Taming Busoga's historical 'curse' and mindset stagnation

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Busoga is a land of great potential but saddled by many challenges. With a new term of office for the National Resistance Movement (NRM) Government commencing in May, the urgency to resolve Busoga's problems demands that leaders wake up, resist endless fights and concentrate on development.

In this year's general elections, the NRM presidential candidate, Yoweri Museveni, won the sub-region with a majority of elected leaders. Where NRM lost, it was chiefly due to mistakes and dubious practices by some contestants during the party primaries. Some candidates had been involved in recruiting election officials whom they could easily control to their advantage.

To prevent a recurrence of such misconduct in future elections, the electoral commission of Dr Tanga Odoi should be empowered at least three years in advance to start teaching party members and its teams how to go about internal elections and emerge stronger as a team.

Political confusion in Busoga has, nonetheless, persisted despite NRM's achievements at the polls. Among the causes is the endemic disunity and intrigue among Busoga's leaders, which is now a culture with every new election cycle. The same detrimental attitude persists.

Leaders have failed to work as a team for the sub-region's transformation. They do not meet under one roof to discuss issues affecting the area. They only meet while welcoming the President, at burials and at wedding events.

It would be unrealistic to expect much progress when the people's representatives are facing different directions instead of operating as a collective lobby group and auditing programmes under implementation in the zone.

It is only in Busoga where MPs fail to sit under one roof and as a family to discuss the challenges and get solutions for their electorates in 10 years.

This odd behaviour was carried over from the Uganda People's Congress days. Some sources say from the Legislative Council days (colonial times). It entails leaders putting personal interest and hatred above common interests.

People will hate each other, hate friends of the person they hate, hate their children and even hate their grandchildren. Even in death, they will hate one's "ghost"! These are cross-generational feuds that defy time and the very purpose of leadership. If leaders are not exemplary in exhibiting unity of purpose, how will the people behave differently?



Even as we speak, before the newly elected leaders assume office, they have started plotting for the other's failure, which is sure to deny the Basoga a good share of the national cake. In short, for every election cycle, Busoga goes back to "reset". There is never a new chapter. How can we move like this?

Poverty in Busoga cannot be attributed to the NRM Government, but to the lack of focus and the weaknesses of the leaders.

Despite the President's interventions to divert them from in-fighting and to concentrate on transformation, they have refused to listen. For example, the majority lack a model garden. Rather, they have joined the people to invest only in sugarcane and failed to change their mindsets to diversify into other enterprises.

At one time, President Museveni donated heifers to these leaders to start model farms. However, the heifers were sold off on arrival by these individuals supposed to be mindset-change agents. How can we transform Busoga with this kind of attitude?

In the era of Parish Development Model, Emyooga, Youth Livelihood Programme, the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme, the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises project, the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment, and more, how many leaders speak about these routinely and not necessarily to win support for themselves but rather to give a chance to the ordinary Musoga to prosper?

Therefore, there is a very urgent need for attitude and mindset change, and it should start with the new leaders coming on board. The newly elected leaders in the sub-region should detect and refuse to be recruited by unpatriotic and selfish Busoga leaders. Much of the energy should be invested in auditing wealth creation programmes. Otherwise, the only achievement they may count on at the end of it all is the virus they acquired of divisionism and endless infighting.

In essence, Busoga leaders should not struggle to prove their existence. They should leave the public to judge them based on their performance. Such struggles promote disunity, hinder development, reduce the region's bargaining power and deny the people the chance to elect the leaders of their choice. Busoga leaders should adopt the culture of dialogue like its done in other parts of the country when it comes to development.

If nothing changes, Busoga will take longer to achieve its full potential, even with President Museveni's overflowing goodwill and clear vision to leave no one behind in his national prosperity plan.

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