

Editorial

LET LEADERS UNITE

At the collapse of the Quintuple Alliance (an alliance of European states fighting Napoleon) Lord Castlereagh of Britain told his colleagues in the alliance that 'things are going back to a wholesome state, every man for himself and God for us all'.

However, the leaders in the Rwenzori Region have defied this – and will on the 28th -30th October, converge at Kasunga Conference Centre in Kyenjojo for their Annual Regional Leaders retreat herein also called 'Kasunga 5'. The leaders have on an annual basis held the retreat with an aim of strengthening collaboration among themselves and – improving service delivery for the development of the rural households

This initiative by the Rwenzori region is not only a milestone among the regional leadership, but it also provides a learning point for other politicians and leaders in Uganda. It's high time our leaders – across the political spectrum to work together for the development of the nation – other than fighting one another

Together we shall create the change we need in development

Happy October colleagues

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KASUNGA AGAIN



By John Murungi Amooti

It is frenzy, tension parked, fiery, nerve raking, temperamental – but yet, an embodiment and pedigree of leadership galvanization in the Rwenzori region. On an annual basis save for 2010, Leaders from hitherto five – and now seven districts of the Rwenzori region flock to the secluded and opulent haven for the Kasunga Regional Leaders Retreat. Top on agenda is always the desire and need to enchant and harness the social, economic development paradigms of the region. The 6 year old retreat is now 'beckoning on the door' – it runs from the 27th -30th of October 2011.

In an exclusive interview with the Executive Director of Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), Mr. Julius Mwanga, he revealed that preparations were in high gear – and most of the leaders had confirmed their attendance. The theme of the conference has also been carefully selected to rhyme in consonance with the

current overtures by both government and CSOs to improve the livelihoods of rural households in the region. The theme is; **Harnessing development opportunities for the wellbeing of rural households in the Rwenzori Region.**

For the last 7 years now, Leaders in the Rwenzori region, working in partnership with Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), have coalesced synergies in a bid to foster development, through a multi-stakeholder approach. The leaders include; members of parliament, local council officials, cultural leaders, political party leaders, civil society and the private sector.

Pursuant to these efforts, the leaders have been meeting on an annual basis to debate, dialogue and come out with recommendations and actions to regional challenges and priorities. The previous 4 Kasunga

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Leadership Retreats have recommended the formation of initiatives like the Rwenzori Regional Think Tank, Regional MPs Forum, Regional Development Leadership Group and Region Elders Forum - which are already operational.

The organizers of the Retreat have added another dimension this year: they have invited the two kings of the kingdoms that form the region to grace the retreat. King of Toro, Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru will open the retreat on 28th – as his Rwenzuru counterpart closes the function on 30th.

Other than the political leaders, the Retreat is expected to attract prominent intellectual from the region. These include; Andrew Mwenda of the Independent news Magazine, Charles Mwangushya of The Daily Monitor, Morrison Rwakakamba of Twaweza and many other firebrands. The Retreat will among other thing have key note addresses from ministers Crispus Kiyonga (Defence), Adolf Mwesige (Local Government) and Aston Kajara of Finance (Investment).

The first Kasunga Regional Retreat, was organized after Uganda held its first multi-party elections, in 2006 - after 26 years. KRC –and other proponents of development were wary of this new political development as most Ugandans associated multi-party politics with witch hunting and political disdain. Indeed, the last Multi-party elections had been held in 1980 –and the debacle that had engulfed them was later to draw Uganda into a political conundrum –which ended in one of the contestants under the flagship of Uganda People's Movement, Yoweri Museveni disputing the results of the elections –and subsequently waging a protracted guerrilla war –that was later to catapult him into the presidency in 1986.

The 2006 elections had witnessed an acrimonious campaign among the various candidates –as they competed for different offices. To crown it all, the gap between Government and NGOs was becoming an impediment to service delivery. The retreat was organized by KRC in partnership with the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Kabarole, led by Mr. Ndiwa Chemaswett who was then the RDC. The KRC Newsletter will keep you posted on the deliberations at the Retreat.

