

FROM CHAINS TO LOANS: BUILDING REPARATIVE PATHWAYS IN AFRICA'S DEBT STRUGGLE

INTRODUCTION

The 5th African Conference on Debt and Development (AfCoDD V), held from 27th–29th August 2025 in Accra, Ghana, once again placed Africa's debt question at the center of continental dis-



course. Under the theme “Africa's Debt Crisis: A Reparations and Reparative Justice Framework Analysis,” the convening examined how centuries of slavery, colonial extraction, and neo-colonial financial systems continue to underpin Africa's persistent cycles of indebtedness

Uganda Debt Network (UDN), represented by Executive Director Tumwebaze Patrick, joined African leaders, economists, and civil society actors in interrogating Africa's position within an unjust global financial architecture.

For UDN, the discussions resonated deeply with its mission of advancing ac-

countability, sustainable debt management, and citizen-led advocacy for economic justice in Uganda and across the region.

A Continuum of Struggle: Linking AfCoDD V to the August 8th Webinar

AfCoDD V did not stand in isolation. Just weeks earlier, UDN co-hosted a regional webinar, “From Chains to Loans: Reparative Policy Responses to Colonial-Era Injustices and Contemporary Debt Challenges in East Africa” (8th August 2025). That conversation, available online here, spotlighted East Africa's unique vulnerabilities, where debt servicing increasingly outpaces investment in health, education, and climate resilience.

Both platforms advanced a shared thesis: Africa's debt is not simply a matter of mismanagement but of historical injustice. The webinar highlighted how odious debts contracted during colonial and authoritarian regimes continue to burden nations today, undermining democratic development. AfCoDD V elevated this analysis by situating Africa's debt crisis within a broader reparations agenda, arguing that debt cancellation and restitution are integral to restoring sovereignty and dignity on the continent.

Toward a Reparative Future

AfCoDD V closed by proposing a pathway to reparations through debt cancellation, the African Borrowing Charter, and Agenda 2063 commitments. The conference pillars political, research and ideation, and civic mobilization laid out a blueprint for sustained advocacy, rooted in Pan-African solidarity and citizen agency

For Uganda Debt Network, the task ahead is clear: to translate these continental commitments into national and community-level advocacy, ensuring that the struggle for debt justice moves from conference halls to policy reforms and grassroots empowerment.

The resonance between the August 8th webinar and AfCoDD V illustrates that Africa's debt struggle is not a single moment but an ongoing continuum from chains, to loans, and hopefully, to reparations.



UDN—ED (on the right) participating in the march from Obra Spot to Independence Square Accra Ghana in the Pan-African Rally for Debt Cancellation, a clear message that Africa rejects debt as modern colonialism.

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