

**Proposed title:**

## **Double-edged sword?**

**Analyzing the formal and informal (un-enumerated) structures of service delivery to social capital formation in a rural village in Luwero district.**

**Abstract:** This paper analyses the heft imposed by the *formal structures* of service delivery to the informal (*un-enumerated*) structures of social support as a potential for social capital formation in resource poor settings in Uganda. Although the potential of community organisations and groups as critical for accumulation of social capital has been well documented, it remains largely unclear how emphasis on formal community groups is fruitful for social capital formation. In Uganda, there is a policy attempt to provide/channel services through organized groups of people at the local level. As such, formal groups have thrived in the shape of farmers groups, village savings groups and a host of other groups whose formation owes to the deliberate government and non-state formal actors such as NGOs to promote group approach. These have thrived alongside informal groups/associations that draw heavily on the traditional norms and values of social assistance and reciprocity. The informal groups/arrangements of service delivery that include village level associations, burial groups, and mutual support activities, have traditionally provided support for their members in form of household amenities, comforting the bereaved, assisting the disadvantaged, meeting funeral expenses and caring for the sick.

From findings through informal discussions, observations and formal interviews with community members, I argue that groups formed under the stewardship of government and other non-state formal actors such as NGOs, have provided a fertile ground for elite capture, created another layer of power and are usually not accountable to the members leading to some degree of dissatisfaction and frustration. In the communities of Kaguugo, this is a double-edged sword. This is because in reality, the formal structures of service delivery are not purely *absent*, and neither are they purely *present*. If they were purely absent, then people would solely turn to their informal structures and systems of support, and if they were functional, then they would effectively provide the necessary services. In Kaguugo the formal structures of service delivery in form of formal groups are not purely absent but remain largely dysfunctional maintaining an aura of an ever present formal structure. The findings indicate that when this occurs, three things are likely to happen that threaten the potential of group or village level associations as a source of social capital. First, out of the frustration, people lose trust of formal services and shun any calls for involvement in collective effort; secondly, people form hybrid associations borrowing ideas and principles from both formal and un-enumerated/informal groups leaving traditional groups are at the verge of being extinct. The study findings have implications for conceptualization of social capital as involvement in groups.

**Key words:** social capital, formal groups, un-enumerated groups, rural.

