July 13, 2020

RE: EXPOSED: HOW CANDIDATES BOUGHT VOTES IN NPP PRIMARIES

1. I exercise my constitutionally guaranteed right to a rejoinder to a scurrilous, publication against me by Corruption Watch. From the outset, I reject entirely, the imputations attributed to me in the said publication. There are obvious distortions, unfair interpretations and sensationalism in the story.
2. First, it is claimed that “A Corruption Watch investigation has found that…[I] facilitated the use of MASLOC money to allegedly induce delegates in the Yendi Constituency…” I would like to point out that there is no iota of truth in this statement. If the reporters were truly confident in their ‘findings’, why did they find the need to use the caveat, ‘allegedly’? You make a categorical statement in your headline that votes were bought and yet in your opening paragraph, you introduce alleged inducement. You would know that buying connotes the presence of offer and acceptance, while inducement would imply persuasion.
3. I point out there was no vote buying on my part.
4. I also reject the claim that MASLOC money was used to induce delegates because it is completely false. There is no evidence to back this claim. Unless they were purposely excluded, some of the beneficiaries of a transparent loan scheme were always going to be members of various political parties including the NPP and some would be delegates. The generalisation that the beneficiaries were all delegates is unfair and unproven. They were not and I told you so but you chose to call them delegates.
5. In paragraph 10 of your publication, you say “On Thursday, 21st May 2020, Hajia distributed GHS1000 state money under the MASLOC loans to delegates…” Here too, you repeated the false claim that all the beneficiaries were delegates. Even though you admit that the money given out were loans to be repaid, you still claimed that state money was distributed, creating an unfair impression of dolling out state money. I wish to emphasise that it was MASLOC that distributed the loans and not me as an individual. I supervised the process in my capacity as a deputy CEO.
6. In paragraph 11, you again claim that I addressed delegates which you captured on video through your undercover investigators. This is strange because this was a public event where MASLOC beneficiaries received their loans. As a daughter of the land, I addressed the gathering advising them to utilize the loans judiciously and to invest in their farming activities. I explained that I had to plead with my bosses to release their disbursements ahead of time because it was the farming season and they needed to till the soil and sow their crops. There were loud speakers and large numbers of people at the gathering. I personally caused the programme to be filmed and shared widely because I didn’t think I was doing anything illegal or wrong. I must emphasise that the beneficiaries were not all delegates as you seek to portray. I commit no crime by saying I lobbied for more for the constituency. In any case these are loans which will be paid back to the state. You faulted my statement that I pleaded for early disbursement. I did that because it is in the interest of the scheme itself that beneficiaries get the loans when they need them. It is the only way they can repay. With May being the most critical period of farming in the northern parts, it was the most prudent thing to do to give them their loans at that time.
7. And for the avoidance of doubt, many constituencies in the northern region and elsewhere had far larger number of MASLOC loan beneficiary groups than Yendi and this is verifiable. Tamale Central – 117 groups; Tamale South – 69 groups; Tamale North – 56 groups; Yendi – 35 groups.
8. You seem to have completely misunderstood the processes and the considerations that go into giving out these loans.
9. You also cited the donation of fertilisers as evidence of vote-buying. This is the farming season and as a daughter of the land, the least I could do for my people from my personal resources is to help them with farm inputs. Sons and daughters from Yendi and elsewhere, whether or not they are in public office, support farmers with these essential inputs. This is one way to reduce poverty in our towns and villages. Certainly, this is not vote-buying
10. The most egregious of your claims against me are in paragraph 13 where you say I admitted to your findings. Of course if you ask me about a public event and the disbursement of loans, I would confirm. It is strange for you to then pitch this as an admission of some wrong doing. In my conversation with you, I pointed out repeatedly that even though some of the beneficiaries may have been delegates, there were non-delegates, too. In spite of this, you - conveniently and in furtherance of an agenda to concoct a wrongdoing - ignored this and consistently refer to the beneficiaries as NPP delegates.
11. In that same paragraph, you say that I admitted to the findings but insisted that I didn’t “err in her decision to give state money to induce delegates…”. I specifically refuted these claims and this is obvious in the 1 minute 40 seconds audio clip you attached to your publication and yet you still came to the conclusion that I admitted to something wrong. It would seem that regardless of the facts, you were bent on finding faults and when you couldn’t find any, you fabricated them and made assumptions.
12. It bears repeating that I did not give state money for free to delegates contrary to your claims. Residents of Yendi applied for loans as citizens and were assessed and granted the loans which they will pay back. I, therefore, did not buy any votes with state money. I may have won the election if I did.
13. I didn’t admit to giving state money to delegates to induce them because that did not happen. I couldn’t possibly admit something that didn’t happen.
14. The publication and unfortunate claim that I admitted to your imputations have caused me grave harm. The least you can do is publish this rejoinder to the same extent as your original baseless claims.

Signed:

Hajia Abibata Shanni Mahama

Deputy Chief Executive

MASLOC