AFRICAN DEMOCRACY FORUM HOLDS ASSEMBLY, AS ACTIVISTS CALL FOR CITIZENS ACTION

*By John Murungi Amooti
Speke Resort, Munyonyo*

The sprawling canopies. Well paved lawns –blending with natural –and yet not natural, buttress-rooted creepers, consummating well with the ebbing tide of the cool Lake Victoria breeze. The sweet melodies of birds playing joyously and perched onto the giant palm trees – rhyming almost in unison, with the well orchestrated brass symphony pervading the entire picturesque, serene and tranquil, commonwealth Speke Resort, Munyonyo –and basking in this grandeur and beauty were the tenacious activists drawn from across the world for the African Democracy Forum (ADF) General Assembly

This writer was part of the highly explosive meeting that took place from 22nd -23rd September. The Assembly begun in earnest –with discussions on the democratic tenets or lack of them in Africa –and more intriguing was the proclivity of members to critique their governments but also appraise themselves as Civil Society organizations.

Opening the baptism of fire was the insightful remarks from the Foundation for Human Rights Initiatives and the National NGO Forum under whose auspices, the AGM was organized. The opening remarks were not only informative in terms of the aims and objectives of the AGM, but they also provided a 'baseline' upon which the participants from the various countries of Africa, derived issues of debate.

Ms Hannah Forster, the chairperson of the Forum gave a synoptic review of the major activities and achievements of the years, 2009-2011 –which included inter alia; the creation of a vibrant lobby group to influence African countries to ratify 'the

African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.'

It was however noted that whereas most African countries had signed the treaty, they were taking long to ratify it. There was therefore urgent need to address the challenge, by engaging the different African governments in matters of promoting democracy through free and fair elections –and adherence to Human Rights.

The Assembly which takes place after every three years –and was now having its maiden appearance in East Africa, was also used as an opportunity for the different representatives of the continental clusters to give feedback on the various engagements they had been involved in. The most dominant issue was the tendency by African presidents to rule into perpetuity –and this was further exacerbated by the high levels of corruption

The representatives of West Africa told the meeting that their region was clogged by political demagogues whose main interest was power, power and more power –no matter the cost! They cited an example of Laurent Bagbo –who despite losing the presidential race to his arch-rival, Alassane Quattara, continued to hang onto the seat. It had to take the intervention of the international community to push him out.

Other cases of dictatorship were reported in Cameroon where incumbent Paul Biya was clinging onto power using all surreptitious means –and he has stifled all forms of political opposition.

Moving down south in the SADAC region, the situation was not any better. In Malawi, Bingu Wamutharika was soon entering the political folklore as his fellow statehouse occupant, the late Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda –for all the wrong reasons –misrul-



ing the country and plunging it into a dictatorship! Of course Mutharika was not any different from his Zimbabwean counterpart Robert Mugabe, the participants observed. They called for concerted efforts to enhance civic competence among the communities so as to influence political processes.

Enter East Africa –and the roller-coaster reaches fever –pitch. Right from Kenya–where President Mwai Kibaki, despite widely believed to have lost the 2007 presidential race refused to concede defeat –ostensibly under the tutelage of his strong headed wife, Lucy Kibaki! And then, the hat-trick of election madness grows into a crescendo-as we enter Uganda. Though Uganda has periodically held elections

(every after 5 years) -there have always been serious concerns over the fairness of these elections –and most campaigns are usually characterized by acrimony

Arthur Larok, the Head of programs at the National NGO Forum in ‘a no- Holds -barred’ presentation on the political situation in Uganda castigated civil society organizations, who instead of building the citizenry into solid advocates, were busy enjoying coffee in their comfort zones and merely talking rhetoric –forgetting that any change in the political landscape can only be caused by them (the citizens)

