

BLACK MONDAY

Citizen Action against theft of our Money... Enough is Enough!

How the Covid-19 cash, donations were squandered

EDITORIAL

Government's failure to distribute food relief was pitiful

A sizable number of Ugandans poked holes in the design of government food distribution effort during the Covid-19 pandemic where millions of people were placed under a national lockdown, on grounds that it was full of ambiguities and inefficiency executed.

Government mobilised relief food donations from various institution and individuals to help the needy. However, the distribution was highly wanting.

They say the food it failed to have the necessary impact to more than 1.5 million people. The figure was what was estimated to be in dire need of food because they are low income earners and whose incomes are from hand to mouth.

The total lockdown that was meant to stop the spread of Covid-19. Commentators said the number of people who needed food support was underestimated.

The argument was that vulnerable households were not only in Kampala slums where the urban poor stay and highly populated areas but other regions across the country have such dwellings.

So, when only Kampala-based vulnerable people were targeted, those scattered across the country were left to their own desperate means.

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Ministry of Health officials have denied mismanaging Covid-19 money despite public uproar.



At the start, Uganda was applauded for combating the novel Covid-19 when it instituted a lockdown that lasted months. Uganda's first Covid-19 case was discovered in March at the country's Entebbe International Airport but by August the Eastern African nation of more than 42 million people had just recorded just over 1,200 cases and five deaths, an extremely low total for such large population. But by Christmas, festivities things had gotten out of hand with 33,360 cases, and 245 deaths reported and the hospitals which are incompetently facilitated were overrun by the Covid-19 patients to the extent that the Ministry of Health told Ugandans bluntly that they are on their own. "Deaths due

to Covid-19 are within our families and friends," Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, the minister of health who was then campaigning to become the Lira District woman Member of Parliament said. "It's our individual and collective responsibility to practice safe behaviors such as: Maintaining social distance and avoiding gatherings and crowds – always wear a face mask when in public."

Uganda's Covid-19 response according to many analysts has largely failed because of corruption and the heightened political environment that made people to wrongly believe that either Covid-19 doesn't exist it's not fatal. "The political class were the first to contravene the Covid-19 SOPs," Dr. Ekwaro Obuku, the former President of Uganda

Medical Association said referring to Standard Operating Procedures. "Why did they expect them citizens to do? The irony was that the first government official who was caught red-handed violating the SOPs was Dr Aceng who was supposed to be guide Ugandans in observing the procedures. In footage that went viral, the minister was seen with a crowd of mask-less women singing songs and it later emerged that she was in the process of mobilizing support for eyeing the position of Lira District Woman MP seat. Several interpretations were made of Dr Aceng's action with many in the opposition concluding that perhaps Covid-19 is just being used as a tool to gauge the regime's opponents.

"When I went to the venue where she (Dr Aceng) was launching the

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distribution of face masks, people were crowded and it was only the minister wearing face mask," Ms Joy Atim Ongom, the incumbent Lira District Woman Member of Parliament (MP), reacted to Ms Aceng's actions. "What the minister did is contrary to measures she has been advocating for to contain the spread of coronavirus which includes regular hand washing, social distancing and wearing of face mask in public," she added. Though Dr Aceng denied that she was holding a political rally saying she was "training people how to properly use masks, it seems it was too little too late, as Covid-19 increasingly became a partisan issue with the opposition accusing the ministry of Health of using the ruling party's cadres during the launch of the face masks instead of health workers.

The Covid-19 pandemic put governments across the world under immense pressure to react quickly and decisively.

In Uganda, it came at critical year in which electioneering was getting into high gear as the political actors were getting ready for the 2021 general elections.

But once contagion took a foothold in the country, mass gatherings were banned and people

were told to stay at home with the exception of what came to be known as essential workers. While his competitors were largely confined to their homes, President Museveni who has been in power since 1986 was enjoying free coverage on all television stations and radio stations as he was frequently updating the country on the latest on Covid-19.

For instance, by June 2020, Museveni had made no fewer than 16 live Presidential addresses on Covid-19 in less than three months. While a motley crew of experts in public policy have glorified this 'strong' leadership, many Ugandans increasingly question the politics behind Covid-19 government measures.

Some questioned the way he took over from health experts to update the nation on how the war against the pandemic was unfolding. They instantly retreated to the back seat.

