but they all have their known choices. You will really know their true colours when the campaigns begin".

2.2.2 Participation in Decision-making

The fundamental principles contained in Uganda's decentralisation policy are political decentralisation, personnel decentralisation, and financial decentralisation. The first principle, political decentralisation, is the most pertinent for this particular assessment. The basis upon which political decentralisation rests is to empower the local citizenry by ensuring that they participate in the decision-making process so that those decisions are based on local circumstances and can lead to programmes that they can own and which are implementable. Therefore, the question of participation in decision-making was of interest to this assessment and was therefore one of the sub-dimensions assessed under democratic participation

Figure 6: Participation in Decision-making
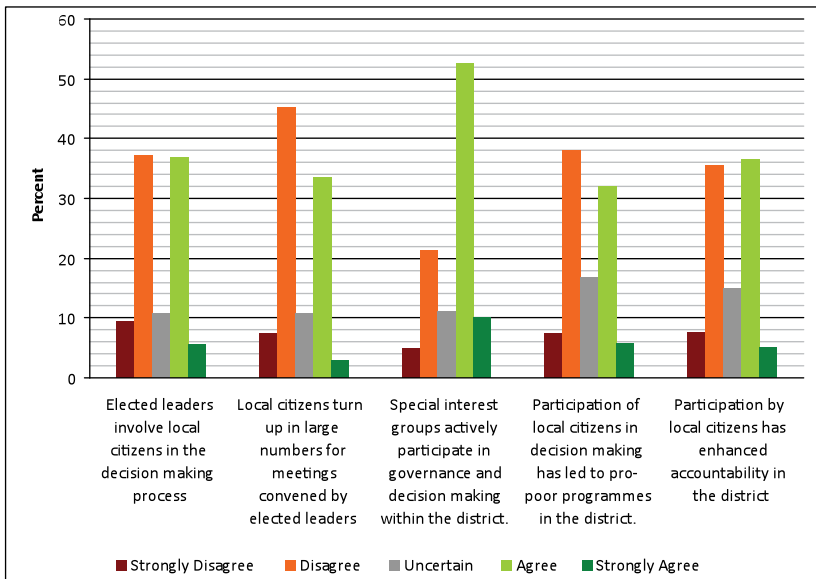
Indicator:	Elected leaders involve local citizens in the decision-making process

The participatory approach to development emphasises people's involvement in the decision-making process. This helps to ensure that programme implementation is successful and that the eventual outcomes are owned by the people themselves. Figure 6, however, shows that the interviewees were quite divided in their response to the statement that elected leaders involve local citizens in the decision-making process, with 43% agreeing and 47% disagreeing.

Scores for the indicator: "Elected leaders involve local citizens in the decision-making process"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.73	3.12	3.2	2.79	2.82	2.91	2.88

It was generally observed during interviews with KIs and FGDs that some level of citizen consultation was taking place at the lower levels of representation, i.e. LCs I, II and III. This, however, tends to reduce as one moves to higher levels in the local government hierarchy, i.e. to the level of the district. One can argue that it is to be expected that a district may easily be seen by locals as less representative (and less consultative) than, say, a village or parish council, the latter being closer to the people. However,

> *"Local citizens are not involved in decision making mainly because there are no regular village council meetings."*
> (Individual interviewee in Mbarara district)

local participants in the FGDs had very precise explanations as to why they felt that the districts were not representing them. First, they cited lack of regular consultations by their representatives at district level, notably the councillors. Second, they noted that although some concrete platforms where the people can offer their views on development programmes such as the Budget Conferences, District Technical Planning Committees and Integrity Forums exist, the views given by people on these platforms hardly ever make it into the district plans. On this note, participants in an FGD in Mbale district were clear about their reluctance to participate in further Budget Conferences. Third, they generally complained of not being consulted on development projects that are brought to their areas. In Mbarara, for example, in one of the FGDs, the respondents had this to say: "People just know projects are done though they cannot tell how they were conceived … Citizens do not influence decisions because they do not attend meetings … Citizens cannot influence decisions and policies of the leaders because they fear their leaders". From the foregoing, it can be concluded with some level of certainty that effective citizen consultation is lacking in the districts.

> **Indicator:** Local citizens turn up in large numbers for meetings convened by elected leaders

Based on the above findings which indicate, first, that elected leaders do not regularly consult citizens and, second, that the local citizens do not feel that they have a real impact on decision-making even if they give their views, a low score of this indicator was to be expected.

Scores for the indicator: "Local citizens turn up in large numbers for meetings convened by elected leaders"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.83	3.29	2.47	2.73	2.52	2.88	2.82

More than half (53%) of the respondents disagreed that local citizens turn up in large numbers for meetings convened by elected leaders whereas only a minority (37%) agreed. The disagreement was particularly high in Masaka (68%) and Soroti (64%), while it was much lower in Arua (41%) and Gulu (33%). However, while there was a high degree of uncertainty in Arua, respondents in Gulu widely suggested a high turnout for meetings convened by the elected leaders. With the exception of the northern districts, the general perception indicates that when the local citizens' views are ignored by the local leadership, then the citizens tend not to attend meetings that are convened.

> **Indicator:** Special interest groups actively participate in governance and decision-making within the districts

A more positive picture emerges when one takes a look at the participation of special interest groups in decision-making processes. Here, the majority (63%) of the respondents agreed that special interest groups actively participate in governance and decision-making within the districts. Respondents in the districts of Mbarara (74%), Kasese (68%), Soroti (69%), Gulu (64%) and Masaka (60%), agreed more on the statement than those in Arua (49%), and Mbale (36%).

Scores for the indicator: "Special interest groups actively participate in governance and decision-making within the district"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.17	3.39	3.62	3.13	3.42	3.65	3.48

The main reason that can be advanced regarding the contrasting perception between general participation and participation of interest groups is because the special interest groups are represented at all the Local Council levels in accordance with the law. It is, however, worth stating that mere representation

in LCs does not mean effectiveness in influencing decisions in the group's interest. Secondly, the available documents in the seven districts indicate that interest groups, though in existence by an Act of Parliament, are not fully taken into consideration in the final district plans. The conclusion which can be made here is that the fact that the interest groups are represented in councils has not always resulted in their effective participation in decision-making in the districts.

Indicator:	Participation of local citizens in decision-making has led to pro-poor programmes in the district

Respondents were divided on the question of whether citizens' participation in the decision-making process has led to pro-poor programmes in the districts. Nevertheless, the percentage of those who disagreed (46%) was slightly above the percentage of those who agreed (38%). Statistics from the districts indicate that the disagreement was highest in Soroti and Masaka, where it actually went beyond 50%. The disagreement was quite lower in the other districts, particularly Gulu (39%), Arua (41%) and Kasese (36%).

Scores for the indicator: "Participation of local citizens in decision making has led to pro- poor programmes in the district"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.86	3	2.81	2.74	2.8	3.01	3.1

The results here can be interpreted somehow in relation to earlier findings that citizens' participation is weak and has not resulted in citizens' interests being reflected in development programmes. Therefore, citizen participation, even in the limited instances where it exists, can be interpreted as being pseudo-participation. It generally appears that the final decision is anyway still taken by the elected leaders and could be directed more towards addressing the leaders' personal interests rather than the interests of the local citizens.

Indicator:	Participation by local citizens has enhanced accountability in the district

Forty three percent of the respondents disagreed that participation by local citizens has enhanced accountability and transparency in the districts, while fewer were able to agree on this statement (42%). The respondents in Kasese (54%) and Masaka (57%) disagreed more than those in the other districts that the local citizens can achieve accountability and transparency in the districts through their participation. In contrast, only 28% of the respondents in Gulu and 27% of the respondents in Soroti expressed disagreement. It should also be noted that the number of respondents who were uncertain was high in the districts of Arua (29%), Gulu (21%), and Mbarara (13%).

Scores for the indicator: "Participation by local citizens has enhanced accountability in the district"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.63	3.21	3.44	3.05	2.75	3.01	2.65

From the findings it can be concluded that there is generally a perception that local citizens cannot call the elected leaders to account. This implies that the capacity of the local people to promote accountability and to deal with corruption is quite limited.

2.2.3 Development of Civic Organisations

Besides government institutions, civic organisations can be seen as alternative avenues through which the people can participate not only in attaining local development, but in sharing information and educating one another on issues of good governance. Indeed, civic organisations can be, and have become, mechanisms through which the people's collective interests in the decision-making process can be represented. Here, civic organisations include, among others, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and other interest group associations. In this regard, the development of civic organisations has been considered as one of the indicators of democratic participation.

Figure 7: Democratic Participation: Development of Civic Organisations
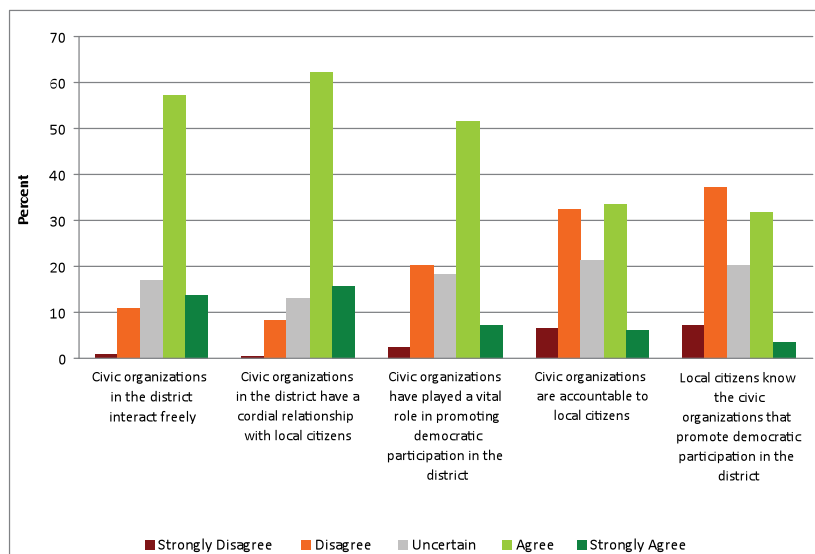
Indicator: Civic organisations in the district interact freely[6]

The majority (71%) of the respondents agreed that civic organisations in the seven districts interact freely while only 12% disagreed. The highest agreement rates were generated in Mbarara (80%) and Kasese (82%), while the lowest came from Gulu and Soroti (61% each).

