

UCAA ANNUAL NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM HELD ON 23RD APRIL 2010 AT ELLY'S MOTEL-SEETA, MUKONO

As one of its activities, the UCAA secretariat normally organizes annual National Development Forums where a debate is carried out. The topics for debate during these forums are carefully chosen depending on a contemporary issue that is affecting our society. This is for purposes of raising awareness amongst Change Agents and other development partners and together look for a way forward. For this year, the topic was "How has corruption affected service delivery to Ugandans today?" Invitation to defend the topic was given to Hon. Nathan Nandala Mafabi, who is the chairman Public Accounts Committee [PAC] in the Ugandan parliament and also Member of Parliament representing Budadiri West .Invitation to oppose the topic was given to Hon. Stephen Mukitale Biraahwa Adyeri, chairman economic monitoring committee in the Ugandan Parliament and also Member of Parliament representing Buliisa county.

At 3:30 p.m, the guest speaker arrived and his presence was recognized officially by the UCAA Chairperson, Leonard Ssengonzi. Attendance in this forum was a total of one hundred and twenty five [125] participants. Most of the participants were Change Agents who represented the whole country. There were also UCAA staffs in attendance and partners coming from other organizations namely: Uganda Land Alliance, Network of Ugandan Research and Research Users, Uganda Debt Network, Child Fund International and African Renewal ministries, a Christian Non Governmental organization.

Prayers were conducted and there after the National and UCAA anthems were sung respectively.

The Chairperson UCAA, Mr. Leonard Ssengonzi then welcomed each one who had attended the forum in their different capacities. He briefly talked about UCAA and what it does. He said all districts were represented. He then asked each board member coming from a region to stand up and introduce him/her self, then there after also introduce delegates from the various districts of the regions that they represent. This was successfully done. The chairperson went ahead to invite the speaker of the day to make his presentation on corruption. Mean while another guest speaker who was supposed to oppose the motion did not come, so the board representative for Northern region, Mr Otto Jack Lumoro presented on his behalf.

Hon. Nandala Mafabi started by thanking UCAA for giving him an opportunity to present a paper on such a contentious issue. He gave a brief back ground of himself and went ahead to present a paper on corruption and how it has affected service delivery. He said in its simplest terms, corruption can be defined as the abuse of a public position for personal gain or for the benefit of an individual or group to whom one owes allegiance. He said in Africa, corruption is mainly in the executive arm for the obvious reasons that both the legislature and executive branches have generally lost whatever independence and power they may have once possessed .That corruption thrives in an undemocratic governments and is the antithesis of good governance. Said corruption is a consequence of unaccountable monopoly of power of authoritarian regimes and undermines good governance, distorting policy leading to poor public services and infrastructure, reduced spending on health and education and serious budgetary problems.

He said corruption in Uganda is deep rooted in the electoral system, political parties, electoral commission and the electorate, and have devastating effects resulting in shoddy road network, theft of drugs in hospitals, unfair recruitment regimes and dismissals. Mr Mafabi said that money stolen through corruption affects the welfare of the police, nurses, teachers, Doctors, leaving no funds to improve their pay and living standards. He continued that corruption affects the development of infrastructure and the living conditions of a particular community and the public at large.

He summarized his presentation by saying that corruption is equal to monopoly plus discretion minus accountability. He said this diverts public resources and affects service delivery. That fighting it needs political will at the highest level and a concerted effort from all stakeholders. That to fight corruption; Accountability must be strengthened, the probability of being caught must increase, the penalties of corruption for both givers and takers must rise and incentives must be linked to performance.

After his presentation, his co-presenter, Mr. Otto Jack Lumoro also made his presentation citing other factors that are leading to poor service delivery, not necessarily corruption. He made mention of the following:

- High population growth rate that has overwhelmed the few resources that is available.
- HIV/AIDS in Uganda
- Creation of smaller districts, yet there are no enough resources to support these districts.
- Lack of close supervision and monitoring of government programmes
- Personalizing resources on the part of those in power.
- Power hungry leaders e.g. contracts given to those not deserving.
- Government spending a lot on management and little left for service delivery.
- Planning without proper plans i.e. without looking at the resources that they have
- Extravagance on the part of leaders' e.g. holding big parties, driving big and expensive vehicles which they do not complain of.
- Poor taxation mechanism. People do not know why they pay taxes.
- Lack of clarity on the implementation process
- Bureaucracy and intrigue, I belong to so and so, so I'm not touchable.
- Poor landscape cannot allow services to be delivered to some places for example Bududa in the Eastern part of Uganda. It's a natural factor that they are there and it's hard for them to be reached with services.
- Prioritization of some areas leaves other areas vulnerable.
- Differences in cultural beliefs e.g. in karamoja, a service like pit latrine cannot be taken due to the belief that when you go to the latrine, you will not produce.
- Finally he said that we are also to blame because we do not attend to government sensitization programmes.

After the second presentation, there was a platform for plenary discussion where members aired out their views in regard to the two presentations .The following, among

others were the key notable concerns that members of the forum wanted clarity on. Most of the questions were addressed to Hon. Nandala Mafabi, the first presenter.

