

ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

Corruption threatening Vision 2020

By Owen Wababaza

Every year, \$1 trillion is paid in bribes, while an estimated \$2.6 trillion is stolen through corruption, a sum equivalent to more than 5% of the global GDP.

In developing countries, according to the United Nations Development Programme, funds lost to corruption are estimated at 10 times the amount of official development assistance.

Unfortunately, in Uganda, despite corruption being a big threat to the country's economy and service delivery, society has largely accepted it as a way of life. According to a 2015 report by the Parliament of Uganda, the country has lost more than sh24 trillion to corruption in the last 10 years.

In the 2016 Transparency International survey released early this year, Uganda was among the top 25 most corrupt nations in the world after being ranked 151 of 176 countries in the Corruption Perception Index annual report with a score of 25% and dropping 12 places.

The report attributed the high levels of corruption to deficiency of opportunities for all, which has created a vicious cycle between corruption and unequal distribution of power in society.

"It has become easy for the rich to exploit the poor and the powerful to exploit the opaque of the global financial system to enrich themselves at the expense of the public good," reads part of the report.

John Oundo, an anti-corruption activist, links corruption in Uganda to politicians who make endless promises without action. Oundo says promising to tackle corruption and not delivering has made the situation worse.

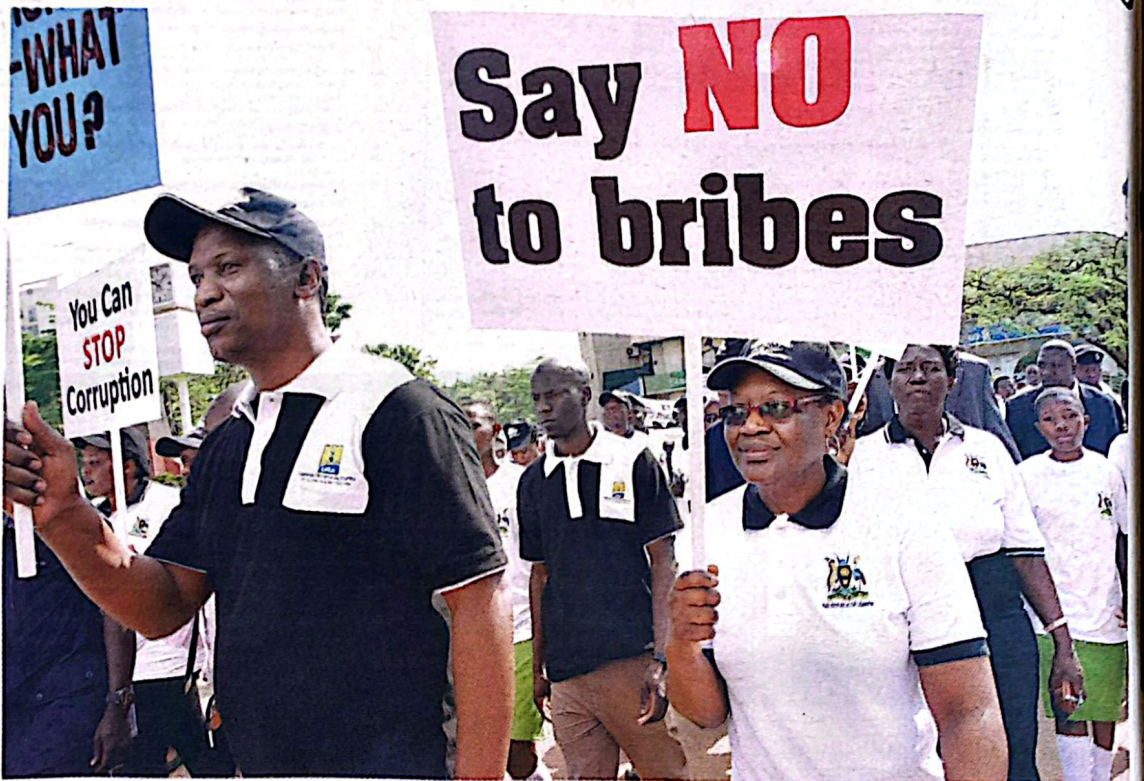
"President Yoweri Museveni should come out strongly on corrupt officials, especially those in influential positions who swindle taxpayers' money and go scot-free. It is until we stop this kind of impunity that we will register progress in the war against corruption," Oundo says.

