THE THIRD SECTOR AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN KENYA

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

There is an emerging consensus among scholars, researchers and development practitioners that the underlying cause of Africa's underdevelopment is a "governance crisis." In its authoritative report on Structural Adjustment and Development in Africa, the World Bank (1989) argued that at the root of Africa's development problems was a crisis of governance. That bureaucratic obstruction, pervasive rent seeking, red tape, arbitrary decision-making and widespread corruption had contributed to the failure of public institutions, which paved way for the prevalence of personal rule in the majority of African countries. With this "political malaise," economic reforms were frustrated by lack of effective implementation, resulting into poor economic performance and the subsequent underdevelopment.

Leading scholars of African politics and development have since arrived at this finding. Arguing that authoritarian governance has undermined development in Africa, Claude Ake (1996), for example, has pointed out that the political context of the development project has rendered it improbable. That the premium of power in Africa is exceptionally higher than the concern for development. The elite in power has merely concentrated on manipulating people, institutions and interests in order to retain power and continue to consume the scarce recourses needed for development.

Anyang' Nyong'o concurs. He points out that in most African countries, the authoritarian state has overtly engaged in unfair distribution of "development resources" between individuals, tribes and regions rather than generating the said resources for development. This is how he puts it:

> "Occupying state bureaucracy became an end in itself, a means of self-enrichment for the individual, and a means for the redistribution of public resources for the region or ethnic communities. It was a process that logically led to the tremendous expansion of state bureaucracy, with a corresponding inflation of budgetary provisions for the administrative machinery. When there were no sufficient revenues for the state to sustain this, it resorted to both domestic and foreign borrowing. Non-performing public projects, set up for political reasons to satisfy this or that tribe, this or that region, became the major sources for the drain in public finances as well as the major cause of public indebtedness. In debt and not growing, the economies of African courtiers were the veritable victims of authoritarian politics and rent - seeking regimes." (Nyong'o, 2002:82-3).

Such conclusions have naturally led to the call, and concern, for the transformation of the nature of governance if African countries have to realize development. "Good governance" has since been presented as the alternative and a cure for this political malaise (World Bank, 1989). The thinking is that the transformation of the prevailing "bad governance" can be realized if the wasteful, corrupt, inefficient and politically repressive state is cut down to size and grassroots organizations are empowered to exert pressure on public officials for greater accountability. Thus, grassroots organization are expected to institutionalize "good governance" in Africa by demanding democratic reforms; facilitating debate on public policy issues; aggregating public opinion and presenting such opinion to the state; and demanding accountability of the state to the citizens.

Whereas this thinking is logical, it is doubtful whether grassroots organizations in Africa can live up to this expectation. The purpose of this paper is to assess the contribution of these organizations to the transformation of governance in Africa, using a case study of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in Kenya. The basic question to be addressed in this discussion is the extent to which CBOs have contributed to the transformation of governance in Kenya. The answer to this question is expected to serve as a pointer to the role of the third sector in the transformation of governance in Africa.

To set off the discussion, it is imperative that we understand the concept of governance and set parameters within which the role of CBOs in its transformation is to be analyzed here.

2.0   GOVERNANCE: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In its simplest definition, the concept governance refers to the management of public affairs (Nyong'o, 2002: 79). Thus, it is the management of the norms and rules that set the framework for the organization and conduct of politics within a polity (Hyden, 1992:7). These norms and rules are particularly important, for they determine the nature of the relationships between the rulers and the ruled, or the governors and the governed. Hence, the mode of their management is of significance in explaining the nature or form of governance that obtain in a particular state.

According to Hyden (1992:15-6), the nature of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled can be explained using three broad variables. First, citizen influence and oversight. This includes the means by which individual citizens can participate in the political process and thereby express their preference about public policy; the aggregation

of these preferences for effecting public policy-making; and the means for holding the rulers accountable to the citizens for their decisions and actions. These can be summarize d as the degree of political participation; the means of opinion aggregation; and methods of public accountability.

Second, responsive and responsible leadership. This involves the attitudes of political leaders toward their role as public trustees, espe cially their orientation toward the sanctity of the civic public realm; their readiness to share information with citizens; and their adherence to the rule of law. Hyden sums up these as respect for civic public realm; openness in public policy-making; and adherence to the rule of law.

Third, social reciprocities; which refers to the extent to which citizens or groups treat each other as equals by tolerating each other in the pursuit of politics. It also includes the extent to which voluntary associations are capable of transcending basic social identities like kinship, ethnicity and race. In a nutshell, this includes the degree of political equality, inter-group tolerance and social inclusiveness in associational membership.