1. One member noted that the fight against corruption is a tough one and corruption seems to be on the rise. She asked Hon. Mafabi what keeps him going. The same participant expressed her concern over the dysfunctional family where children are deprived of love and affection. These makes children grow knowing greed, so when they are adult ,they know one has to have enough for one's self and even keep some not minding whether the neighbor has what to eat or not. This member was appreciating the family as the major step towards the fight against corruption.
2. Another member lamented "We say corruption, corruption, yet we are in the same house eating from the same table. Who is corrupt then? I have never seen any Member of Ugandan Parliament putting up a crusade against corruption. What is the way forward?"
3. A partner from NURRU asked Hon. Mafabi why they [parliament] can't use NURRU to assess the data that is being fed to the decision makers because most of these data is being doctored. He went ahead to ask Hon. Mafabi what he is doing about Members of Parliament who sign and don't attend. He also wondered how the poor will get to parliament because the demand for money let him down in becoming Members of Parliament.
4. Another participant asked the presenter of the day, who is also the chairman Public Accounts Committee, how long it takes for them to do their work because it waits for something to go wrong, and then it comes into play. She also had concerns over procurement which is now being done by civil servants who are corrupt. She said these people are fond of demanding for kick backs, so money keeps rotating within the corrupt. She also had concerns over how the public is not informed especially when PAC is going to a particular place.
5. Another participant noted that the second presenter seemed to be in support of the first presenter. That high population is not corruption. However, he said that most of the money is spent in management. For example, that Judiciary is given priority than agriculture, where most of the population is dependent on. What should be done to reverse this trend? He also went ahead to say that lack of information affects the populace. He cited an example where say in construction, the bills of quantity and the contractors are not disclosed to the local population. This makes monitoring hard, because you cannot monitor what you did not conceive from the beginning.
6. One of the participants asked Hon. Mafabi that "You receive reports of corruption late, where were you? You have brought to book those who give out the money, but these people need to be sensitized. What have you done? You have not known what's causing population increase.
7. Finally, there was a participant whose concern was mainly on information sharing, information that is vital for the populace. He said corruption thrives amongst the ignorant people so they need information for example of how much money was taken by whom. He also said corruption is death because money that could have been used to improve on infrastructures is diverted. He gave an example of the Member of Parliament who died in Mabira forest, Dr. Lukwiya who died jiggers and Trachoma in his area,

Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting's money, etc. Lastly he asked how far the naming and shaming of projects has gone.

After all these questions and comments were paused, Mr. Mafabi reacted to them as follows:

In his response to the questions raised by participants, Hon. Nandala Mafabi started by giving out his telephone contact as being 0772220157. He also gave his e-mail as being nandala@parliament.go.ug

Nandala in his response especially to his co-presenter said corruption is an issue that is very hard to contest. He said he knew the guest who was invited to oppose him would not come. Nevertheless, He said he had this to respond to the opponent who was got at short notice. He said he is never in the middle. He said when one is wrong, he does not mingle words. That he tells the person off but he also appreciates good work.

Nandala did not agree with his opponent who said population increase was a cause of poor service delivery. He gave data to dispute this that in 1986, the Ugandan population was 18m and the budget was 300m. Now we are about 30m and the budget is 7.5 trillion. This means we have resources that have been stolen.

To the issue of culture, Nandala said there's no bad culture and that culture makes us grow.

About HIV/AIDS causing corruption, he said this was wrong and cited the global fund money which was stolen.

About the allowance of Members of Parliament which they do not complain of, Hon. Nandala replied that Members of Parliament get this money to take to voters in order to keep them in power. Those voters should be able to vote those who represent them and encouraged the electorate to stop demanding for money from Members of Parliament.

He disagreed with the second presenter on the issue of Disaster and said it's not corruption but agreed with him on the issue of not having plans, He said not planning is planning to fail.

He went ahead to tackle issues of specific concern that other participants, besides his opponent had posed.

To the first question of what keeps his going at the height of corruption, Hon. Nandala said if he doesn't work' then nobody will. He also said when somebody meets him and tells him "thanks Mafabi for what you are doing", he gets the strength and that keeps him going. He appreciated the concern about the family and was in agreement with the view that it should be the first step to reverse the trend. He encouraged all parents to bring up their children well.

To the second question of who is corrupt yet all are eating from the same plate, he urged all the participants to be vigilant on corruption and went ahead to ask the

participant who had asked him this question what she had done, especially with the position that she holds to reverse the trend. He encouraged each of the participants to make noise where there's corruption because we all belong to civil society that have a right to hold leaders accountable.

To the third question, Mafabi concurred with his concern. He even gave a statistical figure to highlight this concern. He said population increase is said to be at 3.3% and economic growth is said to be at 7.3%. This means by now the standard of living of all Ugandans would have improved with all Ugandans living above the poverty line, which is far from reality. He said these are figures doctored to win donors and the World Bank. For that M.Ps who sign and do not attend, Hon Mafabi Challenged the electorate not to send them back to parliament but send those who are able to represent them.

To the fourth question, he said that that is how they work. They cannot act where there's no mistake. He reported that for procurement, it's now a law approved by world bank that civil servants must do the procurement so not much can be done but promised that next time Public Accounts Committee is going somewhere, they'll not take the populace un aware.

To the fifth question Mafabi said that he even left World Bank because most of the money was going on management and little reached the beneficiaries. This hurt him and he had to leave but that they've always tried to encourage the public to display information.

To the sixth concern, Hon. Nandala said at least this participant should have started by thanking him for the work well done because now we can hear the Auditor Generals' report because of his presence. He said that even the dead are accountable. In some cases the estates of the dead is sold to recover the debts.

To the last concern, Hon. Nandala said that its true corruption is death and sometimes action is taken only when a prominent personality dies. He gave an example of some work being done in Mabira only when the Member of Parliament died.

There were no questions to the second presenter as it was realized that most of his arguments were supporting the first presenter. His arguments that did not support the first presenter were disputed out right and he had no defense.

Much as there were other participants who had questions for the first presenter, it was not possible to ask him since he was already time bar and he had other pressing issues to attend to.

This forum then ended at 6:13 p.m with the singing of the UCAA Anthem. It was a developmental day we must report.