



CITIZEN ACTION FOR A PEACEFUL, SECURE AND PROSPEROUS UGANDA - WITH HAPPY PEOPLE

A 2014 New Year Message from the Civil Society

Preamble

Fellow Ugandans, the leadership of Uganda's civil society congratulate each one of you upon completing the year 2013. As always we take this opportunity to reflect on the past year and most importantly to recommit ourselves to work towards building an inclusive and just economy, a strong democracy and national stability in Uganda. Since 2009, the Citizen Manifesto process has offered an important opportunity for many Ugandans to realize that as citizens we should always act based on national values and interests. This statement is informed by the Citizen Manifesto.

In 2014 we continue with the commitment to promote development that is citizen focused. We call upon all Ugandans to see themselves as part of a democratic culture that works towards a society where the citizen is central. This should not be about satisfying only the material desires that we have as individuals or narrow institutional or political mandates - but our interests should be for all of us to work collectively towards a common good – a better Uganda. In the sections that follow we present the three priority areas of focus this year:

1. Promote Citizen Organizing for a Better Uganda:

The Year 2013 witnessed increasing citizen organising, inspired in part by various CSO-led initiatives including; Black Monday Movement, the Citizen Manifesto activities, Budget Advocacy work, the Local Government Scorecard, the Uganda Women's Agenda, Citizen Assessments in education such as Uwezo, the quality public education campaign, advocacy on maternal health, work on violence against women and several other initiatives supported and promoted by civil society.

Under the Black Monday we published and widely distributed our newsletter that stimulated dialogue on issues of public concern based on monthly themes. These newsletters had overwhelming demand across the country and we have since witnessed increasing citizen interest and actions against theft of public funds and monitoring performance of government provision of social services as a result of these interventions.

Civil society across the country will continue with these campaigns with a clear focus on looking for sustainable solutions that are citizen centered. Under the Black Monday campaign we shall continue to point out the corruption ills but also profile various acts of integrity and dignity that Ugandans across the country are involved in on a day-to-day basis – changing their lives and their communities. We refuse Uganda to be defined by the corruption we see but affirm that Uganda is a country of dignity and integrity and across this country on a daily basis women and men of all walks of life including the public officials are changing lives in various ways. We shall look for them, affirm them and celebrate them as our integrity heroes.

But, Uganda still has to address the historical challenges of citizenship. Uganda has for long faced situations of civic deficiency that are rooted in our history of conflict, citizen disempowerment and lack of a culture of constitutionalism. This is manifest in the collapse of values of 'ubuntu', rule of law and community cohesion as well as the erosion of the ethos of hard work. Civic deficiency therefore makes corruption a way of life and creates a sense of despondency, despair and helplessness in the country. Civic deficiency is what makes citizens avoid or dodge paying taxes. It creates the environment in which drugs can be stolen from the hospitals and rotten seeds can be procured in the name of boosting agricultural production. Civic deficiency is also what creates a culture of violence and allows ills such as child sacrifice, human trafficking and complete collapse of productivity in the villages of Uganda to thrive acceptably. It is the reason the phenomenon of begging and street children has become an established industry.

We recognize that CSOs have often struggled with accepting that civic education and citizen mobilisation is political work requiring new skills that many of us are deficient in. It is important for all stakeholders to appreciate the CSO work is political but it is not politically partisan. In 2014 CSOs will intensify civic education and practical support models for citizen organizing so that we counter the ills of civic deficiency by focusing on the rights and responsibilities of the citizen in shaping a better Uganda through the following specific actions:

- Rejecting a **national mindset** that accepts a life of poverty, corruption, laziness, wastefulness, hopelessness and replace it with **new national mindset** that cherishes integrity, dignity, accountability, prosperity, peace, happiness and hope.
- Rejecting a corrupt, inefficient, ineffective and wasteful **governance culture**; and replace these with efficient, prudent, strong government institutions delivering high quality services.
- Rejecting a selfish, arrogant, insensitive, patronizing, dictatorial **leadership culture** and replace that with an accountable, transparent, selfless leadership culture.
- Rejecting the **balkanization of Uganda and the divisions created between our people** largely for political goals and strive for unity in diversity and creating a country where everyone feels valued and contributes to transformation.

2. Wealth Creation for a Prosperous Uganda in which citizens live with Dignity

We now know from all our work that a key reason many citizens do not seem to show concern about the trillions of tax payer's money stolen, embezzled and diverted by shameless officials is because they do not see themselves as owners of these monies. We have also noticed an increasing delink between the often educated, usually urban based and fairly comfortable political, bureaucratic and business elite and often uneducated, desperate, young, largely rural based very uncomfortable majority poor.

We recognize that the government of Uganda worked tirelessly to tame the galloping inflation that characterized the year 2012 and the economy grew by slightly over 5% in the financial year 2012-2013. The government of Uganda signed major contracts for three hydropower dam construction; as well as road and rail infrastructure constructions with high potential

for employment and increasing people's incomes, but these have not yet translated in better incomes for the average Ugandan family. In 2013 most Ugandan families could barely meet their basic needs comfortably. This reality is exacerbated by intense poverty especially in rural Uganda and the daily survival mode that the majority of Ugandans find themselves in 2013. Poverty is Uganda's modern day slavery and should be rejected and ejected by all Ugandans.

