


Besigye's FDC copies manifesto from UK

Tuesday, 16 November 2010 12:57 By Mubatsi Asinja Habati



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Does Forum for Democratic Change's (FDC) presidential candidate, Kizza Besigye, and the United Kingdom's Conservative Party leader, Prime Minister David Cameron think exactly the same things?



If not, how does Besigye explain how his FDC manifesto is shockingly similar to that of the UK's Conservative Party?

Cameron's manifesto was launched in the UK on April 6 and Besigye's seven months later in Masaka on Nov. 1. The similarity between them is raising queries about why the FDC ended up copying the CP manifesto.

Partly it is because political parties in

Uganda, in their rush to grab power, rarely pause long enough to articulate their campaign platforms.

Those that attempt to, wave campaign platforms that they are not convinced about and eventually renege on when the opportunity arises.

In the most famous case, President Yoweri Museveni in his 2001 Election Manifesto wrote the following: "I am once again offering myself to serve the people of Uganda because of my conviction... I am taking on the challenge of contesting for a last presidential term for the following reasons..."

He won the election on the understanding that was his last term. Barely two years into his term, however, he went back on his promise, and amended the Constitution to allow him run for endless terms.

Dr Goloba Mutebi, a research fellow at Makerere University, says manifestos do not mean a lot to ordinary Ugandans because the majority do not read them. He says parties in most cases promise more than they can actually deliver.

“Parties have a tendency of having manifestos as a ritual, delivering little or nothing on their promises,” he said, “In the last two elections the NRM promised to end corruption, reduce poverty but we still hear that all the time.”

As a result, election campaign manifestos have lost value.

The process and content of the 2011 election manifestos of various parties make this point.

The Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) party has not bothered to release a manifesto. Robert Kanusu, a spokesperson for its maverick leader, Olara Otunnu, says a manifesto is not their biggest preoccupation. At this stage, he said, they have to first remove the Badru Kiggundu-led Electoral Commission from organizing the 2011 election.

Incidentally, although it is not an ideological position, Otunnu’s message could turn out to be the most relevant if the Kigundu’s EC fails to organise a free and fair election.

Copycats

But the case of the Interparty Cooperation (IPC) manifesto of three time runner Kizza Besigye, carries the manifesto farce to a new level. The IPC manifesto is a copycat cut-and-paste version of the manifesto of the UK’s Conservative Party.

In the IPC manifesto, the opening sentence of the message to Ugandans by Kizza Besigye is

Besigye’s message to Ugandans

Fellow Ugandans,

A country is at its best when the leadership cares about its people and when the sense of national purpose and vision is clear. For 25 years under the

22 words long and that of the Conservative Party leader, David Cameron is 22 words. However, over 80 percent or 18 of the words in Besigye's statement are the same as those in David Cameron's statement.

Wafula Oguttu, who is the spokesperson of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which is the leading voice in the loose-coalition that includes four other political entities, calls it a "coincidence".

But you can judge for yourself. First, Cameron's statement: "A country is at its best when the bonds between people are strong and when the sense of national purpose is clear."

Then Besigye's statement: "A country is at its best when the leadership cares about its people and when the sense of national purpose and vision is clear."

When shown these two sentences, a professor at a university said that is a clear case of plagiarism.

"They have basically stolen the

NRM, hope has been lost and the challenges we face are immense. Our public sector is overwhelmed by misuse of public resources, our social fabric is shattered and the political system and the politicians have all betrayed the people and the cause they came to serve.

I believe we can get out of this trap and sort out these problems if we stick and work together. If we remember that we are all Ugandans and we are therefore one people irrespective of our tribe, religion, colour and social economic and political background.

