



The MP for Kampala central, Mohammed Nsereko has said he will not attend any of the NRM retreats in Kyankwanzi

Refunding donor money was the right decision



Obed Katureebe

The Government has reimbursed sh21b to the government of Ireland.

The refund was as a result of the misappropriation of the Irish aid money to the Office of the Prime Minister meant for development projects in north and north eastern part of the country that had for sometime been ravaged by a civil war.

Following that misappropriation, other development partners like, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and the UK froze aid transfers after a forensic audit by the Auditor General revealed financial mismanagement.

Many officials in the Office of the Prime Minister have since been arrested and are facing prosecution.

The refund follows an interface with President Museveni late last year in which he assured them that all stolen monies would be refunded.

The President further assured the donors that the Government had finalised plans to apprehend those who stole the aid money and promised to recover it.

As a result, the Government decided to use a four pronged approach to this problem.

Firstly, it resolved to investigate and prosecute all guilty parties involved in stealing the donor funds.

Indeed, a reasonable number of top officials in the OPM have been arrested and are facing trial. More others are being investigated.

The Government has also resolved to pursue the recovery processes through the courts of laws. This will include among other measures to hunt for the properties of the culprits and sell them off to recover the stolen monies.

To guard against any further financial drain, the Government has decided to put in place stringent financial and accounting systems.

New controls in the Integrated Financial Management Systems (IFMS) are being put in place to curtail those who were abusing this system to make fraudulent transfers. Besides, any payment in Bank of Uganda requires a second confirmation from accounting officers mainly who must confirm physically that they are the authors of the appended signatures on the said payment schedules. This repayment will reassure development partners of the Government's resolve to fill the loopholes.

The writer works with the Media Centre

We'll always pay for our actions

There are six of us around the table. We're disturbed and talking about how to help. The place where we work and live and have friendships and worship with others is under attack.

Through 2012, this place, an educational institution, became, as one Ugandan said, "a den of thieves." Then the New Year had barely arrived when a campus home was broken into and robbed while its Ugandan family slept.

One of the six, a woman, half laughs that thieves aren't bright enough to kidnap children. Another woman says don't laugh, it could happen. A man tells how his laptop was stolen while he went for tea.

Another tells how his vanished after thieves entered his office posing as maintenance workers. Another wonders why workers disciplined for stealing were rehired. Nepotism and collusion among guards and porous borders and security's leadership are questioned.

Then there's the employee who stole cash. He confessed it when caught, but, months later, still has his job because he's since denied it to a senior manager.

That money originated from international donors. A woman at the table says such crimes are tolerated because they're hidden, while pregnant girls at this Christian institution are summarily dismissed.

Of course, this institution is fighting a larger milieu. Transparency International ranks Uganda as the most corrupt country in East Africa and more corrupt than 129



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other countries worldwide. Most of Africa's 54 countries fail this coalition's pass grade.

"I've lived here for years, but I'll never understand this," I recently said to a Ugandan colleague. He told me that I simply don't understand this culture's hidden mechanisms.

He and I were talking about responsibility. After several homes in one exposed area of the above-noted institution were robbed, my family requested that one of its many guards patrol this area at night. Despite one recent theft from our own vulnerable home, and our repeated requests, no guard was provided. A week later my home was robbed again.

A guard was then finally given. But compensation to help pay for losses, requested because of how administration's

slow response factored into the second theft, was denied. Its top leader said the institution felt no responsibility. It was not the thief.

I wonder, though, if there is not a longer view, one that considers sins of omission as much as those of commission. This view says, "All this is my fault."

A good leader said this once. "All this is my fault." He was General Robert Lee, who led the South to defeat in America's civil war. Was it all Lee's fault? No. But by not denying his own role, he helped bring healing and faith in tomorrow.

I suppose this is an outdated way of seeing the world and our place in it. It is a view that is too foreign and unrealistic for our nature.

Some of us could blow up the planet, then stand with our hands in our pockets and look the other way. How did Eden go? Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, the serpent blamed God.

Even so, I wonder if this "all this is my fault" response is really the only chance that any of us have. This is because we will always pay for what we do or fail to do. Life itself teaches us this truth.

Any nation, or any institution, or any common man or woman on the street, pays by what we have allowed ourselves to become, and we pay by the lives that we lead.

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