

BLACK MONDAY

Citizen Action Against theft of our money without SHAME!

Editorial

Time to say no to vote buying

I was excited to learn that The Anti-Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2013 was yet again in the house for another reading. This comes hot on the heels of a survey, 'Who Pays the Piper' released by civil society recently in which money was underscored as a key 'influencer' in elections. Many of the MPs interviewed in the course of this survey confirmed that the cost of competing for a parliamentary seat has increased almost ten times since 2001. It is commendable that progress is being made towards understanding the role of money in elections - especially in Uganda. As we head towards 2016, we must collectively avert any situation, which puts the vote in the hands of money, more so, 'black money'. We must vehemently denounce the skewed philosophy that those who have 'the money' make the rules and the agenda.

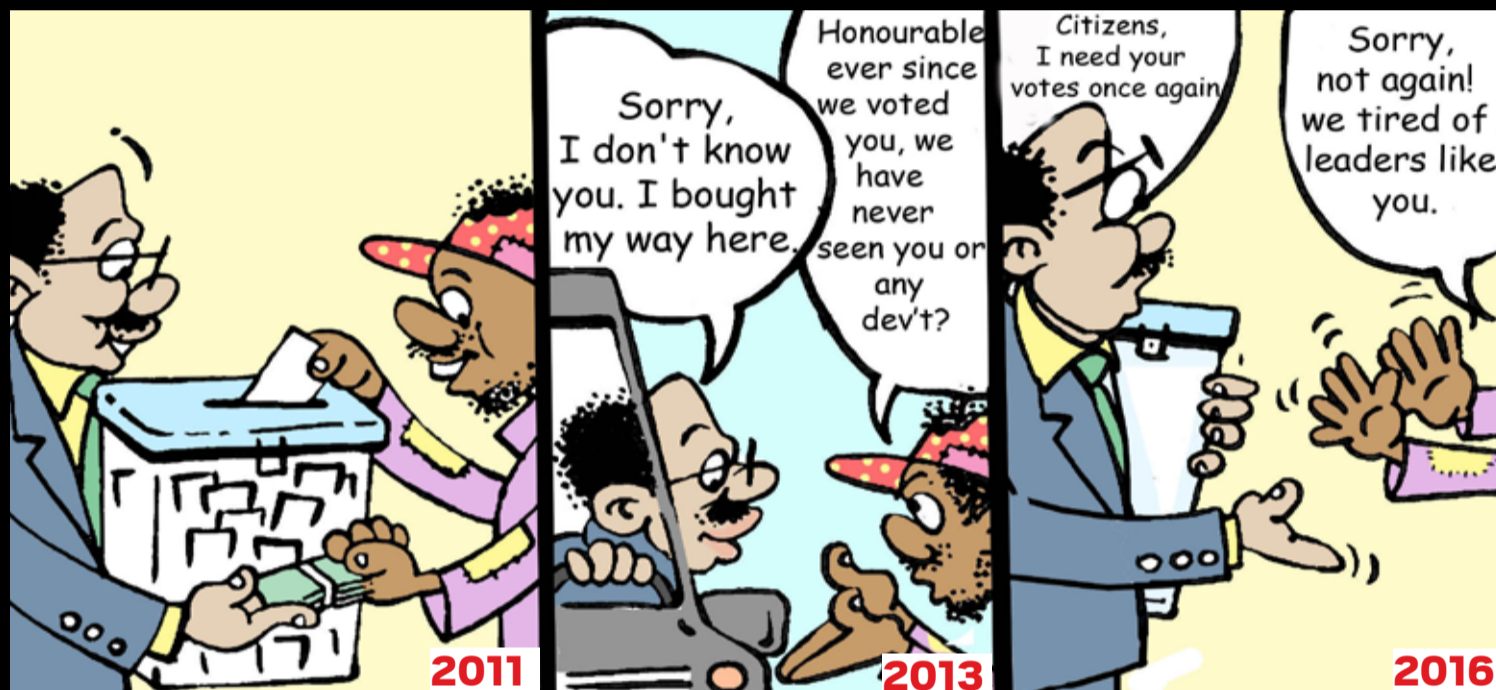
Strategic investment in understanding sources of these enormous campaign funds that we see today is very critical. Government must raise vigil to check any flow of 'black money' from external sources. The public ought to monitor any acts of elements that dip their rapacious hands into the public coffers.