These variables can be used to classify the relationship between the rulers and the ruled in a polity into two broad categories of "democratic" and "authoritarian", with respective implications for the nature of governance that obtains. Thus, whereas a regime that allows citizen participation in the political process; is accountable to the public for its actions; has responsive and responsible leadership; and facilitates social reciprocities among the citizens would be said to be "democratic," the one that negates on these attribute s would be "authoritarian." The respective forms of governance that obtains from this classification have simply been referred to by some authors as "good" governance and "bad" governance, respectively (World Bank, 1989; Cohen, 1995; Nyong'o, 2002).

As already mentioned, African countries have exhibited more of "bad" governance than "good" governance. By the mid 1980s, the majority of African countries were either under one -party or military regimes that did not tolerate citizen participation in the political process. The ruling elite monopolized public policy-making and any form of political dissent was ruthlessly repressed and eliminated. Detention of citizens without trial existed in most countries. In one -party regimes, constitutions prohibited the formation of "other" political parties and canonized the ruling party as the only genuine and authentic guide towards what was believed to be "democracy" and "development." Competitive elections had never been held in some countries, and where they were held, they were more of a formality for legitimizing the existing power structure and eliminating a few

politicians who were out of favour with the chief executive or his closest supporters. In the circumstances, the rulers were not accountable to the ruled for their actions. To ensure that they retained power, the ruling elite resorted to mobilizing support on the basis of natural ties: the clan, the ethnic group or even the race. This only served to arouse "negative ethnicity" and inter-group intolerance in the political process (Nyong'o, 2002).

The challenge since the early 1990s has, therefore, been how to transform this "bad" governance in order to realize development in Africa. The contribution of CBOs to this transformation in Kenya is the subject of this discussion. Before delving into the substantive discussion, it would be informative to trace the place of CBOs in Kenya's politics during the one-party era.

3:0   CBOs AND AUTHORITARIAN POLITICS IN KENYA

The concept community-based organizations is used in this discussion to refer to voluntary and autonomous local level self-help organizations that are endogenous to a community, with established rules, regulations and procedures of operation (Chitere, 1994:99). They are usually formed for mutual attainment of goals specific to the members or, at times, the entire community. The concept is, thus, used in this case to exclude spontaneous action groups that spring up to perform a task and dissolve once it has been accomplished.

The types of CBOs in Kenya range from community-wide associations to small groups of a few individuals within a locality. These can be further classified into women's groups, welfare associations, savings and credit associations, communal self-help groups and youth groups (Wanyama, 2001: 64). Whereas women's groups are self-help associations formed exclusively by women within a locality for purposes of improving their living conditions, welfare associations bring together people along kinship ties like lineage, clan or ethnic group for purposes of satisfying their social, cultural and at times economic interests. Communal self-help groups, on the other hand, are spontaneously formed by interested people within a locality out of the common desire and concern to realize a common goal for the good of the entire community. The said goal could be to put up a school, a water point, a bridge, a church, etc., which is accomplished through members' voluntary contribution of resources. Then savings and credit associations are essentially informal financial institutions for mobilizing savings for lending to, as well as satisfying other financial needs of, the members. These institutions take the form of either

rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAS) or accumulating savings and credit associations (ASCRAs). Finally, there are the youth groups. These are essentially self-help associations formed exclusively by the youth in order to either start or improve their income - generating activities (Wanyama, 2001).

From these brie f definitions, it is apparent that CBOs generally emerge in response to the scarcity of social, cultural and economic resources and/or services within a community. They are formed to provide such resources and/or services to participants who cannot obtain or satisfy them on their own. Thus members of local communities organize themselves into these organizations to take collective action to satisfy the glaring necessities in their livelihoods (Barkan, 1992: 176). In addition, such members also satisfy social welfare needs through the interaction that results from the entire process. To this end, the basic pre-occupation of CBOs in Kenya has been the satisfaction of socio-economic needs of their members.

Nevertheless, the costs of some of the said socio-economic needs have served to edge CBOs into the political process. This has been the case because some of the costs are beyond the means of most organizations. For example, organizations could face the pressure of constructing and equipping schools, village polytechnics, health clinics, local water systems, cattle dips, feeder roads and also invest in income - generating activities; all at the same time. Such demands have compelled CBOs to look out for external assistance to satisfy their obligations to the membership and the entire community. Most of them have resorted to organizing public fundraisers popularly known as *harambee* (Kiswahili for "let us all pull together" to accomplish the tasks). Politicians and other societal elites are usually invited to grace such occasions as chief guests, of course the main reason being to draw resources from these perceived rich and influential personalities (Kanyinga, 1994:96). Other groups have simply taken to soliciting for "handouts" from these politicians or asking the latter to link them to potential donors like Non – Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In the process, CBOs have found their way into the local political arena, with the main objective being to get access to the "development resources" perceived to be under the control of the politicians.

