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# FINANCIAL MOBILISATION- A STRATEGY FOR PEACE, REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF ACHOLI

By: John CAN

## Background

Acoli as people have never been what is generally described economically developed, like owning properties houses, factories or larger sum of money. Their basic wealth were, until 1986, cattle, which were found in nearly every Acoli households. The cattle were what is generally called in economic theory as “near money” that is; it could be turned in to money or cash in very short period with minimum cost. The cattle which were pillars of wealth of Acoli for centuries were wiped within months in 1986/87 as a result of the wars in the Acoliland.

Another important asset of the Acoli is their fertile land. Their land is fertile and abundant. I still believe that land is still belong to Acoli at this point in time, however, I caution that it is important to put investment in the land so that its value up.

The British colonial government which conquered and ruled Acoli for over sixty years never attempted or desired to transform the traditional economy in Acoli.

The introduction of cotton “the slave crop” as major cash crop only enslaved Acoli more than it empowered them. There were practically very few Acoli men and women in the commercial sectors like commerce or manufacturing. Although some financial institutions like commercial banks were established in Acoli as early as 1950, they were serving only the colonial masters and Indians traders. Many of the ordinary Acoli were not encouraged to bank or get loans from these banks. Therefore, the people of Acoli had a poor start, compared to her counter part Baganda of the southern Uganda.

With the departure of colonial government in 1962, the new independent Uganda Government never bother to redress the regional economic inequality. While it is true that the people of Acoli played a major political part only second to Baganda in obtaining independence, there extremely low economic base was not improved at all. the new government did not put any specific agenda to address the economic imbalance for the Northern Region,-including Acoli. There were no attempts to induce or stimulate the economic state in Acoli either as corporate or individually.

The very few people who turn to middle size farming were not supported by either the government or financial institutions in the country. By 1970s many of the small farms that were picking up collapsed. The social and economic base of Acoli was very weak and by the time of Amin's coups only facilitated it to total decay.

The brutal Amin's rule of 1971-1979 did not only

destroyed the Acoli human resources, the very people who would have accumulated wealth, and then investments in the land. It acted as a deterrent to any meaningful economic progress in Acoliland. It is a known fact and properly documented that many Acoli professions fled the countries and went to exiles.

The economic situation in Acholi improved very slightly in 1980-1985. These were due to personal initiatives of individual Acoli but not the government plans. In short, there has never had any economic development plan for Acoli. Even Acoli themselves their District Councils never had any concrete plans for development plans for the districts. Many people were waiting for government to bring them developments which indeed never came. Any slight development projects situated in the land may have been as a result of a general overall plan for the whole country.

From 1986 up to day, Acoli have lost not only their assets; cattle, but hundreds of lives of young and old people. The lost of human resources within the last ten years is the first of its kind and have never been experience in history of Acoli. This has been manifested in the World Bank Report “*North becomes the World Bank scale for poverty*”:

People, (*Acholi*) residing in the Northern Uganda are listed as one of six (6) main categories of the *poor* in Uganda, according to a report drawn from the a study of poverty conducted in seven districts between March and August this year(1995). A Report titled “*Poverty in Selected Districts of Uganda*” quotes, source from the World Bank, as listing the other five categories of poverty as orphaned, displaced and abandoned children; the handicapped; female headed households; older people and their dependants, and the landless peasants.

Why develop Acoli?

There are several reasons why Acoli needs to be developed as quickly as possible. The needs for developing Acoli are many and varied:

*Firstly*, it is a moral and constitutional obligations for any the government in Uganda to initiate development in any part of the country in order to and raise the standard and the quality of lives ordinary people. This is regardless whether the people agree or not with your political, religious or otherwise.

*Secondly*, the people of Acoli has played and still continue to play key role in Uganda social, economic and political scenes since independence October 1962. It is therefore appropriate for people of Acoli to have viable economic base to allow them to have positive

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and healthy contributions in the overall socio-economic and political of Uganda.

