

**Learning by Ear –**  
**Civil society and political commitment No. 5**  
**Sects - Uganda**

**Feature : Gabriel Kahn**  
**Editor : Sandrine Blanchard**  
**Translation : Anne Thomas**

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**1 Female off-voice (Featuretext + Outro)**

**2 Fictional characters (Intro+ Dialogue) :**

- **Philomène (name can be changed):** young woman who knows a lot ,  
Alphonse's big sister

- **Alphonse (name can be changed):** young man who is more naive,  
asks a lot of questions, Philomene's younger brother

**2 Voices overs:**

- **Robert Mukisa** man (original : English)

- **Martin Sempa** man (original : English)

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TEASER: Learning by Ear

**INTRO :**

**Philomène :**

Hello everybody and hello Alphonse!

**Alphonse (snoring)**

**Philomène (raising her voice):**

Alphonse ? Alphooooooooonse !

**Alphonse (waking up suddenly):**

What ??? What ??? Philomène ? What are you doing here?

**Philomène :**

Listen little bro it's about time to wake up, the program has begun ...

**Alphonse (tired):**

Program ? What program ?

**Philomène :**

Learning by Ear of course!

**Alphonse (ashamed):**

Oh, how awful I fell asleep...

**Philomène :**

Yes, I noticed!

**Alphonse (trying to wake up and come back to life) :**

Er "Hello everybody!" (*whispering to Philomène*) What are we talking about today?

**Philomène :**

Today, in our series on civil society and participation, we're looking at sects in Africa.

**Alphonse (exaggerating) :**

Ah! Sects, their loyal followers, their gurus and their self-proclaimed prophets...

**Philomène (interrupting):**

Please Alphonse don't go over the top! Open your ears instead and let's go off to Uganda...

## Report

### 1. SFX Prayer, fade under

### 2. Clip: Robert Mukisa (engl.)

« I had some things that were attacking me in my school. I had problems of spiritual attacks. I feel like things walking upon my face just when I'm reading and I'm not understanding somebody comes and closes my eyes. I just feel somebody doing that. So during that time it was because of the problems I found myself going to that place to be prayed for. At first I thought that it was a good place because they were praying like in another place, but it was at home not a church”

### Reporter:

Robert Mukisa is 17 years old. He lives in Uganda. In this country there are dozens of sects and cults. For instance, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God which predicted the end of the world and forced hundreds of its loyal followers to their deaths in a mass suicide, or the Lord's Resistance Army which has created an army in the north of the country and kidnapped over 20,000 children to be guerrilla warriors or sex slaves. The sects compete with powerful churches, which have rallied masses of people looking for a direct link with God.

### 3. SFX door

### Reporter:

In his despair, Robert Mukisa, joined a sect without knowing it that day...

### 4. Clip: Robert Mukisa (eng.)

“In this cult, you know, actually the basics were repentance and interceding for the nation. We are repenting for the sin of the land. In the process, we are told that the only way for us to be set apart was to separate ourselves from the church. That the Antichrist had taken over the church. In that process we are staying at home and that's where we were praying from. In fact they used to even tell us to separate ourselves from our homes like even your parents, that some of them are demonic,

that when you join them you have demons. Even we had to drop our languages, our names. We have to pray that we're drying up the lake, the river Nile, these are things that she was telling us to intercede for."

**Alphonse (embarrassed to interrupt the report) :**

Er, sorry but what is a sect exactly?

**Reporter:**

A sect is a religious group which deviates from the teachings officially recognized by the major religions. Sects have several characteristics. First, the leader has all the control. Second, members are restricted in their movement. Third, the leader, often called a guru, takes possession of the followers' personal belongings. Fourth, the gurus predict a future in which only sect members will find salvation. They say they are the only beholders of the truth. Sects have a much regulated structure. This doesn't mean, of course, that all regulated structures are sects.

**Alphonse :**

Anything else?

**Reporter :**

Sects also tend to destroy the social and family relations of its members whom it encourages to take a distance from family members and acquaintances not part of the sect.

**Alphonse :**

That doesn't sound very tempting...

**5. SFX: prayer**

**Reporter :**

Martin Sempa is a pastor at the University of Makerere. He has established his own evangelist church and specializes in exorcism and deliverance prayers. He thinks the African soul offers a good breeding ground for sects:

**6. Clip: Martin Sempa (eng.)**

“I think, Africans we’re very much a people of faith and the government has given us a constitution with freedom of worship. There is a hunger what I call a hunger for the Gospel of Christ. And when true ministers of the Gospel do not come, these false ministers will come, who just want to make money.”