Another point of concern was the penchant for most African dictators to use their

impoverished countries’ meager resources to enrich their pecuniary selves -and instead of causing development, they only reward their cronies with luscious government deals. The ADF meeting therefore recommended that members would take their advocacy beyond mere monitoring democracy –if it existed anyway, to another level of enhancing citizen’s civic competence to make their leaders accountable

Another interesting session at the Assembly was the discussion on constitutionalism in Africa. Ms. Priscilla Nyokabi, made a chronological snapshot into the Kenyan constitutional history. To many a law scholar, it was like a journey to the past –the first year at the law school! Kenya’s checkered constitutional history is as nerve raking as its intriguing –a mixed bag of sorts, as the politicians there in seem to keep re-incarnating themselves -as they change goal posts every other election!

The General Assembly ended on a high note with discussion on how to engage the African Union –and other interventions in the next one year. The ADF strategic plan and interventions were clearly highlighted by Patrick Mpedzisi, the head of the secretariat. He mainly delved on ‘the African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance. Paul Ahiave of centre for Democracy and Development led the respondents.



FHRI's Sheila ,Muwanga addressing the Assembly

MWANGA SOLDIERS ON, AS KRC CONTINUES TO CURVE ITS NICHE AT NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ARENAS

Facing the House of Commons for the first time as British Prime Minister, 'best of all time,' English Politician Winston Churchill opened his speech with quite rare words of bravery –and brevity. He faced the fully parked house and said; I have 'nothing to offer but blood tears and sweat'..... we shall fight from the beaches, fight from the landing sites... fight from everywhere –and nowhere, until victory is achieved.....' In the same breadth, tenacious Julius Mwanga thus assured us when we first interviewed him, upon making one year as KRC director, around April this year. The venue is the same (KRC Director's office) mood and setting of the décor still the same –as the 35 year old MBA holder shares his thoughts with The KRC Newsletter's John Murungi Amooti. Below the excerpts



Mr. Mwanga stresses a point during the interview. Right is The KRC newsletter's John Murungi Amooti

Mr. Director, it's long since you last gave us a brief on the current developments at KRC. What can we write home about?

Well, well (swivels in his chair and moves closer) we have been pre-occupied with very many initiatives that aim at addressing the current situation Uganda –and the rest of the world are engulfed in. Before, we even think of what KRC has been able to accomplish in this period, lets first analyze the developments at the national level. These include inter alia; the sky

rocketing commodity prices, the political conundrum surrounding the debate on oil –which have all but necessitated that KRC and other CSOs engage both government and the communities in more meaningful discourse to identify possible solutions.

How have you managed to achieve that?

As you are aware, KRC's major niche in the development process has always been creation of platforms for information sharing and the growth of a vibrant and tena-

cious citizenry that is actively participating in issues of social, economic and political concern. We very much recognize that government is the biggest player in all development processes –and any actor who wishes them away, does not only create a fallacy, but also records minimum results in his interventions. This is the reason, KRC has teamed up with other CSOs in the region and our long time partner Hivos(Netherlands) to design the regional

framework, which will not only accelerate service delivery, but will also buttress collective synergies –as various players in the Rwenzori regional development, will coalesce and share resources and efforts. KRC is therefore facilitating this deeper thinking among its regional partners.

Mr. Director, almost all analysts have opined that the current food crisis in the country has everything to do with the minimum support, government and other development actors are giving to agriculture. What's your take on that?

Among the aims of the regional framework, is the promotion of food security among the rural farming households. This region is blessed with the best soils in the country –so why should our people fail to have enough food for their families, let alone enough for sale? It is a serious concern we are currently trying to address through the various engagements at regional, national and international forums. The CSOs involved in the regional framework will engage government on how to support farmers to use simple irrigation technology- which KRC has already piloted with some farming groups. As a country we need to match our supersonic population growth of 3.3% per annum with increase in food production –lest we have a starving nation!

