

Challenges Museveni faces in his fifth term as President

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Before President Yoweri Museveni can sit back and bask in the glory of securing a fifth term in office, he may want to ponder over some of the biggest challenges that lie ahead.

ELECTION PETITION

The recently-concluded presidential election was, perhaps, one of the most hotly contested in the annals of Uganda's electoral history. However, as widely expected, Museveni emerged winner with 60.61% against his main rival Dr. Kizza Besigye's 35.62%. Amama Mbabazi, who stood as an independent, polled less than 2%.

But both Besigye and Mbabazi dismissed the poll as a sham and the latter petitioned the Supreme Court, seeking the election to be annulled. Mbabazi is Museveni's long-time ally, who once served as prime minister and National Resistance Movement (NRM) secretary general. The petition is being considered and NRM members hope that judges will uphold Museveni's victory.

THE NEXT CABINET

If court upholds his victory, Museveni will face an uphill task of naming his next Cabinet that will serve with him in the next five-year term. Many of his party supporters expect a new Cabinet to be filled with qualified people who can help them achieve the party's strategic goal of transforming Uganda into a middle-income country.

Over 15 ministers lost in the parliamentary elections, with most of them losing to NRM – leaning independents who did not accept the outcome of the party primaries.

Prominent ministers who lost include Crispus Kiyonga (defence), Jim Muhwezi (information), Kahinda Otiari, (justice and constitutional affairs), Rose Akol (internal affairs), Fred Ruhindi (Attorney General), Irene Muloni (energy) and Jessica Alupo (education).

The junior ministers include Henry Banyenzaki (economic monitoring), Fred Omach (finance), Barbara Nekesa (Karamoja affairs), Asuman Kiyingi (works), Sezi Mbaguta (public service), Flavia Munaba (environment), Vincent Nyanzi (state minister in the Vice President's Office), Rebecca Atengo (northern Uganda), Rukia Nakadama



Museveni during the campaigns in Nakaseke district. During the recently-concluded presidential elections, he emerged winner with 60.61% against his main rival Dr. Kizza Besigye's 35.62%, while Amama Mbabazi, who stood as an independent, polled less than 2%

(gender) and Alex Onzima (local government).

President Museveni most times drops politicians who lose in parliamentary elections from his Cabinet and it remains to be seen how he will go about this.

JOBS FOR YOUTH

With a median age of 15.7, Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world. At least 83% of young people have no formal employment, according to the State of Uganda's Population Report released in 2015.

It is little wonder that the recent presidential campaigns saw extravagant promises of job creation schemes from all three principal candidates – Museveni, Besigye of Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) and Mbabazi, an independent. Analysts say although growth remains steady at around 5%, Uganda's economy was not in great shape as the campaigns began. They say the country did not share in the raw materials boom that propelled some African nations to new levels of prosperity in the 2000s, and the low price of oil means that although the country has discovered viable

reserves, natural resources are unlikely to represent a pathway to prosperity any time soon. They contend that this is problematic, because modest growth rates are proving insufficient to meet the expectations of one of the world's fastest growing populations. They say short-term subsidised jobs – for example, in public works schemes – are relatively easy to create, but are unsustainable in the current fiscal environment. Long-term productive jobs are far harder to generate, but are the only way to meet popular demands.

During his campaigns, the President said with infrastructure in place, his focus would now be on wealth creation. Accordingly, he said, sh1trillion would go to agriculture, sh234b for youth fund, sh234b for women fund, sh180b for microfinance and sh500b for innovation fund as a means to fight unemployment and poverty.

Once people are helped to create wealth, Museveni believes that jobs will be available. To hammer the point home, Museveni says someone who builds a hotel creates employment for others.



Museveni during the 22nd trade fair at Uganda Manufacturers Association grounds in Kampala in 2014. During the campaigns, the President said he would set aside sh500b for the innovation fund, part of his focus on wealth creation this term

He also wants to expand the Najjera model in which groups of youth will be assisted with capital to start investment ventures such as metal fabrication workshops. Under the Najjera model, Museveni bought machines for the youth operating a metal workshop and they have since boosted their business.