Scores for the indicator: "Civic organisations in the district interact freely"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.64	3.57	3.54	3.66	3.86	3.89	3.9

The scores here are an indication of the general existence of a free environment for civic organisations to operate in the district. This phenomenon was also confirmed by the KIs and by the FGD participants. This is an encouraging finding, which means that if they harness their potential, CSOs can effectively contribute towards the promotion of political pluralism since the environment generally allows them to do so.

Indicator: Civic organisations in the district have a cordial relationship with local citizens

Over two-thirds (78%) of the respondents agreed that civic organisations in the district have a cordial relationship with local citizens. The highest scores on this indicator were generated in Kasese, Masaka and Gulu. The lowest score was generated in Soroti, the only district where it fell below the minimum threshold of 3.

Scores for the indicator: "Civic organisations in the district have a cordial relationship with local citizens"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.51	3.81	2.83	3.75	3.96	3.89	4.04

These results are an indication that local citizens are receptive to the CSOs and are generally receptive to their work. The reverse is also a possibility, for example in cases where local citizens perceive CSOs to be engaged in programmes that contradict the citizens' aspirations or values, or if they are considered partisan. Fortunately, such a scenario was not found in any of the districts. Instead CSOs were always cited as a reliable partner of the people.

There is, therefore, good ground for tapping the good perception about CSOs to promote the values of political pluralism and democracy among local citizens.

> *"The CSOs are important. At least they attempt to preach the same message of unity after each election."*
> (Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

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[6] "Interact freely" means that the civic organisations are free to design and implement programmes including those on political and governance issues without restriction and that they are free to reach out to local citizens and to interact with each other as groups

> **Indicator:** Civic organisations have played a vital role in promoting democratic participation in the district

On this indicator, a sizeable number of respondents (59%) agreed while 23% disagreed that civic organisations have played a vital role in promoting democratic participation in the districts. Fourteen percent of the respondents were uncertain. Soroti (81%), Mbarara (73%) and Kasese (62%) were the three districts with significantly high agreement rates. The lowest agreement rates come from Arua and Masaka which had 38% each. A significantly high minority of respondents in Arua (33%), Gulu (25%) and Kasese (21%) were uncertain.

Scores for the indicator: "Civic organisations have played a vital role in promoting democratic participation in the district"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.20	3.43	3.8	3.4	2.91	3.66	3.46

The finding that most of the respondents acknowledge the contribution of civic organisations in the promotion of political pluralism is encouraging. The fact that they are considered by a majority to have played a vital role in this area indicates that they have been able to harness their potential, at least to a certain extent, and effectively use the opportunities that arise in a generally free environment as described above.

> **Indicator:** Civic organisations are accountable to local citizens

The observation that the respondents across the districts were quite divided on the question of whether civic organisations are accountable to local citizens is crucial (40% agreement, 39% disagreement).

Scores for the Indicator: "Civic organisations are accountable to local citizens"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.98	3.09	2.91	2.95	2.87	3.33	2.68

Although citizens' trust in civic organisations was generally perceived to be higher than the trust in political parties and government institutions, there is no clear expression of trust in their accountability to the citizens. During FGDs and individual interviews, one argument that was frequently put forward was the dependence of civic organisations on external funding, either from the government or international donors. They are therefore perceived to be more accountable to donors than to the local citizenry. In this context, it was also noted that many of the interventions of NGOs in the districts are not so much based on an assessment of and a reflection on the needs of the local population but on demands and trends coming from the donor community.

Indicator: Local citizens know the civic organisations that promote democratic participation in the districts

Finally, on average, slightly less than half (44%) of the respondents disagreed that local citizens know the civic organisations that promote democratic participation in the districts while only a minority of 35% agreed and another 20% were uncertain.

Scores for the indicator: "Local citizens know the civic organisations that promote democratic participation in the district"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.76	2.84	2.76	2.91	2.46	3.06	2.96

This finding is somewhat at odds with the above-described perception that CSOs have played a vital role in promoting democratic participation. It indicates that either there are only a few civic organisations working in the area of promoting democratic participation, or that those active in this field are not popularly known and have a visibility deficit. In any case, the results allow the conclusion that if the civic organisations working on the promotion of democratic participation are not known by the local citizens, then their interventions must have a rather limited impact. They appear to have not fully exploited their potential and are not effective in reaching their major target group.

2.3 Representation

A functional democracy requires that the people possess ultimate power in its entirety. Leaders in a democracy are but *representatives* of the people. Practically, democratic representation not only necessitates the choosing and periodical replacement of leaders by the people[7]; it also implies that the people retain the ultimate power and control over the decisions and actions implemented by the leaders (on behalf of the citizens). Representation is at the heart of Uganda's decentralisation system, which clearly lays out a framework for citizens from the lowest units and from all groups (including those that were traditionally marginalised) to be represented in all decision-making organs, including local councils. For the will of the people to be reflected in governance, the aspect of representation has to be working in such a way that elected leaders are responsive and effective. Secondly, local citizens need to be empowered in order to exercise control. Lastly, there has to be accountability and transparency. These three aspects formed the sub-dimensions of assessing representation in this assessment.

2.3.1 Responsiveness and Effectiveness of Elected Leaders

Uganda's decentralisation process was intended not only to bring services closer to the people, but also the planning of development programmes. In this way, it was anticipated that people's practical needs and priorities would

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[7]   Otherwise the people can renew the mandate of their leaders by reelecting them into office

be addressed since planning would be done by leaders (and departments) close to the local citizens and that therefore these leaders could easily be informed about people's needs and have them effectively addressed within the local government development programmes.

Figure 8: Representation: Responsiveness and Effectiveness of Elected Leaders

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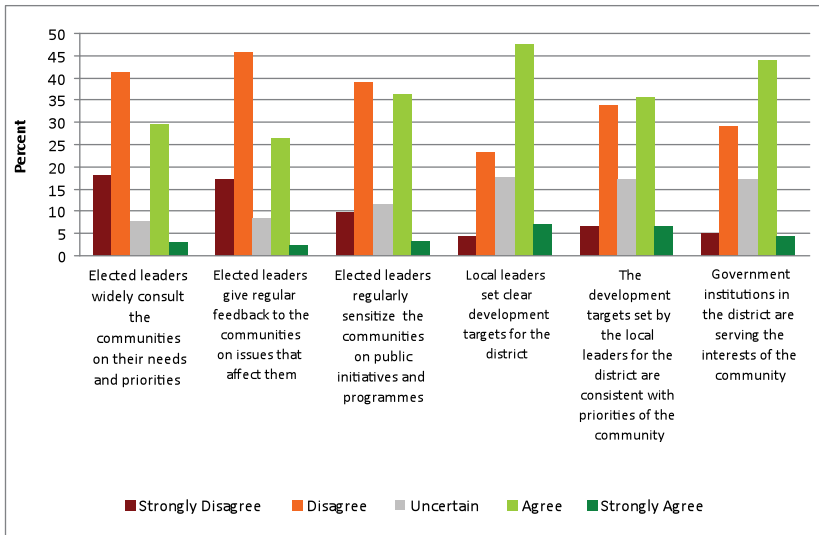
Indicator: Local leaders set clear development targets for the district

Figure 8 shows that, on average, more than half (55%) of the respondents agreed that local leaders set clear development targets for the districts. A minority (28%) of the respondents disagreed and 18% were uncertain. The highest score for this indicator was generated in Soroti. Mbale district got the lowest score (below 3) and fell significantly behind the other districts.

Scores for the indicator: "Local leaders set clear development targets for the district"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.23	3.35	3.66	2.96	3.24	3.31	3.32

Although average, the statistics here indicate some level of confidence in the local leaders and their ability to set clear development targets for their localities. To this effect, it was confirmed that all the districts had District Development Plans (DDPs), District Budget Framework Papers (DBFPs), and Annual District Work Plans. However, the question of whether these development targets reflect the aspirations of the local citizens and if at all they are usually met still remains. Considering the statistics of other indicators related to responsiveness (as discussed below), the answer to

this question tends more towards the negative. Moreover, in Arua district, an observation was made during the interviews that suggested that the local citizens feel more represented on development issues at the lower levels than at district level. This implies that addressing the interests of the local citizens as a basis for local government development programmes tends to decrease as one goes up the rungs of the local governance hierarchy. This argument was supported by participants in FGDs in Mbale district who asserted that although they regularly participate in the Budget Conferences, they do not see their ideas reflected in the district development plans.

Indicator: The development targets set by local leaders for the districts are consistent with priorities of the communities

Respondents were quite divided on the relationship between development targets set by the districts and the priorities of communities. On average, a significant minority (40%) of the respondents disagreed that the development targets set by the local leaders are consistent with the priorities of the communities, with an almost equal percentage of expressed agreement (42%). A sizeable number (17%) of the respondents was uncertain. Only Gulu (53%) surpassed the 50% agreement rate while Masaka scored the lowest.