How does SNV come into the picture? You did allude to it as a partner in all these processes

For the last 5-6 years, we have been working with SNV to support local capacity building of regional partners in a bid to increase efficiency and maximize available local resources in the development processes. The experience gained over time has now led to the current program of Local Capacity Development Facility (LCDF). The program is aiming at creating a perfect match between demand and supply. The LCDF seeks to support government's agenda for the commercialization of agriculture through market development of extension services in an equitable and sustainable manner. The facility will build on the success and lessons of service decentralization, community involvement in the design of relevant services, value chain development and commercial fee based and cost sharing extension delivery. This fits within the global agreement on the shift-

ing of extension services from production methods to value chains enabling farmers to augment their productivity, raise their incomes and collaborate with one another and with agribusiness and agricultural research.

We are also aware that you recently organized a big private sector symposium. Any developments or lessons from there?

By the way, it was not just a mere private sector symposium –but rather a high level colloquium that brought together members of the private sector (business community), Civil Society, government and leading opinion leaders in the region. The private Sector is one area; we need to tap into, as development actors. They have to be supported in their endeavors to contribute to development

It has often been said or even believed that businessmen are only interested in making money –and care less about the plight of the rural poor. How come you are now talking of working with them to increase household incomes of the rural households?

It's high time we realized that the business community has been more responsive to the needs of the rural person, than us in the NGO world –take for example initiatives like Pakalast of the Warid Telecom, MTN freedom bundle...ETC, do you think this is intended for you John? No, no.. this is meant for a poor man in the village who can't afford airtime. We need to learn from such innovations and incorporate them in our interventions with the communities

Any new milestones, in the Research sector?

Our Research Unit has in the last six months worked with the information Unit to support the regional Think Tank to document outcomes of the recent studies in the areas of climate change, Agriculture and Health. We also teamed up with Fort portal Municipality to write a policy brief on how urban waste can be well managed and even be used to promote agriculture through using manure processed thereof

You did mention in our last interview, that KRC had put in place a new strategic plan which would form the bedrock of all KRC interventions in community development. Are you still on track?

Oh yes, we have in fact developed the plan further, to also include our current regional framework processes. We have brought on board partners –who share our development vision and mission to help us meet our goals and objectives. The new partners include International Alert, which is partnering with us on the oil information project and SNV. We cannot of course forget to mention our long term partners like Hivos, Broederlijk Delen (BD), the European Union and DANIDA –who have been with us for over ten years now.

Where is government in all this?

We have worked with government to establish the Regional Development leadership Group (DLG), and the regional MPs Forum. Also, we recently held the first ever regional climatic change week and we had the deputy speaker of parliament as the chief guest. We used the opportunity to present to parliament a petition by both the Civil Society and the regional local governments, requesting the central government to support the farmers to adapt to the vagaries of climatic change

We have been reliably informed that KRC is working with leaders from the Rwenzori region to organize the Kasunga Leaders Retreat. What is the uniqueness about these retreats?

The Kasunga Leaders retreat is the biggest forum that brings together all leaders from our region, to dialogue and share ideas and information on matters of development. The Forum has been organized on an annual basis since 2006. The results emanating thereof, include; the formation of the regional Think Tank, the elders forum, the regional MPS Forum, the regional development leadership group, and the lobbying for funding from government by the leaders to support Mountains of the Moon University (our locally -owned regional community university). We are now heading to Kasunga on the 27th -30th October for our 6th retreat. Almost all our regional leaders have confirmed attendance –including the cultural institutions of Rwenzururu and Toro. It's going to be an explosive event.

KRC trains councilors in a bid to enhance accountability and improved performance

By: Musoki N Sylvia

As the saying goes 'united we stand, divided we fall' –and Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC) has taken this fable a notch higher. For the last 10 years, KRC has in an unprecedented move coalesced regional local leaders to enchant development initiatives through information sharing and enhancing their capacities. This initiative, under the Human Rights and Good Governance Unit has since helped in developing capacities of various leaders in the region.

