



The TRACK

Newsletter

Issue 24



From the Editor

Our esteemed readers, here again is another edition of our TRACK Newsletter. Quite different from our previous editions, Issue 24 highlights some of the major education and health challenges as reported by the citizens during our various community engagements. We do hope that by bringing out these gaps into the limelight, the relevant duty bearers and stakeholders will come out to address them for better service delivery and development of our region and the country at large.

We also share with you some of the achievements realized from the efforts of change agents and whistle-blowers that are committed to have the vice of corruption wiped out.

Finally, be sure to catch a snap-shot of the pictorial summary of some of the activities undertaken in the period under review.

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JOINT MONITORING WITH THE GOVERNANCE CLUSTER



Governance cluster members in a joint monitoring visit in Harugongo

On February 20, 2020, members of the governance cluster embarked on a joint-monitoring venture to three (3) selected areas i.e. Fort Portal Municipality, Nyantaboma HCIII and Harugongo Sub-county head-quarters.

The joint monitoring venture was premised on community concerns raised over service delivery gaps and allegations of abuse of office and works that do not level up to funds injected in government projects.

Cluster members that participated in this monitoring include among others; RAC, RIDE AFRICA, Tooro DEV, RWEPOTA and KIND UG.

Visit One:

The first visit was made to the office of the Town clerk - Fort Portal Municipality Mr. Ahimbisibwe. Here, the team was interested in obtaining the status of some of the pending cases reported within the municipality.

Key among these were;

- a. Poor garbage management in markets and towns,
- b. Sub-standard works on Kibogo road
- c. Poor workmanship in the construction of the drainage system on MT road and street lights
- d. Failure to disseminate information on the procedural allocation of lockups in the lorry park

In response to the above concerns, the Town Clerk admitted that the demands of the municipality do not match the available resources. However, they were doing everything within their powers to ensure better service delivery in the municipality.

In regard to garbage collection, the Town Clerk stated the municipality does not have enough funds to pay for garbage collection but, workable measures had been instilled to address the garbage menace in Fort Portal Municipality

The Town Clerk commended the governance

cluster for picking interest in the development of the municipality and pledged to address all the above-raised concerns for the betterment of Fort Municipality and the district at large.

From the Town Clerk's Office, the team headed to Nyantaboma HCIII to monitor its state of service delivery; our findings revealed that;

- The facility PHC releases and expenditure are not displayed on the notice-board
- Part of the compound is bushy with a pit of stagnant water around the facility which can be a breeding area for mosquitoes.
- Cases of late-coming by some staff were observed, but this was partly blamed on the long distances trekked to come for duty. There is therefore need for construction of staff quarters at the facility to address this gap. Currently, the facility has got only 1 house that accommodates 2 staff.
- Although it is a health center III, Nyantaboma receives drugs of HCII level under push system, save for TB and ART drugs. There is therefore need to elevate the quantity of drugs supplied to this health facility to level up with the number of patients that access services here.

Visit 2:

Harugongo sub county

This was the final monitoring site visited by the cluster. Here we monitored a conference hall that was under construction. The project contract was awarded to Kumwe Investments Limited to redo the roofing of the Conference Hall after several community complaints. The community was concerned about the use of concrete during the construction of the ceiling, stating that there was need to install stronger pillars to hold the roof. The contractor thus demolished the concrete ceiling and replaced it with ply wood. The works done thus far are commendable.

OUR INTERVENTIONS...

Bridging the gap between citizens and duty bearers

Efforts to curb corruption cannot be meaningful if the gap between citizens and the duty bearers is not eliminated. Citizens have to be empowered to hold their leaders accountable on one hand and the other, the duty bearers have to be willing to respond to community concerns and at the same time offer service delivery in a transparent manner.

To this end, RAC has and continues to undertake various interventions to narrow, or even erase the breach between leaders and the community. This way, the two parties can appreciate each other's efforts and contribution in the fight against impunity and as such realise better service delivery which ultimately results into meaningful development.

Round table meetings, Community feedback meetings, social audits, DPAC/stakeholders meetings and the District Integrity Promotion Forums are some of the various avenues we undertake to bridge the gap between citizens and the leaders/duty bearers. All these are undertaken on a quarterly basis across the 63 sub-counties/8 districts of the Rwenzori region, which is our operational area. They have proved to be very effective in providing a platform for the lower grassroots communities to engage with their leaders at various levels on pertinent issues of service delivery. The engagements further provide a platform for leaders/duty bearers to respond to community concerns in form of causing action against the corrupt through correction of defects on government projects, refund of misappropriated public resources and fines among others; clarification of false allegations, commitments to act/address anomalies reported, follow up/investigate graft allegations and awareness creation on service delivery.

