PDM DRIVING UGANDA'S NEXT LEAP - GALABUZI

In light of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's swearing-in for a seventh term at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds, the NRM 2026-2031 campaign theme, *Protecting the gains: making a qualitative leap into high middle-income status* has found expression in several wealth creation initiatives like the Parish Development Model (PDM). DENNIS GALABUZI, PDM's national coordinator spoke to *New Vision* about how the programme is driving transformation.

Q: President Museveni is being sworn in under the theme 'Protecting the Gains'. How does PDM embody this vision?

A: Last July, the President concluded his nationwide PDM assessment tours by urging Ugandans to fight poverty through household wealth creation. Having served at Cabinet level before joining PDM, I can say the programme is a practical expression of "Musevenomics" — a pragmatic philosophy centred on empowerment and grassroots development.

When the NRM took power in 1986, Uganda's economy was in ruins, with reserves of just $26m.

Today, the economy stands at $61.3b. PDM protects these gains by ensuring growth reaches households through parish-level implementation.

PDM places the parish at the centre of planning, budgeting and accountability, enabling *wananchi* to directly participate in development. Government is also tackling barriers to transformation, including limited capital, weak markets, poor agronomic practices, low value addition and exclusion from formal financial systems.

The President often emphasises ekibalo (business planning). How does this apply to a rural farmer?

Ekibalo means strategic business calculation. The President teaches that wealth can be created through the "Four-Acre Model" — for example, allocating land to coffee, fruits, pasture for dairy and food crops, while carefully planning the use of the sh1m PDM seed capital. We are witnessing a mindset shift. Ugandans increasingly view farming and small enterprises as businesses.

We encourage profitability analysis by asking key questions: What is the investment? What are the input costs? Where is the market? What is the expected profit?

Government has established more than 7,600 practical training centres to improve skills, productivity and enterprise sustainability.

What is the current status of the Parish Revolving Fund (PRF)?

By April 2026, the Government had released more than sh3.78 trillion to 10,589 PDM SACCOs nationwide. The money has reached over 3.5 million households and repayments have already started in some parishes.

We are seeing positive results. National poverty has reportedly declined from 21.4% in 2021 to 16.15% in 2024. Beyond funding, PRF has accelerated financial inclusion, with millions of previously unbanked Ugandans now participating in formal or semi-formal financial systems through SACCOs and digital platforms such as Wendi.

Which enterprises are proving most popular among beneficiaries?

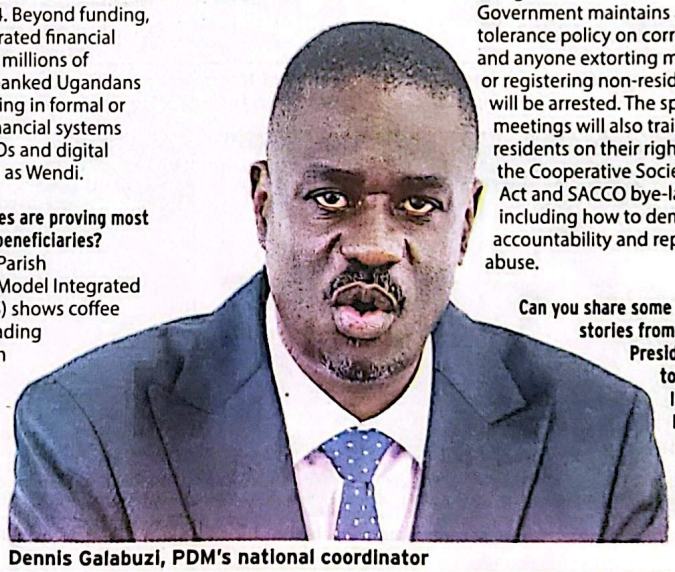
Data from the Parish Development Model Integrated System (PDMIS) shows coffee remains the leading enterprise, with more than 449,000 households investing about sh446.5b. This is followed by piggery and poultry.

There is also strong investment in dairy farming, maize, bananas, cassava and goat rearing. We are now encouraging greater participation in value addition so that parishes evolve into centres of production, processing and trade.

You recently announced reforms regarding SACCO membership. Why now?

Following the President's tours, the goal is to ensure PDM SACCOs become truly community-owned institutions. We want special annual general meetings involving all parish residents. We have introduced two membership categories.

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Dennis Galabuzi, PDM's national coordinator

Category A consists of traditional PDM enterprise groups accessing PRF funds, while Category B allows any parish resident to join the SACCO free of charge.

Initially, many Ugandans saw PDM SACCOs only as channels for receiving the sh1m loan. However, they are intended to become the financial and development backbone of every parish, supporting enterprise selection, farmer education, inputs, value addition and market access.

The special meetings will strengthen governance, amend bye-laws, admit new members and elect credible leadership.

There have been concerns about corruption and SACCO capture by local elites. How are you addressing this?

We introduced a 10-step vetting process for all SACCO leaders, including background checks on integrity, financial discipline and residency.

We continue to urge *wananchi* to remain vigilant because the governance structure belongs to them. Accessing PDM services, including PRF funds, is free of charge.

Government maintains a zero-tolerance policy on corruption and anyone extorting money or registering non-residents will be arrested. The special meetings will also train parish residents on their rights under the Cooperative Societies Act and SACCO bye-laws, including how to demand accountability and report abuse.

Can you share some success stories from the President's tours?

In Busoga, Mrs Tolofisa Buwala used her sh1m loan to buy a dairy cow and now sells four litres of milk daily. In Kampala, Fausta Nalweyiso of Busega turned her support into a thriving piggery business. In Serere, former taxi conductor Joseph Ijaara now earns millions annually from poultry farming on 2.5 acres.

Critics argue that sh100m per parish is too little for urban areas like Kampala. What is your response?

We recognise the challenge. In Greater Kampala, some wards have over 2,000 eligible households, yet sh100m supports only about 100 people annually.

To address this, the President announced an increase in Urban PDM funding to sh130m per parish and sh1b per division for ghetto youth empowerment.

What does the next phase of PDM look like for 2026-2031?

We are moving from stabilisation to sustainability. The long-term goal is to transform the PRF into a fully-fledged parish development bank offering community-owned financial services, agricultural insurance and market linkages.

What is your final message to Ugandans as we celebrate the President's swearing-in?

PDM money is a loan for wealth creation, not a grant for consumption.

It must be repaid at the low interest rate of 6% so that more people can benefit and the fund can grow into a viable Parish Development Bank.

We are already seeing strong repayment discipline, especially among women, who account for 58% of the sh1.34b repaid so far through the Wendi app.

As the President begins this new term, Ugandans should commit themselves to "protecting the gains" by turning every parish into a centre of prosperity.