This has played well into the interests of the political elite who have been out to establish patron-client networks at the local level in order to maintain themselves in power. A brief exposition on how patronage became the foundation of authoritarian politics in Kenya would send this point home.

At independence, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta's immediate goal was to consolidate his authority by establishing a unitary state in the midst of a fluid political realm. There was the opposition Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) struggling to sustain the independence federal constitution against the wish of Kenyatta and the ruling party: Kenya African National Union (KANU). In any case, these two parties were essentially based on ethnic coalitions with conflicting interests. Whereas KANU represented the Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba, Gusii, Meru and Embu ethnic groups, who were also the "bigs, mobilized and haves," KADU represented the other smaller ethnic groups that considered themselves the "have-nots" (Barkan, 1992:169-70). KADU, therefore, preferred federalism in order to protect the interests of its "powerless" associates to the chagrin of KANU, thereby standing in Kenyatta's way to set up a unitary state and assume executive authority.

At the same time, KANU was also riddled with factionalism. Some of its members differed on ideological grounds; with leaders like Oginga Odinag and Bildad Kaggia preferring socialism while others like Tom Mboya and Kenyatta himself opting for capitalism.

Against this background, Kenyatta embarked on his project by negotiating and bargaining with an array of established regional and ethnic leaders within KADU who commanded significant following and respect among their regions. The result was the wooing of KADU, which dissolved itself to join KANU in 1964 in order to "enhance national unity." It should, however, be pointed out that the bargaining that led to the dissolution of KADU marked the foundation of patronage in the governance process, given that the leaders of KADU crossed the floor on the strength of a combination of "carrots and sticks" offered by Kenyatta - most notably the promise of cabinet appointments and development resources to leaders who would defect to KANU and the denial of government services to the constituents of those leaders who remained in KADU (Barkan, 1994:11).

The merger between KANU and KADU did not, nevertheless, enhance national unity. Instead, it intensified factionalism within KANU as divergent groups as well as personalities went out to jockey for power and development resources around Kenyatta. This reality informed Kenyatta that establishing a strong unitary state based on institutional (read democratic) rule would not be easy, given the numerous fictions in the party that ranged from ethno-regional coalitions and ideologically defined groups to personal

following (Kanyinga, 1995: 72-3). He subsequently abandoned the party in the governance process in favour of authoritarianism that took the form of patronage. This he did by initially adopting the "prince" version of personal rule in the 1960s before switching to the "autocrat" version in the 1970s (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982).

With the adoption of this style of leadership, Kenyatta introduced patronage as the framework within which Kenyans would participate in the political process. The relationship between the ruler (Kenyatta) and the ruled was to be based on patron-client networks under the supervision of the chief patron. As a "prince," Kenyatta only tolerated the activities of local political patrons who did not challenge his authority as the undisputed Head of State. He recruited, assisted and manipulated the efforts of such politicians to achieve his goals by selectively dispensing or withholding patronage resources, while at the same time suppressing any form of dissent.

Thus, Kenyatta changed clientelist alliances with various factions according to political expediency. He would dispense patronage resources to the preferred leaders of factions within the alliance at a given time, who would, in turn, extend such resources to their respective clients below the hierarchy as a means of mobilizing political clout for the regime. In the meantime, those factions outside the alliance would receive the "stick" instead of the "carrot" (Barkan, 1992:171). In the process, the various factions became dependent on Kenyatta and competed among themselves to get into the center of Kenyatta's alliance for purposes of benefiting form the patronage resources.

At the same time, Kenyatta institutionalized semi-competitive regular parliamentary elections by introducing the notion of "constituency service." This notion held that the worth of a politician was to be measured in terms of the development activities or projects he/she initiated in the constituency (Okumu and Holmquist, 1984:54). Subsequently, parliamentary elections were turned into a series of local referenda on the ability of individual politicians to contribute to local development. The incumbent members of parliament were henceforth assessed in terms of their ability to secure state resources for their constituencies' development.

This version of electoral politics served to ally more members of parliament to the patron in order to secure "development resources" from the state if they were to retain their seats in the next election. In addition, members of parliament and other politicians who aspired to go to parliament concentrated on initiating development activities at the local level to justify their election.