As highlighted in the following section, a number of concerns hindering access to quality service delivery are often times raised during these community engagement meetings. The meetings provide a platform for the citizens to implore the relevant duty bearers to intervene and take appropriate action to address the challenges faced.

THE HEALTH CHALLENGE...



Members of the Governance cluster in a joint monitoring visit to Nyantaboma HCIII

Health-related challenges top the list of concerns during our community engagements like round table and community feedback meetings. This is perhaps not surprising because there is a general belief that HEALTH IS WEALTH...and therefore all the other efforts geared towards development will be rendered meaningless if the citizens are not healthy. In the quarter under review, a number of health challenges were raised during the 63 community feedback and round table meetings conducted. These include among others;



Patients waiting to be attended to at Bundibugyo Hospital

Absence of public health facilities in most of the newly created sub-counties like Kyakatiwire and Kanyegaramire in Kyenjojo district and Kabweza in Kyegegwa district. This amidst the poor transport system with hardly any public vehicle (save for boda bodas) and ambulances to handle emergency cases like maternal related cases and accidents. The community is thus forced to trek several kilometres to access the nearest health facility in a different sub-county for moderate ailments while for the major ones, one has to move to referral hospitals at the district or regional level. This has sometimes resulted into avoidable deaths.

Understaffing: most of the public facilities across the region are understaffed, posing a risk of absenteeism and delay in receiving medical attention by patients. At Rukungu HCIV for example, the staffing level stands at

44% while at Kagando hospital in Kasese, the maternity department is run by one person who is in fact a volunteer.

The challenge of understaffing is coupled with staff transfers without immediate replacement and in other scenarios, staff have gone for study and other official leaves like maternity and annual leave creating a work burden on the few remaining staff. There are reported cases where a health facility has been left with just one or even no medical staff, simply because some staff were transferred without replacement, and the remaining few are either attending other official duties like workshops and outreaches. In extreme cases, facilities have been left in the hands of askaris (security guards) or even office attendants to administer drugs to patients – a factor that puts the lives of patients at risk.



Some of the Bundibugyo Hospital staff with whom RAC interacted during monitoring of the health sector

Karambi HCIII in Karambi sub-county – Kasese district is one of the facilities affected by the challenge of staff transfers without replacement. It was reported during the sub-county conference that a total of four staff had been transferred within the same period without replacement. The inadequate staffing was

coupled with the challenge of poor sanitation where the latrines were reportedly filled up. The facility in-charge's pleas to the DHO and CAO for urgent intervention to address these challenges fell on deaf ears. The administration was thus left with no choice but to halt admissions save for the maternity department.

Extortion and sale of government drugs: Illegal charges and sale of government drugs across various health facilities is another bad practice commonly reported in various facilities in the region. In Kasese district, there was a loud outcry about extortion of funds through false billing especially for patient admissions. In other instances, patients are attended to but referred to private clinics/drug stores to buy the prescribed drugs. Communities allege that the recommended drug stores are in most cases owned by the staff of the public health facilities who deny the patients access to free government drugs so as to make money from their private stores. During the sub-county conference in Kyenjojo district, there was a loud outcry by the community members who

strongly alleged that a huge percentage of mothers that require delivery by caesarean section are referred to a particular private clinic and charged exorbitantly. It is alleged that the clinic in question is owned by one of the staff at the government health facility. The community wonders why they have to be referred to a clinic yet the public facility in question is well-equipped to offer such services as delivery by C-section. The accused however say that absence of drugs and other medical supplies is a national problem, with many facilities faced with challenges of drug stock-out due to the huge catchment areas served, amidst inadequate drug supply.



One of the wards visited by RAC at Kamwenge HCIII during the social audit

The above challenges are just some of the many that the health sector in the region and the country at large is grappling with. All these challenges, as reported by the community were reported to the leaders and duty bearers during our engagement meetings for action.

Although responses and commitments to have them addressed were made, there is still need for concerted efforts at district, regional, national and even international level to have them completely wiped out.



Kabarole district RDC (center) during a joint monitoring exercise and sensitizing the community members on preventing the spread of COVID 19 in Harugongo sub-county, Kabarole district

CHALLENGES FACING THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Like health, the education sector in Uganda is marred with a number of challenges. This is evidenced in the number of education-related issues reported during our community engagement meetings and some of the cases reported at the RAC secretariat on a day-to-day basis. In this section we highlight some of the key underlying gaps/challenges facing the education sector, with examples of cases reported to RAC during our engagement with the community.