Scores for the indicator: "The development targets set by the local leaders for the district are consistent with priorities of the community"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.91	3.28	3.33	2.85	2.67	3.06	3

The results here indicate that while there is confidence in the leaders' ability to set clear development targets for the districts, a similar level of confidence does not exist when it comes to the ability of leaders to set development targets which are consistent with the needs of communities. In this case, it would be an acceptable point of discussion for one to assert – and this was expressed also during the FGDs – that the development targets set by the leaders are more in the leaders' interest rather than in the interests of the local citizens. This mismatch would in part explain why it has been argued in many circles that the services delivered to local citizens in the districts have been minimal and of a relatively low quality. It also explains why even after several years of decentralisation, several actors continue to note that development programmes implemented by local governments do not suit the needs at the grassroots.

Indicator: Government institutions in the districts are serving the interests of the community

Related to the above is the finding that, on average, less than half (48%) of the respondents agreed that government institutions in the districts are

serving the interests of the communities, while 34% disagreed and 17% were uncertain. Of all the districts, the highest agreement rate came from Mbarara (56%) and Gulu (53%). The districts with the lowest agreement rates were Kasese (38%), Arua (43%), and Masaka (36%), with the latter receiving a very low score (2.79).

Scores for the indicator: "Government institutions in the district are serving the interests of the community"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.17	3.32	3.41	3.12	2.79	3.14	2.98

The statistics here show that, like the development programmes set up by local leaders, interventions by government institutions are also perceived to be inconsistent with community interests.

Indicator:	Elected leaders regularly sensitise the communities on public initiatives and programmes

Regular sensitisation of communities on public initiatives and programmes is essential for ensuring that development programmes are successful and is also a key element of representation. However, only 40% of the respondents agreed that this sensitisation is taking place in the districts, while 49% disagreed.

Scores for the indicator: "Elected leaders regularly sensitise the communities on public initiatives and programmes"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.91	3.04	3.21	2.52	2.51	2.83	2.9

Some of the local development programmes that were cited in this context were NAADS, Universal Primary Education (UPE), and Universal Secondaru Education (USE). From the FGDs, it emerged that some level of sensitisation about these programmes (although not sufficient) was taking place in some areas. However, many local citizens do not perceive this sensitisation by the leaders as a genuine exercise but

> *"We are tired of being given 'lectures' by some of our leaders on how we can get rich and on their hundreds of promises to deliver services which we do not receive."* (Participant during a focus group discussion in Soroti district)

rather as a political strategy to claim credit and to gain people's support for re-election or advancement to higher political offices in future elections.

Indicator:	Elected leaders give regular feedback to communities on issues that affect them

As is the case with sensitisation, also a significant majority (63%) of respondents disagreed that elected leaders give regular feedback to

communities on issues that affect them, while only a minority of 29% agreed. The biggest number of those who disagreed came from Kasese (71%), Mbale (73%), and Masaka (66%).

Scores for the indicator: "Elected leaders give regular feedback to the communities on issues that affect them"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.58	2.64	2.88	2.24	2.34	2.57	2.3

The implication of these low scores is that even in the few instances where local citizens have the opportunity to communicate their interests to leaders, there is little or no feedback given. Local citizens do not get the chance to know what happens with the interests they communicate to their leaders. This can be discouraging, more so when their suggestions have not made it into the development plans. Participants in an FGD in Jewa village in Mbale district were candid on this issue when they remarked that when they attend meetings they usually do not get a chance to hear about what happened to their suggestions.

Indicator:	Elected leaders widely consult the communities on their needs and priorities

The level at which respondents disagreed on the subject of leaders consulting local citizens is high and suggests that elected leaders cannot be sufficiently responsive to the needs of local citizens. The majority (60%) of the respondents disagreed that elected leaders widely consult the communities on their needs and priorities while only 33% agreed. Masaka (74%) and Kasese (68%) districts scored the highest rates of disagreement compared to Soroti (46%), Gulu (57%), and Arua (51%) which performed slightly better. In fact, the scores generated for this indicator were among the lowest in the whole assessment, clearly exposing a missing link in the relationship and communication between elected leaders and the local citizenry. It is in the same line that FGD participants across all districts complained that they do not feel effectively represented but rather left alone and forgotten by their elected leaders.

Scores for the indicator: "Elected leaders widely consult the communities on their needs and priorities"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.70	2.86	2.83	2.44	2.21	2.59	2.37

Besides the low scores, responses to the qualitative questionnaires and statements made during the FGDs confirmed the absence of frequent leader-citizen consultations across all the seven districts. The indication is that leader-citizen interface is a phenomenon which is strong during campaigns

and diminishes to a low level afterwards. In one of the FGDs in Mbarara, a respondent remarked thus about consultations by leaders: "Leaders are chosen but do not come back to serve the people... Leaders at all levels have not done anything to help people as far as services are concerned... People are not sensitised on what each leader at each level is supposed to do... People do not feel represented because the leaders have not consulted

"The local leaders rarely consult the people and even when they do it is only when their personal interests are at stake."
(Individual interviewee in Soroti district)

them..." Such complaints demonstrate why the development targets set by local leaders can be inconsistent with those of the local citizens. This leads to general frustration at grassroots level about the political leaders – regardless of their party affiliations. A comment from an FGD in Soroti summarises the mood of the people towards their leaders as follows: "We are tired of being given 'lectures' by some of our leaders on how we can get rich and on their hundreds of promises to deliver services which we do not receive."

It should be noted here that the leaders who were interviewed individually during this assessment also had some explanations for their failure to regularly consult their voters. In Masaka, for example, a leader argued that voters usually make unrealistic demands, including demands for financial support or assistance to solve personal problems which are not within the capacity and mandate of the leaders to address. With such demands frequently coming up, leaders choose to keep away from regular contacts with their electorate. As a result, they mainly get into contact with them only during campaigns, during which they feel the pressure of having to meet the private demands of voters. This argument cannot serve as a justification in blank for not consulting the local citizens, it does, however, point to a limited understanding on the part of the citizens of the roles and responsibilities of their leaders.

"Our leaders only visit us during campaigns in order to convince us by making all kinds of promises or even 'buying' votes. Once they are elected we don't see them again... until the next election." (Participant during a focus group discussion in Gulu district)

2.3.2 Empowerment of Local Citizens

The level at which local citizens are empowered has to be viewed as central to the way they can cause their representatives to become responsive leaders. It also determines the capacity of the citizens to influence governance altogether. Empowerment as considered in this assessment requires three key ingredients: that the local citizens have the power (and ability) to demand action from their leaders; that local citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities in democratic governance; and that all citizens, including special interest groups, are represented at all levels of governance in accordance with the law.[8]

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[8]   The provisions under the laws of Uganda have under this assessment been considered as sufficient provisions for effective representation of interest groups in governance

Figure 9: Representation: Empowerment of Local Citizens
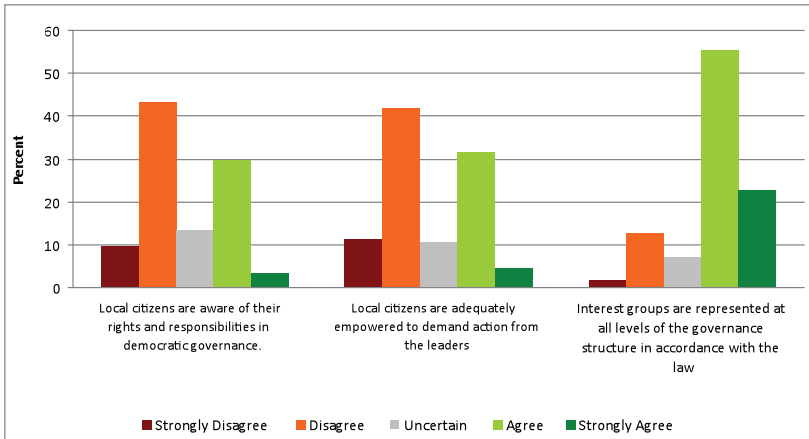
Figure 9 shows that, on average, more than half (53%) of the respondents disagreed that local citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities in democratic governance, while only about 34% agreed. The overall scores for this indicator show that indeed the perception is that the local citizens are not aware of their rights and responsibilities in democratic governance.

Scores for the indicator: "Local citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities in democratic governance"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.47	2.85	2.68	2.91	2.42	2.73	3.08

In all the districts, it was found that inadequate civic education by the responsible actors (i.e. government agencies, political parties and civic organisations) was to blame for this scenario. The fact that the citizens are perceived as not knowing their rights and responsibilities may indicate that they are neither fully part of the democratisation process and the local development agenda nor fully able to perform their rights as enshrined in the 1995 Constitution (Article 38)[9].

| Indicator: | Local citizens are adequately empowered to demand action from the leaders |

Slightly more than half (53%) of the respondents disagreed that local citizens are adequately empowered to demand action from leaders with another

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11% being uncertain, while only 36% agreed. As already discussed, many local citizens are not aware of their rights and responsibilities in democratic governance, which contributes to their inability to demand action from the leaders.

Scores for the indicator: "Local citizens are adequately empowered to demand action from the leaders"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.64	2.76	3.01	2.81	2.58	2.59	2.91

Even with such low scores on this indicator, it is interesting to note that in all the districts, the media and governance-oriented CSOs were applauded for engaging local citizens on good governance issues. The media, through reporting, and the CSOs, through their advocacy work, help to present some of the citizens' demands to the leaders. There are also instances of local citizens demanding explanations from their leaders. In Kasese district, for example, in a letter dated 27 December 2005, the people of Kanamba parish, in Karusandara sub-county, wrote to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the district on the misuse of funds that the CAO had given them as collections obtained from Queen Elizabeth National Park. They specifically complained of not knowing how much the money was and who was awarded the tender to construct staff quarters for the Kanamba schools. In the light of such trends, and given an increase in the level of awareness of their rights and responsibilities, citizens of the districts will be more able to hold their leaders to account.

