



Different Approaches, Same Goal?

**Civil Society and the fight
against Corruption in Uganda**

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2013

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1. Introduction

To be able to make an adequate attempt to engage with the question of the role of civil society in fighting corruption, one must be clear on at least three things: (a) the topic itself presupposes that civil society is one of many other actors in this struggle and thus its role must be looked at in the context of the role of other agencies; (b) one must be very clear on their understanding of corruption and its manifestations in Uganda; and (c) one must fully understand civil society in Uganda; its real strengths and limitations so as to place a realistic agenda for them to play.

My framing of the paper with the question 'Different Approaches, Same Goal' is an attempt to interrogate the obvious assumption that different actors will invariably have different approaches and strategies to confront the problem that corruption is. But is that a given? Do we in fact have different approaches or actually share a lot in common and only differ in tactics and levels of depth we are willing to go? Secondly, do we have the same goal as anti-corruption crusaders? Are some agencies using the anti-corruption fight as a special purpose vehicle to achieve regime change and or transformation in leadership and governance? Is there anything wrong with that?

The key thesis in this paper is that as anti-corruption crusaders, we have different perspectives on what ought to be done and how to do it and therefore our approaches may differ - but as long as they are all aiming to achieve the same goal for different actors have different comparative strengths. We may also have different intentions. What we must never do however, is over glorify our way as the only way. Rather, we should look at our approaches as one of many in the 'market place'. This way, we dissipate one another's energies and actually turn our guns at one another while our people are devoured by corruption and the perpetrators sit on the 'crown' and laugh at us! Above all, what we need, whether in civil society, in government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), in political parties, in church and mosques, as well as in State House are incorruptible leaders with unquestionable track record against corruption and integrity. Without 'Servant Leadership', our challenge becomes all the more difficult.

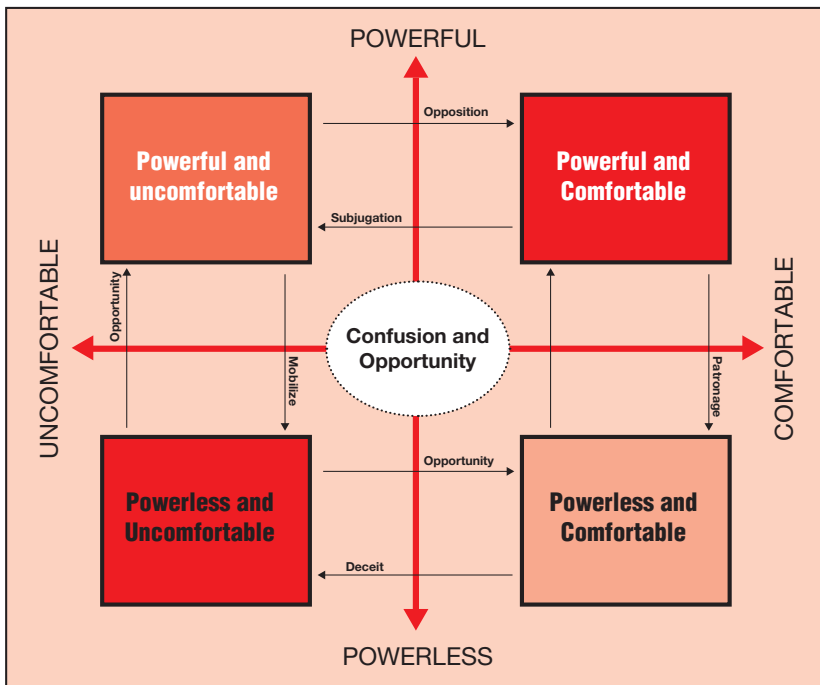
2. Uganda's Context: The big Picture

Uganda, a country 'gifted by nature', one with enormous but curtailed potential suffers numerous paradoxes that we must reflect on for us to have a good understanding of what Uganda's real problem is. The most insightful written material I have come across was by my close friend Benson Ekwee from the Public Affairs Center (an NGO with headquarters in Soroti, in Teso) who illuminates 7 paradoxes out the Pearl of Africa. The 1st is that of being gifted by nature (rich in mineral and other natural resources, a wonderful climate and fertile soils, yet more than 51% of our population lives in poverty on less than 2 dollars a day; the 2nd is that with generous foreign aid inflows, we remain underdeveloped. In 1962 we received close to US \$ 6 billion and were able to develop social and economic infrastructure with some ease, but today, we get in excess of US\$ 20 billion and are doing much less and also failed to maintain what we inherited; the 3rd paradox is of low domestic revenue collection with better services; increased revenue collection, poor services. The national revenue collection in the early years of independence up to the early 1980s was slightly more than UGX 40bn. At this time the country also had one of the best social services in the region. The country's health and education services were highly coveted in the region. Mulago was the best referral hospital in the region and the common phenomenon of drugs stock outs,

understaffing that are common today was unheard of. Today, the government collects close to UGX 10 trillion but services are very poor.

