

# NGOs should not be milking cows

**A recent** probe launched by the Senate into the financial operations of an NGO is, to some extent, long overdue.

Some people have been able to slip through the legal loopholes and created NGOs that are no less different than cooperatives.

The NGO in question is actually an umbrella organisation of over 150 smaller NGOs working in the HIV/Aids field who each pay between Frw 100,000 and Frw200,000 as a membership fee!

In 1994, right after the Genocide, there was a proliferation of "humanitarian do-gooders" who invaded this country and out-drove each other with their logo-emblazoned SUVs.

Post Genocide Rwanda was a goldmine in the humanitarian sense: The stories were so grim, that a single paragraph sent to well-wishers back home was enough to start the money tap running full speed.

But the larger-than-necessary number of NGOs can sometimes have adverse effects on a country's image, as Rwanda was to discover later before showing most of them the door.

There was no way these NGOs, would get funding coming if things went back into order, so many took the only option; doctoring their reports to show that they were braving hazards in a country littered with dead bodies, orphans. Their raison d'être was a country in turmoil that desperately needed their presence.

Now it seems some of our local NGOs are suspected of using their cooperative-cum-NGO to make a killing of over Frw 200 million a year which is used to pay the salaries of people manning the secretariat!

As the saying goes, there is no smoke without fire. NGOs have to come clean

**Ends**

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## NGOs under probe over funds

BY IGNATIUS SSUUNA

PARLIAMENT - The Senate is investigating Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to ascertain whether funds are being misused, Sunday Times has learnt. A source from Parliament said Tuesday the probe was ordered following persistent reports that NGOs receive billions yet there is little activity on the ground. "The Senate is interested to know how the money is spent. They also want to know the number of NGO's operating in the country," the source said on condition of anonymity.

Early this week, members of the Senatorial Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Security paid an impromptu visit to the Rwanda NGO Forum on HIV/Aids. The Senate members reportedly demanded to know how funds are being spent.

Rwanda NGO Forum on HIV/Aids is the national umbrella for NGOs tackling the disease. It was formed as a merger of 153 NGOs to fight the HIV/Aids virus in the country and has members in all districts.

The Senators wanted to know how much money the NGO forum spends on employees at its headquarters. A source within the forum said the Senate had been told that the group was spending approximately Frw200 million annually on employees.

The Frw200 million comes from annual subscriptions from member NGOs. The membership fee is Frw100,000 for local NGOs and Frw200,000 for international organisations.

MPs had in the past expressed dissatisfaction, saying the manner in which the funds are spent is questionable since there is no clear mechanism in place to show accountability.

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