In the same spirit, the Electoral Commission (EC) should conduct due diligence to ascertain candidates sources of campaign funding but also stringently counter the misuse of money during election periods. Empowering citizens to report suspicious acts such as movement of large sums of money and illegal acts of vote buying could also provide ideas to help track sources of campaign finances.

Beyond some of the proposed regular campaign finance tracking mechanisms, the EC should consider an Election Finance Monitoring cell to monitor the sources and use of money during the poll season. The dangers of huge amounts of unclear campaign money are looming large on Uganda's political horizon and something needs to be done, now!

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Voter bribery is the utmost level of electoral corruption



The picture on the cover page of the Daily Monitor on 3rd March, 2014 shows an empty parliament and the Deputy Speaker Jacob Oulanya's lamentations about absence of MPs which tells the story of the rather bleak reality of a nation's effort at democratic representation. The image of an empty parliament when important legislation should be going on, was this time round blamed on "Legislators believed to be spending time in their constituencies 'courting' voters as they seek to be re-elected in next year's polls." Previous absences have been attributed variously to MPs scrounging the city for some extra cash to ward off the burden of heavy indebtedness therefore appearing in the House to sign the attendance register and secure their allowance before heading off to attend workshops or other business to make an extra dime.

A recent report by Alliance for Election Campaign Finance Monitoring (ACFIM) released in February presenting findings of a survey among about 150 MPs brought the whole aspect of money in politics into a new perspective.

That our MPs are highly indebted is a well-established fact but on what and who they spend their money had been a subject of speculation. The report, "Who pays the piper" helps to provide some useful answers.

The MPs who participated in the survey answered in large majorities to almost all questions on the negativity of money in politics in agreement. Responding to a question about the leap of the influence of money in politics over the last few elections, a majority agreed that it had gone up at least ten percent every electoral cycle. Asked whether if the trend continues politics won't be a reserve for

only the super-rich they still answered affirmative. To this particular question one

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could add that while the super-rich may not offer themselves for elective office, they could use their money to influence who become leaders.

A cycle of blame games have followed the exponential growth of money as a key factor in swaying political decision making. The challenge is not on use of money per se but rather the purpose for which it is deployed.

In other countries, especially the developed West, money works largely to buy media to sell the candidate and his agenda. In Uganda, politics is transactional. The politician gives either physical cash or fills in for gaps in governmental service delivery by paying to sink a borehole, repair a broken culvert or put beds in a health center in return for votes.

The corrosive effect of this is that the social contract between the voter and the leader is broken and because people in government are the ones sometimes lobbied to make the financial contribution to the candidate, the expected ability to hold those in charge of the purses of public finance for service delivery projects is lost.

However, at an individual level, MPs ought to reflect on a worrying statistic: the attrition rate every election cycle tilts in favour of those who can commit to do their job without worrying about whether they will be re-elected.

Many former MPs have fallen to destitution because of the desire to satisfy an insatiable constituency with financial rewards. When they are defeated by deeper pockets, they find the constituencies they once promised prosperity with poverty still wallowing. It is simply not sustainable for neither the piper nor he who pays, can call the tune.