Staff and pupil absenteeism:

Staff and pupil absenteeism in school is often times coupled with late coming; factors leading to this gap are many but mostly, they stem from the long distances trekked by the teachers to and from school on a daily basis. Staff accommodation in a number of schools is unheard of and consequently, teachers end up reporting late for duty. A case in point is Kasurenge P/S in Kasese district which despite being in a mountainous zone, has no staff house. The teachers therefore have to trek for a minimum of 3 hours to report to school for duty. One can only imagine that after such a long distance walk, they are exhausted yet they have to take the same route later in the evening when going back home. This definitely affects their performance as they may not be in position to do adequate preparation and assessment of their learners' performance.

On the side of pupils, absenteeism is fuelled by factors like market days where learners, at the command of their guardians are forced to go to markets to fend for their families

In other places like Kyenjojo and Kyegegwa, there is a growing concern over pupil and staff absenteeism due to their religious beliefs. This is the case with a sect of the community that belongs to Bisaka's faith where schools like Badida P/S and Mirongo P/S, pupil absenteeism is reportedly very high on every 2nd, 12th and 22nd day of the month; which are believed to be their days of worship.

Inadequate infrastructure:

Despite the existing minimum standards that are meant to govern operation of the education sector, a number of schools do fall short of these requirements. The education policy for example requires that each school should have a minimum of one latrine stance per 40 learners yet in schools like Kiyonga PS in Bwera sub-county – Kasese district have got only 5 latrine stances which are not sufficient for the 750 pupils and 19 teachers. At Ihandiro PS, the latrine, at the time of our monitoring was full; yet with no immediate plan to construct new ones. When presented to the duty bearers for intervention during our sub-county conference in Bwera, the LCIII Chairperson said that the sub county did not have funds to construct a new one which requires up to 20 million Shillings – an amount the sub-county cannot afford.

In Buweza Primary school in Maliba sub-county – Kasese district, there is only one 3-stance latrine used by the teachers and pupils whose enrollment adds up to 557. The school is further faced with the challenge of inadequate classrooms – a factor that forced the Head-teacher to partition the only four classrooms available to serve all the seven classes. P.1 and p2 share one class room, P.3 and P.4, sit in one class-room while P.5 and P.6 share one classroom. The classes are separated by rows, with two chalk-boards in a classroom – one per class. In such a scenario, one only wonders how two teachers can stand before pupils of different classes in the same room!

The above challenges are just some of the prevalent gaps affecting service delivery in the region and probably the country all over. It is for this reason therefore that through the RAC model various platforms and structures to have these gaps identified, reported and addressed were set up in accomplishment of the RAC mission – 'To contribute to poverty reduction in the Rwenzori region by empowering citizens to expose and cause action against corruption.'



Some of the RAC board members during the RAC AGM 2019

THE RAC MODEL

Platforms created emanate from the grassroots structures where community animators popularly known as the RAC monitors and activists are facilitated to monitor the various service delivery points and government programs within their localities. RAC has got over 700 community animators and 8 District Focal Persons who monitor government programs on a day-to-day basis. Issues of concern raised through these structures are presented to the secretariat and compiled into reports that are presented to the relevant duty bearers for response through community round-table meetings/sub-county conferences. Important to note is the fact that concerns raised by the community during the sub-county round-table meetings may sometimes require intervention by leaders at district or regional level. Such issues are thus compiled and presented to leaders for response during the District Integrity Promotion Forum meetings.

Like the round table meetings, the DIPF meetings are conducted on a quarterly basis, bringing together all the key stakeholders in service delivery, including Heads of Departments, DPAC, CSOs, private sector, judiciary, police and the office of the IGG among others. The DIPF provides a platform for the duty bearers to address outstanding issues from the sub-county meetings while at the same time respond to other issues affecting service delivery in the district. In the quarter under review, only 3 DIPFs were conducted in the districts of Bundibugyo, Kabarole and Kyenjojo. The remaining five (5) were hindered by the outbreak of the COVID-19 outbreak which led to halting of all public gatherings.



Some of the RAC monitors during the 2019 AGM

Responses and action taken in regard to the cases reported were taken back to the community through the 63 feedback meetings conducted across the 63 sub-counties where RAC operates. Two radio talk-shows in Kamwenge and Kasese were also conducted to provide updates on some of the issues reported in the quarter under review while at the same time address some of the prevalent issues affecting service delivery.