The NRM say: 'give us your vote and we will make all of you rich'. We say: real change comes not from government alone. Real change comes when the people are mobilized, and inspired to play a part in the nation's future and feel there is fairness in the distribution of the nation's resources. Yes this is our plan. Yes it sounds ambitious. But in the end all the new measures, all the new policy initiatives, shall remain

Cameron's message to UK voters

Together for change we shall win

Invitation to join the government of Britain

A country is at its best when the bonds between people are strong and when the sense of national purpose is clear. Today the challenges facing Britain are immense. Our economy is overwhelmed by debt, our social fabric is frayed and our political system has betrayed the people.

But these problems can be overcome if we pull together and work together. If we remember that we are all in this together.

Some politicians say: 'give us your vote and we will sort out all your problems'. We say: real change comes not from government alone. Real change comes when the people are inspired and mobilised, when millions of us are fired up to

idea and the message not only the words,” said the professor. “If that happened in an exam, the student would fail.”

The entire 19-page IPC manifesto is similar to the 92-page manifesto of the UK’s Conservatives. The similarities between them are so numerous and so blatant that they appear indefensible. Not for Wafula Oguttu though.

The FDC enjoys a special relationship with the UK’s Conservative Party. Members of CP, who travelled all the way from Britain, were in Masaka flashing the V-sign of Besigye’s FDC at the launch of the IPC manifesto on Nov.1.

Wafula Oguttu, who was involved in drafting the manifesto, says the similarities could be possible because the FDC hired a consultant from the UK’s CP to assist and advise them on writing the manifesto. He says there was a sharing of ideas on issues like the economy and social service delivery since the FDC enjoys a relationship with the UK’s conservatives.

spoken words without you and your involvement.

How will we create jobs unless we understand that we are all in this struggle together?

How will we raise the standards of education in our schools unless every parent plays their part and government realizes the need? How will we turn around the communities unless people stop asking ‘who will do this?’ and start focusing on solutions?

The 2011 elections offer us the opportunity for us to change or to continue with this misery. We believe Uganda will change for the better when we all vote to take part, to take responsibility – if we all come together for a purpose. We believe that collective strength will overpower our problems. We believe that we have the support needed for this change and above all we have the resources in this country.

It is only this relationship that can get rid of this oppressive government that has kept you

play a part in the nation’s future.

Yes this is ambitious. Yes it is optimistic. But in the end all the Acts of Parliament, all the new measures, all the new policy initiatives, are just politicians’ words without you and your involvement.

How will we deal with the debt crisis unless we understand that we are all in this together?

How will we raise responsible children unless every adult plays their part? How will we revitalise communities unless people stop asking ‘who will fix this?’ and start asking ‘what can I do?’ Britain will change for the better when we all elect to take part, to take responsibility – if we all come together. Collective strength will overpower our problems.

Only together can we can get rid of this government and, eventually, its debt. Only together can we get the economy moving. Only together can we protect the NHS. Improve our schools.

Mend our broken society. Together we can even make politics and

However, he says that does not make FDC a copycat. “You can say that (there is plagiarism) on your own. FDC has brilliant people. You cannot say I, Ogenga Latigo, Kizza Besigye, Ruzinda, Mugisha Muntu, Salamu Musumba, and other people involved in writing the manifesto would copy ideas. But even if there was to be copying, you cannot copy things which can’t work,” Oguttu said.

Plagiarism is using others’ ideas and words without clearly acknowledging the source of that information. It is unethical and shows a lack of preparedness.

While we are all involved in using ideas that in a way do not belong to us, we do it with care, and if not we risk being accused of plagiarism. With the proliferation of the internet, the temptation to plagiarise is high when not restrained. Acknowledging the source of ideas or words positions oneself above cut and paste practice.

More fundamental, however, is the question of whether the IPC and Besigye are convinced about such a cut-and-pasted message.

The 241-page NRM manifesto is much bigger in volume than the skeletal 8-page manifesto the party

suffering for 25 years and, eventually start the progress we need. It is this process that can get the economy moving so that we can create jobs for our children.

It is through this effort together that we will offer quality health care, improve our standards of education for our children, reclaim our freedom and liberties and repair our broken society. I believe that together we stand a chance to make politics and politicians work better to support our efforts.

