Weekly Edition

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RECTIFY GOVERNMENT UNDER-STAFFING FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY IN AFRICA

1. INTRODUCTION

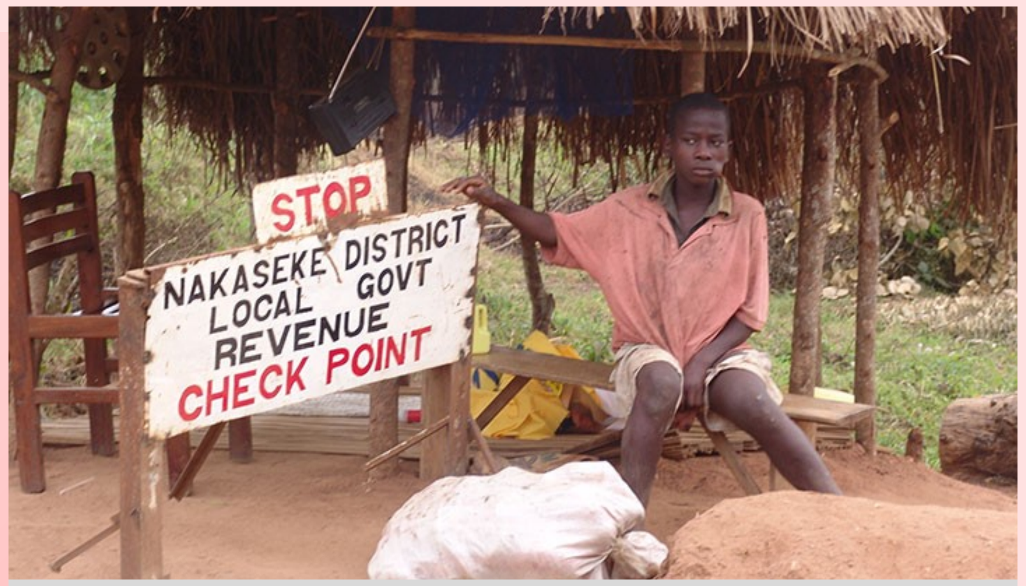
Across Africa, majority citizens (men, women, youths) oftentimes depend on public services such as Policing, Immigration, Safe water, Lands, Roads, Health, Agricultural extension, Electricity supply, Statistical data, Weather forecast and others. Such services are mainly provided through Local Governments and Municipal layers. Even for meaningful accountability to citizens and delivery of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the functional capacity of the public sector can be enhanced through adequate Staffing, towards the desired outputs and outcomes. We shall today look at the African case of Uganda.

2. GROSS UNDER-STAFFING AT SERVICE DELIVERY POINTS IN UGANDA

Despite a scale of service delivery progress in Uganda , under-staffing at Local Government and Municipal Councils continues to riddle the country. A number of critical Staff, for instance, in Fiscal Year 2018/19 remained in temporary (acting) capacity in offices at various layers of administration and management.

"Out of the expected 1,176 positions, only 596 positions had been filled, leaving staffing gap of 580, representing 49%" according to Uganda's Auditor General's report dated December 2019.

As such, in Fiscal Year 2018/19, Staffing



A boy rests under a shade formerly used by Nakaseke district local government revenue collectors courtesy of the Observer .

gaps (Vacancy rates) stood at the following selected layers;

1) **Kapchorwa Municipality (68% vacancy),**
2) **Kitgum Municipality (57% vacancy),**
3) **Nansana Municipality (51% vacancy),**
4) **Tororo Municipality (51% vacancy),**
5) **Iganga Municipality (32% vacancy),**
6) **Lugazi Municipality (36% vacancy).**

It's little wonder that a forest of reasons and challenges notwithstanding, the overall financial performance by 16 Municipalities showed that in FY 2018/19, UGX 4.3 billion i.e. 64% (out of UGX 6.8billion received hitherto), was transferred back to the national Treasury as unspent funds. This scale of transfer-back was also in respect to unspent salaries, given the understaffing in respective Municipalities.

So it's highly probable that the inadequate Staffing exacerbates resources' absorption constraints that may manifest through: a) poor timely technical support supervision , b) reporting overruns, c) poor supervision of private contractors, d) poor quality and quantity of service delivery outputs and outcomes given challenged monitoring of actual frontline service delivery points.

Moreover, Under-staffing overstretches the available staff capacities to work overload, accountability deficit, lower morale and absenteeism. Such low absorption implies financial underperformance including debt/ borrowed resources. Without serious and urgent reversal of Under-staffing, the tax payers often suffer no-value-for money additional tax burden and debt servicing. This state-of-affairs adversely affects the citizens in lower social strata and economic quintile; especially poor women and youths who largely depend on public services for their livelihood.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

1) Ministry of Public Service should endeavor that all Government structures are filled to at least 70% capacity, towards improved public sector service delivery.
2) African Governments must commit to improving the remuneration and working conditions of public sector workers, towards improved service delivery to citizens of respective countries.
3) Uganda must have a quip stop-gap measure for Staffing and efficiency in available resources for improved service delivery.

Through reversing the Understaffing trend in Governments, Africa will contribute to achieving Goal 8 on: promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and descent work for all.

READERS' FEEDBACK CORNER

Abraham Mensah (Email), in respect to : UDN Weekly Newsletter, Edition 339

Thanks for sharing,
African countries aren't getting as much as they should from foreign direct investment. Governments need to spend more effort on maximizing the impact of FDI on economic growth. This is over and above current efforts to gain a bigger share of global foreign direct investment flows. Failure to raise the impact of foreign direct investment on economic growth will mean that African countries will not fully benefit from higher inflows.

Christine Mubiru (Email)
Thank you for the 339th edition of the UDN weekly newsletter.
The recommendations and conclusion are agreeable . Affirmation action is called for.

UDN appreciates support by: UDN Membership; DCA; DGF; Save the Children in Uganda; Inspectorate of Government; IBP and Trocaire.

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