The resultant political arrangement played into Kenyatta's goal of involving people in the mobilization of development resources to supplement state initiatives in local development through the *harambee* movement. This was in response to the popular expectations for development services at independence, which were beyond what the state could provide. Kenyatta urged Kenyans to engage in *harambee* self-help efforts to satisfy their development needs rather than wait for the state to satisfy such needs. He also encouraged people to demand support for their initiated self-help projects from their political leaders. In a way, Kenyatta was directing members of CBOs to give their support to political leaders in exchange for the assistance that such leaders accord their development activities.

In the process, clientelism became a major feature of CBOs' activities. Politicians jostled for space in the *harambee* movement that consisted of a variety of CBOs in order to make a contribution to the development of their constituencies. Others made frantic efforts to join or remain part of Kenyatta's "inner circle" as a means of drawing resource to contribute to CBOs' self-help projects in their constituencies. Consequently, contribution to CBOs' *harambee* became political levers with which local-level patrons edged into national political alliances. Thus, CBOs became a vehicle for the articulation of patron-client networks, and also a mechanism for political control as well as governance by the president (Kanyinga, 1995:74). On the other hand, the culture of dependency crept into CBOs. Members of these organizations were ready to support any form of leadership so long as the leaders extended resources to their organizations (Maas, 1986: 65-71).

This symbiotic relationship between CBOs and the state continued into the Moi era with surprising alacrity. But unlike during the Kenyatta era where these organizations enjoyed some relative autonomy as long as they played into the patron-client networks that sustained the political system, Moi sought to bring CBOs into his direct and personal control. He started this move by banning the ethnic-oriented welfare associations claiming to reduce "tribalism," while in actual sense he was stepping up authoritarianism by eliminating the countervailing social, economic and political power that these CBOs represented.

In the subsequent years, attempts were made to curb the autonomy of CBOs by using the Provincial Administration to regulate their activities. One of such regulations was the requirement that CBOs seek formal registration with the state. Secondly, that the CBOs were to obtain a license from the said Administration to hold *harambee* fund-raisers.

The end result was that those groups that were perceived to be outside the patron-client networks that formed the core of the political system, or those that invited persons who were not "loyal" to the president to preside over their functions, were not allowed to conduct *harambee.* In addition, the organization of *harambee* changed with a tendency toward large-scale fund-raisers for CBOs within an administrative division, district or even the whole country; initiated by the president himself in order to take credit for the "success." The huge amounts of money that were subsequently raised endeared CBOs to the president and thereby established himself as the patron of *harambee* across the country (Barkan, 1992:186).

These regulations and control over CBOs' political space was accompanied by a culture of fear and sycophancy, especially after the 1982 attempted coup d'etat. As politicians sought to demonstrate loudly their support and "loyalty" to the president in order to be exonerated from the political turmoil, the CBOs linked to such politicians joined the chorus to uploud and celebrate everything, including the suppression of dissent, which the president did. In return, the CBOs that demonstrated utmost "loyalty," as evidenced by their allegiance to equally loyal local politicians, were rewarded with development resources from donor NGOs, Government Programmes, or through *harambee* fund-raisers, occasionally graced by the president. This saw CBOs further embedded in a clientelist web from which they could hardly free themselves to regain their eroded autonomy.

The onset of multi-party politics in 1991 did not significantly change this relationship between CBOs and the state. The culture of dependency had spread across the CBO fraternity to the extent that even those organizations which had not been "captured" by the state into its clientelist network were struggling to get into it so as to get access to the resources. Consequently, it was not surprising that the demands for political change from the late 1980s and the clamour for constitutional reform throughout the 1990s emanated from the urban areas rather than the vast rural areas that are awash with CBOs (Ake, 1991: 37; Bratton and van de Walle, 1997:102).

Thus, throughout the Moi era, CBOs have been reduced to appendages of the ruling elite rather than autonomous organizations that can influence the local political process. Their role has been reduced to mobilizing political support for "loyal" politicians and the chief patron in exchange for development resources that occasionally flow to these organizations. The CBOs that don't play this role, and hence deemed not to be useful to or

in favour of, the ruling elite have largely remained silent, unnoticed and outside the local political arena.

Against this background, the question that arises is the extent to which CBOs have contributed towards the transformation of governance in the country. We now attempt an answer to this question in the next section.