> **Indicator:** Interest groups are represented at all levels of the governance structure in accordance with the law

On the representation of traditionally marginalised groups (women, youth, PWDs etc.), a significant majority (78%) of the respondents agreed that these groups are represented at all levels of the governance structure in accordance with the law. The fact that the laws (1995 Constitution and Local Governments Act, 1997) provide for the representation of these groups is one of the contributing factors. In addition, district records confirm that interest groups are represented within all governance structures in the districts and at lower local-government levels. However, many of the key informants interviewed on the same subject were of the view that representation is one thing, but being able to influence decisions is quite another. By this they meant that whereas the interest groups are represented in the governance structures, they are not empowered enough to influence the decisions made in the councils to cater for the interests of the groups they represent.

Scores for the indicator: "Interest groups are represented at all levels of the governance structure in accordance with the law"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.80	3.72	3.98	3.42	3.84	3.93	4.01

2.3.3 Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are considered fundamental principles of democratic governance and especially representation. The two concepts of transparency and accountability are both demand-driven: leaders will always be accountable only to the extent to which their environment demands that they be. Thus, in order to assess the question of transparency and accountability, the existence of functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt leaders and the question as to which degree the local citizens sympathise (or do not sympathise) with corrupt elected leaders are key indicators in this assessment. Furthermore, the level at which leaders disseminate vital information to the local citizens determines to a large extent the level of transparency, as does the question how effectively elected leaders in the districts manage public resources.

Figure 10: Representation (Accountability and Transparency)
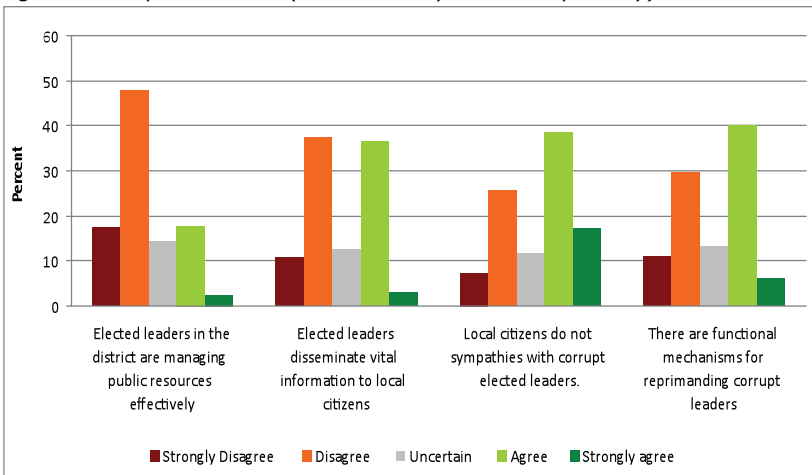
Indicator:	Elected leaders in the district are managing public resources effectively

Figure 10 shows that, on average, the majority (65%) of the respondents disagreed that elected leaders in the districts are managing public resources effectively. Only a minority (20%) agreed. The highest disagreement rates were generated in the districts of Masaka (735) and Kasese (68%).

Scores for the indicator: "Elected leaders in the district are managing public resources effectively"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.31	2.57	2.43	2.3	2.2	2.68	2.3

This score indicates that the people in the district feel that public resources are being used inappropriately, which also allows the conclusion that corruption exists in the districts. Such a conclusion is further supported by the numerous reports about the poor quality of services delivered in the districts, conflicts surrounding the award of local government contracts and about the embezzlement of funds. It is also supported by numerous cases of local government officials being indicted by the IGG and by audit reports from the Auditor General's Office which testify to the widespread abuse of public resources by elected leaders at district and lower levels.

Indicator: Elected leaders disseminate vital information to local citizens

On the question of elected leaders disseminating vital information to the local citizens, slightly less than half (48%) of the respondents disagreed that they do so while only 40% agreed. Masaka (64%) topped the disagreement rate while Gulu (35%) had the lowest.

Scores for the indicator: "Elected leaders disseminate vital information to local citizens"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
2.90	3.19	3.22	2.6	2.4	2.69	2.86

Responses from the qualitative interviews and FGDs reveal that most of the information disseminated by the elected leaders is viewed as not always being given for free and often as incomplete. Some respondents refer to such information as half-truths which are meant to score political points and not necessarily to inform the local citizens about what is happening in their localities. The reasons why the leaders do not disseminate vital information to citizens can be debated. One can argue that it is all part and parcel of the weak feedback from politicians in all the districts (see above). Also, the lack of information among local citizens leaves a gap which makes it difficult for them to demand accountability.

Indicator: Local citizens do not sympathise with corrupt leaders

With regard to another important aspect of ensuring accountability, i.e. whether or not local citizens sympathise with corrupt leaders, the results show a positive tendency. Over half (56%) of the respondents agreed with the statement that local citizens in the districts do not sympathise with corrupt leaders, while 33% disagreed.

Scores for the indicator: "Local citizens do not sympathise with corrupt elected leaders"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3.08	3.58	3.66	3.29	3.12	3.2	3.31

This finding can also be interpreted as positively surprising because it was noted earlier that many citizens lack the requisite knowledge and awareness regarding their civic and political rights, which implies that they are not able to challenge their local leaders. Nevertheless, cases exist, for example in Soroti district, of elected leaders being voted out of office for reasons related to abuse of office. A case was also reported to have occurred in Malongo sub-county (Masaka) where the electorate passed a vote of no confidence in the sub-county chairperson on similar grounds while in Kisekka sub-county in the same district, the speaker was relieved of his duties. The respondents also cited general actions by citizens, such as exposing corrupt leaders on radio, especially during radio talk shows and call-in programmes, as well as reporting them to the offices of the RDC, the police and the IGG. It was also noted that the citizens are aware of and ready to use another tool at their disposal to deal with the corrupt, i.e. using the next elections to vote out leaders who have abused their office.

One challenge still remains, however: The institutional frameworks which possess the legal authority to deal with corruption are not perceived as being fully effective but are seen, instead, as not having yielded results to the satisfaction of stakeholders. In spite of the several policies and laws that have been put in place, as well as the existence of institutions such as the IGG, the Anti-corruption Unit in the Police, the Ministry of Ethics and Integrity, the Auditor General's Office, and anti-corruption forums or *bemeza,* corruption still remains a problem at all levels in the country.

Indicator:	There are functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt leaders

Less than half (46%) of the respondents agreed that functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt local leaders do exist in the districts whereas 40% disagreed and 13% were uncertain.

Scores for the indicator: "There are functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt leaders"						
Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese
3	3.01	3.13	3.25	2.5	3.33	2.82

Theoretically, the existence of functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt leaders is a cornerstone for ensuring that corruption is decisively dealt with whenever it occurs. This also helps to discourage others from corrupt tendencies. Discussions

"Local citizens can do very little against elected leaders who have abused their office because recalling elected leaders is nearly impossible."
(Individual interviewee in Soroti district*)*

with respondents revealed that they were well aware that several laws were

enacted and that several government departments are in place to investigate, reprimand and deal with the corrupt. The respondents were, however, of the view that these mechanisms have not been effective from the top down to grassroots level. This may explain the relatively low score for this indicator. A local resident of Kigandani village in Soroti municipality graphically described it as follows: "If an LC I vice chairperson who misappropriated 25% of funds sent to the village could not be reprimanded, and therefore these mechanisms are not working in the village, how will it work for the big fish up there in the district or in Kampala?" It can thus be that the mechanisms to fight corruption are not effectively functional. This makes it rather difficult, as has been the case in many districts, for the local citizens to cause corrupt local leaders to account for their actions or inactions and to ensure that there is clear retribution for the corrupt.

"*If an LC I vice chairperson who misappropriated 25% of funds sent to the village could not be reprimanded, and therefore these mechanisms are not working in the village, how will it work for the big fish up there in the district or in Kampala?*" (Participant during a focus group discussion in Soroti district)

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

From an overall perspective, the results of the assessment indicate that although there are some positive trends, the state of political pluralism and democracy at local-government level in Uganda in the current situation presents several areas where improvement is needed. The statistics show that the perception of respondents on most of the indicators was rather skeptical. Furthermore, the observations at grassroots level gathered from the focus group discussions indicate that the local citizens are to a certain degree unsatisfied with the state of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation within their localities. A satisfactory score was only generated for a few individual indicators, while the average scores for all three concepts turned out to be rather low.

Figure 11: Overall National Scores for the Three Dimensions
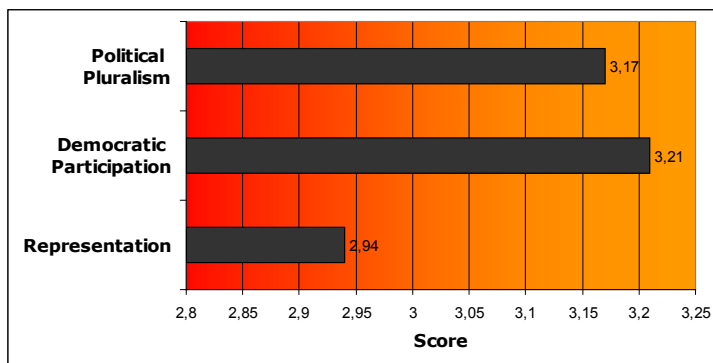
A look at the overall scores for the three dimensions reveals a striking gap between political pluralism and democratic participation on the one hand (both receiving an average score above 3), and representation on the other hand, with the latter receiving a low score of 2.94, i.e. below the threshold of 3. These statistical results – together with findings gathered at community level – indicate some serious shortcomings in all three dimensions and clearly expose an urgent need for improvement, particularly in the area of representation.

However, apart from the foregoing general observation, it is important to also note the differences among the seven districts analysed in this assessment. While in the areas of political pluralism and democratic participation the western districts of Mbarara and Kasese received the highest scores, and, thus, perform much in accordance with the perception of the respondents, the picture for the dimension of representation looks quite different.