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Uganda tops African countries in vote buying

Four out of ten (41%) Ugandans say a candidate or someone from a political party offered them food, a gift or money in return for their vote at the general elections in 2011, according to Afrobarometer pollsters. Of the 32 countries in Africa where Afrobarometer conducted their surveys, Uganda tops the poll for

vote buying. Our neighbours, Kenya and Tanzania, do not even come close. Only 14% of Tanzanians said they had direct experience of vote buying while 32% of Kenyans said someone had offered them something for their vote in the 2012 elections. Less than one in six (16%) of Africans surveyed across all 32 countries had

direct experience of vote buying. In Mauritius, just one percent said that someone had offered them money, a gift or food in return for their vote. Near neighbours like Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique scored well below Uganda with only one in twenty (5%) Mozambicans, one in seven Malawians (14%) and Zambians (13%)

said they had experienced vote buying in their last national elections. What is happening in Uganda that makes vote buying so widespread and affects so many citizens in the pearl of Africa? For more information see www.afrobarometer.org

Where is the source of all this money?



President Yoweri Museveni offers a cash contribution to a SACCO leader.



An NRM mobilizer pulls out cash in UGX 50,000 notes to give to citizens who had come to receive the president as he returned from the UN assembly.



Hon Kibule offers UGX 10 million to SACCO members in his constituency



Citizens scramble and disperse after the MP started distributing funds meant to mobilise for the presidents 2016 sole candidate bid.

Electoral corruption at local government: a double loss for citizens

Corruption in electoral processes in Uganda manifests in various forms at both the national and district level ultimately effecting service delivery at the cost of the citizens. For Instance during previous election campaigns, the incumbent District LC 5 Chairperson and Councillors have been receiving campaign funding from the district budgets. Interviews with some district heads of departments, who spoke to us anonymously, revealed that the campaign contributions to District LC 5 Chairperson and Councillors, are diverted from service delivery.

“As head of department you must get money from your budget to make a campaign contribution for the incumbent LC 5 and councillors,” said one of the district engineers.

As the country draws closer to the campaign period ahead of the February 2016 general elections, civil society anti-corruption activists are suspicious that the district budget for Local Government service delivery for financial year 2015/2016 will be sacrificed at the altar of campaign financing for incumbent District Chairpersons and Councillors. This means that the poor citizens at the grass root level will be denied their rights to

quality social services.

The most likely votes to be affected include works, water, health, education, and production (especially NAADS programme). This money is diverted in many ways including fictitious procurement where a phantom company could win a tender and is paid for no work done yet the money comes back in cash. As civil society actors and other concerned citizens we must do all it takes to monitor these budgets and ensure that any form of misuse of public funds is nibbed in the bud.

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Huge sums of money like these are often given to contesting candidates at local government to ensure favoured candidates win at the expense of service delivery

Vote Buying: A tale of citizens losing trust in their leaders

“We have lost trust,” said one of the villagers. “This money and things have not in any way changed or improved people’s lives,” proclaimed another. So why do people continue to accept and even solicit for the thousand shillings, a few beers or the small packets of salt, sugar and soap in return for their vote during elections?

For two hours villagers from a small hamlet outside Wobulenzi in Luweero discussed vote buying and selling, and what might be done to reduce or contain it. Listening to them, it was clear that these citizens felt elections had been reduced to merely transacting their votes for money or gifts because they had lost all trust and confidence that any politician would actually deliver on their promises. “There is no value for votes in this country,” answered one of the men during the discussion. “People are poor” chimed another, “they have eaten the small things that they have managed to get from the candidate at that time, rather than waiting for promises that are never fulfilled.” So then was it worth it in the long run; once the

candidate had been elected? Not at all, as one woman present made clear; “The money and things are just small favours which cannot cause any development in people’s lives”. Another said angrily, “Candidates feel they have bought you and when we ask for electricity or repairs to the road they say: ‘Which people are these? Those people that ate my

money?’ They don’t care about it!”