The 4th paradox is one of a growing economy but worsening unemployment problem; the 5th is one where government employees in authorities earn more than 10 times than their colleagues in mainstream public services; the Executive Director of KCCA earns close to 10 times what the Chief Justice of Uganda earns; a driver in KCCA earns two times the salary of the chairperson of Electoral commission; salary of a Permanent secretary who is the Accounting Officer of a government ministry; a Director in KCCA earns six times the salary of the Supreme Court Judge, more than fifteen times that of the CAO of a district, twenty times that of a Medical doctor! The commissioner general of URA earns more than 15 times the salary of the Army Commander and IGP and seven times the salary of IGG! The Managing Director of NSSF earns more than 12 times the salary of the Secretary of Electoral Commission and with his salary over 200 primary school teachers can be paid! The 5th paradox is one of many more religions as moral decay increases, our churches are overflowing and Nakivubo, Namboole have seen the biggest crowds during overnight prayers. The 6th paradox is one of more oversight institutions established, corruption worsening and the 7th is that at the time we are said to be democratizing, draconian laws and controls are on the increase and we are closely moving to rule by law, rather than by law. Another colleague from the National NGO Forum talks about the irony of a present and absent government at the same time. If you collapsed in front of Africana, it is unlikely that you will see government as if your debtors breathe hard on your neck, you will not see government, but try to pick a placard and demonstrate even on a subject such as corruption and you will know that government is present.

In my humble view, Uganda’s major primary problem is a politico economy one. Uganda’s political, economic and policy regime features a dominant power alliance of a few comfortable people consciously and sometimes unconsciously working to maintain a corrupt, patronage based status quo and outside the comfortable group is a growing majority restless to change the status quo as illustrated below:



The moral from the preceding discussion is that we can only do as much with the above status quo pertaining and while we do all in our means to fight against corruption we must know that there are many working against this very cause.

So while we may not, with our different constraints confront the bigger picture in its entirety, we at least should not undermine those that aim to change the status quo.

3. Corruption in Uganda

There is a lot to always write home about corruption in Uganda. For one, it may be the single most critical reason for the wide injustice we see today. It could, after politics, be the most debated subject on Uganda's airwaves and continues to occupy headlines in the print media. For this very reason, there are likely to be as diverse an opinion on this subject as you can find on anything! On my part, I would like to focus on four aspects of this subject: the concept; some myths around it; its magnitude and finally the various response actions.

To start with, corruption has been variously defined as 'abuse of office for private gain', with its most common manifestations being: bribery, financial leakages, conflict of interest, embezzlement, false accounting, fraud, influence peddling, nepotism, theft of public monies or assets. The first point to make about the definition is that it is too inward looking and narrow as it focuses on the idea that someone must be in public office to be corrupt and also assumes that corruption is an act that is driven by private interests, when in fact it could be oiling wider interests. Also, a lot happens outside the 'office'. The second point to make about the manifestations or corruption is that some aren't necessarily seen as bad in our socio-cultural contexts, rather the art of generosity by those 'favoured' to be in spaces where they can steal. Because of these conceptual issues, a colleague of mine at ActionAid argues that corruption has become such a corrupt concept that it may not appeal that much. He argues that corruption is a proxy concept to theft of resources meant for others or the collective and as such we have proxy solutions proffered in the fight against corruption, with a proxy target. Reflecting on whether there is an equivalent of the concept in any of our local languages, we struggled and so as civil society, we have just branded this struggle 'theft' after all what is happening in OPM, Public Service, Education, Parliament, Ministry of Works, Bank of Uganda, Ministry of Finance and many more public offices is blatant theft and other manifestations like influence peddling, nepotism and others simply facilitate theft of public resources and donor aid!

Next up are four myths about corruption that we must dispel to give us the energy to move ahead with our crusade.

Myth 1 - corruption is part of our lifestyle as a people.

Many have argued that corruption is not just a political enterprise or patronage, but it is a social institution that internally reproduces in our lives. According to this narrative, it is impossible to rid ourselves of this cancer and should simply adapt to its reality at worst and at best tolerate some of it. This view is not only defeatist, but it is also not true. A popular idea of 'two publics' operating in Africa at the same time has been popularized by Peter Eke, a Professor from West Africa. He suggests that corruption thrives in Africa because we live in two contrasting publics, the first is the primordial public ruled by traditional and cultural norms that do not entertain corrupt practices and so when one is asked to safely keep collections for weddings, burials and introductions, not a cent is stolen. But in the second public, called the 'civic and modern' public where we all come to earn a living, we mercilessly steal. Sometimes we still from the latter and distribute in the former and that is why people in the village will mobilize for 'their man' minister implicated in grand corruption scandals. Again this myth must be expunged because it is self defeating for it actually proves that we can have a theft free public driven by the logic of the primordial!

Myth 2 - that because everyone is sucked into the vice of corruption, no one has the moral authority to question the other.

