

Manifesto implementation on course, says NRM

Today marks one year since President Yoweri Museveni took oath of office for a fifth term. In the run-up to the February 12 general election, the National Resistance Movement produced a manifesto which aims at taking Uganda to modernity through job-creation and inclusive development. The key commitments in the manifesto include strengthening security, Good governance and democracy, employment and macro-economic stability, agriculture, industry, tourism, human Capital development, health, infrastructure development for competitiveness, trade, sustainable harnessing of natural resources, public and private sector institutional development, international and regional co-operation. The *New Vision*, in a series of articles in this special report, assesses the progress so far and highlights areas that require support and improvements. To set the stage **PASCAL KWESIGA** sounded out the director of the NRM manifesto implementation unit, **Willis Bashaasha**, to give an insight into what has been going on behind the scenes

It is a year since President Yoweri Museveni was sworn in for another term in office. Is there anything to celebrate in terms of translating his manifesto commitments into action?

Absolutely. Most of the work plans of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) have been aligned with his manifesto commitments, and budgets have been put in place to implement the manifesto.

We are going to have the manifesto implementation week for the different MDAs to inform the public through the media about the implementation status.

Is there any tangible progress beyond aligning work plans and budgets of MDAs with the manifesto? That is why we are calling the actual players. We are calling about eight MDAs to give us the implementation status, especially those implementing the flagship projects. It will be an interactive process and will provide us with an opportunity to know what has so far been done under the different MDAs.

After that, we can find out whether there is cause for celebration or not.

When will this be?

It will start from today, to the 19th of this month. The MDAs will give their implementation status to the public through the media at Uganda Media Centre.

What are the flagship

Focus on the 2016 - 2021 NRM manifesto

- Strengthening security
- Good governance and democracy
- Employment and macro-economic stability
- Agriculture
- Industry
- Tourism
- Human Capital development
- Health
- Infrastructure development for competitiveness
- Trade
- Sustainable harnessing of natural resources
- Public and Private Sector Institutional Development
- International and Regional co-operation



Willis Bashaasha

projects that the MDAs are implementing?

We have the oil and gas projects, where we have injected a lot of money. There is the Standard Gauge Railway that is coming on board and roads, which have been taking a big chunk of the budget and power generation.

We also have the Youth Livelihood, Women

Empowerment Fund and the Social Assistance Grants for empowerment projects aimed at improving livelihoods and promoting inclusive budgeting. We need to see if there is progress and success in the implementation of these projects.

You have been tracking the implementation and a bit of success of these projects. In your view, without even looking at reports from MDAs, has there been any successes of these efforts in the past one year?

But these MDAs are mandated to report to me. I do not want to appear to be the one telling the story. That is why we are inviting them to tell their story.

But you should have an idea of what has been done. Probably, there is nothing.

We have statistics. Most of the roads are under construction.

But the first year of the manifesto implementation really involves planning, design and procurement. Of course, some projects have been rolled over. We are extending power and only very few districts have not been connected to the national grid. The issue of drug stock-out in the health facilities is being sorted.

The first year of the implementation of the president's manifesto has been hit by slow economic growth and bouts of insecurity in parts of the country. Have these presented any challenges in the manifesto implementation?

Of course, the economy had been projected to grow at a rate of about 5.5%, but it has slowed down to about 4.5%. The drought has affected food production and escalated inflation. There has been a short fall in revenue collected and all these will

be translated into reduced resource envelope. There has also been re-allocation of resources along the way. For example, budgets of ministries were cut to allocate money for the construction of roads in Bunyoro so as to facilitate oil production. Due to the drought, some resources had to be re-allocated to support water for production projects.

With no signs of when the economy will recover and some resources being re-allocated to provide, among others, relief services to people hit by hunger, how do you think these will affect the manifesto's implementation?

Of course, these setbacks have definitely affected the original implementation plan. But as the economy recovers, we shall be able to deal with the setbacks. We want to work with all Ugandans to implement the manifesto. We want to put efforts together

and move our country forward. It is not Government alone. It should be a collective responsibility.

This is the NRM manifesto. Which role do you want Ugandans to play in its implementation?

We have the challenge of productivity, and the President has been emphatic that we need to improve our household incomes. The value of hard work has degenerated in this country and we need a revolution in this area. Hard work would help us raise our household incomes and revenues to the Government.

Which are those manifesto commitments that most Ugandans should embrace and can actively help Government to achieve?

They should embrace all commitments. But the ones that touch most ordinary Ugandans include the Youth Livelihood Fund and Women Empowerment. If these are implemented, the women will turn around the fortunes of households and alleviate poverty. The other is improved road network and electricity, which will trigger growth in the economy. The support to Operation Wealth Creation is also key for Ugandans, although we have not yet evaluated its performance. The most important are programmes that put something in the pockets of ordinary Ugandans and turn around the fortunes of households.

The manifesto will be expiring in four years' time. Do you think there are things that should be done differently to be able to execute the commitments in the remaining period?

We need to improve on the focus and passion in doing our work. The President has been emphatic on prioritisation because we cannot do all things at a go.

We also need to stop the mentality that it is the Government's duty to do everything for the people. We need to cherish the value of hard work because that is what has enabled countries to develop. The issue of presidential pledges keep coming up, but those are managed under State House.

But that reduces the money available to implement the manifesto's commitments.

That is true. Maybe, what you are saying is that the President should limit such additional commitments, as these divert the money available and slow down implementation.