Choose a project which you can maintain even in retirement

When preparing for retirement learn the real cost of projects

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Note that

At some stage, sooner or later, the officer will have to leave the office, and with it, the car, the fuel and the allowances. Through some manouvers, he might keep the car, but certainly not the fuel. Then the farm will stop being so attractive. Terminal benefits, severance packages or golden handshakes can only go so far.

You have seen many people saying they are going to the farm on the weekend. They get into the 4WD with red numbers and zoom off. The tank has been filled by the office, as the officer is ostensibly off for inspection duty upcountry. Allowances have been processed for the trip and he has the cash in a brown envelop. The driver has also got his allowances and as they usually do, has left half of the money at home.

The officer passes through Lukoola around Nakivubo and makes a call to his colleague in the agriculture ministry to confirm the name of the chemicals he is supposed to take to the farm. He goes through different shops, picking the pesticides and acaricides. Finally, they take off.

This is not a weekly routine as the officer is often busy with other matters. But the disbursement of cash to the farm occurs even more than once a week. And thanks to mobile money, the officer can send money as hands ask for it.

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They usually find some important commitments such as children's school fees (some of them abroad), paying of a mortgage balance, getting a car "befitting of one's status" — whatever that means, and even some important but not essential commitments like that long promised family holiday abroad or celebrating some marriage jubilee. Anyway, it is a fact, as told to me by managers of time for ensuring that Ugandans believed in the Opposition was at elections where they should have garnered MPs in greater numbers to defeat Museveni's possible mischief on the floor of Parliament., that a frighteningly overwhelming majority of retirees blow up their package within two months of getting it.

Something wrong happens to a person whose account gets credited with sh100m, when it has never seen more than sh3m in the 30 years since it was opened. Even if the account was operational before the currency reform of May 1987 which saw two zeroes struck off all balances, there were no salaries of sh4m. So, while even sh20m could have been passing through the officer's hands in a good month, the account has never been credited with sh5m at a go.

Projects such as keeping exotic cattle are expensive to maintain. The animals fall sick and the drugs cost money

RETIREMENT PACKAGE EXCITEMENT

So after weeks or even months of processing his package, one day that familiar beep of the phone comes with the strangest of all news, notification from the bank thus: "Your account has been credited with sh103,627,828.00. Suddenly the phone feels too heavy, it should after such a strange amount being announced through it.

This important person who has probably been a departmental head changes course and heads to the nearest ATM to confirm that it is not a joke. Hands shaking, he even gets his pin wrong at first. Carefully now, he punches the pin with sweating fingers the second time and selects the balance option.

The strange figure stares at him again: UGX103,627,828.00, or more if he somehow had more than zero balance. Firmly, he tells himself to be careful and not spend the money without planning. So he withdraws 'only' sh200,000 to go announce the good news home with. Along the way he picks a few goodies to suit the mood and eventually arrives home.

What happens over the following two weeks is sadly comical. A party mood engulfs the family. Relatives get to hear of the good news and they also bring their petitions and they get attended to. By the time the couple come to their senses, they are down to the last sh10m. They "get serious" and start planning with this.

THE PROJECTS BECOME A BURDEN

That is when the farm starts becoming a burden. The animals fall sick and the drugs cost money. After several die off, it is considered prudent to sell the remainder, pending a restocking that never takes place. Farm hands whose salary was forgotten when the paytime was going on become restless

If the second month passes with only half of the pay for one month forthcoming, they start looking for their pay selling off some produce, or even tools. And equally sad, they start neglecting their duties. The little harvest realised goes bad due to mishandling.

The recently retired officer learns of these negative developments rather late because he has not been going to the farm for a while. First, he was too busy spending his package and after that, he does not have money for fuel.

Word starts going around that the farm is on sale. It could be initiated by the telephone farmer himself, it could be by land brokers, or even creditors.