

UGANDA DEBT NETWORK

Approach memo on increased Public Administration and expenditure with reference to Government vehicles

Introduction

The government policy instruments on vehicles provides for the standardization of vehicles for government officials. The policy instruments, nonetheless, continue to be disregarded and suffer abuse. This is evident in the high caliber of fuel-guzzling, costly vehicle purchases and maintenance used by the government officials to maximize their luxury, at the cost of the majority taxpayers that have to meet their tax obligations and still receive poor service delivery in return. The above situation has been worsened by the fleet of Government vehicles and motorcycles, which were totaling to 12004 (6,571 vehicles and 5,433 motorcycles) by December 2005¹. The numbers excluded project vehicles and motorcycles. Such a big size of government vehicles places a huge burden on the taxpayers through purchases, maintenance (garage costs, fuels, oils and lubricants) and bonding off the fleet.

Even if government has financed some of the vehicle schemes through external borrowing, it is the Ugandan citizens who are at staked, a factor that worsens the country's debt burden through debt repayment.

Background

UDN has been at the forefront of monitoring the utilization of public resources so as to benefit the people of Uganda. Through the PEAP, as a national framework for poverty reduction, Uganda has registered substantial progress in meeting her objectives. In spite of the successes of the PEAP, poverty remains a major challenge to the citizens of Uganda. 31% (over 9.9 million) of Ugandans remains under the yoke of absolute poverty².

The levels of poverty are attributed to a big cost spent on Public Administration as a result of establishing new administrative structures contrary to the well-laid guidelines under the Local Governments Act, 1997³,

The expenditure on and other endorsed privileges have led to a hefty allocation to Public Administration in the Annual Budgets. In the FY 2005/06, for example, the Public administration sector allocation were 13.0% of the total budget

¹ A study commissioned by the Parliament of Uganda called the, Annual Expenditure on Government Vehicles October, 2005

² UBOS, 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census, Analytical Report, Abridged Version, October 2006.

³ Uganda Debt Network, Policy Review Newsletter, Vol. 7 Issue 2, February, 2007

expenditure, while 11.3% was earmarked for the roads and works sector⁴. Thus the bigger percentages of our roads remain in a remorseful state despite the government's continued spending on road maintenance.

Rationale

There is need to place stronger emphasis on public administration reforms, which have stalled in recent years, policies are not well articulated by the policy makers and the well laid down guidelines are not adhered to. A key concern is that the recurrent spending has continuously increased in the recent years at the expense of service delivery, which would have benefited a majority of Ugandans. If the policies are strengthened and PEAP objectives taken as a priority, the percentage of people living below the poverty line will drastically reduce. The government's lack of commitment to improving the sectors that are critical to the needs of the majority Ugandans as reflected in the budgets trends (11% to 9.5% for Health, 6.1% to 2.6% for water, 4.4% to 3.5% for agriculture, etc between 2000/01 and 2005/06) dictate a strong call for a shift in the state of affairs.

Objectives

Overall

The overall objective of the campaign on the numbers, purchase, maintenance and bonding off of government vehicles is to ensure that government practices and expenditure are responsive to achieving the key priorities of the PEAP to benefit the majority of Ugandans.

Specific Objectives

- 1) To lobby parliament adhere to the government vehicle purchasing processes that are aligned to government circular and instruments on standardization⁵ of vehicles.
- 2) To lobby government officials adhere to the Standing Orders of Public Service⁶ on the use and care of government vehicles.
- 3) To lobby for the reduction on the numbers of government vehicles so as to reduce the cost of public administration
- 4) To lobby for comprehensive procedure that reflects efficiency and effectiveness in the maintenance and care of the few recommended government vehicles.

⁴ Uganda Debt Network, *Policy Review Newsletter*, Vol. 7 Issue 2, February, 2007

⁵ Establishment Notice No. 1 of 2003 that updated the Circular Standing Instructions No. 1 of 1999

⁶ The Standing orders provides for the time, logbook, fuel register, etc.

Activities

- A one-day workshop will be organized for members of the civil society, grassroots monitors, UDN allied districts, government representatives, media etc. A total number of 30 participants are expected to attend the workshop. The workshop is aimed at bringing together people from different parts of the country and levels to contribute effectively on a) the challenges of the increasing public administration costs, which have continued to increase at the expense of services delivery, b) analyze the impact of the escalating cost of public administration at the expense of social service delivery and c) identify the possible recommendations to policy makers.
- The participants develop a CS statement.
- Media activities⁷

Targeted Group

- Parliament
- Media

Expected out put

- Extensive media coverage
- CSO Statement
- Workshop report

⁷ Both radio and TV talk shows, Press Statement, etc