Fellow Ugandans, my invitation is this: join us to reverse the bad policies and build on our achievements by voting us to take leadership of this country

Dr. COL (Rtd) Kizza Besigye

politicians work better. And if we can do that, we can do anything. Yes, together we can do anything. So my invitation today is this: join us, to form a new kind of government for Britain.

David Cameron

issued for the 2006 general elections. It was done by a 12-man team led by NRM Secretary General Amama Mbabazi. It is generally about promises to ensure faster economic growth, good governance and fighting corruption and ensuring East African integration and African unity.

Like the FDC manifesto, the promises in the 241-page, 13- point NRM manifesto under the theme Prosperity for All, Better Service Delivery and Job Creation, are transplanted verbatim from the 2001 manifesto for candidate Museveni and the 2006 NRM manifesto.

For example, the party writes in the 2011 manifesto:

NRM shall promote farm mechanization through loaning tractors and related implements to sub-county SACCOs and youth groups which will operate as service providers to farmers in the sub-county.

In 2001, Museveni's manifesto carried the following promise:

Farmers' associations ... will make accessible and affordable agricultural inputs and equipment such as fertilizers and pesticides, tractors, spray pumps and bush clearers.

On irrigation schemes, the 2001 said: We shall develop more model agricultural schemes, such as Doho Rice Scheme in Tororo and Olweny in Lira.

The current manifesto says: NRM shall establish four new medium size irrigation schemes each with 2,000 hectares for promotion of irrigation: expansion of Kibimba irrigation scheme to support outgrowers; Pearl rice irrigation scheme in Igongero swamp in Bugiri/Iganga districts; expansion of Doho irrigation scheme in Butaleja; and development of Namatala swamp in Mbale/Budaka districts;

In 2001, Museveni promised to tarmac a host of roads, including the Gulu – Atiak – Bibia highway. The road is among those earmarked for tarmacking in the 2011 election manifesto.

Making the manifesto promises is one thing, implementing them another. Commenting on the robust promises in the 2011 NRM manifesto, Augustine Ruzindana, the opposition FDC Assistant Secretary General in charge of Research, was precise: "Why didn't they implement these programs over the past 25 years?"

Makerere University don, Dr Tanga Odoi, says promises in a manifesto should clearly show their resource base.

“If you promise better pay for civil servants,” he says, “tell us how you intend to raise the funds not relying on foreign donations to pay teachers and doctors a better salary.”

The process

Commenting on the manifesto-making process, Twinomujuni Kafunjo, a specialist in Money in Politics at the Democracy Monitoring Group (DEMGGroup), says Ugandans do not believe in manifestos since experience has taught them that when politicians promise, they never deliver.

Other things, says Twinomujuni, such as how much money a candidate gives voters, will affect the vote. “That is why one can move from a political party they have served for the last forty years to one he has always castigated.”

He says parties, however, should have a clear picture of what they want to offer to the people and ideology to guide their party manifesto.

“Consultation can be done through party structures and have it approved by the delegates conference after leaders of different regions have brought in the problems from the areas they lead,” says Twinomujuni.

Most parties held Delegates Conferences but used the process to elect party leaders.

An Election Specialist at the DemGroup, John Mary Odoy, says that although an ideology should be at the forefront when a party is writing its manifesto, it may have to make space to show how they will address urgent emergent issues like corruption and the oil wealth question in Uganda.

Job Kiija, an administrator at the NGO Forum which drafted the people’s manifesto says they took copies to all political parties that had candidates in the presidential race so that they could inform the manifesto writing process. He says manifesto writing requires political parties to first scan the environment to know what voters need.

Deo Njoki, who headed the team that drafted Norbert Mao’s Democratic Party manifesto, says they went through a thoroughly consultative process so that they could deliver a manifesto that represents real change in Uganda and what their candidate can fulfill if elected.

They consulted youth, women, and NGO groups, through workshops and stakeholders meetings and everyone was free to bring in ideas.

