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Uganda Special Edition Newsletter Issue May 2012

Stories and Voices of Hope from Giriki

Editorial: Trials and Triumphs



This Special Edition - '**Focus on Giriki**' tells of a remarkable story of the people of Giriki faced with a multitude of socioeconomic challenges, but who courageously and with a smile on their faces, show unwavering commitment to transform their lives, one at a time.

The Edition is inspired by a team reflection following the Commissioning of the Greek River Primary School in Giriki Sub County, Kween District. The school was built with support from ActionAid International Uganda (AAIU) and subsequently handed over to the Government in an event hosted by the Community at the School, some 400 Kilometers from Kampala in former Kapchorwa District on May 4th 2012, and attended by several guests including the Assistant Commissioner, Primary Education who represented the Minister of Education and Sports.

This Newsletter captures stories and voices of hope from Giriki and represents the triumph over the trails of the people in Giriki. It demonstrates the workings of ActionAid's Human Rights Based Approach guided by the twin logic of transforming the *condition* and *position* of poor girls, boys, women and men.

We would also like to take this opportunity to most sincerely extend our hearty appreciation of the Giriki Community and those of ActionAid International Uganda with the White Fields; and Richard, Sarah and Sam Skelt's family from the UK whose generous financial contributions made it possible to complete the school projects at Greek River. We are doing everything to ensure that we continue to work with other players so that the important foundation we have set leads to the ultimate goal for which the project was initiated. This was the message we passed to all stakeholders at the commissioning of the school as part of the sustainability commitment that we all need to make.

Welcome and be inspired as you read the stories!

By Henry Nickson Ogwal, Director Partnership Funding and Sponsorship - ActionAid International Uganda

ActionAid Hands over Greek River Primary School to Government

By Henry Nickson Ogwal, Director Partnership Funding and Sponsorship - ActionAid International Uganda



ActionAid Uganda hands over Greek River Primary School to Assistant Commissioner C.Tony Mukasa-Lusambu

On the 4th May 2012, Mr. C.Tony Mukasa – Lusambu, who represented the Minister of Education and Sports (MoES) Honourable Jessica Alupo as the Guest of Honour, commissioned Greek Primary School. Out of 763 pupils enrolled, 45 % of the pupils are girls. The function took place in Giriki village, Ngenge sub-county, Kween District. During the same function, ActionAid International Uganda (AAIU) handed over to Government the school project worth UGX 540 million. The school project comprised of an eight classrooms block furnished with 144 three-seater-desks, 16 office chairs and 12 working tables; three blocks of VIP pit latrines with 14 stances for teachers, boys and girls; a block of teachers' house fitted with solar panels; a block of store and kitchen constructed with wood-fuel savings stoves; 5 industrial size sauce-pans for cooking; and a 20 horsepower diesel-engine grain-mill and mill-house. ActionAid also handed over a 20 hectares school farm planted with corn and soya beans. In order to address the risk from lightening in the relatively flat Greater Ngenge terrain, two lightening arrestors were fitted onto the classroom block. The function was attended by children, women and men from Giriki community, community

leaders, sub-county and district leaders, the area MP and the Women MP for Kween.

In his address, Mr. Mukasa-Lusambu thanked ActionAid for supporting Government in fulfilling its mandate to provide quality education by constructing a school in such a hard-to-reach area where formerly displaced children needed to access education services. He was highly impressed by the school feeding project that he requested ActionAid to document and share with the MoES to inform policy discussions. He advised the school administration to plant trees to secure the buildings, beautiful flowers to attract the children to school and develop good roads. He encouraged the school to develop a talking compound by printing and installing messages on the compounds.

While Mr. Mukasa-Lusambu received community demands directed to Ministry of Education and Sports written by the women of Giriki, and read by Cherukut Miriam, Programme Coordinator of Kapchorwa Civil Society Organisations' Alliance (KACSOA) to which he promised to ably share with the top management of the Ministry, he cited a few challenges taking the

Photo: Stephen Wandera | ActionAid

... ActionAid Hands over Greek River Primary School to Government

demands forward. He noted that Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) had ordered for suspension of coding new schools until the financial year 2014/2015 due to lack of funding. He advised the District Education Officer of Kween and Greek River Primary School Administration to search for old record for the school that existed in the area before the community was displaced. In that case, it would be much easier to code the school for grant aiding using the old record. He concluded that because he had shared in the pain of the Giriki community by walking about four kilometres as a result of bad road, he will be a good ambassador of Giriki in the Ministry.