4.0 CBOs AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNANCE IN KENYA

The quest for the transformation of governance in Kenya has been on since the late 1980s. Protesting against authoritarianism by the one-party state and the resultant economic decay, people from diverse social backgrounds coalesced into an opposition movement in 1990 to demand for political pluralism as a means of restoring "good governance." Amorphous protesters burst into the streets of Nairobi and other towns to demonstrate in support of reintroducing a multi-party political system to facilitated people's participation in the governance process. They also demanded for accountability of the governors to the governed and adherence to the rule of law. The state's attempts to use force to disperse the demonstrators resulted into violent street battles, starting with the *Saba-Saba* (Kiswahili for "Seven-Seven," referring to the date 7th July - the seventh day of the seventh month) riots of 7th July 1990, to compel the government to initiate reforms towards democratic governance in the country. These pressures, along with the external demands for political change, forced the government to embark on democratic reforms. What has been the contribution of CBOs to this process?

4.1 The Quest for Political Liberalization

Given the centrality of political participation to good governance, the transformation of authoritarian governance had to start with the liberalization of the political system. It goes without saying that the monolithic one-party state was essentially antithetical to people's participation in the governance process, especially the making of public policy. This explains why the pro-reform movement demanded for the establishment of a multi-party political system to give citizens avenues for political participation.

Nevertheless, CBOs were not conspicuous participants in the struggle for political liberalization. The demonstrations and agitations in support of political pluralism were essentially concentrated in the urban areas where organizations for the clergy, lawyers,

journalists, students, among others, were at the forefront. The rural areas, where CBOs are predominant, remained dormant in the ensuring struggle that pitted the people against the monolithic state. The implication is that CBOs remained aloof, if not indifferent, to the agitation for political liberalization that had taken the government by storm.

The logical explanation for this turn of events can only be found in the role of CBOs in local politics, which we tried to explain in the previous section. The point was made that the principal motivation for the engagement of CBOs in local politics was to draw development resources from the ruling elite. The desperate demand for development resources by these organizations saw many CBOs get into the patronage web that sustained the one-party state. Consequently, the CBOs could not challenge or question the vices of the political system that supported their development activities.

For example, in Kiambu district of central Kenya, where the first president of Kenya came from, the government had over the years assisted women's group to buy public service buses to generate income for themselves. While initiating this project, the government encouraged women, of course through their local political patrons, to pool their resources to obtain minimal deposits that were supplemented by politically arranged commercial bank loans to buy the buses. Local politicians went out to organize *harambee* fund-raisers to enable some women groups to raise the required minimal deposits in order to get access to the lucrative low-interest bank loans (Kanyinga, 1994: 107). The instant success of the bus project in Limuru and Kikuyu divisions of the district became the envy of many other women's groups in the region and indeed the whole country that they started to demand similar arrangements from their political patrons.

Nevertheless, the bus project in Kiambu was not without a cost in terms of shaping the political allegiance of the groups that received the resources. The groups became the means for orchestrating the campaign against perceived KANU "dissidents" and eventually the proponents of multi-party democracy in Kiambu. Despite the overwhelming support for political liberalization in Kiambu, partly due to the political fall-out of the politicians who were prominent during the Kenyatta era, the women's groups remained loyal to the KANU politicians who had extended the bus project resources to them. This can be interpreted to mean that these groups sacrificed the civic conscience, which dictated that they join the majority of Kiambu residents to agitate for political pluralism, in exchange for the development resources.

To demobilize more CBOs from the pro-reform movement, KANU stepped up its effort to patronize local voluntary organizations by increasing the flow of resources to "loyal" CBOs. In some parts of the district, hardly a week passed without KANU patrons holding a fund drive for women's self-help projects. It appeared as if KANU was essentially dangling development resources as a means of recruiting more CBOs into its patron-client network. Consequently, Kiambu witnessed a rise in the formation of new CBOs to benefit from such resources. This was evidenced by the growth in the number of registered CBOs in some of the constituencies. For instance, between July 1991 and June 1992, 31 new CBOs were registered in Githunguri and about 50 in Limuru constituencies - far more than had been registered in 1989 or 1990 (Kanying'a, 1994: 111). In the meantime, the government stepped up a squeeze on the mobilization of development resources by CBOs that were outside its clientelist network. Such organizations were not licensed to conduct harambee fundraisers. The Provincial Administration declined to issue permits for *harambee* in which opposition politicians would be involved.

