

Local leaders must ensure effective service delivery

THIS week, thousands of elected officials at the district and sub-county levels across Uganda took the oath of office. These ceremonies marked the formal start of a new term of local governance.

Most of the leaders pledged to fight graft and ensure effective service delivery in their areas of jurisdiction. That pledge matters, because local governments are where policy meets people.

It is at the district and sub-county level that roads are graded, health centres are stocked, classrooms are built, and agricultural extension services reach the farmer. When these structures work, citizens feel the impact of the Government daily. When they fail, public trust erodes fastest.

The repeated emphasis on fighting corruption during the ceremonies reflects an awareness that graft remains the single biggest threat to service delivery at the local level. Funds meant for health, education, and infrastructure disappear too often through inflated contracts, ghost projects, and outright theft.

Fighting graft demands active oversight by councils,



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transparency in procurement, and a willingness to hold peers accountable. This local-level renewal comes on the heels of a national renewal.

While taking the oath of office for a seventh term, President Yoweri Museveni outlined his priorities for the next five years. He placed wealth creation at the centre, with a focus on industrialisation, value addition to

agricultural produce, and expanding market access for Ugandan products.

The two moments are connected. National priorities cannot succeed if local governments do not execute them. The Parish Development Model, for example, depends entirely on the competence and integrity of sub-county and parish leadership. Roads under the district roads programme will only be passable if engineering and procurement processes are clean. Industrial parks will remain empty shells if local land administration is mired in disputes and bribery.

To succeed, the newly sworn in leaders should publish work plans and budgets for public scrutiny, hold regular sub-county accountability forums beyond election periods, and partner with civil society, the media, and the Inspectorate of Government to create real-time feedback on service delivery and corruption risks.

Indeed, Uganda's development trajectory will heavily depend on the alignment of the national vision and local execution. The pledges made this week are a good start.