

LETTERS

LETTER OF THE DAY

We must get rid of corruption to gain from oil

EDITOR: Although agricultural science and government funding programmes have enormously contributed to the increased food production and agriculture-led rural development, nutrition and poverty are still the main problems for millions of people living in rural areas, this could also be evidenced in the Albertine region, with the wealth resource (oil).

This persistence of poverty is strongly linked to poor government institutionalised systems. Most of the world's poor people live in rural areas and are often farmers themselves and most surprisingly people living in areas of natural resources exploitation are found terribly poor.

When a natural resource is discovered, people in those areas expect many things that will change and

improve their livelihoods, but turn they get the worst due to decay and failure of responsible institutions. For example, the populations in those areas expect employment. This has been evidenced in many areas such as Niger Delta in Nigeria, Kilembe copper mines in Kasese and in South Sudan.

One of the greatest threats facing the people of the Niger River Delta has actually been their own government. The Nigerian government has total control over property rights and they have the authority to seize any property for use by the oil companies.

Most of the wealth that comes out of the ground in the delta goes to the government of Nigeria. As a result of the enormous amounts of sweet light crude that comes out of the delta every day, Nigeria has the second largest

GDP in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite the wealth flowing into the nation from oil revenues, many of Nigeria's socio-economic factors are worse now than they were 30 years ago.

According to the World Bank, most of Nigeria's oil wealth gets siphoned off by 1% of the population. Nigerians have on many occasions engaged in protests against oil-related corruption and environmental concerns, but are frequently met with harsh suppression by government forces.

However much we expect the oil wealth to help in attainment of the middle income status, this could be hindered by corruption in government institutions, lack of transparency and accountability.

Robert Asimwe,
Kampala

PICTURE BY FRANCIS EMORUT

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The Letters Editor, P. O. Box 9815 Kampala; or email: letters@newvision.co.ug
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