



UGANDA DEBT NETWORK

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MESSAGE OF SUPPORT AND APPRECIATION FOR H.E. THE PRESIDENT'S 23RD NRM DAY PRONOUNCEMENT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC FORA (BARAZAS) TO PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Your Excellency,

We refer to your pronouncements on, and directions for, the establishment of Barazas as a forum for monitoring Gombolola (sub-county)-level accountability, that you made on 26th January 2009 at Kololo Airstrip to mark NRM day, and carried in various media.

We at Uganda Debt Network (UDN), in a large measure, laud your wisdom in the choice of this approach and support this decision to promote the demand, by the community, for public transparency in the fight against Corruption at the grassroots level, especially since they are the intended beneficiaries of the government programmes.

Since the launching of the Poverty Action Fund (PAF) by Government in 1999 to eliminate poverty among our people, we at UDN have been imparting knowledge and skills to grassroots communities in several districts to enable them monitor the expenditure of public resources meant to deliver quality services to the people and thus combat poverty. In the same vein, we have promoted community monitoring as an effective weapon in the fight against corruption especially at the Local Government level. As provided for in Objective X of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, we are aware and have continued to promote awareness of the state's responsibility to "take all the necessary steps to involve the people in implementation of development plans and programmes that affect them". We have complemented government's efforts to eradicate poverty and socio-economic injustice in Uganda with home-grown, replicable, pro-active and pre-emptive local-level initiatives and actions.

While pursuing its vision of "a prosperous Uganda with equitable development and high quality of life", UDN, in 2002, developed an approach to enhancing local-level public accountability and effective participation of the poor in the implementation of programmes that affect them especially at the local

government level. This approach, which is called the “Community-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES)”, institutionalizes CSO-led community participation and empowerment procedures, systems and structures for public engagement at sub-county and district levels in monitoring and reporting on government programmes. UDN trains community members in participatory monitoring and evaluation of service delivery by supporting and working closely with the Ministry of Local Government and Local Governments by bringing issues to their attention for corrective action. The training content also focuses on promoting participatory planning and budgeting at all levels which empowers communities to demand for better services and hold their leaders accountable as part of the recommendations.

Over the last six years, UDN has institutionalized this approach in 47 sub-counties within the 12 districts of Bushenyi, Kanungu, Tororo, Iganga, Kaliro, Kamuli, Namutumba, Bugiri, Kumi, Amuria, Katakwi and Bukedea. Altogether, at least 5,000 UDN trained community-based monitors have been engaged in this process of CBMES since its inception.

Operationalization of the CBMES is a near cost-free process when fully internalized and adopted by the communities. Due to its high level of effectiveness and efficiency, the CBMES has been emulated by many other prominent district and regional-based, as well as national, CSO networks in Uganda that aim to promote public accountability and anti-corruption initiatives. Several of these CSOs were nurtured by UDN before attaining self-sustainability. Consequently, this approach has a country-wide coverage since the anti-corruption CSOs that use it are spread all over the country. We, and indeed many others that have emulated this approach, have complemented it with media-based dissemination of the results of monitoring the performance of government programmes by volunteer community members. These results are reported on in the sub-county and district dialogues (your equivalent of Bimeeza/Baraza) and electronic media through radio talk shows in the local languages. This approach promotes uninhibited, unobtrusive engagement with the local leaders and service providers in such a manner that would yield high-level leadership-based responsiveness and community engagement. We have supported the community-selected monitors by providing them with the opportunity to engage the service providers on several radio stations countrywide and with a large, active and participating audience of empowered communities.

Your Excellency, we are reassured by your wise decision to have the Barazas established as government-led institutions. Since we as CSOs have realized the fruits of empowerment of the local communities among whom we operate, we welcome this government policy as an effective approach to fighting corruption. Though we cannot attest to the level of effective preventative capacity of the measures developed and that have been replicated elsewhere,

we tracked and observed some reactive responses within the district and sub-county-based high-value targets that you mentioned in your speech on the 23rd NRM Day celebrations. Through the dialogues that culminate after a series of pre-emptive activities, we have managed to bring to the attention of the local leaders the anomalies in implementation of the programmes meant to benefit the communities they serve. With the support of the local leadership and the communities, we have enabled the leadership to unearth and rectify the anomalies. There is evidence of documented success stories that have emerged as a result of applying this monitoring approach in the sub-counties and districts where UDN and other like-minded partners operate.

We at UDN appreciate the efforts of the sub-county and district officials that have been very supportive of the CBMES approach as well as the Office of the Prime Minister, particularly the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES). We also thank Parliament (Budget Committee, Local Government Public Accounts Committee) and Directorate for Ethics and Integrity, for their support to UDN work.

We wish to commend the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED), for having agreed to publish Central Government transfers to Local Governments regularly in the press to facilitate accountability and transparency - in response to recommendations of the Sector Working Groups and regular PAF forums where UDN was a participant.

We request the Government to consider the following recommendations in order to realise high benefits from the Bimeeza/ Baraza initiatives:

- The approach of open accounting should not merely be at Local Governments, since about 77 % of the national resources actually remain with the Central Government. We are aware of the challenges that have been raised in various key government institutions where issues of accountability challenges involving high-level officials have been endemic. Indeed, we commend your efforts to bring to book some of the Ministers, high-ranking Public Service and State House officials involved in the GAVI funds mismanagement, for example.
- We call upon Government to support CSOs, which are now well spread around the country and have initiated such community monitoring and evaluation processes for public accountability.

Your Excellency, in recognition of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda - Objectives XXVI on Accountability and XXIX on the Duties of a Citizen of Uganda - and in observance of Article 98 recognising The President as the Fountain of Honour, we at UDN, pledge our unreserved support to your efforts in the fight against corruption and promotion of public accountability.

For God and My Country

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Tumwebaze', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Patrick Tumwebaze

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

For and on behalf of UDN Members and Partners