

## INTERNATIONAL ANTI - CORRUPTION DAY 2020 MESSAGE

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly by resolution 58/4 of 31st October 2003, designated 9th December as the International Anti- Corruption Day. A number of African countries including Uganda, ratified this day. The day was designated for global observance to promote awareness about the dangers of corruption, and how to prevent and combat it. For over a decade, anti-corruption agencies, organizations and individual actors in Uganda have commemorated the International Anti-Corruption Week which ends today December 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, the official International Anti-Corruption Day.

Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all. It undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development and contributes to governmental instability. Corruption attacks the foundation of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law and creating bureaucratic quagmires whose only reason for existing is the soliciting of bribes.

Corruption in Uganda is widespread and is one of the greatest obstacles to the country's economic development as well as to the provision of quality public services. It takes away funds meant for public service delivery, denying many women and girls their right to accessing quality services such as health care and education. Tax evasion, money laundering, and related corruption are costing Uganda at least \$1 billion a year, according to Global Financial Integrity.

FOWODE today joins the rest of the civil society in Uganda and in the world to commemorate the International Anti-Corruption Day 2020.

### COVID-19 AND CORRUPTION

This year's global International Anti-Corruption Day theme is "RECOVER with INTEGRITY." It was selected because corruption thrives in times of crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. The government of Uganda hastily mobilized billions in funds to procure medical equipment, procure and supply emergency food for the vulnerable and provide an economic safety net for citizens and businesses in distress.

The urgent responses required, however, led some institutions to trade compliance, oversight and accountability for achievement of rapid impact, thus creating significant opportunities for corruption.

FOWODE calls on leaders and citizens to observe this year's global anti-corruption theme as it highlights that only by putting effective corruption mitigation measures in place will a better recovery be possible, while it also emphasizes that inclusive COVID-19 recovery can only be achieved with integrity.

## CORRUPTION AND ELECTIONS IN UGANDA:

Uganda is currently preparing for general elections at various levels. Over the past election cycles, there has been an increased commercialization of politics leading to election of leaders who seek to recover their investment. This trend is one of the key drivers of corruption.

FOWODE, through her work seeks to strengthen women's collective voice and agency for enhanced transparency and accountability. Through awareness creation, engagement and advocacy, we hope to gradually build the capacities of citizens to engage their leaders for accountability and improved service delivery. When citizens, especially women are aware of the dangers corruption presents to effective service delivery, they will be more willing and able to engage their leaders, report corruption and follow up on actions to make corruption risky (costly). We call upon all citizens to desist from selling their vote and to elect leaders with a proven track record on transparency.

### BUILDING A WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Poor service delivery for women and girls remains a key challenge in Uganda especially in the Health, Education and Agricultural sectors. This has been mainly caused by poor prioritization for women's issues in plans and budgets at both local and national levels.

On the supply side, corruption is exacerbated by political patronage and impunity among leaders. The demand side is marked by weak ability of the citizens to demand for accountability from their leaders due to limited awareness, knowledge and skills, limited platforms for citizens' organizing, and an increasingly restrictive environment marked by intimidation and harassment by the State.

Although Uganda has a number of anti-corruption legal frameworks such as the Anti-Corruption Act, the Penal Code, the Inspectorate of Government Act 2002, the Public Finance Management Act 2015 and the Leadership Code Act 2002 (LCA), weak enforcement caused by impunity and a largely apathetic citizenry render them ineffective.

FOWODE believes that corruption affects women disproportionately owing to their gender roles and resultantly to the dependence of public services. The national theme: **"Promoting Social Accountability Through Active Citizenry"** rhymes well with our call for every woman to stand up and ask leaders to account for public resources. Corruption can only be defeated if leaders are aware that the cost of corruption as a result of citizens action is too high.

Besides restoring public confidence, FOWODE believes in the importance of citizen participation in the fight against corruption, with emphasis that the perceived 'untouchables' will remain untouchable if nobody acts and reports them. As we strive to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on time, the Government and all Ugandans are called upon to step up efforts to eradicate corruption and promote good governance if we are to deliver on our global pledge to leave no one behind.

### **STAND UP AND JOIN THE FIGHT**



Patricia Munabi Babiiha  
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