FIGHTING CORRUPTION

This is also another key issue awaiting Museveni in his in-tray because Uganda loses about sh600b annually through corruption.

It is recognised that while there has been tangible progress in establishing the legal and institutional framework to tackle corruption in Uganda, there is a continued absence of a clear demonstration of political will to fight corruption. In some

respects, there has even been resistance to and obstruction of the anti-corruption process, actions that may demonstrate a lack of political will to take the process further. A day after he was declared winner of the February 18 presidential elections, Museveni told journalists at his country home in Rwakitura, Kirohura district that he would be tough on corruption. During campaigns, Museveni used the imagery of rats eating millet to explain to supporters the difference between wealth distribution and spending.

Museveni said he was aware of the corruption problem and that he had been discussing it with supporters during campaigns. He singled out permanent secretaries, sub-county chiefs and chief administrative officers as key

players in managing taxpayers money.

"Even when I was campaigning, the people were always telling me about these thieves," he said, describing his experience during the campaigns as a consultative meeting with his children, grandchildren and a few elders in the bracket of supporters that he addressed. "I was explaining to them using the imagery of rats and millet. The two concepts of enlarging the resource envelop by collecting more revenue, but also stopping the thieves or rats from encroaching on this millet.

"We are going to be tough. I was going to be tough and dismiss them (officials in charge of government resources) during the campaigns, but we did not want to mix campaigns and

running government," he said.

He has been commending Allen Kagina (Uganda National Roads Authority executive director), Pius Bigirimana (gender ministry permanent secretary) and Jennifer Musisi (Kampala Capital City Authority executive director) as role models in fighting corruption.

OPPOSITION LEADERS

Analysts say opposition leaders, especially of FDC-led by Besigye, might not make life easy for Museveni – as evidenced by their refusal, following his win, to recognise him. FDC has already launched a "Free my Vote" campaign that seeks to boycott activities by Museveni and those of musicians deemed to be sympathetic to NRM. Ssemujju Nganda, the FDC party spokesperson, said the campaign, which will "be peaceful" seeks to alienate those oppressing Ugandans.

"Starting this Thursday (March 10) we will not be going to work every Thursday of the week and we call upon all Ugandans who voted for Besigye to stay home that day. The home imprisonment will be in protest of the detention of Dr. Besigye," Ssemujju said, highlighting the continued 'house arrest' of Besigye at his home in Kasangati in Wakiso district. Amidst the calls for peace and reconciliatory dialogue, FDC leaders also revealed that the party still had reservations on joining negotiations with Museveni and set conditions that would guarantee their participation. They requested for a broad participation of all political parties, civil society organisations and all stakeholders, a neutral arbiter and a guarantee that whatever would be decided was to be implemented. However, it is not known whether Museveni's group would be able to accept these conditions.

IMPROVING SERVICES

Analysts say although the NRM government is often credited with reducing poverty and improving infrastructure, the quality of public services enjoyed by most Ugandans



Once people are helped to create wealth, Museveni believes that jobs will be available. He said someone who builds a hotel creates employment for others and promised to dedicate sh234b for youth fund

is undermined by the funding available. For example, Uganda has free primary education, but children often have no books or desks and teachers' salaries sometimes go unpaid for months. Many existing hospitals and clinics lack the most basic medicines and equipment – so much so, that the Government had physically prevented Opposition candidates from entering any more hospitals because they were making effective campaign propaganda from their failings.

Pundits argue that an improvement in services would, thus, bring broader social and economic gains by helping Ugandan workers to be more productive. This could be achieved by redirecting some of the funds that are currently being used to strengthen the security forces – justified under the catch-all banner of national security – to improving the quality of hospitals and schools.



President Museveni's lawyers walk to court during the preliminary hearing of the election petition by Amama Mbabazi before the justices of the Supreme Court on Monday

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ANALYSTS SAY ONE FACTOR THAT WILL CONSTRAIN MUSEVENI'S ABILITY TO FUND PUBLIC SERVICES AND CREATE JOBS IS THE RISING NATIONAL DEBT OF OVER \$6B. THE DEBT TO GDP RATIO HAS GROWN EVERY YEAR SINCE 2008

REDUCE NATIONAL DEBT

Both political and economic analysts say one factor that will constrain Museveni's ability to fund public services and create jobs is the rising national debt. Uganda currently has a debt of over \$6b and the debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratio has grown every year since 2008.