**Reporter:**

Robert Mukisa shivers when he thinks about his prophesess:

**7. SFX: Tiger**

**8. Clip: Robert Mukisa (eng)**

«She was called Njendo Merabu. She liked to close herself in the bedroom. At one point I think we had to understand that she would turn into an animal when she was there inside. Sometimes into snakes or leopards. that was the source of her power.”

**9. Sound : Léopard**

**Alphonse :**

Did you hear that Philomène ?

**Philomène :**

Yes, and then some days there were accidents, says Robert.

**10. Clip: Robert Mukisa (eng)**

“It happened that people started getting sick in the cult and there was no medication for them. And the diseases were weird. These people would be strangled by demons, and there were some who died actually from also demonic attacks. After that boy dying, she said that the spirit of the boy was went in her. So she just stopped. She was just out of the house and she went back to the village.”

**Philomène :**

And this is not an isolated case...

**Reporter:**

In Uganda, there are dozens of sects as Pastor Sempa says:

**11. Clip: Martin Sempa (eng)**

“We have Ssebulanda in Rakai, which is building a major city. They want to start their own little republic in Rakai and they duped the country into getting some kind of no tax trade free zone. But really it is a cult. It’s an astro-cult built on vibrations and the worship of some masters. We have others that worship people such as Owo Mushobozi in western Uganda. His people dress in white. He’s venerated like a god. We have Alice Lakwena which eventually became Joseph Kony, leader of the LRA. It has nothing to do with the Bible because he kills, he steals, he rapes, he mutilates and Kony sacrifices people. Then we also have some pseudo-Christianised cults such as Kakende who mixes Christianity and African traditional magic.”

**Reporter:**

Joseph Kibwetere is famous for very sad reasons, too. He was a defrocked priest who ran the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God. He had predicted the world would come to an end in 1999 and ordered his loyal followers to sell all their belongings before doomsday. When the world did not come to an end, he locked all his followers in a church and set them on fire.

**Music**

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## Part 2 Dialogue

**Alphonse :**

I've looked in my dictionary and it defines a sect as "a small religious, political or philosophical group, which shares the same ideas."

**Philomène :**

Yes, but it also means a group of believers who have broken off from a larger group, for example from a large, well-established religious group, usually due to a dispute about doctrinal matters, in order to found a dissident religious group.

**Alphonse :**

But the word sect also sometimes has a negative connotation! It makes me think of obscure rites, conducted by ill-meaning gurus, maybe even dangerous extremists.

**Philomène :**

It's because there have been many cases of unsavory people who have exploited their followers' gullibility (trend to believe somethings easily without questioning it) to appropriate their goods or to incite them to break the law in the name of religion and faith.

**Alphonse :**

Crooks! And I also recall mass suicides organized by sects...

**Philomène :**

... often linked to prophesies about the imminent end of the world.

**Alphonse :**

Like that of Joseph Kibwetere which was mentioned in the report about Uganda. And how ex-sect members talk about their experiences -- it sends shivers down your spine!

**Philomène :**

You have to remember, Alphonse, that not all states define sects in the same way. Some sects make the most of legal loopholes, which makes the struggle against them very difficult if a problem does arise.

**Alphonse :**

It's true that if countries are not agreed about the definition nor the need or means to fight against sects then it must be very complicated. But what do the followers themselves say?

**Philomène :**

They want more tolerance for their beliefs which they say consist of true faith. They consider their doctrines to be a form of spirituality comparable to that of big recognized religions.

**Alphonse :**

But, if I understand correctly, Philo, you're trying to warn me to be careful if I approach such a grouping -- whatever it is?

**Philomène :**

Yes, you always have to keep a cool head, never follow certain orders or precepts blindly, especially if they go against your beliefs or moral values. Some gurus are very good speakers who can exert a negative influence on their followers. Some of them even drug their followers to render them more dependent and docile.

**Alphonse :**

OK, I will keep my eyes wide open and I'll think carefully before joining any group. But now my friends are waiting for me to play football so I've got to run, see you later Philomene!

**Philomène (laughing) :**

Have a good time, little bro, and play well!



**Music**

**Outro :**

**Reporter:**

You've just heard a Learning by Ear program on the subject of civil society and participation, all about sects. To listen to the program again or to send us your feedback, go to [www.dw-world.de/lbe](http://www.dw-world.de/lbe). Thanks for listening and don't forget to tune in again next time!

**Music**