So what could be done? Or was vote buying irreversible? Despite the poverty and lack of trust in politicians and their meaningless and inflated promises, some felt strongly that this could be combatted if citizens up and down the country decided publicly

to reject vote buying together. The citizens in this focus group discussion felt that the laws on vote buying needed tightening up – if someone broke the law they couldn’t run for election again for at least five years. They said: “We need spies (observers) to watch who is distributing money and report them to the

higher authorities”. But if the village could agree, and hold to a decision, to reject vote buying then this would start to reduce the commercialization of elections.

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Citizens line up to vote during the recent Woman MP bi-elections in Luweero district where the President indicated that the election was not free and fair. Citizens have decried the use of money to buy votes in elections that needs to be dealt with.

Election Fraud: Recounting observation of the 2011 youth MP elections

The processes of electing leaders under the electoral college system is supported across the world, not only because of its ability to deliver credible and well resonated results, but also because it is easier to manage the associated activities. In Uganda, the Worker’s, Person’s with Disability and the Youth elect their Members of Parliament through this system. Because the numbers being dealt with in an Electoral College system of elections is smaller than a general election, the expectation is that the processes would be well planned, managed, and controlled. The processes should be transparent and facilitate the realization of credible results and accountable leaders.

An election that is marred by election related malpractices such as corruption and irregular processes kills the confidence of the public and builds scepticism around the nature of leaders who arrived through a ‘failed’ process and their ability to independently serve their electorate and be held accountable. In this article, we recount some of the events that unfolded around the organization and execution of the 2011 Youth MP elections while attempting to point out the challenges of working within a corrupted electoral system.

The recount

For each region, during the pre-election period, polling centres and the Electoral College were gazetted. The polling center for election of Youth MP for Central Region was in Masaka, Western Region was in Fort portal, Eastern Region in

Soroti, Arua for Northern Region and Jinja for National Female MP.

The electoral commission, a body that was mandated to manage the electoral process seemed to have been marred with the challenges of delivering free, fair, and credible youth elections. The facilitation for the electorates/voters was in itself a challenge. The money meant for transport, accommodation and meals for the electorates came in very late which created an environment for vote bribery and influence peddling with the candidates ferrying the electorate and buying them food and beverages! Candidates with

means would offer ‘free’ transport, accommodation and meals financed by their political parties and ‘God-fathers’ which greatly compromised the objectivity of the voting college.

There was limited time for displaying the voter register for verification. The voters register had many anomalies such as missing and mismatched names/designations all of which could not be rectified at the last moment. Many delegates were therefore left out of the voting league. The polling process started late at night (which contravenes the electoral laws). The polling in all the

centers happened in the wee hours of the morning and some polling stations experienced power blackouts during the tallying.

The ballot papers for youth MP were printed at the polling station on ordinary printing paper! Honestly, how can one rule out electoral malpractices if an essential element of an electoral process like a ballot paper is printed at the last minute and on ordinary paper? Could the process have been influenced by ‘he who pays the piper...?’

Critical analysis of Ugandan elections organized using the Electoral College system leads one to question how a democratic and constitutional given right can be turned into an object of democratic mockery marred with inconsistencies, un-preparedness cash peddling, and voter bribery.