*Thirdly*, despite the fact that the population of Acoli is now very much reduced because of the thousands of lives lost as a result of 11 years of war in the land, Acoli still stand out to have a high number of population compared to other tribes in Uganda.

I may safely say today that ; quality and quantity of trained and experienced manpower from Acoli community. The manpower is now well equipped to manage and execute any of the development projects and mobilise finance for developments for the land.

*Fourthly*, unless otherwise the land law in Uganda changes very soon, Acoli land is a very precious asset that its people. It needs to be developed to enables people to earn meaningful lives from the soil. Despite the war, the rice, sunflower and simsim grown in Acoliland are still the commodities sought most from other business communities in other parts of Uganda.

*Lastly*, the Acoliland bounders or very near to these countries; Sudan ,Zaire, Niger, Chad) which at are known to have nothing more wars than foods for the last fifty years. Sudan, and not very far from the Zaire and many countries in central Africa. There is every opportunities to tape foreign currencies form these countries by supplying them with foodstuff. These will go along way in strengthening the new Uganda's economic policy of decentralisation. The two districts, Kitgum and Gulu shall become economically viable institutions and able to advance developments with minimum assistance from central government coffers.

Uganda's policy of decentralisation and Acoli development.

The current economic climate like privatisation and decentralisation is the currency of today. The world is moving in that direction and Acholi must mover that way. Our economic lifeblood is should be e part of the blowing wind

The decentralisation policy is one of the golden chance for Acoli to take up development strategies. It is a challenged for the indigoes Acoli particularly outside. The Acoli people must now take their economic and social development into tighter hands. Decentralisation is the base where creative and enterpreneurship is rewarded accordingly

Raising Finance for Development Acholi.

The current state of social, political and economic situation in Acoli, requires a host of "medicines" for the cure and I strongly recommend that the "lead medicine" as being *Immediate Economic development* in the land. Histories have shown us that underdevelopment, poverty in communities or any country often bring dissatisfaction, anger, and despair and soon

replaced by distortion of information among the communities. These generally lead to wars, insurgencies, successions and many other social and political upheavals.

Normally, for any country, groups or individual to break away from vicious circle of poverty, it may requires direct injection of external capital, either inform of cash or real investments like in its economy at initial stage. For the Acoli communities to disentangle itself from such vicious circle of poverty, deaths, and diseases ranging now at home, it has to quickly re-assess it overall assets and liabilities. As said before, the Acoli have abundant assets; land, manpower, and natural resources which can be enhanced. Its population as of today is 750,000

Therefore in this unique circumstances like in our land today, there are all the reasons to request from fund from individuals, international governments and agencies

The rehabilitation and rebuilding of Acoli is a priority to all Acoli , he/she is at home or outside the land. It is challenged that everyone must take and participate should be like the "Marshal Plan" which was launched to build the shattered economies of Europeans countries after the World War II. The big difference is this time, it should be Acoli communities to initiate and execute developments.

Proposals:

The people of Acoli should as immediate start to change their attitude towards developments and consider desisting of blaming other tribes or present government in Uganda for their economic disadvantage. Most of these disadvantage are caused people Acoli entrusted with leadership but never lead the people.

The people of Acoli should mobilise themselves and raise finance . They have to form Investment Institutions which can accumulate money and form Investment institutions like Agricultural Banks.

The formation of Acoli Commission:

The Acoli Parliamentary Group (APG) and the communities should take upon themselves to convince et the Parliament that the formation of Acoli Commission is an important economic idea, That this goes far well enough with the current decentralisation policy in the country. This body should be formed by Uganda Act of Parliament. It is purely economic body which not only initiate development but execute it.

The Commission shall be a separate body from the local authorities. This body shall be responsible for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Acoli. It shall be able to borrow and loan the to the people and agents of Acoli. The Commission shall also be able to solicit finance from the international bodies like World Bank etc.

The proposed operation of the *Acoli Commission* is available, well written in my papers and may be given

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out if requested.

The Central government shall initially fund this body, and afterward find a way of make itself it self viable, or business like institution.

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