In the 2015 National Service Delivery Survey by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the Uganda Police was ranked as the most corrupt, followed by tax officials, the Judiciary, public sector and business executives in that order.

The vice exhibits in different forms such as bribery, embezzlement, causing financial loss, false accounting, influence peddling, nepotism and many others with the most common form of corruption in Uganda being bribery.

According to a statement on the United Nations website, corruption is a serious crime that can undermine social and economic development in all societies and no country, region or community is immune.

It is for this reason that the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention



Irene Mulyagonja (right), the Inspector General of Government, holds a placard during a walk to launch the Anti-Corruption Week at the Chogm Grounds in Kampala last month. She says corruption is a hindrance to the attainment of national development goals

Sensitising the public sector

As part of the activities to mark this year's Anti-Corruption Day, the Inspectorate of Government, Office of the Auditor General, Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets, Directorate of Ethics and Integrity and the Uganda Revenue Authority, made spot checks at the weigh bridges, Police stations and a prison.

"We shared information and continued to seek support from public officers in combating corruption in the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Works and Transport, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. We also visited the districts of Kalungu, Masaka, Lyantonde, Mbarara, Ibanda, Fort Portal and Mubende," Mulyagonja says.

against corruption and designated December 9 as the International Anti-corruption Day, to raise awareness about the dangers of corruption and remind citizens about their responsibility in the fight against the vice.

Anti-corruption agencies also review their successes and failures and inform the public about the strategies that they intend to employ during the ensuing year. The day has been observed since December 2005.

IGG's efforts to fight corruption

According to Irene Mulyagonja, the Inspector General of Government (IGG), the Inspectorate of Government has partnered with the Directorate of Ethics and Integrity, Office of the Auditor General and Public Procurement and Disposal of

Public Assets Authority since 2014, to fight the prevalent vice.

"A syndicate was formed to fight the most deleterious emerging form of corruption, which is popularly referred to as syndicate corruption. It involves networks of strategically placed public officials who connive to embezzle public funds," Mulyagonja says.

This year, the agencies have organised activities under the theme: *Restoring Integrity in Civil Service; Regaining Public Trust in the Anti-Corruption Fight*.

The theme emphasises the need to curb corruption by educating civil servants about its effects and ensuring that maladministration, which if not dealt with results in impunity and ultimately corruption, is dealt with seriously.

As part of the efforts to restore

integrity and public confidence in the public institutions, the agencies organised meetings with ministries, departments, agencies and local governments to discover and discuss mechanisms that they have put in place to address corruption in their institutions.

Barazas were held to canvass support of citizens and for their views about the levels of corruption in service delivery.

Mulyagonja calls on everyone to play a role in the fight against corruption, if Uganda is to achieve its goal of middle income status.

"We all know that rampant corruption obstructs development and hinders attainment of both global and national development goals. For the case of Uganda, we may fail to attain the lower middle income status that we are targeting in 2020, which is the goal set out in the second National Development Plan," she says.

Corruption further defies and undermines fundamental human rights, institutions and the belief in the systems that have been created.

"In an environment where corruption prevails, public resources are redirected to the pockets of the corrupt few individuals, which deepens inequality by diverting money solely needed for health care, education and other essential services," Mulyagonja adds.

Corruption affects the poor, since

they are the ones most in need of the public goods and services, but cannot afford to pay bribes in order to access them. It is for this reason that this year's campaign targeted the institutions of government that are meant to serve citizens by providing basic services which are affected by corruption, when it continues to show up in processes of delivery of these crucial services.

The institutions targeted include the finance ministry including several institutions in the accountability sector, the Ministry of Health and that of works and transport in addition to allied institutions. In these institutions, the Inspectorate of Government focused on mechanisms that have been put in place to fight corruption from within.

"As a country, it is important for us to achieve an equitable, inclusive and prosperous future for all citizens and to foster a culture of transparency, accountability and rule of law. The anti-corruption agencies through existing collaboration, will continue to engage all stakeholders at various levels to demand for corruption-free services and report corruption," Mulyagonja says.

"It is our vision to see an accountable and responsive public sector that will meet our ultimate goal of ensuring distributive and administrative justice for all Ugandans," she says.