Regarding the latter dimension, it is actually the districts of Gulu and Soroti which received the highest scores. In a context of generally low scores in this area, Gulu and Soroti were the only districts which received a score above 3.

Figure 12: Political Pluralism: Scores per District
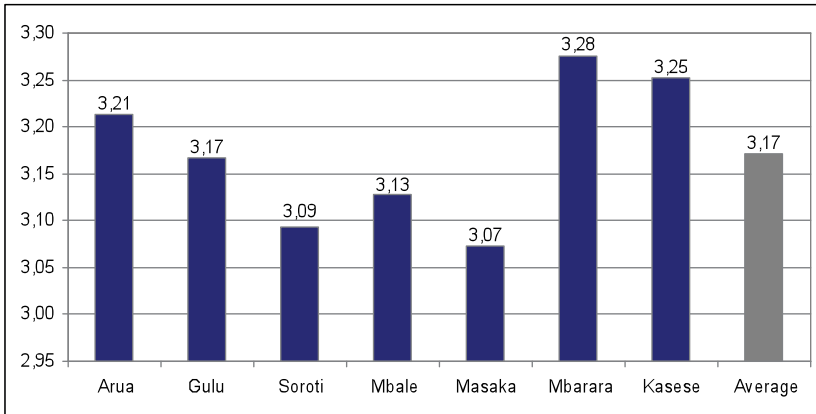
With regard to political pluralism the average score for all seven districts is 3.17. On a scale of 1 to 5, this implies a score slightly above the median and indicates that there was some degree of uncertainty or disagreement among the respondents. None of the districts reached a satisfactory score, which in this case would be at least above 3.5. However, there were significant differences between the seven districts, with Mbarara, Kasese and Arua reaching scores above the average, while the results for Masaka and Soroti were the weakest. This reflects a perception among respondents that the state of political pluralism in those two districts is low.

Figure 13: Democratic Participation: Scores per District
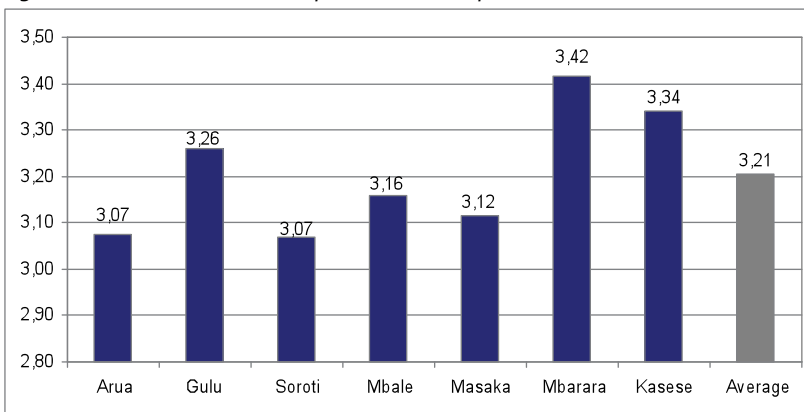
The findings on democratic participation are quite similar with those on political pluralism, with an average score of 3.21 with again Mbarara and

Kasese getting the highest scores. For Arua district, interestingly, there is quite a significant gap between the results on political pluralism and democratic participation, while respondents in Soroti and Masaka gave similarly low scores in both dimensions.

Figure 14: Representation: Scores per District
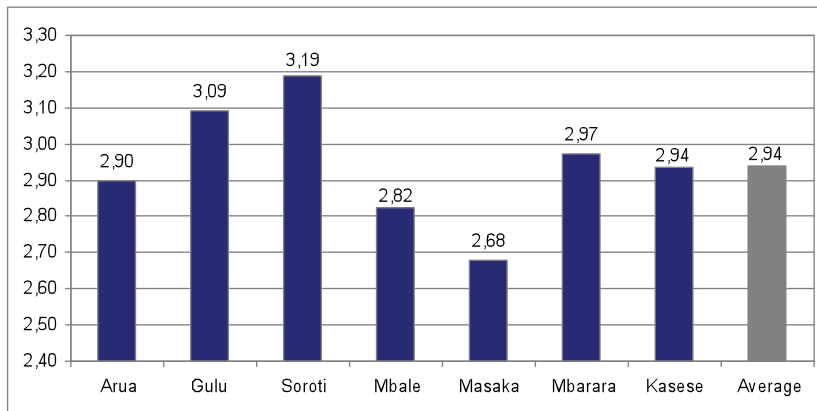
The findings on the concept of representation look quite different for two reasons. First, the average score is significantly weaker than those on political pluralism and democratic participation and actually falls below the median of 3. In the context of this assessment this means a very weak result, which leaves no doubt about the shortcomings and the need for action in this area.

Second, the results appear quite different from those for the other two concepts in an inter-district comparison. While Mbarara and Kasese got significantly weaker results compared to their scores on political pluralism and democratic participation, it was actually the districts of Gulu and Soroti that received the highest score with regard to representation. The relatively stronger scores for Soroti can be considered a surprise, taking into account that the district received low scores in the previous concepts. From an overall perspective, Mbale and Masaka appear to be similarly weak in all three dimensions.

With such differences in the district scores, a generalised conclusion for all seven districts would only have limited explanatory power. Thus, it will be important for further analysis and discussion of the assessment results to identify the existing gaps among the districts in order to point out particular challenges in each district and in order to recognise and acknowledge best practices across the districts. If this assessment is to be followed by concrete steps for improving the situation, then the willingness to learn from the (positive and negative) experiences of other districts is a key factor.

The assessment results, nevertheless, allow for an identification of general trends across the districts. The general impression that emerges form the findings – and this is supported by the discussions with local citizens – is that all districts seem to face similar challenges with regard to most of the

indicators assessed. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, a closer look shall be taken at the sub-dimensions and indicators based on the synthesis of results at national level.

Figure 15: Overall National Scores for the Sub-Dimensions
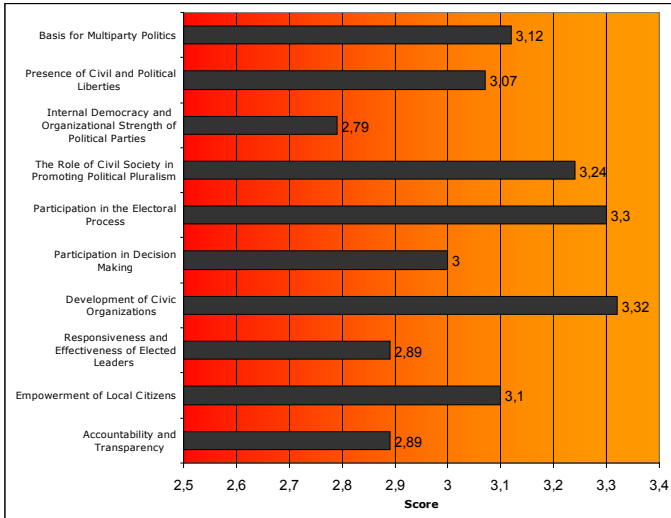
As Figure 15 shows, there are significant differences between the scores for each sub-dimension. On a positive note, the two-sub-dimensions that explicitly focus on civil society received relatively high scores (compared to the other sub-dimensions). This is a good indicator with regard to the freedom and vibrancy of civil society as a key actor in the promotion of political pluralism and democracy.

Furthermore, the score for participation in the electoral process was relatively high, which indicates that basic democratic procedures are perceived to at least fulfil minimum standards.

However, it should be pointed out that there is a big gap between the score for electoral participation and participation in decision-making. This raises the question as to whether effective participation can be guaranteed through basic formal-democratic procedures only, or whether a functioning democracy needs to ensure a more substantial involvement of the citizens, i.e. through effective participation in decision-making. Clearly, the latter is perceived to be lacking at local-government level in Uganda.

Finally, one should take a look at the three sub-dimensions with the lowest scores. Obviously the weakest scored sub-dimensions are those that focus less on the broader context and democratic structures, but more on the roles of individual leaders and their political parties, respectively. The overall results concerning the role of political parties (score of 2.79) indicate a high level of skepticism towards the parties among the citizens. Furthermore, the findings of the assessment expose a high level of frustration about and

mistrust towards the elected leaders, both with regard to responsiveness and effectiveness as well as accountability and transparency (score of 2.89 for both sub-dimensions).

Even though the overall results are rather disappointing, in order to have a balanced conclusion it is essential to point out the weak points and negative results as well as the strong points and positive results. It is therefore meaningful to highlight the individual indicators that received the highest and lowest scores.

Table 1: High-Scoring Indicators (Top 5)

1.	Interest groups are represented at all levels of the governance structure in accordance with the law	**3.81**
2.	There is an active presence of legally registered political parties in the district	**3.79**
3.	Civic organisations in the district interact freely	**3.72**
4.	All political parties choose their leaders through democratic processes	**3.70**
5.	Civic organisations in the district have a cordial relationship with local citizens	**3.68**

A look at the indicators with the highest scores (see Table 1) reveals that two of them actually focus on civic organisations. It is one of the laudable results of this assessment that civic organisations are perceived to be operating in a relatively free and harmonious environment and maintain a cordial relationship with the local citizens.

Another two indicators focus on political parties. The respondents are clearly aware of the presence of political parties in their districts and know about their activities. Furthermore, there seems to be a certain degree of trust in internal democracy within the parties.

Finally, the indicator with the highest score was the one on the representation of interest groups at all levels of the governance structure. This is not surprising since this is guaranteed by the law and is also based on a long-standing tradition in the Ugandan political context.