Pictorial Highlights of activities conducted in the quarter under review

Several activities were conducted in the period under review and these are summarized in the following pictorial

a. *Cases reported by monitors followed up and feedback given to communities through community meetings:*



b. *Three (3) District Integrity Promotion Forum (DIPF) meetings conducted:*



- c. *DPAC, Internal Audit and other committees supported to monitor the extent of implementation of their recommendations:*



RAC staff, board member and Kamwenge district leaders during the DPAC meeting

- d. *Networking with partners:*

RAC collaborated and participated in various forums organized by our partners at district, regional and national level. These include; Training of Governance Cluster Members in Budget Analysis; commemoration of the budget week (dialogue, procession and exhibition); a baraza to provide a platform for citizens to engage their leaders on service delivery gaps in Kabarole district – the baraza was organized by the Office of the Prime Minister in Fort Portal; Breakfast meeting with the parliamentary committee on Education and Health organized by KRC among others. In addition, The RAC Executive Director participated as a panelist at the Anti-Corruption Dialogue organized by the Justice Law and Order Sector under the theme Expanding collective action in Uganda’s anti-corruption response, where she highlighted the major gaps facing the JLOS sector with recommendations to address the identified gaps.

e. *Monitoring activities conducted:*



f. *Media Campaign: Two radio talk shows conducted in Kasese and Kamwenge*



g. Social Audit:



Social audit at Kisuba Seed Secondary school



RAC and Kamwenge district leaders in a site visit during Kamwenge district social audit

h. Focal persons attend meetings, report, monitor and give feedback on various programs within their respective districts



STORIES OF CHANGE

TOP CHINESE SUPER MARKET IN FORT PORTAL PROBED FOR ILLEGAL SALE OF GOVERNMENT MAMA KITS



Exhibits of kits recovered from the super market



Zhao (R) lght the owner of the super market

On March 19, 2020, a whistle blower tipped off Rwenzori Anti-Corruption Coalition about a Super Market that was illegally involved in the sale of government mama kits. Upon this tip-off, RAC alerted police and other security agencies who swung into action to verify the whistle-blower's allegations.

Good Home - the Super market in question belongs to Chinese Nationals with two branches; one located on Ruhandika street and another on Bundibugyo road.

The search into the Super Market by the investigating team confirmed the allegations as true, with each kit going for Shs. 50,000/= . A total of 10 kits were recovered from the two branches.

A case file – SD REF NO.32/19/03/20 of illegal possession of Government stores was thus registered at Fort-portal Police against Zhao Long - the business owner. Zhao was arrested and detained at Fort Portal police station but later released on police bond.

The Kabarole District RDC – Mr. Asimwe Stephen when asked for comment said that the police and other security agencies are gathering more information on the source, number of kits stolen and their net worth.

He further noted that the vice is illegal and criminal, adding that their teams are on ground to ensure that such practices are wiped out and the culprits brought to book.

He applauded RAC and the whistle-blower for their vigilance, urging every other patriotic Ugandan to follow suit.



Right: Zhao's wife under probe

Kakabara Monitors cause correction of defects on a latrine

Early this year, Kakabara RAC branch members as part of their routine monitoring visited a public five-stance latrine under construction in Kakabara trading center. The latrine under construction was contracted to BIG TIME ESTATES, budgeted at Fourteen Million. The specifications for this project include among others; 30 feet deep and two feet wide using clay bricks and 30 gauge iron sheets, Other contract obligations include; bush clearing and planting of trees in a bid to conserve the environment.

During their site visit, the monitors observed a number of defects on the latrine and immediately informed the relevant duty bearers for intervention. No sooner had the monitors reported the defects than the latrine which was then at roofing level collapsed.

After the unfortunate incident of the collapsed latrine, the monitors quickly went back to the sub-county and district leadership to implore for their urgent intervention. This time round, the leadership acted immediately – they paid a visit to the site and conducted a meeting that attracted over a hundred community members to bring them up to speed with what was going on.

Mr. Mwesige Adolf – the Assistant District Engineer who doubles as the Project Supervisor apologized for the shoddy works, but pledged to task the contractor to have all the defects fixed at his own cost.

In a follow up monitoring visit to the site, it was observed that construction works had resumed. Like the saying goes... 'Once bitten, twice shy... the community is optimistic that after the unfortunate incidence of the collapsed latrine, the new one under construction will be of good standards.