Kween Woman MP Hon. Lydia Barteka was pleased to inform the gathering that ActionAid assessment was right. This resulted in implementation of initiatives that have had positive impact on the people thus encouraged return, resettlement and reconciliation of the Giriki community. Kween area MP Hon. Kisos Chemaswet shared the importance of the citizens demanding for accountability from Government. He promised to donate 1,000 seedlings to the school.

Earlier on, the Acting District Chairperson Mr. Paul Majinjach in his remarks underscored ActionAid as a transparent organisation worthy of emulation. He said it is because of this value that the local people and the leaders have cooperated and worked with ActionAid during the time of active armed conflicts and resettlement.

The country Director of ActionAid International Uganda, Arthur Larok, noted that he was happy with leadership in ActionAid that hands over every good work for others to complete. He cited the projects in Giriki were initiated by Charles Mbeeta Businge who handed over to him a couple of months ago. He noted that the national leaders must adopt this. He noted that ActionAid will stand with the people of Giriki community to fight poverty, injustice and indignity as long as there will be resources to support that. ActionAid committed to work to strengthen poor people action to hold duty bearers to account and respecting women's rights. To address the Gender Based Violence in Kween District, ActionAid is establishing with support from DfID a Women Rights Centre for whom the personnel have already been recruited.

Construction of the classrooms, teachers' houses and pit latrines was funded by The White Fields (UK) while school feeding program that provided mid-day meal, construction of school kitchen, store, a grain mill-house and a school garden was funded by Richard, Sarah and Sam Skelt's family from the UK.

Background to Giriki Community and ActionAid's Interventions: A Snap Shot

By Aggrey Kibet, Programme Coordinator – Kapchorwa Local Rights Programme



Giriki Community is an indigenous people located in Griki sub-county in the Northern enclave of Kween District sandwiched between Amudat District, Bukwo District in Uganda and West Pokot District of Kenya. It is estimated that the total population is about 7,000 today. The community is characterised of people formerly displaced by cattle rustling and related armed conflict within Uganda and to Kenya in the last 40 years.

From 1950s to 2006, Kapchorwa, Bukwo and Kween Districts in located in Eastern Uganda (Giriki inclusive) were faced by the phenomena of cattle and other livestock rustling by the Pokot and Karamojong warriors. This resulted into loss of lives and property (livestock) and internal displacement to the highland areas within Kapchorwa District and to other neighbouring districts. It is estimated that by 2007; 34,523 people became displaced, 1,639 were killed and 700,000 heads of cattle, and 500,000 goats and sheep were rustled across the Greater Ngenge lower belt which is the present Ngenge and Giriki sub-counties (Ngenge Community Development, 2007).

In 2006, the Government of Uganda initiated a forceful disarmament program through which a number of warriors and rustlers were disarmed. Coupled with other peace and conflict resolution efforts by other stake holders within Uganda and the Republic of Kenya, the disarmament marked the end of cattle rustling and the return to peace which has encouraged the displaced persons to return to their former places.

In March 2007, ActionAid Uganda undertook an assessment of the situation in the returnees' areas of Greater Ngenge that was still part of Kapchorwa District but presently in the newly created Kween District focusing on the three resettlement camps of Giriki, Korite and Sundet camps. The assessment revealed that Giriki resettlement camp had the highest number of returnee's (i.e. 1,000 people) facing the biggest challenges. Since then, the number of people returning has continued to build up and more resettlements areas have come up. The total number of settlers now in Giriki stands at about 7,015 (District Planning unit-Kween DLG, 2012)



Women celebrating the handover

Key Issues affecting Giriki and surrounding areas

There is breakdown of basic educational infrastructures with sub-counties like Giriki having no secondary or technical school. This is denying the children of Giriki their right to access education.