This view is like the first one above defeatist. It arraigns everyone as a victim and thus propagates a victim doctrine that creates a comfort zone both for those involved in corruption and those trying to fight it. Very often, this view is raised as a diversionary tactic, a weapon by the corrupt or those benefiting from it. So we were challenged as civil society organisations behind the resurgent anti-theft campaign that we as corrupt and therefore cannot question government. My simple response is that indeed civil society organisations are an off-shoot from the same society that breeds the corrupt in the public and private sector and therefore there will be elements of corruption within civil society organisations. The big difference however is how we respond to it. In the organisation I work for and many others I know, there is a swift and decisive response with punitive action, while in government, a few cases notwithstanding, to a large extent impunity reigns. This view is also not fair to many Ugandans who live a decent, modest and honest life. It is thus not fair to say because a non-smoker interacts with smokers doing ‘their thing’; the former automatically is one!

Myth 3 - that the accelerated trends of corruption in Uganda is normal in the development trajectory.

A little bit of corruption is part of the hazards of development, the argument goes. Again this is a convenient scapegoat to condone what is going on.

Myth 4 - that the biggest corruption is by technocrats and so that is where the focus should be, rather than politicising the struggle!

While there may be evidence to this assertion, it is only part of the story. The environment created for corruption to flourish is as critical as the act itself. In fact in several cases, technocrats are only conduits and share the loot with their overseers, including politicians. Also there is something called taking political responsibility, a virtue that most of our politicians know not of! The final and most profound point about this myth is that it tantamount to an exoneration of political leaders as the blame is shifted to technocrats. For all the technocrats that are in Luzira, very little has changed in the various ministries and departments.

Magnitude of Corruption in Uganda

Corruption is one of the most difficult vices to assess magnitude of, for the simple reason that often there is no receipt for a transaction of corruption and also collusion and concealment is part of how it is kept alive. Decrying the syndicate nature with which it thrives, some have suggested the need for forensic audits to detect this cancer. A further complication is that corruption in some public offices is just the order of how things get done and so people actually make do with it to ‘aid service’ delivery such as in acquiring passports. Away from this difficulty though, there are known cases which we reflect on. Also studies conducted especially by institutions like the World Bank and organisations like Transparency International, as well outcomes from consistent and respectable work by agencies such as the Auditor General gives us something to start with.

First, it is fair to say that more people lose out than gain from corruption and so while there is a burgeoning industry of corruption benefactors, majority actually suffer the brunt negatively whether in terms of a poor road, delayed remuneration, lack of drugs in health units or failing agricultural extension services - the majority almost always suffer.

Second, there is a high opportunity cost to theft and swindling of taxes and donor aid. To illustrate using a few obvious examples: with UBOS revealing that 4/10 residents of Kampala unable to afford mosquito nets, the 63 billion pensions scandal, if deployed differently would provide all adults above the age of 18 years with mosquito nets and save the lives of hundreds who die every day of malaria related complications. The 200 billion ID scam, would be able to de-worm 13 million children below the age of 10 years for a whole 10 years. Controlling corruption is estimated can reduce child mortality, whose figures currently stand at 127/1000 by two-thirds!

Third, ending corruption in government is estimated by economists would increase per capita income four-fold from its current 490 to 1960, effectively surpassing the National Development Plan (NDP) target of 614. Further economists estimate that acting on graft would add 3% to our economic growth statistic currently at 5.5% and this could unlock opportunities for millions of unemployed youth and create an environment for support to critical sectors. Instead, Bank of Uganda estimates that withdrawal of aid by donors could reduce growth to 4.5% from its current level.

By any measure therefore it is clear that the country is losing enormously to corruption and that it itself is enough reason to do something about it and to this subject we turn below.

Efficacy of Current Response Actions

The extent of corruption is so bad that, it is easy to forget some really important work being done by determined agencies like the Auditor General, Criminal Investigations Department (CID), Inspectorate of Government (IGG), select committees of Parliament, the remarkable role of the media in exposing scandals and fomenting public discussion and determined efforts by civil society organisations. It is fair to say that government agencies and non state actors have done a great job in one dimension - exposing corruption, investigating and building body of evidence, but this hasn't been followed up by decisive action in the same proportion.

The response action by the key protagonists; government itself, Parliament and politicians, media, civil society organisations and donors can be divided into five key categories: a) instituting legal, policy and institutional frameworks; b) strengthening systems that can greatly reduce the possibilities of corruption occurring such as systems improvement; c) instituting commissions of inquiry into large-scale scandals; d) naming and shaming; and finally d) withdrawing trust and support to government by both citizens and donors!

