Citizen monitors at the fore-front of the fight against corruption in Karamoja.

At Karamoja Primary School in Napak district, the Office of the Prime Minister constructed houses for 18 teachers. These structures were handed over in 2014 and 10 months later, they had developed life threatening cracks.

The teachers to whom they had been assigned abandoned them and instead opted to rent houses at the nearby trading centres or commuting from their homes.

The houses had been constructed as part of the support rendered to Northern Uganda under the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund phase III (NUSAF-III), but instead of achieving the intended purpose, to bring teachers closer to school as one of the ways to curb a number of ill-effects of late arrivals and absenteeism, the project has managed to achieve nothing short of a negative balance to the country.

At the district, the leadership at Napak does not know when they will have new structures constructed for the teachers or if they will have them at all.

Despite investing huge sums of money in this project, it is clear that the houses did not stand the test of time and now plans are underway to have them replaced. This is not only a waste of public resources, but a form of disguised corruption as well.

Karamoja sub-region remains the least socially and economically develops, with 61 percent of the total population of 1.2 million living in poverty (UNUHS, 2016/17). The overall literacy rate for Karamoja stands at only 25 percent, compared to 44 percent in Kampala, while 60 percent of women are unable to read and write (UNFPA, 2018).

Much as a number of factors have been allocated to as causes of this unfortunate situation, corruption cannot be ruled out.

The poor state of Karamoja has also partly been linked to the poor governance exhibited in the region inform of limited participation of the ordinary citizen in monitoring government programmes and demanding transparency and accountability.


Despite the robust legal framework, substantial amounts of money from the Government through the Office of the Prime Minister and other government agencies that are meant to develop Karamoja continues to be misused unabated. For instance, NUSAF I, II & III, and the Peace, Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP), have been marred with gross corruption over shs2bn lost.

Officials from Kampala to Karamoja to investigate on-going development projects in the region have often stopped along the way and made their reports without setting foot in the region.

The government action against abuse of these funds is not sufficient and as such, statistics have shown that the sub region continues to register the worst socio-economic indicators compared to the rest of Uganda. For instance, Karamoja districts have the highest Poverty Indices (HPI) with Napak, Nakapiripirit and Moroto districts having 63.5% compared to the national average of 37.5%.

To address the accountability gap in the region, occurred by limited citizen participation in demanding for transparency and accountability, Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda in 2013 supported the establishment of Karamoja Anti-Corruption Coalition. The aim of the regional coalition was to galvanize civil society and citizens’ efforts in the fight against corruption.

To further augment these efforts, Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda, Karamoja Anti-Corruption Coalition, with financial support from Irish Aid, have for the last two years implemented the Strengthening Karamoja Anti-Corruption Coalition Project.

This project has aimed at strengthening the Karamoja Anti-Corruption Coalition (KACC) and other local civic society organisations to increase citizen participation in monitoring service delivery.

Karamoja Anti-Corruption Coalition introduced the community-based monitoring system which is anchored on various laws and policies in Uganda referred to as people’s participation, community participation and supported under Article 38 of the Constitution of Uganda (1995).

Monitoring of public service delivery is anchored on people’s responsibility to report abuse, release of resources and corruption.

Under this system, 114 community volunteers were selected from Nabilatuk, Moroto, Napak and Nakapiripirit districts and trained in laws and policies and equipped with skills in reporting and analysing government documents such as BkL of Quantities, work plans and budgets, to monitor service delivery in Karamoja sub-region.

Duty bearers such as the government officials, religious leaders and elders were also trained on how to handle and give feedback to the cases received to ensure that the required action was taken.

Service delivery issues identified are discussed through a number of forums including; community parliaments, District Integrity Promotion Forums and media engagements.

Mr. Ayub Mukisa the Karamoja Anti-Corruption Coalition Coordinator, says that because of their interventions, a number of actions had been taken by stakeholders like the recovery of stolen medical equipment at Nakapiripirit Health Centre III and recovery of solar panels Tikoole Water Plant.

“We have also seen the construction of an incinerator and a placentia pit at Kajiejob Health Centre III and Ngapenot Health II respectively. Beds and desks were supplied to Kalotem Primary School and staff numbers at all health centres and schools have increased from 60% to 80%, which has resulted into a reduction in absenteeism and late coming” Mr. Mukisa further notes.

Mr. Emmony Lorom one of the monitors from Nabukusor district says that citizens are able to engage with leaders and influence actions when they have the tools of engagement. He further notes that when this tool is used, cases demoralizes the communities to report corruption and service delivery issues and he recommends that it is important for duty bearers to give timely feedback to communities.

The Assistant Town Clerk for Nabilatuk Town Council Mr. John Langoli recognizes the contribution of community monitors to making service delivery.

Community monitors are now recognized by the district and some of them have been appointed to the strategic leadership positions such as sub-county cabinet committees, local Council Courts and Health Monitoring Committees in Nabukusor and Nakapiripirit district and this has further motivated many, he says.

The Deputy Principal Administrative Secretary Nabuluk district Mr. Ilko Ol Jkos Lomien says that Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) should help in the eradication of poverty by equipping every individual with the basic skill sets and knowledge, but in Karamoja the situation is different as most of the UPE graduates in Karamoja are still academically malnourished and some cannot adequately read or write. He recommends increased monitoring exercises of schools.

The Executive Director Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda Mrs. Clissy Kagaba notes that although the Ministry of Education and Sports should contribute to the construction of basic school facilities (classrooms, libraries), some of ACCU’s findings indicate that some of the classroom blocks were in a sorry state and the building architectural plans were not fit for Karamoja.

Design of buildings should be compatible with the conditions of Karamoja to enable proper learning of students, she adds.

The Ministry of Education and Sports ought to train and retain teachers, however, most teachers are meeting their own costs of training which was a disservice, considering the amount of money that they earn. The Ministry of Education and Sports should support teachers from Karamoja to acquire additional training and enhance their capacities to deliver quality education to Uganda’s most disadvantaged region.