There is the problem of land grabbing by unscrupulous individuals mainly those with money and influence migrating from other areas and want to take advantage of the vacuum created by the long absence of genuine displaced owners to different locations of the country to take over their land. This dispossession of land is a blatant violation of rights to property and livelihoods of Giriki community.

There is frequent flooding of the relatively flat belt during rainy season affecting agriculture, settlement and access to markets because of destruction onto the roads. This is compounded further by already poor roads and bridges which worsen the accessibility of the farmers of Greater Ngenge to support from government as a semi arid sub-region. Therefore, glaring gaps in service delivery, infrastructure and access to justice include access to extension services, large scale irrigation, climate adaptation measures and markets for improved livelihoods.

ActionAid's Interventions

- ActionAid Uganda supported 165 most vulnerable households out of the original 2,000 households in Giriki with building materials – providing a strong attraction for displaced persons to return and resettle;
- Supported health infrastructural development through the provision of a fully equipped Giriki Health Unit complete with a winged staff house and a bore hole reaching over 2,500 people as far as Karita sub-county in Amudat District with basic health services;
- Supported increasing access to education through construction and equipping of 8 classroom block, twin staff house, 5 stance boys latrine, 3 stance girls latrine and teachers latrine and 144 classroom desks, classroom chairs and tables and a fully furnished teachers and Headmasters furniture. This has enabled 763 children from Giriki to access their rights to basic primary education; and
- The equipped the school with a kitchen complete with modern wood-fuel saving stoves, grain mill and mill house and support to school gardening to ensure sustainability of school feeding which has already boosted enrolment and retention in school especially for the girl children. Between 2010 and 2012, enrolment of Greek Primary School increased by 445 % from 140 to current 763 pupils.

... Background to Giriki Community and ActionAid's Interventions: A Snap Shot

Key Lessons Learnt

1. That the representation of ActionAid as more responsive than Government in the eyes of the locals is quite risky in terms of sustainability of service delivery in the community. The need for the community to understand the role of ActionAid as an NGO that may provide intermediate contribution and building local knowledge on rights and obligation of the community; and the know Government role as constitutional and mandatory as a primary duty bearer and therefore engage it is critical.
2. The resilience of the Giriki community in the face of extremely difficult social, economic, road and other basic infrastructure, climate change/semi drought conditions among other challenges is quite striking. It presents an opportunity to build on in the quest for lasting solutions to the development challenges bedeviling the Giriki community through a focus on sustainable livelihoods options. This also requires that the community mobilisation and organisation to contribute to decision that affect them has to be take place.

Looking Forward: Outstanding Rights Issues

- a) Introduction and expansion of Post Primary Education: There is a critical need for a secondary and a tertiary school to fully respond to the rights of the children of Giriki community. To respected and promoted the rights to quality education especially for the girl children, there is need for deliberate services targeting them, efforts to enrol and maintain them at school and to empower them socio-economically;
- b) To fully respond to the health rights, it is urgent that Government upgrades Giriki Health Centre II to Health Centre IV. This will meet comprehensive health needs including maternity, PMTCT and minor surgeries; and
- c) The Community of Giriki urgently requires government investment in agricultural infrastructure that include small and medium scale irrigation, extension services, post-harvest food handling and value addition,, marketing and linkages for improved and sustainable household incomes!

6 Hours Late and 11 Hours behind Schedule! BUT WHY?

By Arthur LAROK, Country Director



The Commissioning of Greek Primary School in Giriki Sub Country, Kween District, 400 Kilometres from Kampala in the Eastern part of Uganda was supposed to start at 9 am and end at 1:00 pm with lunch so that we are back to Kapchorwa by 3 pm! The event started at 3 pm and ended at 6:30 pm and we got back at 2 am in the night, 11 hours behind our schedule.

I and Colleagues, Bruno, Denis, Samuel, Sam and Hellen left Mbale at 6:30 am after spending a night enroute to Giriki to take part in the commissioning of Greek Primary School. It was supposed to be a 2 hour journey from Mbale to Giriki, but after an hour's drive, we caught up with an advance team from ActionAid that was supposed to have arrived in Giriki a day earlier. They had been stuck at a spot, less than 34 kilometres to our final destination and had spent a night at Chepsikunya, a nearby trading centre on Mbale – Moroto road. It had rained the previous night and the road was horrendous.