Table 2: Low-Scoring Indicators (Bottom 5)

1.	Elected leaders in the district are managing public resources effectively	**2.40**
2.	Elected leaders give regular feedback to the communities on issues that affect them	**2.51**
3.	There is adequate civic education of the electorate before elections	**2.52**
4.	Elected leaders widely consult the communities on their needs and priorities	**2.57**
5.	The relationship between political parties is cordial	**2.65**

While it has been observed above that the scores for party internal democracy and active presence of political parties in the districts were relatively high, it should be noted that another indicator that focuses on the parties is among the bottom five with the lowest scores (see Table 2). The conflictive relationship between the political parties appears to be one of their major shortcomings, and this cannot be ignored since it prevents a fair and tolerant competition style and thereby undermines the democratic culture in the country.

Furthermore, the score with regard to civic education before elections exposes a significant shortcoming. Civic education for the local population was not only widely perceived according to the scores, but it was also confirmed from the FGDs and interviews with KIs to be lacking in all seven districts.

Most importantly, three out of the five indicators that received the weakest scores concern elected leaders and their performance. The results for all the three indicators expose shortcomings on the part of the elected leaders that cannot be ignored. It also generally shows a significant level of mistrust among the citizens in the leaders as effective representatives. According to the perception of the respondents (including the feedback from the communities and KIs), elected leaders not only fail to consult the communities on their needs and priorities and to provide regular feedback, but also fail to manage public resources effectively.

All in all, based on the findings described above, the conclusions can be summarised thus:

1. There are some positive trends that can be tapped into to strengthen political pluralism in the districts. These include, among others, the fact that the people accept multi-partyism as an appropriate political system, the active presence of political parties and the fact that local citizens are free to join these parties. The perception that the majority of local citizens accept multi-partyism as an appropriate form of governance shows that the support for the change to a multi-party system as demonstrated in the 2005 referendum has not changed over the last years and with the first practical experiences. However, despite the general support, there appears to be a lack of clear understanding of what political pluralism is about and a lack of awareness of the relevant laws. The lack of awareness and knowledge undermines the people's empowerment and active involvement in democratic processes in a pluralistic setting.

2. There is average respect for civil and political liberties in the districts. However, not all people feel that they are free to enjoy these liberties. For example, there is perceived to be some interference in the freedom of all political parties to hold public meetings, and half of the respondents could not agree that the local citizens freely enjoy their civil and political rights. Three major explanatory factors can be identified here: First, many local citizens appear to lack awareness of their rights. Second, a number of local citizens feel intimidated by several factors within the political environment. Third, the rhetoric of politicians across the political parties contributes to a perceived limitation in civil and political rights.

3. The active presence of legally registered parties in the districts is acknowledged by a majority. However, the parties are considered to be rather weak in their structure and their performance with regard to their democratic functions. They are mostly personality-driven; the more popular the candidate is in a given area, the stronger the party is perceived to be in that area. While internal democracy seems to meet minimum standards, there are signs that party members do not have confidence in this democracy. This explains the high number of independents running for office against candidates of parties to which they formerly belonged. There are also other major challenges, such as lack of funding, lack of clear programmes, weak organisational structures, weak or even absent structures at grassroots level, as well as conflict within and among the parties.

4. Although the political environment seems to be generally free and conducive to active participation, there are significant challenges. In particular, there is a big gap between participation through elections and participation in decision-making, with the latter being much weaker. Active participation is undermined by a lack of awareness and limited civic education. Citizens do not have adequate knowledge of their rights, duties and obligations. This makes it difficult for them to hold leaders accountable and to effectively take advantage of the multi-party political dispensation.

5. There is uncertainty among the people concerning the role and performance of CSOs in the promotion of democracy and political pluralism. While they are perceived to have a cordial relationship with elected leaders as well as the broader population and interact freely in the districts, people are not fully convinced of their contribution towards strengthening democratic participation. A major challenge is that many local citizens do not even know the CSOs that are involved in democracy promotion in the district. Second, CSOs seem to tend to shy away from topics on democracy and politics as they consider these to be controversial and partisan areas which can negatively affect their work on programmes like poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS and others. Hence, the potential of CSOs to promote political pluralism and democracy is not fully tapped.

6. The most fundamental shortcomings are observed in the area of representation. A majority of respondents did not agree that the people's needs and priorities are adequately reflected in development targets set by the local leaders in the districts. The people do not feel properly represented owing to a general lack of regular sensitisation, poor feedback from their elected leaders and the absence of consultations by their leaders about their needs and priorities. There is general frustration with elected leaders who make promises during campaigns but do not fulfil them. Once elected, the leaders lose touch with the electorate and fail to frequently consult the local citizens. Generally, the perception and feeling among local citizens is that leaders pursue individual

interests rather than the interests of the people who elect them into office. Furthermore, the assessment reveals a general dissatisfaction among local citizens with the way leaders manage public resources in the districts. Based on the scores and on the observations from the FGDs and interviews with KIs, it appears that public resources in the districts are not appropriately managed by the leaders.

7.   There is a strong perception that accountability and transparency are lacking in the districts. Although many respondents agreed that functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt leaders do exist, an equally big number of respondents expressed the view that these mechanisms have not been effective in causing public officials to be transparent and accountable. Furthermore, there are several reports, including those in the media, by the Auditor General and by the IGG which confirm that the challenge of corruption in the districts is in reality just as bad as it is perceived to be. The local citizens are not sufficiently empowered to hold elected leaders to account, partly because of the limited level of awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Yet even in cases where citizens seem to be able to exercise their power in dealing with leaders who abuse their office, the weaknesses within the mechanisms that possess the legal authority to discipline them limit the extent to which the local citizens can be successful.

3.2 Recommendations

1.   There is urgent need to enhance the awareness of the local population about aspects of political pluralism, democratic participation and representation. Efforts to provide effective and widespread civic education need to be strengthened in order to empower the people and enable them to fully benefit from the democratic and pluralistic system as it continues to evolve at local government level. The observed lack of civic education demands action, primarily on the part of government institutions (both at local and national levels), but complementary to that of CSOs (local, national, international) which also need to strengthen their efforts in educating and empowering people at the local levels. It emerges from the findings that it is not only the local citizens who require civic education, the leaders too need it. There is evidence that some of the challenges experienced with regard to political pluralism, for example, the lack of cordiality among parties are primarily perpetuated by the actions of the leaders. Therefore, the civic education programme recommended here is one which also covers and addresses limitations on the part of the leaders.

2.   The local leaderships need to intensify bottom-up planning right from village level up to the district through the use of participatory approaches. This process should be one in which citizens' ideas and priorities are solicited not just for the sake of fulfilling institutional requirements but where they clearly form the basis of the final development plans of local governments.

3. Elected leaders need to ensure that they keep in touch with their electorate, provide regular feedback and allow for effective consultations at community level. This will not only contribute to a better reflection of the people's needs and demands in decision-making, but also enhance the popular support for decisions made by local governments. Finally, it would help the elected leaders to improve their reputation and overcome the growing mistrust against leaders on the part of the citizens.

4. Local CSOs should strengthen their involvement in explicitly political areas, i.e. in the promotion of pluralism and democracy. So far, relatively few civil society initiatives have addressed the urgent issues and challenges of local governance. More CSOs need to be brought on board to work in these areas, while others need to strengthen the output and visibility of their activities. Networking and cooperation could be an important element, as it creates synergy effects and allows for joint actions with a stronger output and broader impact. It is also necessary to analyse the factors that sometimes cause CSOs to tend to shy away from political topics. A dialogue between the CSOs and political leaders can be a very useful instrument here. It can help to build understanding among all actors of the roles and mandate of CSOs in the promotion of democracy to eliminate the possibility that in the promotion of democracy, the CSOs "step in the space" of politicians.

5. Political parties need to strengthen their permanent support base and their structures at local level and enhance efforts to provide real programmatic alternatives to the people. There is need for parties to work towards ensuring that they are in touch with the people and to move away from the current situation where the parties' support among citizens depends more on the support of individual party candidates rather than vice versa. With regard to their chronic shortcomings in funding, provision of state funding for registered parties appears to be a viable option.

6. Concrete measures and mechanisms should be put in place to enhance accountability and transparency in decision-making across all political institutions. Action is needed from both the local and national governments in this area to ensure that existing legal and institutional arrangements effectively work. One important ingredient here will be the need to promote citizen empowerment, normally through civic education, to ensure that citizens at local government level can provide the necessary "demand side" of accountability. Besides, government, the media and civil society actors can play a very prominent role here.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Scores per Indicator for the Seven Districts

Political Pluralism I: Basis for Multiparty Politics								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
Many local citizens understand political pluralism	2.84	2.95	2.56	2.89	2.84	2.66	2.9	2.81
The majority of local citizens accept multi-partyism as appropriate political system	3.77	3.73	3.94	3.79	3.68	2.93	3.41	3.61
Many local citizens know the law that operationalises political pluralism	2.03	2.57	1.97	2.12	1.84	2.1	2.39	2.15
There is an active presence of legally registered political parties in the district	3.95	3.6	3.4	3.82	3.98	3.79	4.02	3.79
Elections that have been held in the district have been have free and fair	3.45	3.02	3.22	2.56	2.87	3.53	3.17	3.12
The relationship between political parties is cordial.	3	2.7	2.09	2.54	2.93	2.49	2.81	2.65
Citizens in the district generally tolerate divergent political views and ideologies.	3.45	3.19	3.15	2.94	3.15	3.36	3.41	3.24
Local citizens have freedom to join and participate in any political party of their choice without fear or favour	3.72	3.55	3.4	3.44	3.68	3.72	3.94	3.64
Average score:	**3.28**	**3.16**	**2.97**	**3.01**	**3.12**	**3.07**	**3.26**	**3.12**