This pattern of controlling the political alliance of CBOs was repeated in other parts of the country, with the result that these organizations ended up choosing to play for "development" rather than the quest for political liberalization. As per their main interest, CBOs preferred to remain aloof or even indifferent to the on-going agitations for political pluralism in order to benefit from the apparently floating state development resources for "loyal" organizations. The CBOs subsequently refrained from identifying with opposition politics in the countryside and instead occasionally went out to brand urban agitators for political pluralism as "disgruntled government dissidents who were seeking to satisfying their selfish ends."

4.2 Aggregation and Dissemination of Public Opinion

A transformation from authoritarian to democratic governance begins, rather than ends, with political liberalization. Thereafter, it is imperative that people have the freedom to organize and assemble for purposes of debating or discussing public issues. Through such debates, people would have an opportunity to form opinions and express their preferences in the governance process. However, this can only happen where there are organizations capable of facilitating the process.

Civil society organizations, of which CBOs are a part, have since been thought to be the most suitable to perform this task in Africa (Diamond, 1994; Harbeson et. al, 1994;

Allen, 1997). To this end, they would act as aggregators and disseminators of public opinion. This would eventually enable them to monitor and limit the exercise of arbitrary public policy-making; articulate and defend people's interests; and also stimulate political participation among the citizens. The political environment brought about by such activities would enable citizens to collectively pursue and defend their interests; thereby improving the governance process. Have CBOs played this role in Kenya?

The available evidence shows that CBOs, particularly in the rural areas, have not lived up to this expectation. To start with, as much as these organizations enjoy the freedom of association and assembly to a large extent, civic matters do not constitute subject of the discussions in their meetings. A recent survey of these organizations in Western Kenya shows that discussion at the meetings of CBOs is limited to such maters as individual contributions to the development projects of the organizations; mobilization of external resources for the projects of the organizations; sharing of dividends generated from profit-making ventures; defaulting on members' contributions to the projects of the organizations; attendance of meetings; etc (Alila and Wanyama, 1995). A cursory look at these items of discussion reveals that CBOs are more concerned with the mobilization and distribution of development resources than civic debates.

The absence of civic debates during the meetings of CBOs implies a lack of concern fro public opinion, especially on the governance process. A possible interpretation of this scenario, in the midst of a charged political environment where demands for political reform are in vogue, is that CBOs' preoccupation with the mobilization of external resources for development has seen them turn "a deaf ear" to public opinion so long as they extract the resources. The example of women's groups in Kiambu that has already been cited gives credence to this interpretation. These groups seem to have chosen to ignore the obtaining public opinion issues in order to benefit from *harambee* fundraisers and cheap bank loans to finance their bus projects availed by KANU patrons who had been shunned by the public (Kanying'a, 1994: 107-111).

In the circumstances, CBOs in Kenya have not effectively played the role of aggregating and disseminating public opinion as would be expected of civil society organizations. The associational life made possible by these organizations has not necessarily facilitated political participation. CBOs are yet to become a conspicuous forum for discussing public policy issues or aggregating public opinion on the governance process. Though these organizations articulate and represent interests, the tendency is for such

interests to be restricted to subsistence matters (Orvis, 1997: 157). In fact the preoccupation with subsistence matters within a political system that thrives on patronage has only meant CBOs' conformity to the whims of an authoritarian state. Consequently, people's participations in these organizations in many cases has meant accepting and supporting authoritarian governance as well as refraining from publicly identifying with opposition politics. This has not served well the on-going struggle to transform governance in the country.

4.3 Elections and Participation in Public Policy-making

Elections in a multi-party political system, which Kenya is, are significant in the transformation of governance for at least two reasons. First, they give the electorate an opportunity to choose alternative policies presented by the competing political parties, which gives people an opportunity to indirectly participate in public policy-making. Secondly, they also give the electorate a chance to vote out of government the "bad leaders" responsible for the "bad governance." Given that people choose their representatives in the government, elections then also give people an opportunity to indirectly participate in public policy-making through their representatives. The significance of CBOs in the transformation of governance, in this regard, would be to influence the election results as a way of making a contribution to public policy-making.

Nevertheless, CBOs in Kenya do not seem to have edged their participation in elections towards this end. This is the case mainly because the determinants of the 1992 and 1997 multi-party elections were not public policy concerns. Rather, ethnicity and patronage tended to weigh more influence on the results than any other factor (Orvis, 1997: 149-150). Thus, the participation of CBOs was based on patronage and ethnicity rather than public policy alternatives.