In pursuance of the initiative, KRC recently organized various trainings for local councilors at district and sub-county levels. These were aimed at equipping the leaders with the necessary skills to conduct council business. The areas of training included inter alia; rules of procedures, roles and responsibilities of the different offices in council -and the budget, planning processes - with an aim of enhancing bottom up planning.

The inductions were conducted with financial support from the DANIDA-HUGO funded, KRC Deepening Democracy Project.

Cognizant of the vast experience senior regional politicians have, KRC has always called upon them to share their experiences with the new leaders. Various technocrats have also been called upon to tackle complex subjects like the budget cycle framework, Bills of quantities and expenditure monitoring.

The inductions also tackle the role of the speaker, formation of the executive and other committees, order paper, bi-laws / ordinance making processes. This is



A cross section of Rwenzori Region District Leaders during an earlier KRC organized leadership training

expected to result into consultative and efficient representation entailing bottom up planning from village to district levels

However, there are various issues of reflection which have since emanated from these interactions. It must be noted that most of these councilors are semi –illiterate, their capacities to learn was reported to be quite low, this therefore called for constant mentoring and coaching. This actually confirmed earlier fears that the ineptitude of these councilors to grasp issues like budgeting and bills of quantities was an impediment to service delivery –as the technocrats used this loophole to steal public funds without proper monitoring.

Another point of concern, which has been coming out of these engagements –and which should be urgently addressed is the delayed election of LC 1 chairpersons –who ostensibly are the bedrock of service delivery at the community level. Most of them lost morale when they lost in the NRM primary elections.

In line with this initiative, KRC has taken the promotion of team work among the different leaders –both civic and political, to a level higher –the Kasunga Leaders Retreat. The Kasunga Leaders Retreat is a political 'politburo' of all regional leaders –as they thus repair to dialogue and plan for the development of their region.

Bank of Uganda Increases Lending Rates, as Businesses Face Hard Times

By Rukuya Michael

As someone once said, that when problems come - they come in torrential amounts! This is the scenario; the much suffering rural farmers will find themselves when the new law on lending rates comes into force. Bank of Uganda (BOU) has in the last couple of weeks announced raised the prime lending to commercial banks rate to a whopping 20 percent per -almost double the rate 12 months ago!

As a result, the commercial banks have responded by raising the lending rate for business loans to an astronomical figure of 30% per annum. This development is very unfortunate as almost the entire Ugandan business community -as well as the commercial farmers depend on loans. There are just a few business entities re-finance and re-capitalize themselves from the retained earnings and savings.

Though the economists at Bank of Uganda claim that Bank of Uganda is taking the move to reduce on the on the debt burden that the majority of Ugandan entrepreneurs have depended on over the years - it is likely not possible that businesses will stop borrowing -the high interest rates notwithstanding! They will no doubt continue taking those high interest loans -and pass on the burden to the end user-the poor Ugandan consumers. Worse still they can move to the unscrupulous and unregulated financial service providers or herein also referred to as loan sharks. Despite most of these 'loan sharks' charg-

ing high interest rates, there loans are quick to access -thus attracting many clients. This therefore means that the aim of BOU of reducing liquidity through lending will not be achieved. The action will instead exacerbate an already bad economic situation.

One panacea that could come handy, is the KRC promoted MFA Model though it is at a micro level. KRC has achieved this through working with co-operatives and Savings and Credit Associations. Over the years, KRC has worked with these community-managed and owned institutions, -and built their capacities to grow into village banks at community level, through helping them mobilize savings and lending it out at an average interest rate of 3% per month on a reducing balance and with no hidden costs -thus, making the loan user friendly for borrowers who would have otherwise failed to access the high interest loans from the commercial banks.