The fight against Covid-19 got more political when Mr Museveni put Resident District Commissioners (RDC) instead of public health officials at the centre of fighting Covid-19 disease, springing them back to relevancy but yet again bringing in question their role in light of next year's general elections.

Dozens of the individuals and companies that donated money and other items to the Covid-19 task force.



The idea that Covid-19 was a money-making venture for the political class and the technocrats gathered momentum in December when the Ministry of Finance's Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) released a report accusing the ministry of health of outright corruption.





Mr Abbas Ali of Yoshino Trading Limited (middle) handing over keys to Hon. Mary Karooro Okurut, the Minister of General Duties in the Prime Minister's Office also the political overseer of the National Response Fund to Covid-19. Left is the chairman of the fund Mr Emmanuel Katongole. Right is the secretary and Administrator Ms Kisaka Dorothy.



The RDCs who are ideally supposed to be civil servants who are in charge of monitoring government were charged during the lockdown by Mr Museveni with heading each district's Covid-19 taskforce and one of their roles was to clear those who are in swift need of use of private vehicles to transport sick people to hospitals.

The RDCs who were soon overwhelmed by hundreds of people who either called them or turned up at their offices seeking clearance to travel were tasked by the president to collect all cars used by public servants ostensibly to evacuate possible Covid-9 patients.

"A citizen should not receive

a service from a faceless 'government'. No, they should see a hand linked to a face that will be on a ballot paper in the next election," Dr Olive Kobusingye a researcher at Makerere University's College of Health Sciences says. "So, the president becomes the giver of all good things and the legislator becomes the welfare system, a mini-ministry of this and that. Health, Education, Agriculture, even security."

She said that RDCs become a catch-all within the district.

"The minimum education requirement for one to become an RDC is Senior 4. Even more important than education and

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni flags off vehicles donated to Covid-19 Response Team to help in the fight against the spread of Corona virus pandemic in the country. According to the donations lists, by July 2020, the Covid-19 Fund Secretariat received over 1,500 donors.

skills, they [RDCs] are loyal to the president. Now the RDC is the person in charge of coordinating the Emergency Medical Services during a pandemic. Institutions aside, we have spent decades perfecting official corruption. The knee-jerk response to any crisis was bound to be, 'Great! Where is the money?' So now there appears to be more time and energy spent on splitting the money than on ensuring Ugandans survive the dual dangers of Covid-19 and the lockdown."

Corruption

In order to go through the Covid-19 induced lockdown government had to look for extra

finances but drumming up billions for the government will always going to be a thorny issue in a country forever rocked by high-profile corruption scandals. Public suspicion of government corruption and mismanagement in Uganda in ever high and this hasn't helped the fight against coronavirus.

"The feeling within the general public was that while they were busy suffering under the lockdown," Dr. Rhoda Wanyenze, the dean of Makerere University's school of Public Health said. "The political elite and civil servants were enriching themselves on Covid-funding. That's why they didn't take the disease seriously, in the first place."

In April, the tone was set when four top officials in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), who are accused of fraudulent procurement of relief food for people affected by the Covid-19-induced lockdown.

The officials include Permanent Secretary Christine Guwatudde, Mr Joel Wanjala (Under Secretary and accounting officer), Mr Martin Owor, (commissioner for disaster preparedness and head of Covid-19 taskforce) and Fred Lutimba (assistant commissioner in charge of procurement).

The group contracted several companies that included; Aponye Uganda Limited which was given Shs19 billion to supply several kilograms of maize each at Shs3,

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000, Mandela Millers Limited which was given Shs9 billion and Afro Kai Limited which was paid Shs2 billion.

The other companies include Mehta Group C/o SCoul which was given Shs900 million, Operation Wealth Creation which was paid Shs450 million, Pearl Dairy Farmers Limited with a bill of Shs525 million, Nmacks Investments Limited Shs225 million and Global Center Limited Shs240 million.

The state insisted that the quadruple used their offices to defraud government after making

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Uganda was plunged into another finance related scandal when on April 8, 2020, MPs allocated themselves Shs 20 million from a Shs923b supplementary budget designated to Covid-19. Only Shs. 294b of the total budget went towards the government’s multi-sectoral response.

false entries of the award letters to the companies to supply relief items purporting that the money had been allocated by the OPM contracts committee which was false. The case has now been committed to the High Court for trial.

