

UPDF and Corporate Social Responsibility

The UPDF-Uganda People's Defense Forces is an extension of the National Resistance Army (NRA) which practically conceived and nurtured from Ugandan peasants. It was led by a handful of militant, intelligentsia and endowed with genuine military training, combat experience and knowledge in matters of politics. This combination of patriotic Ugandans became the people's Army. The lessons these amalgamated groups learnt from each are still taught through political education attended by civilians and combatants alike. This has ensured a long-lasting peaceful co-existence between the civilian community and the military.

The UPDF continue to be a pro-people National Army and there is no likelihood of this status deteriorating. On the contrary this trend continues to grow.

The UPDF soldiers, rights from the time they enrol into the force, are continuously reminded of their subordination to the civil society. This ideal accompanies the UPDF Officers and Combatants so that the areas they operate in experience friendly co-existence and operations. The Civilians be it in Uganda, DRC, Somalia who have interacted with with the UPDF express shock to eventually realize that they have met an armed force that does not bark at civilians, loot their properties or rape girls and women. What a strong, and a professional army in Africa.

The UPDF wherever they are found are a source of solace for the civilians that have no access to health facilities due to affordability constraints. UPDF has never turned away a single civilian seeking medicament at any of their hospital-What a socially responsible Army?. This Army has been known to share their food ratio with civilians in strife torn parts of the country like Karamoja-this is done by the army not because they have plenty but because the army is professional and socially and morally upright.

In Somalia, UPDF has become the single most effective provider of health to the public.

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Plot 65, Bukoto Street-P.O Box 36733-Kampala-Uganda, Tel: +256 312 283 776, +256 712 936 206
Email: publicopinions@yahoo.com-Website: www.pubopinions.org

UPDF is also known by the term 'Productive Army'. This army in its infancy attempted to create major industries in the manufacturer of textiles at Kawempe,blankets at old Portbell Road,Lime in Dura and Pharmaceuticals at Nakasongola-among others.Such noble initiative were to benefit not only the UPDF Officers and Women but also the people of uganda.

The UPDF today manufactures its own munitions,assembles its own firearms and does major repairs on its arsenals. The Directorate of Production in the UPDF has been revamped and will soon be able to operate large scale agrovetculture projects on land the army owns in various parts of uganda.This will not only benefit the UPDF alone but will resoundingly contribute to social-economical development of uganda.

The UPDF under its National Enterprises Corporation (NEC) is involved with Iranian Industrialists in making tractors and in conjunction with the Ministry of Health,it operates the Join Clinical Research Centre (JCRC) which specialises and has greatly succeeded in handling HIV/AIDS related issues within the country.Having commenced their activities in early 1990S,JCRC has replicated itself and currently operates large clinics in a number of barracks across the country.

Can we compare UPDF with the past armies?. The following episode should explain the stark difference between these armies. It should be understood that men from past post-independence ugandan armies have not been barred from the UPDF.

Corruption in uganda is a serious problem but government has put in place measures to combat it. The problem of ghost soldiers and purchase of inferior materials are history today in the UPDF.The war on corruption within the UPDF has verily succeeded. It is this success, i.e in weeding out the ghosts, that has ensured the defeat of armed insurgents with such finality. This time the soldiers are there in physical terms-not just on nominal rolls. They are not represented by the ghosts on the warfront, hence the giant leaps forward.

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Of course the worst forms of corruption include terrorism, robbery and murder. In 2001 Uganda had to look to the Army to arrest a spate of mayhem that gripped the city and its environs. The Army came up with Operation Wembley commanded by a UPDF Colonel, which was eradicated the terror problem.

On the question of the Army's protection and respect for human rights, we need to go back to the beginning. A time came, from 1971 to 1986 when the value of human life in Uganda went far below that of a farm chicken. Only with the emergence of NRM now UPDF on the scene was this sad trend reversed. Henceforth, citizens were amazed that men and women in Army Uniform could be the harbingers of peace and defenders of human rights.

It can be pointed out that few individual soldiers have gone out with firearms and committed crime. But, then soldiers are human beings and can be potential criminals-just like several civilians have sometimes taken it upon to pick pangas, iron bars and in many cases even guns to kill fellow citizens. As for the UPDF, such criminal acts are treated with harsh lethal reactions they deserve. UPDF with the above few remarks has and will continue to be a social, professionally and morally responsible National Army.