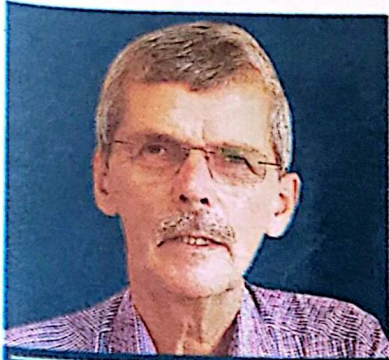


CONCENTRATE ON IMPROVING PEOPLE'S LIVES



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David Cameron introduced the referendum that resulted in Brexit. Subsequently, Boris Johnston led the country into disarray so there was great hope when a new Prime Minister, Sir Kir Starmer, was appointed.

He seemed to be a man capable of leading Britain out of the mess, but he was unable to turn things around, so the political drama continues with a battle for a change of leadership. Political drama arises in the first place because people are dissatisfied with the performance of government, but if it is prolonged it diverts attention from the business of government itself.

Government should exist to make the lives of the people better and if Britain had not gone through years of political drama, the economy would now have improved, and the government would be stable.

In Uganda, the majority of the population are poor, with families finding no easy exit ramp from generational poverty. The Government has introduced the Parish Development Model but we are not yet seeing the results in terms of increased household incomes.

What we are witnessing is the enormous growth of the bodaboda



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industry with young men deserting the land to become bodaboda riders. People are even selling their land to buy bodabodas, but is this a wise long-term investment?

The problem with the bodaboda industry is that it gives immediate cash, but this cash does not translate into the development of the individual. If the cash is not set aside for depreciation and repairs, in time the vehicle will break down and the income will dry up. Getting immediate cash is a false dawn and if one factors in where the cash is spent, such as in betting shops, alcohol and sex, household

income does not increase, and no development of the family takes place.

Countries, including Ireland, have pulled themselves out of poverty by first building up farming and rural agro-industries.

This is then followed by urban industrialisation, which causes urban drift, with people moving to the cities for employment. In rural Uganda, we have little in the way of agro-industrialisation, but the bodaboda sector draws in young men.

Unfortunately, their income is seldom reinvested in agriculture or small businesses, but they are attracted to the city, resulting in the massive increase of bodabodas in Kampala clogging the streets.

Along with this comes crime in the form of muggings and theft which feeds businesses that depend on stolen goods. None of this is real industrialisation that builds the economy, so families don't have adequate school fees and children drop out by Primary Five, creating a vicious cycle: the boys hustle for a living and the girls get pregnant as teenagers.

The people who were given ministerial posts have an onerous responsibility — to break this cycle.

And this will be done, not through a silver bullet, but through taking small steps — such as improved education in rural areas, regulating the bodaboda industry, closing down sports betting shops, making a serious increase in the agricultural extension service and supply of clonal coffee seedlings, educating subsistence farmers in modern agronomy, and through incentivisation of large scale businesses to invest in rural areas. Girls need improved sex education so that they can protect themselves from pregnancy and STIs.

Young men need training in productive ways to earn a living and Uganda's export markets need further developing.

In terms of leadership it would also help if Ugandans witnessed an end of the practice of government ministers and their escorts forcing through traffic and pushing other motorists off the road. Let the new cabinet lead by example.

Ugandans are yearning for leadership. Many Ugandans spend their day hustling to make ends meet and the last thing they need is government ministers doing their own hustle. They need leaders tackling real problems that will make their lives better.