They say reducing the national debt will require Museveni to identify and realise new revenue streams. Strengthening the capacity of URA to close the gap between what it is owed and what it receives – which in areas such as VAT stands at 60% – would be one way to go about this. They, however, argue that the experience of other countries suggests that this is far harder to achieve in the absence of clear evidence that revenues are being reinvested to improve the quality of services.

FIGHTING CRIME

Another urgent task for Museveni is to stop rising crime levels. Crime is on the rise in and around Kampala with defilement, murder and rape topping the list, according to the Police statistics. Over the past two years, unknown assailants have ambushed and killed a dozen of leading Muslim clerics. Others survived and now live in fear. The attacks have occurred across the country, from Kampala, to border towns such as Mbale district. The Government and the Police say

Allied Democratic Forces insurgents, among others, are responsible for the killings. Others blame them on an ideological struggle within the Muslim community or a result of a fight over property and money.

DEALING WITH THE WEST, US

Analysts say although Museveni is more likely to enjoy international support both for development and the fight against terrorism, he might face a torrid time in enjoying political legitimacy abroad. Foreign observers say the poll was conducted in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

While praising the "remarkable determination" of Ugandans to vote, European Union chief observer Eduard Kuken said the ruling party's "domination of the political landscape distorted the fairness of the campaign".

AGE LIMIT

This is also another challenge. One of Mbabazi's lawyers, Benjamin Alipanga, had filed the petition in the Constitutional Court arguing that Museveni, who is 71, would not be qualified to serve a full five-year presidential term from 2016 because he would be past the constitutional age limit of 75 years.

There had been proposals to have the age limit for the presidency lifted by amending the Constitution and many proposals are expected after May. Some individuals propose

there should be no age limit for the presidency as long as the president is able to serve, deliver and people still have faith in him or her.

MANAGING TRANSITION

How to manage the question of transition and the generational fight between NRM historicals and the party's youth is also going to be a major challenge for Museveni. Foreign affairs minister Sam Kutesa recently told *New Vision* in an interview that Museveni was not going to be here forever and it is not necessary for him to be here forever.

"But I think the foundation for the country to take off has been set and this term (2016-2021), which is clear we are winning, should be to consolidate it and I believe a younger generation will emerge to take over from all of us," he said.

Kutesa, added: "I think a lot of work needs to be done in strengthening the party, strengthening the youth and the nation, so that a new generation can take power after this term (2016-2021) in my view. In this term (2016-2021) we must create room for the new generation to be able to take over in 2021."

During last year's party primaries, it took the intervention of Museveni to save most of his colleagues who were under the threat of firebrand young politicians who had expressed interest in their seats. Some of the beneficiaries of this included NRM's first national vice-chairman Hajji Moses Kigongo, whose seat was being threatened by a little-known Hakim Lukenge and Maj. Gen. Matayo Kyaligonza, the NRM vice-chairman for western Uganda, who faced competition from Odrek Rwabwogo, the president's son-in-law.

Even though the party prevailed against the two to step down, some say the same voices will again emerge and this time it might be impossible to silence them. Francis Babu, an NRM central executive committee member, warns that this is going to be a big challenge, but that the party must be ready to face it.

"Change within the party is definitely inevitable, but clear processes must be put in place to ensure that nobody gets offended," Babu said.

If the question of succession is not handled well, Babu warns that it could brew revolt within the NRM party.

"It is incumbent upon the party leaders to start discussing the question of succession now more than ever. The party must be prepared to admit that we, the current leaders, cannot continue to be political players forever," Babu warned.

The NRM party has, often times, experienced situations where one or two members jolted out, especially after feeling that the top leadership was not willing to discuss change. Two of the presidential candidates in the 2016 presidential election Mbabazi and Besigye, were once regarded as top members of the party. They opted to move when they felt their voices were being silenced.