Political Pluralism II: Presence of Civil and Political Liberties								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
Local citizens freely enjoy their civil and political rights	3.12	3.02	2.83	3.04	2.95	3.33	3.58	3.12
All political parties are free to hold public meetings without deterrence	2.93	2.66	2.04	2.83	2.48	3.23	3.45	2.80
People are free to attend public meetings/assemblies organised by an political party without fear	3.40	3.22	2.93	3.16	3.24	3.73	3.67	3.34
The media publishes a fair and balanced coverage of all political parties without negative interference	2.97	2.79	2.26	2.93	2.71	3.18	3.25	2.87
Political parties in the district are free to mobilise resources locally	3.3	2.99	2.89	2.84	3.58	3.38	3.41	3.20
Average score:	**3.14**	**2.94**	**2.59**	**2.96**	**2.99**	**3.37**	**3.47**	**3.07**

Political Pluralism III: Internal Democracy and Organisational Strength of Political Parties								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
All political parties choose their leaders through democratic processes	3.98	3.45	3.98	3.65	3.49	3.66	3.66	3.70
All eligible members of the different political parties can freely compete for offices in their parties	3.93	3.53	3.93	3.63	3.48	3.85	3.77	3.73
All political parties in the district elect their flag bearers in free and fair elections within the party	3.73	3.57	3.73	3.26	3.09	3.47	3.51	3.48
All political parties have well established mechanisms for conflict resolution	3.01	2.87	3.01	2.8	2.9	2.99	3.08	2.95
All political parties have adequately disseminated their constitutions and manifestos	2.61	2.81	2.61	2.82	2.93	2.86	2.64	2.75
All political parties have established structures up to the grassroots level.	2.76	2.92	2.76	3.02	2.89	2.84	3.05	2.89
Average score:	**2.86**	**2.74**	**2.86**	**2.74**	**2.68**	**2.81**	**2.82**	**2.79**

Political Pluralism IV: The Role of Civil Society in Promoting Political Pluralism								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
There is an active presence of CSOs working on political pluralism and democracy promotion in the district.	2.91	2.98	3.43	3.16	2.5	3.29	2.97	3.03
CSOs in the district understand their roles in the promotion of political pluralism	2.99	3.14	3.53	3.09	2.72	3.45	3.01	3.13
CSOs in the district have contributed to raising awareness on civil and political rights among the local citizens	2.98	3.35	3.69	3.33	2.6	3.35	3.27	3.22
CSOs have been proactive in ensuring that concerns of local citizens are addressed by the elected leaders	2.91	3.41	2.89	3.25	2.87	3.37	3.47	3.17
Elected leaders in the district have a cordial relationship with CSOs	3.32	3.52	3.6	3.52	3.68	3.61	2.6	3.41
CSOs in the district perform their functions in a free and non partisan manner	3.26	3.62	3.49	3.75	3.75	3.72	2.85	3.49
Average score:	3.06	3.34	3.44	3.35	3.02	3.47	3.03	3.24

Democratic Participation I: Participation in the electoral process								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
All political parties have provided opportunities for local citizens to actively participate in local politics.	3.56	3.66	3.42	3.72	3.67	3.57	3.81	3.63
There is adequate civic education of the electorate before elections.	2.31	2.56	2.17	2.9	2.37	2.39	2.93	2.52
Voters in the district usually turn out in great numbers for elections	3.19	3.25	3.39	2.98	3.46	4.06	3.82	3.45
Voters in the district have easy access to electoral materials	3.01	2.96	3.11	3.08	3.01	3.86	3.71	3.25
People freely register and willingly support political parties of their choice	3.73	3.72	2.57	3.61	3.87	4.06	3.86	3.63
Average Score:	3.16	3.23	2.93	3.26	3.28	3.59	3.63	3.30

Democratic Participation II: Participation in Decision Making								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
Elected leaders involve local citizens in the decision making process	2.73	3.12	3.2	2.79	2.82	2.91	2.88	2.92
Local citizens turn up in large numbers for meetings convened by elected leaders	2.83	3.29	2.47	2.73	2.52	2.88	2.82	2.79
Special interest groups actively participate in governance and decision making within the district.	3.17	3.39	3.62	3.13	3.42	3.65	3.48	3.41
Participation of local citizens in decision making has led to pro- poor programmees in the district.	2.86	3	2.81	2.74	2.8	3.01	3.1	2.90
Participation by local citizens has enhanced accountability in the district	2.63	3.21	3.44	3.05	2.75	3.01	2.65	2.96
Average score:	2.84	3.20	3.11	2.89	2.86	3.09	2.99	3.00

Democratic Participation III: Development of Civic Organisations								
	Arua	**Gulu**	**Soroti**	**Mbale**	**Masaka**	**Mbarara**	**Kasese**	**Average**
Civic organisations in the district interact freely	3.64	3.57	3.54	3.66	3.86	3.89	3.9	3.72
Civic organisations in the district have a cordial relationship with local citizens	3.51	3.81	2.83	3.75	3.96	3.89	4.04	3.68
Civic organisations have played a vital role in promoting democratic participation in the district	3.20	3.43	3.8	3.4	2.91	3.66	3.46	3.41
Civic organisations are accountable to local citizens	2.98	3.09	2.91	2.95	2.87	3.33	2.68	2.97
Local citizens know the civic organisations that promote democratic participation in the district	2.76	2.84	2.76	2.91	2.46	3.06	2.96	2.82
Average score:	**3.22**	**3.35**	**3.17**	**3.33**	**3.21**	**3.57**	**3.41**	**3.32**

Representation I: Responsiveness and Effectiveness of Elected Leaders								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
Elected leaders widely consult the communities on their needs and priorities	2.70	2.86	2.83	2.44	2.21	2.59	2.37	2.57
Elected leaders give regular feedback to the communities on issues that affect them	2.58	2.64	2.88	2.24	2.34	2.57	2.3	2.51
Elected leaders regularly sensitise the communities on public initiatives and programmes	2.91	3.04	3.21	2.52	2.51	2.83	2.9	2.85
Local leaders set clear development targets for the district	3.23	3.35	3.66	2.96	3.24	3.31	3.32	3.30
The development targets set by the local leaders for the district are consistent with priorities of the community	2.91	3.28	3.33	2.85	2.67	3.06	3	3.01
Government institutions in the district are serving the interests of the community	3.17	3.32	3.41	3.12	2.79	3.14	2.98	3.13
Average score:	**2.92**	**3.08**	**3.22**	**2.69**	**2.63**	**2.92**	**2.81**	**2.89**

Representation II: Empowerment of Local Citizens								
	Arua	**Gulu**	**Soroti**	**Mbale**	**Masaka**	**Mbarara**	**Kasese**	**Average**
Local citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities in democratic governance.	2.47	2.85	2.68	2.91	2.42	2.73	3.08	2.73
Local citizens are adequately empowered to demand action from the leaders	2.64	2.76	3.01	2.81	2.58	2.59	2.91	2.76
Interest groups are represented at all levels of the governance structure in accordance with the law	3.80	3.72	3.98	3.42	3.84	3.93	4.01	3.81
Average score:	**2.97**	**3.11**	**3.22**	**3.05**	**2.95**	**3.08**	**3.33**	**3.10**

Representation III: Accountability and Transparency								
	Arua	Gulu	Soroti	Mbale	Masaka	Mbarara	Kasese	Average
Elected leaders in the district are managing public resources effectively	2.31	2.57	2.43	2.3	2.2	2.68	2.3	2.40
Elected leaders disseminate vital information to local citizens	2.90	3.19	3.22	2.6	2.4	2.69	2.86	2.84
Local citizens do not sympathise with corrupt elected leaders.	3.08	3.58	3.66	3.29	3.12	3.2	3.31	3.32
There are functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt leaders	3	3.01	3.13	3.25	2.5	3.33	2.82	3.01
Average score:	**2.82**	**3.09**	**3.11**	**2.86**	**2.56**	**2.98**	**2.82**	**2.89**

Appendix 2: Overview of Aggregated Assessment Results

Political pluralism I – Basis for Multiparty Politics

	Many local citizens understand political pluralism		The majority of local citizens accept multi-partyism as appropriate political system		Many local citizens know the law that operationalises political pluralism		There is an active presence of legally registered political parties in the district		Elections that have been held in the district have been have free and fair		The relationship between political parties is cordial		Citizens in the district generally tolerate divergent political views and ideologies		Local citizens have freedom to join and participate in any political party of their choice without fear or favour	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	45	6.9	19	2.9	153	23.5	7	1.1	57	8.8	72	11.1	27	4.2	26	4.0
Disagree	297	45.8	119	18.3	335	51.5	86	13.2	186	28.6	292	45.0	187	28.8	123	18.9
Uncertain	77	11.9	67	10.3	84	12.9	43	6.6	82	12.6	96	14.8	68	10.5	37	5.7
Agree	200	30.8	342	52.6	67	10.3	413	63.5	272	41.8	169	26.0	340	52.3	337	51.8
Strongly Agree	30	4.6	103	15.8	11	1.7	101	15.5	53	8.2	20	3.1	28	4.3	127	19.5
Total	649	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	649	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0

Political Pluralism II - The Presence of Civil and Political Liberties

	Local citizens freely enjoy their civil and political rights		All political parties are free to hold public meetings without deterrence		People are free to attend Public meetings/assemblies organised by an political party without fear		The media Publishes a fair and balanced coverage of all political parties without negative interference		Political parties in the district are free to mobilise resources locally	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	46	7.1	98	15.1	41	6.3	49	7.5	28	4.3
Disagree	208	32.0	231	35.5	170	26.1	277	42.5	148	22.7
Uncertain	70	10.8	56	8.6	53	8.1	68	10.4	174	26.7
Agree	268	41.2	228	35.1	302	46.4	223	34.3	267	41.0
Strongly Agree	58	8.9	37	5.7	85	13.1	34	5.2	34	5.2
Total	650	100.0	650	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0

