

Team-Building Improves performance at the IG

With SUGAR TAF's support, leadership at the Inspectorate of Government has fostered a radically new working culture at the Directorate of Special Investigations.

Established in 2016, the Directorate of Special Investigations is itself an innovation in the fight against high-level corruption in Uganda. Beyond this, it has developed a way of working that is pioneering and is already yielding positive results in the form of more effective investigations of complex corruption-related crimes. When asked to reflect on the positive changes that they have seen since the Directorate began, both Mr. Joram Magezi, who heads the Directorate, and Mr. Reuben Bainomujuni, Principal Inspectorate Officer, focus on a single word: “teamwork.”

Initially, team-building was a necessary part of bringing together a new collection of officers who had been uprooted from other teams to join the new Directorate. As they came together, they had to take on new roles and responsibilities. SUGAR TAF supported this with training and guidance on how to assemble a case, handle investigations, prepare reports, and maximise the relationship between investigations and prosecution. SUGAR TAF encouraged the Directorate's officers to approach cases as a team, rather than as individuals. This has been essential for collaborating together on the bigger and more complex cases. Mr. Magezi reflects, “We'd have issues of fear of confidentiality and information leakage. Investigators wanted to keep everything close to their chest. It would take longer because of that. But [SUGAR TAF] helped us with handling big cases: the entire Directorate is now sharing documents and information without the fear and conservatism that they had before. Because we're all doing the same activity and we're all responsible.”

Mr. Bainomujuni describes the work culture within the Directorate which is much flatter than the typical government departmental hierarchy. This eliminates or reduces many of the steps that would typically be required as a matter of protocol: writing reports and requiring numerous approvals from various levels of authority. Instead, he says, many cases come directly to the relevant officer, and officers have the freedom and responsibility to respond directly. This is important because investigations are time-sensitive: the longer they take, the more likely it is that evidence will disappear. Another major advantage afforded by the Directorate's culture of openness and teamwork is that officers can easily draw on the special expertise of their colleagues in the course of working on their own cases.

While both Mr. Magezi and Mr. Bainomujuni credit SUGAR TAF as being instrumental in shaping the Directorate's work culture, it is equally clear that the leadership and staff within the Directorate and the IG more broadly - also deserve a great deal of credit. The officers identified for the Directorate were selected on merit based on their capacity and ability to investigate complex cases. The director has welcomed and encouraged the teamwork approach, and is himself open and accessible to his staff. As

Mr. Magezi and his team shape themselves into a powerful anti-corruption syndicate, Uganda's capacity to unravel high-level corruption just got stronger.

"We don't have a big hierarchy of junior, mid-level and senior, we're almost the same. It wasn't like that before. When SUGAR TAF came in, it levelled the bureaucracy, and made it easy for, from the level of director to the officer level to make quick decisions: to remove losses in time and losses in resources."

- Mr. Reuben
Bainomujuni,
Principal Inspectorate
Officer