After several attempts, we were advised, by the LC III Chairperson of Giriki to use small motorcycles (commonly known as *bodabodas*) to get to our final destination. He was riding one and he informed us that 3 other bad spots lay ahead and there was no way our cars would cross those spots because the road had essentially broken down. Asked why this road was in such a bad state, he mentioned three

major reasons: a) seasonal high rainfall that occasionally washes away the road; b) a private construction firm owned by a soldier that has failed to complete its work; and c) lack of clarity on whether the road is a national road to be maintained by the National Roads Authority or a local road under the jurisdiction of the Local Government before riding off to Kapchorwa to follow up a case with the Police in which his Bank Account was hacked into and defrauded. As we stood by and hoped for miracles, we reflected on the three reasons and clearly with responsible leadership able to oversee better planning and oversight, all the three problems would quite easily have been overcome, we concluded.

As we waited, a UPDF Soldier coming from the opposite side of the road arrives, with four other people (one dead) on another bodaboda. It was sad to hear the story of how his young 4-year old son died of malaria on the same road because they couldn't reach the Health Centre in time. He was returning to Kapchorwa, the nearby district to arrange for his son's burial. When I showed deepest sympathies, he looked up at me and said, '*my friend, this is the life we live...*' I gave him 30,000 Uganda shillings (about 12 USD) as my modest contribution and his response, '*...may God Bless you and have a successful journey...*' Indeed God listened to him and blessed us with a successful trip.



Roads turned into mud and even the Land Cruisers cannot pass. Lack of infrastructure is a major problem in the district.

Quotes!

If it were not that I hail from this place, I would have given up the construction of this school. The cost of doing this work was so high especially because of the bad road and remote location. Sometimes I spent 5 nights on the road transporting building materials.

Mr. ... Lead Contractor for Greek River Primary School - ActionAid believes in contracting local people to do technical work, as at ActionAid it is more than just business as usual

...he will be useful in 5 years time!

Sam, Driver at ActionAid Uganda makes a comment after a 14 year old boy was not given a lift and an adult he was walking with was, by an MP from the area. In 5 years the boy would be a voter and therefore important.

What you went through for one day is what we go through everyday.

Mr. Steven Cherwaru, Driver of Kapchorwa ActionAid suggesting that the team hadn't faced any difficulties yet.

... 6 Hours Late and 11 Hours behind Schedule! BUT WHY?

One, two, three hours go by and we are still at the same spot. We decide to return to the nearby Trading Centre to organise for *bodabodas* to take us to Giriki. At the Trading Centre we were joined by more team members in three other vehicles, including one carrying our Guest of Honour from the Ministry of Education. After a few minutes briefing to the Guest of Honour, he honourably considered the option on jumping onto a bike for the 22+ kilometre journey. His affirmative response was as encouraging as we could ever imagine. He was as determined as we were, to reach Giriki and commission the school --- after all we had come long already and more importantly the community of Giriki were already waiting for us anyway. The next problem was then getting about 10 *bodabodas* to ferry us in pairs to the venue. We were told that the 5 or so *bodabodas* that operate in the trading centre had gone to Kapchorwa Town and would be back at 12 noon! To avoid 'overcrowding' the trading centre, we decided to drive back to the bad-spot as the *bodabodas* are being organised.

Time check, 1 pm and we are still at the same spot. Community members from the nearby village had mobilized themselves to give us a hand and we were told that they had actually managed to 'repair' the two bad-spots ahead and were trying this last one, where one vehicle coming from the opposite side had got stuck and blocked everybody else. Then came a Range Rover belonging to the Area MP, Hon Kisos Chemaswet and he too was stuck with us and an interesting discussion ensued with him, details of which have been written on, in another article. We all got out of our cars and started to trek towards Giriki, hoping the *bodabodas* would find us on the way. Moments later, we saw a vehicle had passed through and a big sigh of relief followed! Using simple local tools, the community members had managed to get all the vehicles to cross over!