However unlike the commercial banks where the central bank introduced the credit reference bureau (CRB) which enables current and potential bank borrowers to be accessed by all the 22 Banks in Uganda - to assess their potential and indebtedness, before giving them loans, this seems is lacking at the micro level, hence giving room for some people to acquire multiple loans from the different financial service providers. Among the possible effects of the move by the Ugandan Central Bank to increase the prime lending rate is that the demand for

the products from Microfinance Deposit taking Institutions (MDIs) and the small Micro Finance associations and Savings and Credit organizations which will negatively affect the operations of the of these service providers literally meaning that the Micro Finance institutions have to look out for the new potential borrowers who have not been hitherto banking with them.

A key lesson that the government of Uganda and all Ugandans should embrace is the saving culture if we are to avoid the credit crunch and global economic melt-down recently paralyzed the entire Europe. The entire community was resorting to borrowing as a solution to all their problems to an extent that even reputable and bigger banks could no longer raise funds to lend out to their clients. This should raise an alarm to Uganda since when the central bank announced its raise of prime lending rates to commercial banks, within a week all commercial banks had risen their interest rates -literally meaning that all the commercial banks depend on the funds from the central bank other than internally generated funds such as deposits from their clients.

Relevancy of streamlining HIV/AIDS prevention in Religion

By Kamanyire Henry

Many religious faiths exist in the world today –and are much credited for playing a human development role of feeding the spiritual part. However, the growth of religion has faced a challenge of confronting HIV epidemic which has continued to attack the primary structure which is the clergy. The HIV prevalence in Uganda is at 6% and affecting every religion.

Abstinence and being faithful have the key message for the un-married and married respectively in both churches and mosques. The late, Pope John during his last visit to Africa noted that HIV could not be overcome only through distribution of condom –as it could instead exacerbate the problem. He instead emphasized abstinence and faithfulness among the married people.

Commenting on streamlining HIV among the Muslim community, an imam in Bundibugyo noted in a stride to prevent HIV/AIDS through promoting HIV testing and counseling, that in his Mosque, they do not marry off couples without knowing their HIV status. He revealed this during a dialogue organized by KRC on HIV/AIDS prevention in Bundibugyo recently. On the contrary, streamlining HIV prevention has not been tailored to the different classes of people. For the case of Catholics, the failure to promote the use of condoms I may say has not been conscious of the class of the clergy who are promiscuous. Promiscuity is not condoned in church but the question would be; can't a promiscuous person repent? And if yes, should promiscuous people repent after acquiring HIV/AIDS?

In some Pentecostal churches, some HIV positive clergy have reportedly been said to have been cured of HIV/AIDS without having tested or even taken drugs. I



believe in miracles but miracles have to be authentic a case of the turning water into wine by Jesus. The wine was not poured but tested and drunk. I may say the pastors on one hand they are taking advantage of the clergy or they are “ignorant.” Spiritually there is belief in miracles and also the clergy that proclaims that is healed they do not also want to go for testing to prove and also the pastors’ may discourage them. Moslems have promoted the Sharia law of marrying four wives but I doubt if enough care has been taken in taking care of the current context of HIV/AIDS. In the current situation HIV/AIDS is reportedly on the increase among married couples. This tells us that marrying one or more women does not provide an answer to human desire of promiscuity. Marrying more than one woman may increase the number of players and also the chances of acquiring HIV when any of them gets involved in risky sexual behaviors.

Moral authority and command has to some extent been compromised in cases where the leaders of the different religious

denominations have been implicated in wrong acts. Take for example pastors and priests who have been implicated in cases of defilement other illicit behaviors. The old saying, of “do what I say and not what I do” may not apply in the fight against HIV through instilling morals. Imagine a situation where am a facilitator of seminar on HIV prevention and am caught in the evening committing adultery, how would the participants judge me and take my message? In the recent study by the regional Think Tank, respondents acknowledged that their leaders had not been exemplary in moral behaviors- thus the adherence to health education messages on prevention has been curtailed. We need to lead by example.

The views expressed in this commentary are not necessarily the views of KRC. They are purely thoughts and opinions of the author