In terms of the legal and institutional, Uganda ranks as one of the best in Africa with regards to anti-corruption legislation and strategies, at least on paper! Various institutions have been created to tackle different aspects of this cancer and so you have the Inspectorate of Government receiving and carrying out investigations on allegations of corruption in government and other public offices, the Auditor General has done in its annual audits of several government ministries, departments and agencies, the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) does investigations and has lately provided unprecedented leadership in breaking criminal rackets in government, while Directorate of Public Prosecutions focuses on prosecuting those indicted by various investigations. We thus don't lack institutions or policy frameworks. The big question is the capacity of these institutions to play their role efficiently and effectively and the resources as well as political support they get to play their role. Added to this is the challenge of whether there is enough incentive within government to take decisive action on the evidence generated through various anti-corruption agencies. The public perception is quite negative about this critical aspect and the various institutions mentioned above have simply been accused of being part of a menu that continues to

fuel the hope agenda, even when action is not as decisive. In this regard, cynics have suggested that the institutional and legal framework is part of a public relations gimmick.

When we get to the systems, again we can count endless attempts made to set standards in public procurement, in large part inspired by donor-sponsored reforms rather than a genuine appreciation from 'inside', in instituting systems such as the famous IFMS and several other automated systems. Again, as with the case above, anything put in place by 'man' can be undone by 'man' and most of these systems haven't prevented the escalation of corruption. They may have reduced the volume of paper work, but haven't really prevented the escalation of corruption. In fact these systems have created geniuses' whose job is to break into the system and siphon tax payers money and foreign aid out of government accounts.

On the numerous Commissions of Inquiry, be they on Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, GAVI, Corruption in the Police, that of Junk Helicopters, in URA, during CHOGM and many others, we have seen some symbolic actions and reforms here and there, but several institutions that have been investigated remain as corrupt. These Commissions of inquiry have ended up giving Ugandans a lot of entertainment from vehicles that consume both petrol and diesel or even paraffin for the same engine to questions about whether those who were busy 'eating sausages' while others fought to liberate Uganda have any right to question the latter. The short and the long is that action on Commission of Inquiry reports leave a lot to be desired. In some cases, these very commissions of inquiries are followed up by more commissions of inquiry on the commissions of inquiry leading to wastage of tax payer's money and unwinding processes.

CSOs have invested in a process to name and shame corrupt officials, especially those implicated in various government audits and inquiries. They have also famed those believed to be at the forefront of the fight against corruption and labelled some public officials and leaders Icons of Integrity. While these efforts are to be applauded because they take the agenda to citizens, they still fall short of decisive action, have been inconsistent and in some cases led to a backlash on agencies doing it. Given the rather proxy nature of corruption as explained earlier, many officials named and shamed continue to steal without remorse. Something more serious ought to be done beyond filling our pages with names of thieves and corrupt officials.

Finally, we have over the last decade seen an increasing trend towards withdrawal of trust by citizens and donors. In response to calls not to elect corrupt officials, citizens have in some cases voted out leaders that betray the public trust and continue to steal. Ironically some continue to be voted in, year in, year out! Some constituencies are simply unfazed by these scandals possibly owing to what we discussed earlier - the 2 public analogy! Still on the subject of withdrawing trust, one cannot fail to notice the actions taken by donors to withdraw aid, withheld disbursements or change financing models. While these actions have indeed put pressure on government, their response has been mixed. Some government agencies and officials have responded arrogantly and asked donors to pack and go, while others have apologised and promised to repay donor money, even when we are not sure the source for these refunds! Two contradictory situations are discernible when looking and donor aid withdrawals. First, a tragedy in the aid withdrawals is that in some cases (not all), the end beneficiary is hardest hit and so there is double jeopardy! Second, the impact of these withdrawals for some remains unfelt for the village woman in Ntungamo who never gets any service from government health facilities or agricultural extension, continue to live like there is no foreign aid anyway! So the net effect of donor aid withdrawal in the medium to long term may be less than what we anticipate it to be. In any case, donors despite some effort towards collective action still act in isolation as they have different constituencies. In such circumstances, donors may do better challenging their money through more accountable agencies as the aid business is important both for aid giving country's foreign policy as it is for the recipients domestic agendas.

Despite all the above efforts however, corruption remains systemic and clearly it is fair to say that there so much more getting lost than we currently know. It may well mean that the current cases are just the tip of the iceberg for if the Auditor General went to the Ministry of Works, State House, ministry of Defence, parastatals, Government Commissions, Ministry of Finance, we could be choked by the scale of what is going on. If the same level of scrutiny we see of the public sector is replicated in the private sector and in civil society to expose corruption, the country could melt. So what then is the missing link?

As I conclude this section, I would like to reiterate what I think is the most important missing link in the fight against corruption - Leadership!

Be it in politics, civil society or in any government ministry or agency, the most critical factor in the fight against corruption is a clean, exemplary and decisive leadership. The biggest challenge to Uganda's governance today is 'failing leadership' at different levels, including within civil society. Many who occupy leadership positions either use it to amass private wealth, extend personal or group interest in a grand 'kleptocratic' regime that condones corruption with impunity and reproduces the exploitative governance styles that we knew the colonial era and military dictatorships to be. The much needed 'servant leadership' remains a possibility but requires a lot more courage to confront existing bottlenecks.