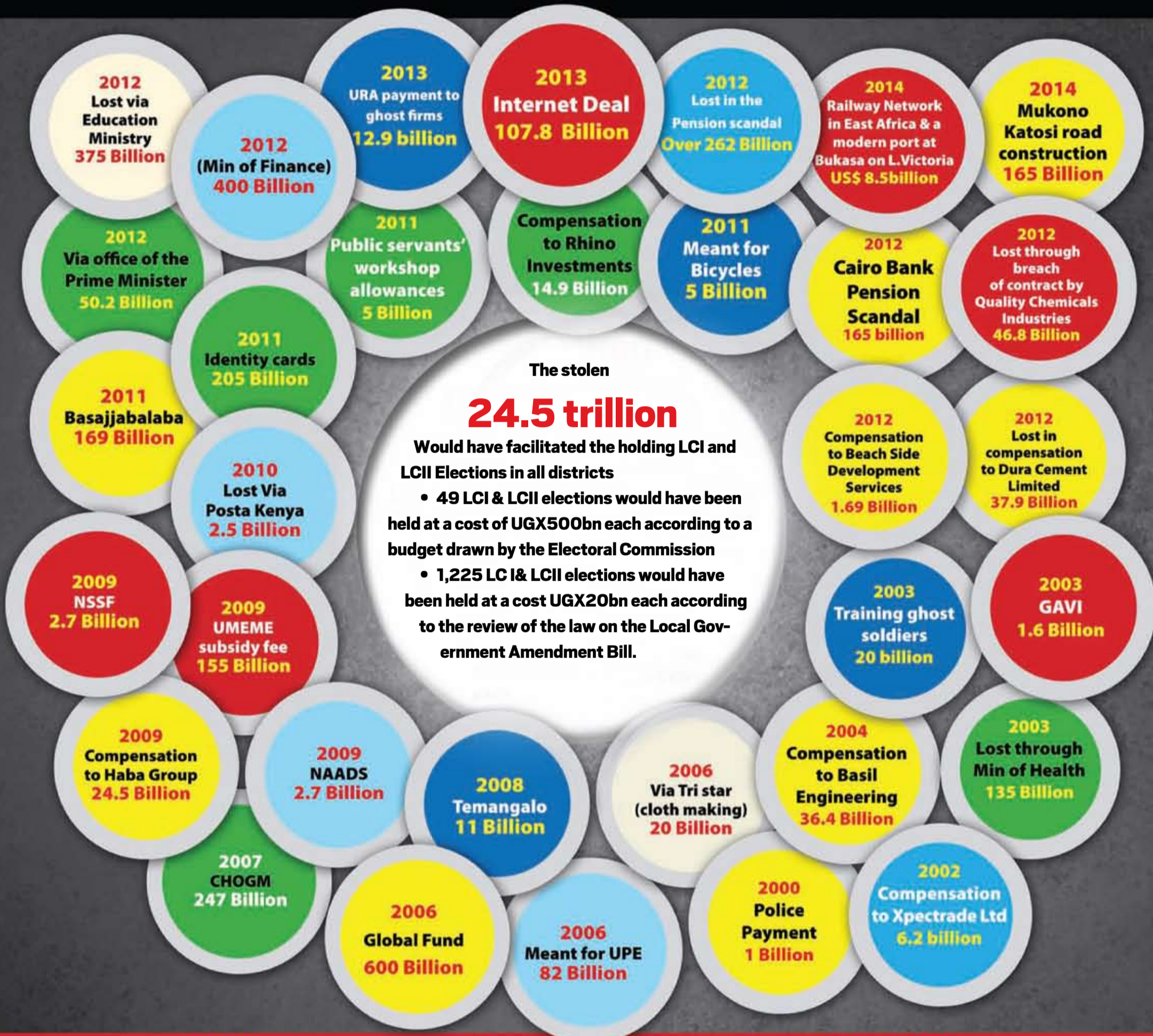
What moral integrity will such a leader have to stand up to fight corruption when s/he is a beneficiary of a corrupt system? What right will the youth have to demand for accountability from a leader that already ‘paid their price’? If the electoral commission does not come out to regulate the use of money and re-organize in the youth MP elections, then, these elections will never produce any legitimate MP suitable to represent any people in this country.



The National Youth Council handover ceremony held at the president’s country home in Rwakitura. Youth elections have been marred by high level of rigging that the elected leaders lack credibility for holding the political offices.

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SUMMARY OF CORRUPTION SCANDALS TO LOOK BACK AT



What must we do to get our money back?

- Wear only black clothes every Monday to show you are tired of theft.
 - Demand political action from the President
 - Isolate every thief implicated in a theft scandal. Don't invite them to your burials, weddings.
 - Do not buy goods or services from businesses owned by thieves. Support Ugandans working honestly to make a living.
- Until all the thieves have returned our money.

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