Fast forward, an hour later, we were in Giriki, 6 hours late, but warmly received by the women from Giriki singing songs of appreciation and welcome. It was a wonderful occasion with the communities that lasted 3 hours, again covered in detail by our Lead Article by Nickson in this edition. After a late lunch at 6 pm, we set off the return journey using another direction this time, three times longer than the route we used to get to Giriki. The road was as bad but navigable through Bukwo District. At 2 am, we arrived at Noah's Ark - a Guest House in Kapchorwa town. A journey of 110 Kms which could have taken us an hour and half had taken 7 hours!

Enough of the story itself, what lessons can be drawn from this experience? *First* and foremost, is the significant point about the importance of infrastructure for any kind of development to take place. With a better road, the life of the son of the UPDF soldier -- an important citizen - would have been saved. With a better road, we would have reached on time for the commissioning of the school and returned on time as well. With a better road, the cost of doing business would have been lower for ActionAid and more resources would be able to reach the people of Giriki other than being spent on heavy duty 4WD Vehicles, fuel and maintenance.

Secondly, this experience, yet again demonstrated betrayal by our leaders and government who often collude with private sector to rob this country through corruption. The road was in that state because of negligence as explained by the LC III Chairperson earlier. The road was in this sorry state because the money for it was and is being stolen. Putting 1st Class marrum on the 30 km stretch where we spent 6 hours instead of 25 minutes would cost less than 200,000,000 and so much would be saved. To put culverts on the three bad-spots to just make the road passable, even at this state would cost less than 6,000,000 Uganda shillings, but we read of stories of 6.5 billion given to MPs to monitor programmes with their own monitoring costs, we know of 16 billion shillings stolen from State House meant for bicycles and we know the cost of public administration in Uganda is skyrocketing. It is possible that over 1 trillion shillings is lost annually to corruption with the World Bank estimating 600 Billion lost every year in procurement related transactions alone. If only government could get its priorities right, many lives would be saved and Uganda would be a better place for all.

To end on a really important note, the Giriki experience demonstrated important characteristics about Ugandans that we all should be proud of: sheer *determination*, unwavering *resilience* and strong *will to overcome adversity* for it was easier for all of us to give up and return to the comfort of town; *innovation* and *adaptation* for with very simple tools and bare hands and feet the community members made the road passable; and finally, the value of *social capital* for without *voluntary support* of the community and standing together in this hard time, we wouldn't have crossed over and held the function.

Our leaders and people in government should build on these very important attributes of our people and Uganda will be a transformed nation.

Quotes!

We thank ActionAid International Uganda because they came here with a vision and they are a very transparent organisation. We know how they operate.

Mr. Paul Majjanch, the Acting LCV Chairperson, making his Speech at the Commissioning of the School.

I thank ActionAid for doing an objective assessment. The team got the diagnostics right and that is why we are here celebrating such a milestone.

Hon Lydia Bateka, Woman Representative, Kween District

I would like to thank ActionAid for the powerful women's group that I have seen here in Giriki. It is an indicator of the value of educating the girl child.

Mr. C. Tony Mukasa-Lusambu, Assistant Commissioner, Primary Education and Guest of Honour to the function

When Elected Leaders Betray the Electorate: A citizen conversation with an MP in a strange place!

Cherukut Miriam, Programme Coordinator - Kapchorwa Civil Society Organizations' Alliance (KACSOA)



Kween MP, Hon. Kisos Chemaswet, engaging with the citizens on the role of MPs in ensuring good roads.

Photo: Hellen Malinga Apila / ActionAid

My unplanned meeting with Hon. Kisos Chemaswet, the area MP of Kween Constituency, Kween District happened in the most unusual way as there was no formal arrangement for us to meet. As fate had it, we met at a point where a group of leaders [including: the MPs of Kween District, Assistant Commissioner of Basic Education from Ministry of Education, the Country Director and a team of staff from ActionAid, Kween Local Government officials and many others] had failed to cross from one side of Giriki road to the other for a couple of hours following an incidence where the road had cracked creating a mini valley following a heavy down pour on the previous night of 3rd May 2012. The leaders were heading to Giriki Sub County in Kween District to witness the Commissioning and handing over of Greek Primary School to Kween Local Government.