We know that leadership shapes culture and so before we hang all the technocrats or Accounts Assistants that actually handle the cash, we must query the environment in which the loot happens. Most often we copy what our leaders do or at least work to satisfy what we see as their character. With a leadership with integrity that epitomizes service for the public good, the right environment will be created for institutional, individual and collective action against corruption. I am confident to say that in Uganda, this is what we lack at the helm, in ministries, in political parties and even in civil society and this remains the single most critical thing we should work towards.

4. Civil Society's effort against corruption

The concept civil society remains notoriously slippery in theory, but its practice civil society is much easier to fathom. *On the onset, I want to make a difference between civil society organisations and a civil society. The latter is an outcome of the efforts of the former and the former in turn strengthens and aids the work of the latter.*

In this section I present a bit of the theory and then the practice. First to the theory -- today, various definitions vaguely describe civil society as the whole of humanity left over once government and for-profit firms are excised, covering all those organisations that fill in the spaces between the family, the state and the market. A common reference point in contemporary literature is provided by Gordon White who in the 90's defined civil society, as 'an associational realm between the state and the family populated by organisations which are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests or values'. In reality however, the boundaries of civil society are fuzzy and in a country like Uganda it is common to find multiple identities of people wearing different hats at the same time -- private sector or business very early in morning, government official towards lunchtime and civil society by day end. All this has implications on relationship, values and behaviour of civil society.

In practice when we talk about civil society in Uganda, we make a prompt error to equate it to NGOs who are only but one actor in the civil society space. Other important players in the civil society space include; trade unions operating under a very constrained neo-liberal environment where capital is favoured over labour and the latter is exploited, often with the aid of government; churches and faith organisations; professional organisations such as medical associations, the law society, think tanks; business and traders' associations; community based organisations operating around self interest; burial and other self help groups such as cooperatives and credit associations; some sections of the media and their associations; the academia and related institutions; youth and women's movements, among others.

These organisations are engaged in varied activities ranging from providing services to those in need (including themselves) - in this category you will find the type of NGOs often referred to as service delivery; they compliment and supplement government. Other NGOs have taken up the duty of advocacy for public interest issues proactively or reactively, in policy and judicial spaces and in some other public spaces especially in reaction to excesses of the state. Majority of civil society are working towards self-interest and mobilize for industrial action as a bargaining tool for their members' interests; traders, teachers unions, academic staff associations and business associations who have more recently taken to the streets in Uganda are driven by this agenda and not necessarily that of the public good.

The modus operandi of several civil society organisations oscillate between needs based to rights based approaches, with some having a combination of the two. Needs when interventions respond to needs of particular target groups or society such as the need for education, the need for health services, the need for food, the need for humanitarian assistance in the face of disaster, the need for agricultural inputs and more. In responding to needs, civil society organisations often directly provide the services needed - the government is usually (though not always) very happy with this group. On the other hand, rights work is targeted at defending constitutional and '*universally accepted*' common rights issues. Many governance, rights and public interest civil society groups target the public and struggle to have the media attend their function. Their activity isn't complete without media coverage. Others negotiate quietly with government or state institutions on issues they are uncomfortable with.

The moral of all the above is a call on us to appreciate the diversity of actors within civil society and caution us from the mistake we often make in thinking that CSOs are always working for the same purpose. An additional constraint to civil society organisations' work is that they do not raise any significant resources for their operations from within and so have to depend on unpredictable and often short-span projects and many of their actions cannot be sustained in the longer term!

The Role of Civil Society Organisations

So with a fair understanding of the bigger picture, a discussion of corruption in Uganda and response by different players and finally with an understanding of what constitutes civil society in Uganda, with all its constraints, below I share what I consider the 3 critical roles civil society organisations can play in the fight against corruption. Beyond the theory, in each case I provide some practical examples of what we have done in the past or are doing presently.

A. Information, Education and Building Citizen Agency

An important and complimentary role civil society can and is already playing is that of providing information to build public education for action against corruption. By far the leading conduit of

information on corruption is the media in its diversity, and for this they must be applauded for they have broken news, courageously shamed and tried to present balanced information. However, media is also driven by the desire for 'new news' every single hour and this inhibits their ability to go deeper and or sustain a particular story to its logical conclusion. One would argue, it is not their role in first place anyway. So comes in CSOs who do not just take media stories forward, but often they have more time and possible resources to undertake more research. Further, CSOs, unlike media has a more intentional purpose of creating awareness for action and not just for information. In the more recent times, we have:

- We have run campaigns including one dubbed '*return our money campaign*' against money irregularly given to Members of Parliament. We even dared and took the Parliamentary Commission to Court! While we did not win the case, we did create a national conversation and debate about the betrayal some MPs were to us as tax payers. A number of them paid the ultimate price during the 2011 elections and we believe next time, they will respect the voters a bit more.
- We are currently completing a *trans-regime analysis of corruption trends* and opportunity the opportunities lost to Uganda as part of the public education agenda. A preliminary quantification of the loss to theft of public resources in the last 50 years suggests that we could have in addition to maintaining the entire referral hospitals across Uganda, built up at least 15 more Hospitals of Mulago's stature in the 15 original districts of Uganda. We could have put up at least 4 Power Dams of the size and power of Owen-Falls in the regions of Uganda and supplied electricity to millions in darkness. We could have maintained, improved and expanded the railway network across the country and eased transport of goods and services in Uganda and significantly reduced the cost of doing business in Uganda and made it a more attractive investment destination. We could have upgraded our national park infrastructure to boost tourism at least 10-fold in terms of revenue.

