

BLACK MONDAY

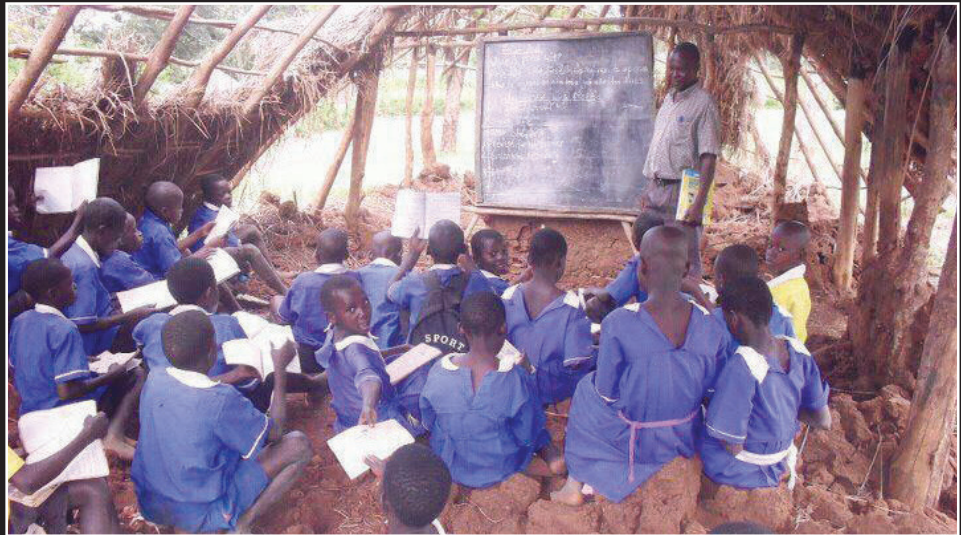
News Letter

Citizen Action Against theft of our money without SHAME!

RAISE THE ALARM: Theft of public resources is robbing from us and our country the future

THE THEFT OF OUR MONEY the taxes we pay (both direct and indirect) and the revenues from public investments – is now a tired story. It no longer makes headline in the news. In fact, we are surprised when a public official, politician or civil servant, does not steal from the public coffers. And those who steal, we protect: the government protects those it considers to be ‘important cadres’; religious leaders and fellow tribes’ mates protect their kin under the guise of ‘selective justice’ – “are they the only ones stealing?” they ask; the rest are silent even when they know who and what they have stolen, because the thieves are generous, or are their relatives, or friends or members of their party. Those who fight ‘thieving’ are given names, and are monitored closely by the Uganda Police lest they ‘incite violence’. Those arrested are kept in police cells briefly, released on police bond – to report weekly (preferably on Mondays), as the rest of Uganda continue in ‘business as usual’. This has become normal for Uganda!

What is not tired is the disastrous impact this theft and the thieves are having on the quality of the life of Ugandans. It is getting worse by the day. There is growing despair everywhere. Teachers, healthcare workers, traders, farmers – the more they work to make ends meet, the further away the ends diverge. And as for the children and youth of the land, who constitute the majority of our population (about 80%) – they are just there! The majority of these children



Alut Kot Primary School, Oyam District. Teachers can happily teach if they have a conducive environment. Their welfare and the learners’ needs to improve!

and youth are in our schools, colleges and universities. For many of them, education has ceased to be the door to promise and opportunity; it has become another of the many graveyards of Uganda’s hopes and dreams.

The Universal Primary Education (UPE), whose introduction in 1997 gave hope for many who had been locked out of Uganda’s education system, has become a nightmare. Children are in school, but they are not learning. They are hungry; they do not have enough teachers; and the schools do not have adequate facilities. Teachers are not teaching: they are de-motivated because of poor pay, so spend more time in their gardens than they do in school. The results show. Only 25% of the children who started Primary One sat Primary Leaving Exams (PLE), the rest having dropped out. The girl-child is the most vulnerable, for as soon as they hit puberty, the lack of sanitation facilities forces them out. It is no wonder that Uganda has the highest teenage pregnancy rates in Africa! As for those who sit PLE and pass, only about 60% of them are absorbed at the secondary level (including technical schools). A similar percentage is lost at the tertiary level. And those who complete college have at most

a 20% chance of some formal employment.

The government’s explanation is that there is not enough money; that the resource envelope is limited. On face value, it is possible to believe until you probe deeper. Recent official reports have shown that the country has been losing more money to theft than it receives in international aid. Think about it for a moment: if we plugged the holes of theft, we would not need international aid for social services! But

“Let us demand for resolute political action on the thieving ministers; interdiction for any Permanent Secretary named in any scandal; full capacity for the institutions mandated to pursue the thieving civil servants; and the Police to halt any more intimidations of those fighting the vice”.

every year, for a number of years now, the Ministry of Education has been reporting ‘ghost’ schools, ‘ghost’ teachers and ‘ghost’ pupils. One wonders what it really takes to snuff out these ghosts! Due to the enormity of the thieving phenomenon, there is now new vocabulary to differentiate levels of theft: there is petty corruption and then grand corruption! Let no one lie to us: there is enough to go round. It is the theft in Government that is robbing us all – children, youth, parents, professionals – and our country the future we have worked for and indeed deserve.

This must stop. It cannot continue. We have already lost a generation. Imagine these millions of drop-outs, un-employed and un-employable youth in 10 years time. Where will they be? What will they be doing? But 10 years is too long. They will not wait. We must all rise to save our future; the future of Uganda’s children and youth.

Let us put our President on notice: “Live up to your pledge. Show the country that you mean what you say: Zero tolerance to

corruption’ otherwise we shall conclude that you too are a beneficiary”. Let all do something; everyone, anywhere, everywhere. There is

no one neutral on this. You are either with the thieves or you are with the future of Uganda. Let everyone of us do what we can do: shun our thieving family members, fellow believers and fellow workers. They are not only a shame to us; they are killing the future – theirs and ours.

This calls for action for all. The time to act is now. We must save our education system, now!

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