Before the ink would dry, Uganda was plunged into another finance related scandal when on April 8, 2020, MPs allocated themselves Shs 20 million (about \$5,300 each, totaling Shs10 billion) from a Shs923b supplementary budget designated to Covid-19. Only Shs. 294b of the total budget went towards the government’s multi-sectoral response. Much of the remaining money was classified defense expenditure raising questions where government priorities were. Though some MPs returned the money following a court order, the Speaker of Parliament. Rebecca Kadaga, ordered MPs to defy the court and keep the money which they claimed was to buy food for their constituents who were hit by



Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health Diana Atwine receives a donation from Arab Contractors.

hunger since they weren’t working. To many Ugandans, not working, means not eating.

The idea that Covid-19 was a money making venture for the political class and the technocrats gathered momentum in December when the Ministry of Finance’s Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU) released a report accusing the ministry of health of outright corruption.

In the report, the BMAU which prepares semi-annual and annual monitoring reports of selected government programmes and projects showed that whereas Sh2.2 trillion was spent in the first four months by the Ministry of Health, a lot of planned purchases were either not yet delivered or exaggeratedly priced by companies with “pitiable” track records.

The report, for instance pointed out that ambulances to evacuate patients were yet to be delivered but the ministry put up a quick a response saying that 33 type B ambulances had been received by the ministry and another 5 ambulances were going through the Customs clearing at the Kenya Port of Mombasa.

The BMAU report also castigated the ministry of health for not procuring beds, mattresses,



Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) Officials were produced in court on charges of alleged mismanagement of Covid-19 money.

blankets, bed sheets, 20 sleeper tents and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) facilities but the ministry denied the accusation instead it cited various extraneous factors as the reason it never delivered on time.

“While the Ministry acknowledges that the contract was signed in May 2020, it is important to find out why the delivery and installations had not commenced in the agreed timeline. The general public and the authors of this report are aware that Uganda went into a total lockdown in March 2020 and this greatly affected logistics among others,” the ministry said in a document signed off by its

permanent secretary Dr Diana Atwine. “However, contrary to what the report stated ‘deliveries and installations had not commenced by September 2020’, the plants were delivered in August 2020.”

The masks that never made it to the people

On December 10, when Patrick Oboi Amuriat, the FDC presidential candidate was campaigning in the Eastern district of Namisindwa which is a Covid-19 hotspot, possibly due it’s a proximity with Kenya, the crowd that turned up had no masks. Nathan Nandala Mafabi,

the FDC Secretary General, who was campaigning for Mr Amuriat had a simple message for the crowd: Government officials stole money meant for masks. Mr Mafabi's allegation stemmed from June when parliament has approved a supplementary budget of 1.087 trillion Shillings to smoothen the Covid-19 response by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade and other government entities.

In the supplementary budget which came just four days to the end of the financial year 2019-2020, whose total budget stood at 40.48 trillion, the Ministry of Health was to use Shs89 billion of the total approval to fund requirements for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The money was intended to procure face masks at Shs33 billion as part of the response to control the spread of the pandemic as the country eased the lockdown. Each mask would cost about Shs2, 400, ministry officials said.

The Ministry was also to use Shs2.3 billion for transport and allowances for the distribution of face masks, Shs37 billion for the procurement of test kits and laboratory consumables, Shs6 billion for tents, Shs4 billion for support to local governments for district-based surveillance activities in the 48 border districts and other districts with high number of Covid-19 cases and Shs7.04 billion for re-modelling of Intensive Care Units (ICUs) at various referral hospitals.

More corruption

That was not the end of the story. A few days after saying they would spend Shs 34 billion on procuring masks, Dr Aceng revealed how the budget had been increased to the tune of Shs 79 billion triggering rumors of corruption.

"The process will cost the government about Shs81 billion. The Shs79 billion is the cost of the masks and the 2 billion is the cost of distribution," Ms Aceng said. Without explaining why there a sudden change of figures. The masks are made up of 3 layers; the outer layer is 65% polyester and 35% cotton, the middle layer is made up of chiffon while the innermost layer is made of cotton."

Indeed, the BMAU report questioned the Shs 6.6 billion that was provided to Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to empower women groups to make face masks. The unit noted that although this initiative is good, there is need for relevant stakeholders to clarify questions to the mandate of the health ministry to provide empowerment funds. On-spot checks by the unit also established low use and uptake of government masks by Ugandans especially in Wakiso, Kampala and Mukono districts since many people preferred using their own masks than those provided by government due to quality issues.

