

RE-ACTIVATION OF SUBCOUNTY SECURITY COMMITTEES

1. Introduction

It has been noted that Sub-county security committees through out the country are not effective and fully operational especially in Northern Uganda. This has had a negative effect on the delivery of police services, especially improvement of law and order and development in general. The UPF is embarking on a country wide programme of reactivating the committees with the relevant stakeholders starting with Northern region. This is aimed at strengthening the programme for resettlement of IDPs from camps back to their villages and re-establishment of law and order in Karamoja.

In order to understand how the subcounty security committees are formed up and function, it is important to appreciate the concept of national security. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 under Article 219 establishes the National Security Council that acts as an advisory body to the President on all matters relating to national security and any other matters connected therewith.

The National Security Council Act Cap.301 stipulates the functions, composition, and regulation of meetings of the council. Reference is also made to the Joint Intelligence Committee which is the technical committee of the National Security Council. This concept is replicated at districts up to the lower local governments.

For effective management of security matters at the district levels, the District Security Committees are provided for under the Act, whose membership is composed of;

- The Resident District Commissioner, who is the chairperson,
- The District Internal Security Officer, who is the secretary,
- The district chairperson,
- The secretary responsible for defence in the district council committee,
- The Chief Administrative Officer of the district,
- The District Police Commander,

- The Uganda People's Defence Forces commanding officer in the area or the reserve force commander in the district,
- The District Prisons Commander,
- The District Criminal Investigations Officer, and
- Any other person whom the committee deems fit to co-opt on the committee.

There is also the District Intelligence Committee that is composed of;

- The Resident District Commissioner, who is the chairperson,
- The District Internal Security Officer, who is the secretary,
- The District Special Branch Officer,
- The Military Intelligence Officer in the district, and
- Any other person whom the committee deems fit to co-opt on the committee.

Back ground to the subcounty security committees

The main focus to policing now is community policing, and this strategy begins at the neighbourhood level. Local Government administration in Uganda is delivered under the Local Council system. Section 26 of the Local Government Act lists the functions of the lower local government councils which include assisting in the maintenance of law, order and security. They also receive and solve problems and disputes forwarded to them from the lower councils. Therefore, implementation of community policing can be achieved under the LC system.

Security concerns of the subcounties just like crime requires a proactive approach. This would require laying down strategies that will effectively deal with any aspect of insecurity or crime before they occur. For example section 39 of the Local Government Act allows local government councils to make byelaws as long as they are not inconsistent with the Constitution of Uganda or any law enacted by parliament or an ordinance of the district. This could be done to curb certain local crimes or acts of insecurity within the subcounty.

Security is the cornerstone to settled communities and consequently development. It is imperative that local leaders prioritize issues of security in order to gain the confidence of the people they lead.

It should also be noted that mechanisms to deal with local problems need to be developed because more often than not, local security or even crime problems, would call for local solutions. It is in this respect that any functioning subcounty security committee would go a long way in meeting the communities' expectations but above all demonstrate the importance of team work.

Where subcounty security committees do not function there is a tendency of solving problems mechanically and to even refer minor problems for solutions from above. In this era of democracy, democratic centralism need to be seen to be practiced.

2. The Sub County Security Committees

Under the Local Government Act, the political head of the subcounty is the chairperson local council III. Likewise the National Security Council Act also establishes in every subcounty a committee known as the subcounty security committee. The subcounty security committee is composed of;

- The chair person of the subcounty local council, who is the chairperson,
- The internal security officer at the subcounty (GISO), who is the secretary,
- The subcounty chief,
- The secretary responsible for security in the subcounty local council committee,
- The area police commander,
- All secretaries for defence of the parish council committees in the subcounty, and
- The chairperson of the subcounty women's council.

Functions of the subcounty security committees

- (a) to inform and advise the district security committee(DSC) on matters relating security in the subcounty,
- (b) to coordinate and advise on matters relating to intelligence and security in the subcounty,
- (c) to forward to the district security committee the security needs of the subcounty,
- (d) to carry out any other function as the district security committee or the council may assign to the committee.

Benefits of sub-county security committees

- Ease of monitoring government programmes
- The population feels safe and secure
- Promotes constitutionalism, respect and observance of human rights
- Improves investments and quality of life
- Improves people's trust in their government
- Provides permanent solutions to problems
- Promotes cooperation and coordination among the various government departments.

CONCLUSION

The framework for establishment of sub county security committees is provided for both in the Constitution of Uganda and the Local Government Act. It is the responsibility of the chairperson of the subcounty local council who is the political head of the subcounty and the Commander of the area police Unit to ensure that the security committee holds regular business. The re-establishment of security, law and order can only be successful with the involvement of all the stakeholders. It is this concerted effort and the contribution of the community that would yield both short and long term benefits as far as fighting crime and insecurity is concerned. It is for this reason that the Uganda Police Force is embarking on a national wide programme of strengthening and reactivation of these committees. In Northern Uganda we believe they will act as a pull factor towards resettlement of people back to their villages while at the same time help to restore law and order in Karamoja region. The UPF seeks to promote a community based policing approach that is centered and focused on the fulfillment of community needs and aspirations. Communities that are empowered and clear about their problems are more willing to support the Police in devising strategies, and to commit their resources to achieve solutions to the problems identified. Reactivation of sub county security committees therefore, provides the ammunition to achieving the above goals, objectives and aspirations.