



L-R: Vice-President Jessica Alupo, Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja and First Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for East African Community Affairs Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, with other Members of Parliament during the first sitting of the 12th Parliament at Kololo Independence Grounds, yesterday



Kashari North MP Patrick Musunguzi and Mbarara District Woman MP Loydah Kyarikunda during the first sitting of the 12th Parliament at Kololo Independence Grounds yesterday. (Scan picture using the Vision Digital Experience to watch video)

By John Odyek
and Mary Karugaba

President Yoweri Museveni has warned ministers and other leaders that they will be held accountable if government programmes intended to fight poverty and create jobs fail to benefit citizens.

Addressing the first sitting of the first session of the 12th Parliament at Kololo Independence Grounds yesterday, Museveni said he will not tolerate leaders who neglect efforts to improve household incomes despite the availability of government funds.

"I do not want to hear of poverty in a homestead. I have been polite to ministers because they are mature people and I do not want to embarrass them. There is capital (Parish Development Model - PDM funds) in the parishes and wards. There is Emyooga. The money must be used to deal with poverty and create jobs."

The President expressed concern about corruption, saying resources meant for development projects were sometimes diverted. "Some money has been going to districts for infrastructure, but some of it is diverted through corruption," he said.

Museveni reflected on his 65 years of involvement in Uganda's transformation, dating back to his days as a student in 1960. "I have been involved in fighting for Uganda's future for the last 65 years. I started in 1960 when I was in middle school. In all these years, we have worked for our people and helped them."

He pointed to changes in the cattle corridor as evidence that government programmes can improve livelihoods when

MUSEVENI WARNS MINISTERS ON POVERTY, CORRUPTION



President Museveni addressing the Members of Parliament yesterday

implemented effectively. "I started in the cattle corridor and if you go there, those people have changed. They have moved from nomadism to settled agriculture and developed their industry, which has given them a much better life," he said.

Museveni said the lessons learned in the cattle corridor informed later programmes such as the four-acre model introduced in 1996 to promote commercial agriculture and boost household incomes.

"The manifesto of 1996 contained the strategy of four sectors and seven activities. This was 30 years ago and immediately after that, we introduced

capital," he said.

The President said government has made substantial financial resources available through the Parish PDM and other programmes, but many leaders have failed to ensure the funds reach intended beneficiaries.

"As I speak now, in every parish there is sh800m in low-cost capital. There is sh500m new money and another sh300m that should have been recovered and revolved, there is now sh800m per parish and per ward in Uganda."

He challenged National Resistance Movement (NRM) leaders to account for the use of the funds in their communities. "For NRM members, I demand

that you go back to these parishes and ask where the sh800m is. By now, that money should have reached about 800 families in every parish," he said.

Museveni revealed that government intends to increase annual allocations under the programme from sh100m to sh200m per parish.

"If all of you do your work, we shall demand data on what has been happening in every parish and every ward," he said.

According to the President, continued funding and loan recoveries could raise available capital in each parish to more than sh2b within five years. "Very soon, if we continue adding sh200m per year, there

will be more than sh2b in each parish by the end of this term," he said.

"I do not want to hear that there is poverty in a homestead that has not accessed this money if they have land," Museveni said, warning ministers that they risk dismissal if government programmes fail to improve livelihoods in their areas.

"Anybody who is a minister, if I come to your area and find that people have not benefited, I will sack you. If people do not care about their own people, why should I care about them?"

The President urged Members of Parliament (MPs) to take a greater interest in monitoring government programmes, including Emyooga, PDM, youth initiatives and infrastructure funding.

"There is capital in each parish now, low-cost capital that can help our people move out of poverty. Every MP should take an interest in how that money is being used."

Museveni questioned why many Ugandans continue to seek employment abroad when opportunities exist within the country, particularly in agriculture.

"When I see people going to Dubai to look for jobs, I ask myself why. Dubai is a desert. We are here with rain and fertile land. Why should people in the desert have more jobs than us?" he asked.

He cited examples of beneficiaries of Operation Wealth Creation and PDM

who had established successful poultry, piggery and farming enterprises, saying such ventures demonstrate the potential for wealth creation at the household level.

He recounted the story of a 64-year-old woman who, after receiving support, acquired property and became financially independent. "She was 64 years old, but in all her 64 years she had never owned anything in her home," Museveni said. "Enough is enough."

Museveni said his priority remains Uganda's economic transformation rather than ceremonial activities or sporting celebrations.

"I was a footballer myself. Nobody can tell me about football, but I gave up football in 1966. I am now concentrating on liberation, [fighting] poverty and [creating] jobs."

He disclosed that some people had urged him to attend celebrations for Arsenal Football Club after a recent trophy victory, but he declined. "You can have your Arsenal and all those things, but start with the people, please. Start with your own people," he said.

The President maintained that commercial agriculture remains one of the quickest avenues for job creation and poverty reduction.

He called on leaders at all levels to focus on implementing government initiatives and ensuring resources reach citizens so that poverty can be reduced across the country. He thanked the opposition for having candidates to contest for the position of Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Parliament.

He also warned against the risk of the Ebola virus, urging people to stop shaking hands and hugging.