Even as government was promising to distribute masks to every Ugandan above the age of 6 years it had failed to distribute food to all Ugandans who were living in urban centers of Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono as it had promised. 'Let those who studied maths help me.

Some of the Nobel companies that donated

Number	Organisation	Amount (UGX)
1	Africell Uganda	187,000,000
2	Bidco Uganda Ltd	421,280,000
3	Bidco Uganda Ltd	70,000,000
4	Coca Cola Beverages Africa	258,559,000
5	Crown Beverages	154,099,000
6	Dott Services	94,600,000
7	Equity Bank Uganda Limited & Equity Bank Staff	500,000,000
8	General Machinery Group	220,400,000
9	Government Of India	200,000,000
10	Great Lakes Energy	507,000,000
11	Indian Business Forum	89,000,000
12	Jan Japan Auto Motors	401,030,000
13	Kalpataru Power Transmission Ltd	45,600,000
14	Kawacom (U) Ltd	76,000,000
15	Keisokugiken Co. Ltd	70,000,000
16	Kwagalana Group	160,000,000
17	Lake Bounty Group	74,000,000
18	Madhvani Group and Kakira Sugar Limited	702,600,000
19	Malaysia Furnishings	50,000,000
20	Mandela Group Of Companies	362,000,000
21	Mehta Group	558,000,000
22	Metu Zhongtong Bus Industries-Metu Katabazi	110,000,000
23	Mobile Telephone Network (MTN)	330,000,000
24	Mukono Chinese Industrial Park, Tiang Tiang	120,000,000
25	Mulwana Group Of Companies	209,000,000
26	Overseas Pakistanis Global Foundation Africa	125,800,000
27	People's Republic Of China	200,000,000
28	Riham (Motor Vehicle)	82,000,000
29	Roko Construction Ltd	190,000,000
30	Rtd Brigadier General John Mugenyi	121,583,000
31	Silver Springs Hotel-Raghibir Sandhu	80,000,000
32	Sino Uganda Industrial Park Mbale	120,000,000
33	Steel And Tube	123,000,000
34	Sudhir Group Of Companies	148,000,000
35	TATA Uganda Ltd	143,000,000
36	Tembo Steel	123,000,000
37	The Grain Council Of Uganda	190,000,000
38	The Indian Association of Uganda	310,337,200
39	Top Bet Ltd	160,000,000
40	Toyota Uganda	245,000,000
41	Toyota Uganda	20,000,000
42	Yoshino Trading Ltd	5,000,000
43	Yoshino Trading Ltd	70,000,000

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It has taken government a month and so to distribute food relief to 1.5m people in Wakiso and Kampala," Yusuf Sserunkuma a social – political commentator said back then. "how long will it take the same government to distribute face masks to 37million people and so who are above 6years old. "Secondly," he added, "food was distributed per household but this time, mask will be per person as long as you are above 6 years."

As the government was waxing

lyrical about distributing masks healthcare workers across the country were yearning for Person Protective Equipment (PPE) which never came. "The health sector has about 35,000 health workers that they consider critical for patient care. They are employed in health facilities whose locations are well known - public, private, mission facilities," Dr Kobusingye said during the lockdown. "For the last 2 months, we have advised, begged, threatened, fundraised ... anything,

The Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) distributed some food in Kampala and Wakiso districts

to get a small proportion of these health workers some personal protective equipment (PPE) – and we have failed. Up to today, the majority of health workers still do not have the equipment they need to safely take care of patients. But in the next 2 weeks, the government is going to get a mask into the hands of some 30 million people – all across the country. Is there something they know that we do not?"

Politically, when the Covid-19 was in it's infancy, there had been

a multi-partisan backing for most of the proclamations aimed at stemming the spread of the virus, but partisan differences emerged along lines of colour and symbols associated with face masks. As was the case with the distribution of food relief during the lockdown, commentators similarly argue that political actors instrumentalised face masks for political profit.

Politicians and political parties distributed face masks customized with their colors and symbols.

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EDITORIAL >>

Government's failure to distribute food relief was pitiful

Even when the food was distributed, the majority of vulnerable households did not benefit. Later, there were reports that those who were in charge of food distribution hoarded it and later distributed it to their

There was lack of clear guidelines on the quality and process of distribution which played against the effort of mobilizing resources and distribution of relief.