Though ethnic-based politics has been a feature of Kenyan political organization since the colonial period (Ngunyi, 1996:271), it became more conspicuous in the transition to multi-party democracy (Orvis, 1997:149). After the scrapping of section 2A of the constitution to allow the formation of "other" political parties in December 1991, ethnic politics penetrated into the organizations of civil society that had fought as a unit for the restoration of political pluralism. This saw these organizations fragmented along ethnic lines, with some of them transforming themselves into ethnic-oriented political parties. Since then, ethnicity has remained a leading feature of electoral politics in Kenya.

In 1992, ethnicity was so conspicuous in the presidential election results. Each of the three leading presidential candidates in the opposition had a power base, not in the nature of the policies he advocated or civic organizations, but in the support of his ethnic group. Indeed, the major ethnic groups in Kenya voted by margins of about 90 per cent for "their" presidential candidates and "his" parliamentary and civic authorities allies. Oginga Odinga of Ford-Kenya had all the support of the Luo ethnic group in Nyanza province, just as Kenneth Matiba of Ford-Asili commanded overwhelming support of the Kikuyu community, especially those from his home district of Murang'a. Similarly, Mwai Kibaki, also from the Kikuyu community, of the Democratic Party enjoyed overwhelming support of the Kikuyu people from his Nyeri home district (Ngunyi, 1996:271-72; Kanyinga, 1994:113-114). This voting pattern was repeated in 1997. For example, with the demise of Oginga Odinga, his son Raila Odinga of the defunct National Development Party became the Luo patron and got the support of all the Luo people during the said election. Similarly, Mwai Kibaki took all the Kikuyu votes because Matiba did not contest.

This form of electoral politics saw community-based organizations also polarized along ethnic lines in their voting pattern. They ended up voting not for public policy preferences, but ethnic group considerations. For instance, in Kiambu district, the women's groups that KANU had patronized surprisingly voted as a block for opposition presidential, parliamentary and civic authority candidates in a marked departure to their promise to support their patrons. One major explanation for the change of alliance at the election time had to do with ethnicity. This implies that ethnic identity counted more than even the supply of development resources to some of the CBOs during the elections.

Nevertheless, this should not be interpreted to mean that patronage, through which such resources flow, was insignificant in influencing the election results. Indeed, it was in recognition of the significance of patronage in elections that President Moi and the ruling party, KANU, organized two mammoth *harambee* fund-raisers in 1997 to woo CBOs in the run-up to the December 1997 elections. One was the National Women's Development Fund while the other was the National Youth Development Fund, meant to raise money to support the activities of Women's groups and youth groups, respectively, county-wide. Whereas the justification for the *harambee* sounded logical and development (rather than politically) oriented, the actual reason for raising the tens of millions of shillings was to patronize all active CBOs in the country. Unfortunately, the fundraisers did not influence more CBOs to support KANU during the elections, thanks to the acrimonious manner in

which the funds were shared among the groups. Some "new" CBOs were just formed to benefit from the *harambee* to the chagrin of the "old" groups, with others merely appearing on paper for purposes of sharing the "loot" form the state.

It should, however, be pointed out that the prominent form of patronage in Kenya's electoral politics occurs at the individual rather than the group level. Individual voters only support those patrons who directly deliver resources to their doorsteps "at that time of need." The realization of this "secret weapon" has led political patrons to "corrupt" electoral politics by directly paying voters to vote for a particular candidate or party during the elections (Orvis, 1997: 158). On their part, most voters in Kenya regard cash or other gifts in exchange for their votes during elections as the most effective way of campaigning. In the process, "buying of voters" is quite prevalent in electoral politics. The patron who dishes out the highest amount of money to the individual during the campaign becomes the most powerful while those who give little or no money are despised. Orvis (1997:159) gives an example of a local authority candidate in the 1992 elections in Bonchari constituency of Kisii district who caused a hysterical laughter by going around door to door, giving each household ten shillings (about 30 US cents) to vote for him.

This practice of "buying voters" helped to further fragment the voting pattern of CBOs, which had already fallen prey to ethnicity. The likelihood is that members of CBOs ended up voting, not for the change of political leadership or alternative public policy, but for ethnic ties and, of course, the "belly." Consequently, the participation of CBOs in the 1992 and 1997 general elections did not make a significant contribution to changing the "bad" leadership responsible for "bad" governance or improving popular participation in public policy-making.