We also found ourselves faced with the reality of desperate, unemployed, idle youth looking for ways to make ends meet all round the country. We conducted studies that revealed that the current situation is not far from the context that generated citizen organizing for protecting better prices for their cash crops through cooperatives in the colonial era and later the dream of the independence struggles.

Consequently the year 2013 has confirmed to us that supporting an effective citizen wealth creation strategy is our cardinal contribution for a better Uganda now and in the future. This we have clarified in our minds, is good for government, the private sector and the ordinary citizen.

In 2014 we shall intensify supporting citizens with:

- Equipping citizens with **skills and tools for organizing better**, through citizen savings and investment clubs, across entire value chains so that they can take advantage of all forms of strategic government and private sector investment decisions
- Intensify **youth entrepreneurship and leadership training for wealth creation, gainful and dignified employment** rooted in the ideals of a cooperative movement that is vibrant, citizen initiated, owned and controlled.
- Lobby regionally and internationally for **favorable fair trade and market opportunity for Ugandan products** and work towards supporting the development of a competitive economy.
- Work with the **private sector to invest in social enterprises that serve the needs and promote the dignity of all Ugandans** and reject those that spread discrimination and abuse of women.

3. Peace and Stability for a Secure Uganda

The year 2013 witnessed action by the Executive to narrow the space for citizen's constitutional right of expression, association and participation in matters of government. We have increasingly witnessed a characteristic whipping of Members of Parliament from the ruling party into passing laws such as The Public Order Management Act among others. Further, police brutality was a consistent theme all through the year including rampaging and closing media houses; arrest and torture of anticorruption activists, illegal detention of opposition politicians and shameless manipulation of the Kampala City Council Authority and impeachment of the Lord Mayor of Kampala. The Executive, Parliament and the Judicial Service Commission have been engulfed in unending 'ping-pong' about whether or not to appoint Justice Benjamin Odoki as Chief Justice even though he has passed the retirement age. The resultant effect is that for about one year the Judiciary in Uganda has no substantive head.

Amidst all these developments we have noted with concern that the entire political leadership of Uganda does not seem to have any national consensus on a national minimum benchmark for the Uganda we want - that can be defended regardless of the political divide any person is. This, while citizens through the Citizens Manifesto actually developed one!

We recognize that in the current dispensation political parties are struggling with the disease we refer to as "the crisis of individual merit" where powerful individuals now call the shots at the expense of building party organs and structures. This situation weakens Political Parties in particular and undermines building a democratic culture in Uganda. Parties must be supported to transcend this 'individual merit' inertia that has its roots in the Movement

system of governance. This situation has built a consistent lack of trust and growing insecurity of the political, military and bureaucratic elite of Uganda, to the extent that they are all in a 'daily survival mode' with no strategic planning for the future of the country. This, in our view is the starting point of weak institutions of government and is a recipe for future instability and political conflict in Uganda. It also became clear in 2013 that the country is clearly in a political transition mode. The critical challenge that remains is the nature of the transition – whether it will be violent, as has been the case in our history, or whether it will be peaceful.

While acknowledging that free and fair elections are critical for democratic and peaceful transition, previous elections have proved that the dual crisis – of individual merit and mistrust-coupled with the political culture of patronage, have turned elections into a very expensive routine. We therefore see no inherent value in going for an election in 2016 under the same conditions. Therefore in 2014 we shall mobilize the citizens around the country to recognize the impending crisis and work for a peaceful transition to “The Uganda We Want”:

In 2014 we shall intensify supporting citizens with:

- Advocacy for boldly **addressing the insecurity of the political, military and bureaucratic elite of Uganda** whose uncertain future sets the foundation and looting of public coffers and political instability in Uganda.
- Building on the work of civil society organizations, religious institutions, politicians and the academia we shall advocate for a **National Conference to deliberate and agree a new national consensus on how Ugandans want to be governed**
- In place of another sham election in 2016 and the potential political crisis that it could bring to the country, we shall deliberate on a transitional national unity government to shape a new agenda for democratization and economic transformations. We shall advocate for a political process that leads to establishing a **Transitional Government of National Unity in January 2016** for a period of up to 3 years only with specific mandate to deliver amongst others: (i) Leading a national truth telling, forgiveness, reconciliation and unity process (ii) Managing a national constitutional review process for a renegotiated Uganda We Want. (iii) Investing in building strong competitive political parties as a basis for true democracy in Uganda (iv) Organizing a free and fair election as a foundation for peace and security.
- We shall strengthen a **people-to-people exchange within the Great Lakes Region to secure Uganda within the context of a stable region** especially given the most worrying developments in the last quarter of 2013 in Democratic Republic of Congo and The Republic of South Sudan.

Fellow Citizens it is our individual and collective responsibility to deliver Solidarity, Dignity and Opportunity for all Ugandans irrespective of who they are and where they are found in this great country. Our country is large enough for all of us and at the end of it all, every Ugandan can and must be a winner in this processes!

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

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