Like any other citizen activist passionate about advocating for better service delivery, I had always longed for a day I would put Members of Parliament [who rarely visit their constituencies] on the spot on issues of poor service delivery in their constituencies and its very common to find that campaign messages of MPs are filled with promises of ensuring that services improve and in extreme cases they promise that they will provide better services in health, roads, education including paying fees among others when voted into Parliament.

Now that chance had befallen me like 'manna' from heaven, tickled by the desire to engage this MP who was like all the others waiting to tow one vehicle that had been caught up in the mud, I led a heated debate with the MP by posing one question to him; how about an expectant mother with a complicated delivery case who is supposed to be rushed to a nearby

Hospital which is more than 70kms away in the nearby districts of Kapchorwa or Mbale, what would happen?

Then I went ahead to blame him and the whole parliament for occupying seats in Parliament on the vote of poor citizens and forgetting about them as soon as they got to Parliament and for striving for their own survival at the cost of the voters. I asked about his take about an arrogant statement by the President on the occasion of the NRM 26th Anniversary which took place in Tegeres Secondary School where he irritated the public by saying that money cannot be excavated like murrum. This happened when the president was commenting about the tarmacking of Kapchorwa-Suam road which had been enlisted in the national budget for more than 3 financial years.

The MPs response was that the implementation of the Affirmative Action Policy had resulted into the election of District Women Representatives who instead of effectively using their positions to address the concerns of the electorate, have abused the policy and resorted to sycophancy. He added that the over 120 women MPs would have been a critical mass to positively influence government policy towards better improvement of government services. But the results are on the contrary. Then on the issue of MPs distancing themselves from their constituencies, the MP said that the constituents were making very unrealistic demands of the MP; he attributed that to the lack of adequate information by the citizenry on the role of the MPs and other government institutions including the NGOs and the private sector. *"The public expects me their MP to ensure that roads are good and yet my role is to legislate," Hon. Kisos lamented.* Asked about who should provide good services and

create awareness on the role of leaders the MP hit back at NGOs, "actually you NGOs have failed to educate the constituents about the role of different leadership positions and by the way you should build more schools in my district, I am about to request you for more schools", he said.

In my view, the comments of the MP which are shared by many MPs who are always lamenting when put on the spot on such issues revealed that MPs have forgotten that through their role of examining and scrutinising budgets of various Government Ministries as well as other Government Institutions through their respective sectoral committees have a direct influence over services that reach their constituencies. Many MPs are caught up between serving the interests of the public and those of their parties where they pay so much allegiance. Further as the MP confirmed in our interaction most MPs especially in the ruling party are striving for favours from the President since they all feel they have high chances of becoming Ministers given the fact that the current cabinet has 72 ministerial seats.

Indeed the first order of business in the 9th Parliament after a 3 day swearing in ceremony was to increase their emoluments and so as it is in their powers to approve such changes, their salaries shot up to a cool UGX 20 million. Probably it's these emoluments in addition to other privileges [for self aggrandizement] while in Parliament that motivate them to clamour for political power and not to necessarily fulfil the promises they make during campaigns to the voters who give them the mandate.

Making Policies Work for Staff: Lessons for ActionAid from Giriki

By Denis and Bruno, Staff working in the Finance Department

It was finally a bright Saturday morning and the expression on people's faces in a staff reflection meeting clearly showed that, **"what a hard times reminder"**. We comfortably managed to have our meeting and amongst the issues that were given priority was the lessons learnt from our eventful Friday Giriki experience.