4.4   Public Accountability

The significance of accountability of the rulers to the ruled for "good" governance cannot be overemphasized. This gives the people an opportunity to express their expectations and demands to the governors. Thereafter, such expirations and demands become the benchmarks for people's evaluation of the performance of their leaders or governors. On the other hand, the fact that people will evaluate the performance of the leaders and hold them responsible for their actions, which is the hallmark of public accountability, inspires leaders to perform well. As Hyden would put it, leaders would respect the sanctity of the civic public realm and adhere to the rule of law due to the public

pressure in the whole process (Hyden, 1992: 15). Nevertheless, this can only occur where there are means or mechanisms for holding the rulers accountable to the public for their decisions and actions. Do CBOs constitute such mechanisms?

The point has already been made that CBOs make demands to, and have expectations from, political leaders; but such demands and expectations revolves around subsistence needs. Since the introduction of the notion of "Constituency service" by Kenyatta, CBOs have always expected, and at times demanded (as Kenyatta instructed them to do), the supply of development resources by political leaders. The predominance of patronage in the governance process has only served to reinforce these expectations. Consequently CBOs have given their support to leaders who deliver "development" to their organizations rather than those who perform well in their public assignments.

It would, therefore, appear that CBOs have developed criteria for evaluating the performance of political leaders, which has got nothing to do with good governance. In that criteria, it is the supply of resources that counts for the leader and one would expect that where the competing leaders are all delivering some resources, then the resources will have to be valued to determine the "best performer." Perhaps this explains the prevalence of one of the attributes of "bad" governance in Kenya: corruption. In order to amass wealth for contributing to CBOs' projects, leaders in public offices have taken to corrupt practices. Moreover, the fact that political leaders can simply "buy their way" to public offices through the supply of development resources to CBOs as well as directly "buying" voters has eroded the urge to respect the sanctify of a civic public realm among political leaders. Such leaders no longer consider themselves accountable to the public for their decisions and actions since they will not be evaluated along those lines. Its their wealth that will see them assume electoral offices.

If this analysis is anything to go by, then the implication is that CBOs have not been able to demand for accountability of the leaders to the public. At this rate, one would argue that CBOs have largely been part and parcel of the "bad" governance rather than being mechanisms for holding political leaders accountable to the public.

5.0   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It has been the purpose of this discussion to assess the contribution of local or grassroots organizations to the transformation of governance in Africa, using a case study of community-based organizations in Kenya. This has been done against a popular

assumption in the literature that grassroots organizations have the capacity to transform governance in Africa by exerting pressure on public officials for better performance and greater accountability. That their role in this process would include demanding for democratic reforms from the state; facilitating debate on public policy issues; aggregating and disseminating public opinion; and demanding accountability of the state to the citizens.

The discussion has, however, shown that the political environment in which CBOs in Kenya have found themselves has been antithetical to such expectations. Due to the patron-client relationships that have engulfed CBOs in order to sustain the political elite in power, these organizations have not been able to perform their expected roles in the transformation of governance. It has been observed that though political liberalization is key to, if not the starting point in, the transformation from authoritarian to democratic governance, CBOs were not conspicuous participants in the struggle for it in the early 1990s. CBOs remained aloof or indifferent to the agitations and demonstrations that compelled the government to initiate the reforms.

Similarly, these organizations have not played a significant role in aggregating and disseminating public opinion for purposes of influencing public policy-making. This is particularly the case because civic matters do not constitute subject of discussion in the meetings of CBOs, especially those in the rural areas. The organizations are merely concerned with subsistence matters. This preoccupation with subsistence has also seen these organizations participate in elections not for purposes of changing "bad" governance by way of choosing alternative policies or leaders, but for purposes of satisfying their so-called "development" needs. In the circumstances, they have not necessarily used elections as an opportunity to participate in public policy-making by voting for alternative policy options.

In the same vein, CBOs have not been useful in holding the governors accountable to the governed. These organizations support political leaders for delivering "development resources" rather than good performance in their public assignments. Given that political leaders eventually ascend to office by virtue of their place in the patron-client networks that form the core of the state; their ability to provide resources to CBOs as well as the general electorate; and also their ethnic ties, such leaders no longer consider themselves accountable to the public for their decisions and actions. This has only helped to enhance, rather than transform, bad governance in Kenya.

These findings lead us to the conclusion that the symbiotic relationship that has existed between the CBOs and the state since independence has largely hindered the effective participation of these organizations in the transformation of governance in Kenya. Indeed, these organizations seem to be part and parcel of the "bad" governance rather than the on-going efforts to transform governance. If this conclusion is anything to go by, then the implication is that the third sector in Africa does not have the capacity to transform governance in the light of the prevailing political environment. The relatively poor resource base of some components of this sector has hindered it from transcending the patronage manipulations by the authoritarian state that has vehemently resisted political change and the transformation of governance in the majority of the African countries.

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