Political Pluralism III - Internal Democracy and Organizational Strength of Political Parties

	All political parties choose their leaders through democratic processes		All eligible members of the different political parties can freely compete for offices in their parties		All political parties in the district elect their flag bearers in free and fair elections within the party		All political parties have well established mechanisms for conflict resolution		All political parties have adequately disseminated their constitutions and manifestos		All political parties have established structures up to the grassroots level	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	17	2.6	17	2.6	18	2.8	40	6.1	75	11.5	49	7.5
Disagree	102	15.7	114	17.5	156	24.0	229	35.2	287	44.2	256	39.3
Uncertain	87	13.4	62	9.5	100	15.4	187	28.7	110	16.9	110	16.9
Agree	362	55.6	375	57.6	302	46.4	172	26.4	151	23.2	190	29.2
Strongly Agree	83	12.7	83	12.7	75	11.5	23	3.5	27	4.2	46	7.1
Total	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	650	100.0	651	100.0

Political Pluralism IV - The Roles of Civil Society in Promoting Political Pluralism

	There is an active presence of CSOs working on political pluralism and democracy promotion in the district.		CSOs in the district understand their roles in the promotion of political pluralism		CSOs in the district have contributed to raising awareness on civil and political rights among the local citizens		CSOs have been proactive in ensuring that concerns of local citizens are addressed by the elected leaders		Elected leaders in the district have a cordial relationship with CSOs		CSOs in the district perform their functions in a free and non partisan manner	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	53	8.2	38	5.8	31	4.8	31	4,7	25	3,8	19	2,9
Disagree	202	31.1	159	24.5	164	25.2	167	25,7	97	14,9	105	16,2
Uncertain	101	15.5	162	24.9	125	19.2	138	21,2	180	27,7	148	22,8
Agree	257	39.5	260	40.0	285	43.8	286	44	290	44,6	295	45,5
Strongly Agree	37	5.7	31	4.8	45	6.9	28	4,3	58	8,9	82	12,6
Total	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	649	100.0

Democratic Participation I - Participation in the Electoral Process

	All political parties have provided opportunities for local citizens to actively participate in local politics		There is adequate civic education of the electorate before elections		Voters in the district usually turn out in great numbers for elections		Voters in the district have easy access to electoral materials		People freely register and willingly support political parties of their choice	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	11	1.7	123	18.9	11	1.7	26	4.0	9	1.4
Disagree	112	17.2	276	42.4	182	28.0	177	27.2	101	15.5
Uncertain	66	10.1	65	10.0	63	9.7	70	10.8	44	6.8
Agree	378	58.1	163	25.0	323	49.6	319	49.0	385	59.1
Strongly Agree	84	12.9	24	3.7	72	11.1	59	9.1	112	17.2
Total	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0

Democratic Participation II - Participation in Decision Making

	Elected leaders involve local citizens in the decision making process		Local citizens turn up in large numbers for meetings convened by elected leaders		Special interest groups actively participate in governance and decision making within the district		Participation of local citizens in decision making has led to pro-poor programmes in the district		Participation by local citizens has enhanced accountability in the district	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	61	9.4	48	7.4	32	4.9	48	7.4	50	7.7
Disagree	242	37.2	295	45.3	138	21.2	248	38.1	231	35.5
Uncertain	70	10.8	70	10.8	73	11.2	109	16.7	98	15.1
Agree	241	37.0	219	33.6	343	52.7	208	32.0	237	36.5
Strongly Agree	37	5.7	19	2.9	65	10.0	38	5.8	34	5.2
Total	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	650	100.0

Democratic participation III - Development of Civil Organisations

	Civic organisations in the district interact freely		Civic organisations in the district ihave a cordial relationship with local citizens		Civic organisations have played a vital role in promoting democratic participation in the district		Civic organisations are accountable to local citizens		Local citizens know the civic organisations that promote democratic participation in the district	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	.9	4	.6	15	2.3	42	6.5	47	7.2
Disagree	70	10.8	54	8.3	132	20.3	211	32.5	242	37.2
Uncertain	111	17.1	85	13.1	120	18.5	139	21.4	132	20.3
Agree	373	57.4	404	62.2	335	51.5	217	33.4	207	31.8
Strongly Agree	90	13.8	103	15.8	48	7.4	41	6.3	22	3.4
Total	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0	650	100.0

Representation I - Responsiveness of Elected Leaders to the Needs of Local Citizens

	Elected leaders widely consult the communities on their needs and priorities		Elected leaders give regular feedback to the communities on issues that affect them		Elected leaders regularly sensitise the communities on public initiatives and programmes	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	119	18.3	112	17.2	63	9.7
Disagree	270	41.5	298	45.8	253	38.9
Uncertain	50	7.7	54	8.3	76	11.7
Agree	192	29.5	172	26.4	237	36.4
Strongly Agree	20	3.1	15	2.3	22	3.4
Total	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0

Representation II - Degrees of Effectiveness of Leaders

	Local leaders set clear development targets for the district		The development targets set by the local leaders for the district are consistent with priorities of the community		Government institutions in the district are serving the interests of the community	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	29	4.5	42	6.5	33	5.1
Disagree	151	23.2	221	33.9	191	29.3
Uncertain	114	17.5	113	17.4	112	17.2
Agree	310	47.6	232	35.6	286	43.9
Strongly Agree	47	7.2	43	6.6	29	4.5
Total	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0

Representation III - Empowerment of Local Citizens

	Local citizens are aware of their rights and responsibilities in democratic governance.		Local citizens are adequately empowered to demand action from the leaders		Interest groups are represented at all levels of the governance structure in accordance with the law	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	64	9.8	74	11.4	12	1.8
Disagree	281	43.2	273	41.9	83	12.7
Uncertain	88	13.5	69	10.6	47	7.2
Agree	195	30.0	206	31.6	361	55.5
Strongly Agree	23	3.5	29	4.5	148	22.7
Total	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0

Representation IV – Accountability and Transparency

	Elected leaders in the district are managing public resources effectively		Elected leaders disseminate vital information to local citizens		Local citizens do not sympathise with corrupt elected leaders		There are functional mechanisms for reprimanding corrupt leaders	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	114	17.5	70	10.8	47	7.2	71	10.9
Disagree	311	47.8	242	37.2	167	25.7	194	29.8
Uncertain	94	14.4	82	12.6	75	11.5	86	13.2
Agree	115	17.7	236	36.3	251	38.6	260	39.9
Strongly Agree	17	2.6	21	3.2	111	17.1	39	6.0
Total	651	100.0	651	100.0	651	100.0	650	99.8

Appendix 3: Names of Assessment Teams in the Districts

District	Name	Organisation/Designation
Arua	Abdu A. Moses (Group Leader)	Programme Officer, ADINGON
Arua	Pamela Alia	ACFODE Arua
Arua	Hajati Hanifa Rizgalla	District Speaker
Arua	Buga Mayor	District Councillor
Arua	Batre Ronald	Reporter, Uganda Radio Network
Arua	Mathias Kamp (Contact Person)	Accounting & Project Officer, KAS
Gulu	Odong MP Eric (Group Leader)	Programme Officer, Gulu District NGO Forum
Gulu	Apiyo Eunice	Programme Manager, Volunteer Action Network
Gulu	Ojara Martin Mapenduzi	District Speaker
Gulu	Santa Oketta	District Councillor, Secretary Community Development
Gulu	Aber Patience	Reporter, Radio Rupiny
Gulu	Mathias Kamp (Contact Person)	Accounting & Project Officer, KAS
Soroti	Ekwee Ocen Benson (Group Leader)	Director, PAC Uganda
Soroti	Anyumel Beatrice	District Councillor, Secretary Health & Education
Soroti	Lucy Ekadu Anyango	Journalist, Vision Media Group
Soroti	Obiol Jorem Felix	District Councillor
Soroti	Aguti Betty	Advocacy and Information Officer, TAC
Soroti	Jackie Kayitesi (Contact Person)	Project Assistant, UMDF
Mbale	Mugalya Aggrey (Group Leader)	Coordinator, Bugisu Civil Society Network
Mbale	Egunyu Moses	Director, Uganda Christian Institute of Social Research
Mbale	Kawala Prossy	News Editor, Step FM
Mbale	Balonde Menya	District Councillor
Mbale	Mabanja Nasuru	District Councillor
Mbale	Yusuf Kiranda (Contact Person)	Project Manager, KAS
Masaka	Godfrey Mwanje (Group Leader)	Chairperson, Masaka NGO Forum
Masaka	Michael Mulindwa	District Councillor
Masaka	Rose Naggirinya	Committtee Member, Masaka NGO Forum
Masaka	Umar Ssebulime	District Councillor
Masaka	Dick Lukyamuzi	Journalist, CBS
Masaka	J.B. Mayiga (Contact Person)	Project Coordinator, UMDF
Mbarara	Gershom Matsiko (Group Leader)	Coordinator, MBADICSOF
Mbarara	Jolly Mugisha	Director, MWDO
Mbarara	Muhairwe Grace	District Speaker
Mbarara	Kanoel Jane	District Councillor
Mbarara	Mubiru Sarah	Reporter, WBS
Mbarara	Bernard Mukhone (Contact Person)	Project Assistant, KAS
Kasese	Muzamilu Kigeri Bisanga (Group Leader)	District Councillor
Kasese	John Nzinja	Reporter, New Vision
Kasese	Christopher Bwambale Kipako	Finance & Admin Manager, KADDENET
Kasese	Kabyanga Rebecca	District Councillor
Kasese	Kabarangira Jennifer	Chairperson, Tukole Women Group
Kasese	Assoc. Prof. Yasin Olum (PhD) (Contact Person)	Consultant/Makerere University