Throughout our journey, the roads were very slippery and barely could a car less than a four wheel drive manage to move for a meter or two. However, we were blessed with Toyota Land Cruisers that managed to make it through the rough hills, valleys, swamps and rivers of Kween District. The performance of the vehicles was a clear testimony and justification why we will need to purchase such heavy duty vehicles. In addition, we painfully learnt

when on vehicle had to pull another in turn with chains from a community that all our vehicles must be equipped with way more gadgets than they currently are to include towing chains and Tanganyika Jacks

As we spent some good time trying to get our vehicles move passed the split Chepsikunya - Giriki road, we asked ourselves where we were going to sleep just in case the night closed on us because the situation hadn't got any better. Of course it would have been in the cars. This would mean we could not present any receipts to account for the per diem for the night spent in the car in the wilderness. As our best alternative, we prepared for a night ride in our vehicles at whatever time so as to reach Kapchorwa town, which meant driving beyond the time stat-

ed in the vehicle policy. This drew our attention the need to revise some of our policies to make them compatible with situations where we work. We also learnt from that we need to travel with adequate cash contingency and that we cannot get receipts for all transactions. The case point was when a community member asked for compensation for the chain that he offered in order to have all our vehicles pulled out of the split road. Staff contributed money from their personal contingency fund and a note book page was used to quickly write an acknowledgement. We were saved that the multitude that dug the vehicles and pushed them out of the mud were kind enough not to ask for any payment which we would have failed to pay.

A vote of thanks was officially passed to honour the four gentlemen that were behind the wheels who really did a fantastic job to the extent we concluded in the staff reflection meeting that *our drivers were our heroes*. This was coupled with the earlier field organization that was taken on by the Kapchorwa team that had to spend the previous night in Giriki as they were cut off by the rains. In a flash back, we looked at the extra miles staff walk and extra efforts they put in to achieve organisational targets and objectives and fully agreed that staff recognition and facilitation are key critical factors of success. From this experience, we recommend that some provision of hardship allowances could be discussed and instituted to provide an organisational recognition to staff that face such hardship to execute organizational duties.

The Giriki experience was the first of its kind for some staff members in the field trip and trust me it was a semi immersion to some of us. Because the experience was beneficial, we learnt that immersions should be adopted for each and every staff so as to have a clearer understanding and appreciation of the field and how the poor people we work with spend their daily lives.

The level of commitment that was shown by all the staff on board represented a lesson around team work and resilience. Much as we went through hard times, all staff worked hard and hand-in-hand to remain a team to overcome any unforeseen obstacles. This moment in our lives was a time when we were all more than ready to cross even the most difficult of bridges and ridges as we met them. This was a true representation of the family values and our unwritten culture that needs to be maintained in the AAIU community.

In conclusion, we agreed that the Giriki experience requires us to reflect, draw lessons to improve the way we organise and facilitate our work. A few of the learnings herein shared demonstrate that we need to examine our policies and ensure that they works for us, rather than staff working for policies.

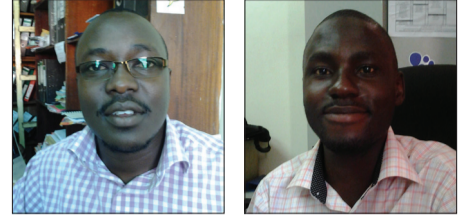


Photo: Stephen Wandera \ ActionAid



Community members clearing the road

Articles written by the Media Partners

My experience with ActionAid has been a fulfilling one**Andrew Mogyema**

I picked interest in ActionAid's working in 2008, particularly its drive to fight hunger in grass root communities. That led me to request the then communication Advisor to assist me and other colleagues to do investigative stories on the hunger situation in Eastern Uganda in 2009 which ActionAid was already working on to bring out as an advocacy issue. At the time extreme hunger is said to have been claiming lives in different districts in Eastern Uganda but government was in denial.

Between February and April 2009, local leaders reported that atleast nine people had died of hunger

in the areas of Soroti, Amuria and Katakwi districts. Thousands more were said to be in danger of starvation after a prolonged drought spell and a sudden shift in the rain patterns in the region. The population was said to have resorted to surviving on wild fruits, leaves, weeds and in some extreme cases, poisonous plants. Over once million people were estimated to have been staring at hunger in the face. But all the same government remained adamant and could not acknowledge the gravity of the problems.

It is in light of the above that ActionAid allowed to facilitate me (At the time I was working with NTV Uganda – Senior reporter/Visioneer) and other colleagues from The Independent and The Observer to work as part of its media advocates to bring out the impacts of hunger for government action.