This type of analysis and juxtaposition of losses to the country, if done in a sustained way, we believe will create a good basis for citizen action against corruption.

B. Citizen Mobilization for Action

The second important role civil society can play beyond just providing information, which if given in excess quantities may actually over doze citizens and deflate them, is mobilization for action. Many a time this may be referred to as 'incitement' by the police, but we shall not relent. Information without action just like faith without action, the Bible tells us, is dead! In a resurgent and rebranded anti-corruption struggle we embarked on recently, we are mobilizing citizens to:

- **Wear black every Monday** as a symbol of a sustained struggle against theft of tax payer's money and donor aid till we see sustained decisive action taken against this cancer. In addition, every 1st Monday of the month, visible action will be taken by members of a Black Monday Movement that we have launched across the country, all wearing black. We shall go and speak one-to-one with market vendors and traders, taxi operators and boda boda riders, in churches and mosques, in pubs, in Universities and demand that every student wears black every Monday, and in all other public spaces to intensify public knowledge of the threat to national development that wanton theft of public has become. This non violent civic action, we believe can build up to millions and be triggered as and when appropriate to take more industrial action.
- **As part of the mobilization, we have called for an Economic Boycott of all blacklisted**

businesses owned by thieves or accomplices forthwith. We have started by listing hotels and all NGOs will be called upon never to hold workshops in such facilities. We shall blacklist petrol stations and chains, pubs and restaurants, supermarkets and shopping malls and telecommunication companies owned by thieves in government or those in which they have shares and urge all Ugandans and well-wishers to spend their money elsewhere. This list will continue growing and we shall do the same at district level. Every month, we shall update the list of businesses and companies that we need to boycott and in so doing weaken the economic backbone of the oppressors and accomplices. We may be accused of economic sabotage and a legislation prepared for us, but we shall till overcome.

- **We are popularising an action to socially out-cast the corrupt and create a virtual Citizen Prison for them till they apologize and ‘turn away from sin’** - with the evidence generated through investigation reports, we shall list politicians, companies and businesses implicated in grand theft of public resources, we shall proceed to exorcise them from our ‘public and social functions’ and put them in a virtual citizen prison. And once they are in this prison, we cannot invite them to open our meetings and conferences, we shall ban them from social functions like weddings & introductions, we shall not give them respect in public and remind them about where they belong, whenever we see them in Supermarkets, workshops and other public spaces. Thieves must be in prison until they return stolen money and wealth.

In this social exorcism action, we make a special appeal to leaders of Churches, Mosques and other places of worship to do 4 simple things: a) develop special prayers for theft and say this every time they deliver sermons; b) never accord special seats for corrupt public officials in our places of worship; c) do special cleansing prayers of all monies received in offertories and tithes; d) reject and move away from the ‘brown envelopes’ that politicians and business people advance them for it is ‘blood money’. If our places of worship do not institute such measures, we the folk will ‘vote’ with our feet to other places of worship that are compliant.

- **Creating a Conscience Fund** for those willing to repent and turn away from sin! Another interesting idea being considered by civil society is the creation of a conscience fund for corrupt officials and thieves who feel convicted to return stolen funds and ill gotten wealth. This amnesty approach could in time become a rewarding initiative that could repair our souls and prepare us for the next life for those of us who believe in our motto, ‘For God and my Country’. It may also just become one of the biggest source off-budget fund that can be used to finance development in Uganda.

C. Integrity Promotion to compliment the Anti-Corruption Agenda

The other important role civil society aims to play is integrity promotion to glorify and profile leaders and other Ugandans who live for something. Leaders of integrity are a rare and possibly endangered species today and so as civil society we believe we must protect, conserve and profile them. As argued earlier, unless we have this type of leaders supported, our fight against corruption will achieve so much less than what we can. Like the old adage goes, charity begins at home and a pot is best built from the inside. We as CSOs must reflect the very features we expect of the state, otherwise we shall lack the credibility to change the other and fall for one of the myths explained earlier. To this end, we have and commit to:

- **Re-igniting past efforts for an annual Name and Fame Book**, the last one was produced over 4 years ago by the Anti-Corruption Coalition. In the same vein, we need to re-ignite the Icons of Integrity Awards that ACCLAIM, NGO Forum and others started a couple of years

back. We must make these more national processes than just a Kampala-based initiative so that we create a national conversation around this. Done regularly and for a sustained period, it could become one of the most potent steps to creating a positive project to glorify good and denounce evil.