The IPC manifesto was the outcome of work by at least 40 top politicians from the FDC, the Conservative Party of Uganda, Justice Forum party (JEEMA) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Ssuubi 2011 pressure group. According Ruzindana, who is also FDC Secretary for Research, the manifesto was reached following incorporation of presentations from the civil society, youths, citizens' forum, researchers and academics in the country.

Each of the groups, which comprise the IPC, presented a manifesto. Professors Dani Nabudere and Augustus Nuwagaba later critiqued the manifestos and the 40 persons oversaw the manifesto.

Trouble over the FDC manifesto was evident as early as October during a manifesto-drafting retreat held at Ridar Hotel Seeta. The FDC and other members of the IPC were split on the message. Augustine Ruzindana, who is the overseer of the IPC manifesto, chaired the retreat.

One group wanted to concentrate the campaign message on describing the rot in the Museveni government but the other wanted to focus on solutions to the issues facing Ugandans, give them hope to realize that change of government was inevitable. This group wanted Besigye to copy the election campaigns in the western countries where candidates focus on issues instead of personalities.

FDC Vice Chairman for Western Uganda, Amanywa Mushenga, tried to convince everyone that exposing the failures of Museveni's government was the best option because voters would see the need to vote for change. In the end, however, the FDC manifesto 2011 mentions Museveni's name only once.

Apparently, IPC had difficulty in framing the message and copying and pasting from the UK's CP manifesto offered a way out.

Similarities between FDC and CP (UK) manifesto

The similarities are not only in the introductory messages but also in the content. Besigye's strap line is: "Together for Change"; Cameron's is: "We're all in this together".

The themes and their arrangement in the books are similar. On the contents page, everything is similar except where FDC include federalism. Both manifestos talk about change the economy, change society,

change politics, protect the environment, and promote national interest.

The third line of the FDC manifesto on page 2 which has Besigye's message to Ugandans reads: "Our public sector is overwhelmed by misuse of public resources, our social fabric is shattered and the political system and the politicians have all betrayed the people and the cause they came to serve."

It appears Ugandans have same problems as the British as the third line on page of the Conservatives' manifesto 2010 reads: "Our economy is overwhelmed by debt, our social fabric is frayed and our political system has betrayed the people."

This is a paragraph from the Conservatives' manifesto: "Some politicians say: 'give us your vote and we will sort out all your problems'. We say: real change comes not from government alone. Real change comes when the people are inspired and mobilised, when millions of us are fired up to play a part in the nation's future. Yes this is ambitious. Yes it is optimistic. But in the end all the Acts of Parliament, all the new measures, all the new policy initiatives, are just politicians' words without you and your involvement."

Now compare that to FDC's statement that: "The NRM say: 'give us your vote and we will make all of you rich'. We say: real change comes not from government alone. Real change comes when the people are mobilized, and inspired to play a part in the nation's future and feel there is fairness in the distribution of the nation's resources. Yes this is our plan. Yes it sounds ambitious. But in the end all the new measures, all the new policy initiatives, shall remain spoken words without you and your involvement."

Similar statements resurface when it comes to education where the readout quote in both manifestos is the same. "We will improve the standards for all pupils and students and close the attainment gaps between the richest and the poorest. We will enhance the prestige and the quality of the teaching profession and we will make sure that teachers live a quality life. The teacher's salary will be raised from the current Uganda shillings 250,000 to a minimum of 400,000 in the first 100 days and the children in UPE will be fed with lunch and breakfast," promises the FDC manifesto.

The Conservatives say: "We will improve standards for all pupils and close the attainment gap between the richest and poorest. We will enhance the prestige and quality of the teaching profession, and give heads and teachers tough new powers of discipline. We will restore rigour to the curriculum and exam system and give every parent access to a good school."

Was all this coincidence as Wafula Oguttu says? Or is it a case of copying intellectual material and failing to own up? Whatever the case, FDC could obviously use some originality

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Last Updated (Tuesday, 16 November 2010 13:05)