

LOCAL GOVERNANCE BRIEFER

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The Parish Development Model: Climate Change Issues

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The Parish Development Model, is *“Neither the Catholic Parish as defined by the Code of Canon Law” nor “The archdiocese or other ecclesiastical unit that would promptly come to your mind”*.

Under the Third National Development Plan (NDPIII—2020/21 to 2024/25), the Government of Uganda approved the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM) for the 10,594 parishes countrywide as a strategy for organizing and delivering public and private sector interventions for wealth creation, employment generation and stimulate overall national development². To the government and other stakeholders, the model is one of the missing pawns on the socio-economic transformation chessboard and perhaps; a panacea to the quest for middle-income status.

Proponents of the proposed wealth creation model assert that the PDM will provide a platform for nearly half of Ugandan households to graduate from the subsistence economy to becoming agents of wealth creation by the time the final evaluation is done. Key among its key outcomes will be the integration of the parishes into the national agro-industrialisation agenda and the recruitment of an additional 5,192 parish chiefs, 10,594 functional parish development committees and a functional parish-based management information system (PBMIS) in all parishes³. By and large, it is not just a model. Rather, it is a programme that will curb the wastage of public resources that have—for decades—gone down the drain through duplication of government service and lack of a

centralized monitoring mechanism.

Like night follows day, critics of the Parish Development Model point to the failures of previous poverty reduction initiatives as the template that the proponents of this newly planned arrangement need to reflect upon. To them, past failures to galvanise both private and public sector plays to accelerate efforts to realise the desired socio-economic transformation should not only provide food for thought but also be an indictment to the *‘think tanks’* where such initiatives are originated. Questions about the actual number of parishes, their current administrative structure and overall ability to manage the planned interventions is rife within the circles of naysayers of the Model. On their part, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have alluded to the lack of consultations of the relevant key stakeholders as the main *“achilles heel”* to its implementation.

Amidst the key challenges underlying the implementation of this Model, however, is the need to integrate climate change interventions. Though not considered as critical as the logistical and human resource needs for it to succeed; the success or failure of the Parish Development Model will—in more ways than one—hinge on how the impact of climate change to the target beneficiaries will be managed.

Like any other administrative unit of the country, all parishes—wherever they are located within Uganda—face varying levels of unprecedented destruction of the environment and natural resources. From the notable illegal encroachment on the natural tree species and catchment

¹ The writer is a Research Fellow at ACODE.

² Republic of Uganda. 2021. Discretionary Development Equalisation Grant (DDEG). Budget and implementation Guidelines. Effectiveness from FY 2020/21, Kampala, Uganda.

³ ibid

areas to the degradation of the hills, mountains and rangelands; residents of all parishes are as susceptible to the impact of climate change like any other category of individuals. Collectively, they all suffer from the effects of poor waste management and pollution and other threats to food security, incomes and livelihoods.

Some parishes located in border areas of the country have—for decades-- played host to millions of refugees, mainly women and children who come from neighbouring countries that are plagued by civil strife and its associated problems. Such influxes have put pressure on existing resources and services as the refugees depend on fuelwood for cooking and wood for shelter construction, leading to mass deforestation and destruction of the ecosystem. Limited access to livelihoods opportunities among youth, women and refugees has also resulted in negative coping strategies such as charcoal production and brick-moulding for shelter construction, which has led to severe land degradation. Besides, there are widespread poor farming practices in some parts of the country such as farming along wetlands and bush-burning which have also led to increased destruction of the ecosystems.

So as government preaches the 'Parish Development Model' approach to wealth creation, it should note that sustainable development can only be achieved by addressing the climate change challenges at the selected administrative unit. Specifically, this is a call to action to:

- *The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should prioritise and fund the enactment and enforcement of ordinances and bylaws:* Whereas the Local Government Act (Chapter 243) gives the district councils power to formulate ordinances and the lower local governments have powers to formulate bylaws for—among other things—ameliorate the impact of climate change⁴-- the formulation of these ordinances and bylaws has been one of the challenges faced by local government councils due to limited funding and expertise. Even in the few local governments where such bylaws exist, their enforcement has been jeopardized by the lack of goodwill to protect the environment. The PDM therefore provides an opportunity to not only promote the enactment of such ordinances and bylaws but also enforce their implementation.
- *The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry*

and Fisheries (MAAIF) should scale up its efforts to mainstream climate change in agriculture: Given that agriculture provides the main livelihood options for most residents of most parishes, the implementation of the PDM provides a compelling case for mainstreaming climate change adaptation and mitigation in agricultural sector policies and plans. This is not only important because the biophysical and socio-economic impacts of climate change and variability have implications on the entire agricultural sector but will also support wider ownership of the climate response and allow drawing on a wider pool of financial and human resources for implementation, capacity and institutional building. It will also lead to more integrated responses based on a more comprehensive understanding of linkages, opportunities, risks and constraints.

- *The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development should fund and implement biogas, energy-saving stoves, solar and other renewable energy sources:* This would not only provide more resources towards creating various incentives to enhance clean and renewable energy (clean cooking technologies) to reduce deforestation for wood fuel and charcoal but also reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to indoor pollution and abuse as they trek long distances to fetch firewood.
- *Promote tree planting:* Parish chiefs and other stakeholders at the administrative unit should be facilitated to champion tree planting as a way of mitigating the impact of climate change resulting from the illegal exploitation of natural forests.
- *Increase effective participation of women in decision making over management of the environment and natural resources:* Women play a critical role in the management of natural resources and are most affected by environmental degradation⁵. This is due to their socially constructed roles and responsibilities namely; their role as primary providers of food, water, and fuel for their families. Women are not only the most affected by climate change but are also a pivotal force for building responses to climate impacts. Their participation in environmental management is therefore, not only necessary but also essential towards achieving sustainable development.

So, whereas the PDM may not be the panacea to

4 Mugenyi, O., and Kagarura, D., (2020). Step by Step Guidelines for Making Ordinances and Bylaws in Uganda (Revised Edition), Kampala, ACODE Policy Briefing Paper Series No.54.

5 Mugenyi, O., Mugeere, A., and Amumpiire, A., A. (2020). Conserving the Environment and Enhancing Community Resilience: Keeping Climate Change on the Post COVID-19 Agenda, Kampala: ACODE, Policy Briefing Paper Series No.53.

poverty eradication and the elevation of Uganda to the list of middle-income status, it provides a window of opportunity for government and other stakeholders to continue the advocacy and implementation of climate change interventions at this level of local administration in Uganda.

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