



Masaka should be split for better service provision

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MASAKA District, with an area of 6413.3 square kilometres and a population of 767,759 (Population Census 2002), may be demarcated into three districts, when Parliament resumes work in February 2010.

Masaka is almost the largest district countrywide. It has nine Members of Parliament, representing 23 sub-counties or 127 parishes (1,334 villages). The MPs, together with some local leaders, consider the district too large for effective and efficient delivery of government programmes. They are, therefore, calling for its demarcation into small districts, as the case is elsewhere in the country.

The leaders propose that Masaka could comprise three districts from: (i) The sub-counties of Bukulula, Lwabenge and Kalungu as well as Kyamuliibwa, including Lukaya Town Council, together with Bigasa, Butenga, Kibinge and Kitanda (all about 439,796 people); (ii) Kkingo, Kisekka and Kyazanga, with Malongo fixed to Lwengo and Ndagwe (242,252 people); (iii) Bukakata, Buwunga and Mukungwe along with Masaka Municipality, Kabonera and Kyanamukaka (228,170 people).

The deputy resident district commissioner, Josephine Kizito, says the proposal is being prepared for presentation to the Government, especially the President, who, met the district political, religious and cultural leaders on the matter at Rwakitura on January 11.

Paradoxically, these leaders divided themselves for and against the creation of new districts and failed to reach a consensus during the meeting. This prompted the President to seek further consultations before taking a decision.

The leaders reveal that they are crying out for a common good, which has been promoted by practically all sitting governments in Uganda since independence in 1962. Successive governments have created new districts from 15 (1966), to about 81 (2009), arguably for purposes of improving service-delivery. Indeed, in December, Parliament approved the districts of Amualat, Atuke, Buvuma and Ntoroko, each with a population of 63,572; 62,018; 42,483 and 50,952 ,respectively. The new districts, regardless of their small population, are all entitled to the same slice of the national pie. This is the practice in government.

Evidently, Kalangala with a population of 36,661, Nakapiripirit with 153,862, or Sembabule with 184,178, are all lined up with Masaka, to equally receive 11 scholarships for Makerere University annually.

Similar services — schools, hospitals or constituency development fund — are distributed likewise. This state of imbalance in resource and service allocation is the main reason the leaders are crying out for the demarcation.

However, opponents argue that creating new districts will create more problems and that the solution lies in proportional arrangements, whereby resources are allocated according to the size or population of the benefiting district.

However, Kizito rejects this proposition, arguing that Masaka cannot afford to remain an island among the many, sacrificing services and resources that ought to go towards its people for competitive development and growth. Therefore, the demarcation, be it today or tomorrow, is inevitable.

The writer is the Woman MP for Masaka District

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