- **Redressing internal governance challenges within the NGO sector** to strengthen our resolve to fight against corruption in the public sector. Already, there is an NGO Quality Assurance Certification process that helps NGOs grown in accountability and governance. As more NGOs genuinely embrace the QuAM, the sector will rid itself of ‘spoilt tomatoes’ and present itself as an even more credible actor against the cancer of corruption.

D. Sustained Advocacy Support on existing efforts

Another important role for civil society organisations is that of sustained advocacy in support of ongoing efforts by both state and non state actors. Seeking collaboration with agencies like the Inspectorate of Government, the Auditor General and Parliament has the potential to reap from synergy and collective action for a common purpose. In addition to all that we are doing in this area, we would particularly like to take advantage of the ongoing debates over an amendment to the anti-corruption legislation to:

- **Produce a more Punitive legislation for Theft of Public Resources and donor aid** - one of the reasons corruption thrives in Uganda is that it is not a risky venture because existing laws while acclaimed to be some of the best in the region, unfortunately still do not go far enough. To make corruption a risky business, we need a law that turns the burden of proof on the accused. We need a law that allows, in cases where evidence has been adduced by a respectable institution like the Auditor General and corroborated by Parliament, property to be confiscated of all those implicated in corruption and auctioned. We need a law that can pronounce that for aggravated cases of corruption and collusion as we see in the Pensions Scandal, the OPM Scandal, UPE Scandal and many more, the penalty is life imprisonment.

Most importantly for all the above punitive measures to work, we need a leadership that has a track record and demonstrates commitment to this cause. We also need a leadership and government that will implement the law justly and not one that will abuse the law and use it to persecute political nemeses for we shall end up with political prisoners confined to life imprisonment rather than the real thieves.

E. Economic Empowerment of ordinary people

Finally, civil society must have a response to patronage and the indignity of poverty! The argument here is that while in theory it is in vogue to talk about mobilizing citizens to hold leaders accountable and exert their rights, in practice, we all know that hungry, vulnerable and poor people have more near term survival priorities to deal with. This category is very vulnerable to being recruited into a patronage network and their immediate survival needs must be taken care of before they are able to meaningfully and sustainably engage in the actions we expect of a civil society. We must therefore:

- In rural areas of Uganda peasant agriculture is the main source of livelihood and supporting the people access necessary inputs to increase productivity and marketing of their produce is an important way of economically relieving them from destitution. One particularly important way of supporting communities is by encouraging collectives and the idea of cooperatives,

dismantled by the state in 80's and 90's aided by neoliberal policy agenda. It is important that civil society organisations spearhead the revival of the cooperative movement, especially producer and marketing cooperatives as a step towards collective bargaining, solidarity and insulation from agents of neo-liberalism and the individualistic culture that underpins its survival.

- We also can organise the urban elite into cooperative societies that will fundamentally change how we look at ourselves and placing in society. We in this room, like many Ugandans are vulnerable to shocks should we lose our jobs, we worry about our children and their education and thus fear to take risks. We must find alternative sources of livelihoods other than borrowing from extortionist banks - cooperative societies can help us as much. Thus beyond peasant and agricultural communities, civil society organisations should also encourage the middle class to join cooperative societies where they can save, collectively invest and pool resources to compliment our incomes.

5. Conclusion

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate the following points that i feel are critical 'take-aways', just in case my presentation was too long to pick out anything. First, we must have leaders of integrity and a track record against corruption and not ones that will condone corruption or selectively forgive some and not others. Because leadership shapes culture, value based leadership can deal a decisive change from the top to the very bottom.

Second, various anti-corruption crusaders each have unique strengths but also limitations. We must therefore ensure that we do not dissipate one another's energy by glorifying our way as the only way. Confronting the 'elephant in the room' from different sides and working for a common goal, both tactical and strategic is critical. Third, we must not fall into the trap of the myths explain earlier for as a people, we have everything it takes to ensure that every Ugandan lives a life in dignity!

Finally, civil society organisations in Uganda are open to cooperation with the IGG and other agencies of the government to deal a decisive blow against corruption. In this cooperation however, we must not name names of one another and respect our autonomy and perspectives for where one sits, determines where they will stand, at least for the initial rise.

About ActionAid Uganda

ActionAid Uganda is a national organisation registered under the laws of Uganda. It is an Affiliate member of ActionAid International, a Global Federation working in over 40 countries with poor, excluded and vulnerable people, their organisations and other players to overcome poverty and injustice.

ActionAid believes that the indignity of poverty is an injustice and a violation of rights arising from unequal power relations right from the family, to global institutions. Further, we believe that an end to poverty and injustice is possible through purposeful individual and collective actions driven by the agency of people, including the poor and often excluded.