This resulted in the abuse of the process that resulted in the arrests of several officials especially from the Office of the Prime Minister.

There was no plan to cater for the sick and vulnerable people as a special group that would be affected by the pandemic.

For example, people living with HIV/ Aids, children, the elderly and expectant mothers were nowhere in the relief distribution plan.

Lactating mothers were promised powdered milk but this promised was

honoured in few places where beans and posho were distributed. Given the giant task of distributing relief nationwide, it was clear that the OPM had no capacity to go it alone. Under the decentralized system, district task forces would have been engaged and vigorously involved. These established systems that have records of needy and vulnerable people from village level would have worked well to make the campaign effective.

The OPM needed to involve all line ministries like agriculture, finance, health and other relevant institution.

The food distribution effort also exposed the country which has rejected the re-establishment of regional food stock centres and silos to avoid a stampede of mobilising donors to intervene when such a crisis emerges.

Without such effort, similar mismanagement and corruption are likely to re-occur.



The UPDF Armoured Brigade distribute food in Masaka city

4. 1. 2012

Voter bribery, intimidation cited in Masindi Municipality polls



A man who tried to vote illegally being arrested at Kihuuba L-Z Polling Station.



A man who claimed to be from Kabalye Police Training School was caught at Kihuuba L-Z Polling Station trying to vote illegally.



Hoes that were dropped at the gate of the Electoral Commission tally centre in Masindi town.

VINCENT BABYESIZA

Widespread incidences of voter impersonation, defective

biometric voter verification machines, voter bribery and intimidation of voters by some security officials were cited in the January 2021 general elections in Masindi Municipality.

This is according to an independent Mobile Election observers who were deployed by the Uganda National NGO Forum.

At Kihuuba L-Z Polling Station, Kihuuba Ward, Mr Fred Baruhahara, the presiding officer informed the observers that a faulty biometric machine delayed voting. He said that although the fault was later fixed, the delay caused unnecessary tension to them.

The biometric machine that was



Mr Charles Bihemaiso, an agent Mr Joab Businge, a Forum for Democratic Change MP candidate was allegedly assaulted by security operatives who were deployed to disorient and intimidate supporters of Opposition groups from casting their vote.

deployed at Nyakagungu in Kiroya Play Grounds, Kabalye Polling Station, the Presiding Officer, Mr Julius Busobozi said it lost connection to the server so, it could not verify voters' identity.

At Kihuuba L-Z, Kihuuba Ward Polling Station, Mr Felix Ovot and Mr Isaac Bongomin who identified themselves as election observers, complained to the presiding officer that police recruits from Kabalye Police Training School illegally voted yet they were not registered voters.

They allegedly used names of people who had registered as voters. Black Monday could not readily verify the allegation.

At the same polling station, some voters claimed that by the time they showed up to vote, their names had already been ticked to imply that they had voted.

Mr Charles Bihemaiso, an agent Mr Joab Businge, a Forum for

Democratic Change MP candidate was allegedly assaulted by security operatives who were deployed to disorient and intimidate supporters of Opposition groups from casting their vote.

In a dramatic turn of events, on January 15, 2021, when Mr John Paul Osinde, the Masindi District Returning Officer declared Mr Businge as the winner of Masindi Municipality MP race, some individuals, in a mockery stunt, dropped hoes at the gate of the tallying centre claiming that the hoes had been given to them by Mr Businge's opponent.

It was further observed that voters were not following Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) like wearing masks, washing hands and social distancing to control the spread of Covid-19, which was a minimum requirement of the Electoral Commission.

The Uganda NGO Forum agent visited 13 polling stations; including Grammar, Kyamuleju, Good Hope, Good Times, Kisita Cell, Kihande P/S, Kabalega College, Greenfield, Kihande L-Z, Kihuuba P/S A-D, Kihuuba P/S L-Z, Nyakagungu L-Z and Kijunjubwa North among others.

THE COST OF CORRUPTION>>

SOME OF THE MANY CORRUPTION SCANDALS IN UGANDA!!!



WHAT UGANDANS LOST TO GRAFT OVER THE YEARS: A THIEF HAS 40 DAYS!!! THIS MUST STOP!

- Wear only black clothes every Monday to show you are tired of theft**
- Until all thieves have returned our money**
- 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 earn a living**

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