The organisation's interventions in its Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) is guided by a twin-logic and intent of seeking to transform the condition in which people live and their position in the decision making process and power structure.

Our Values:

Mutual Respect; Equity and Justice; Honesty and Transparency

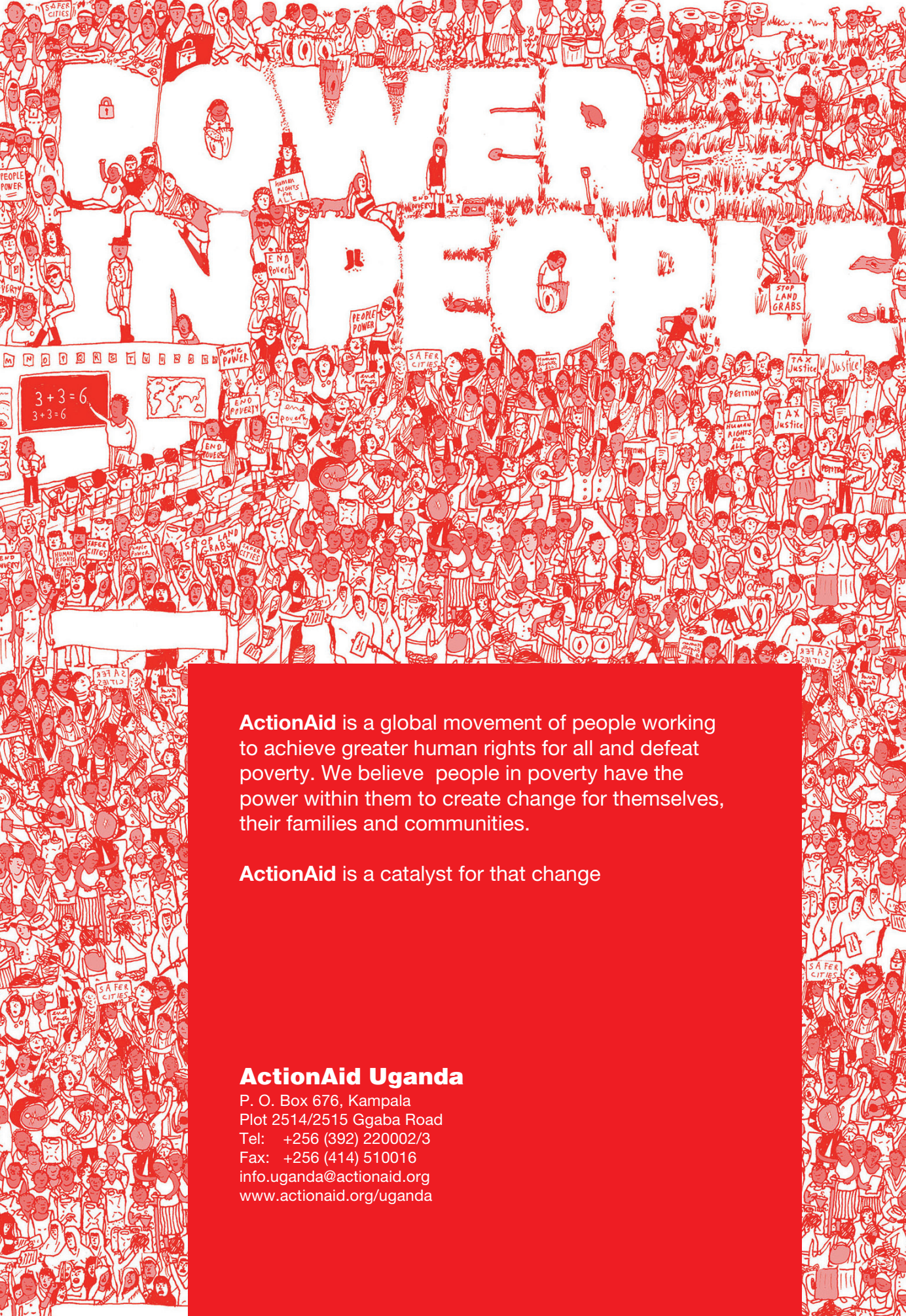
Solidarity with the Poor, Courage of Conviction; Independence; Humility

More on ActionAid - www.actionaid.org

Acknowledgements

This paper is informed by contributions, some written, others verbal from colleagues in civil society. I would like to particularly thank Benson Ekwee of the Public Affairs Centre in Soroti, Eunice Musiime and Richard Ssewakiryanga from the National NGO Forum, Edward Iruura, David Mbarekye and Nickson Ogwal from ActionAid Uganda, Cissy Kagaba from the Anti-Corruption Coalition (ACCU), Helena Okiring from Uganda Youth Network, Leonard Okello from The Uhuru Institute (TUI), Justus Rugambwa from DENIVA, Bishop Zac Niringeye and Jackie Asiimwe for their valuable input.

Errors and omissions are however my full responsibility!



ActionAid is a global movement of people working to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities.

ActionAid is a catalyst for that change

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