That is how we ended up in Teso sub-region, after three days we had gathered a lot of evidence of starving elderly people as well as children and women. We also carried out in-depth interviews with the starving folks. The result of this coverage led to government and parliamentary declaration of the problem as a national emergency which enable resources to be mobilized to channelled to the affected communities.

Since then I have worked closely with ActionAid as a media partner to cover several immersion exercises aimed at providing experiential learning from the lives of those living in poverty by donor and ActionAid officials, donor visits and acting as a media liaison. Through Media Steps Ltd where I am currently the Producer in charge of Communication Development, I have been able to documents

ActionAid's efforts in supporting women and poor people demand for their rights as well as building of schools among others. The most recent trip to Giriki in Kween District however almost turned in to a life and death affair, after discovering that the road has been damaged 34 kms to the venue of the schools hand over. We took to walking, after about 4 to 5 kms the cars joined us, some local people had filled the gape in the road. In the evening we had to use an alternative route which snaked through the Elgon Hills to Bukwo and Kween Districts before joining the tarmacked road in Kapchorwa town. It was so slippery that it took us over 8 hours to cover a distance of about 110 kms. For every second we took on the road, the ActionAid drivers fought hard so we do not tumble over the stiff cliffs due to the slippery nature of the road.

A Humanitarian Photographer: I want to create awareness**Stephen Wandera Ojumbo,**

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My name is Stephen Wandera Ojumbo; a humanitarian photographer in Uganda. I use photojournalism to create awareness on the plight of the less privileged.

Through humanitarian photography, I raise profile of organizations that campaign and work towards better living conditions of the vulnerable and marginalized groups and persons in the society. My purpose through documentation and photo exhibitions is to inspire people to become personally involved in working together; tackling issue that affect them by reflecting faces and lives of real people. To turn otherwise ordinary stories and events into bold statements about society through pictures (a thousand words) in order to raise concern and tell well hidden truth and stories. Therefore, I support organizations to communicate clearly the poverty

and rights issues that affect their target communities.

My major engagement in Humanitarian Photography has been with ActionAid International Uganda. I have handled various community photography assignments from ActionAid one of which earned me the coveted Best Professional Photography Category Award of ActionAid International "Positive Lives Campaign Photo Exhibition" in 2006.

In November, 25th, 2006, I travelled to Benet to meet the Ndorobo community in Kapchorwa to document their plight as land less people. Two weeks of photo shoot was exhaustive at the same time fun. Stephen Cherwaru - the driver, Chemisto - our guide and I would everyday at 8:00 am drive off from Kapchorwa town, leave our vehicle by the road side and start walking -climbing the Hills of Mt. Elgon. We could fall off or run downwards without any grip due to the slippery ground but reach the settlements at flat top of the Hills where I did documentation all-day. We would get back to Kapchorwa town in the night too

tired to untire our shoe laces.

The flooding in Teso in August 2007 almost claimed my own life too just like those of the many victims -.may their soul rest in peace. In the heavy rainfall we (the driver whose name I don't remember, Sophie Irepu and I) were travelling on of a tractor wading through mud to deliver tents for shelter to the displaced communities as I document the events unfold. In a flash, I found my body hanging on my camera strap with my head down and rubbing on to the tractor tyre that was sunken into a huge hole. Sophie cried aloud thinking I was already dead but the pain in my broken rib could not allow me utter a word to tell the driver to stop. He continued to drive a little and finally stopped - probably thinking like Sophie that I was dead.

Many more are my stories of humanitarian work-photography. On 4th May 2012, we left Kapchorwa town heading to Giriki in Kween District to witness and document ActionAid hand over Greek River Primary School to Government. We ended up getting stuck most

of the day because the road got cut off after heavy rainfall watched the road surface and culverts away at several spots.

Still my thanks go to the voiceless and marginalised community for believing in "do it themselves". Cars headed to Giriki would have not reached the destination if it were not for the tireless and voluntary effort of the same community members.

I was most thrilled by the story of an ActionAid driver - Godfrey who refused to give a lift to the local people he found on the way walking in Bukwo a few years back. The same people took a short cut and later found the driver stuck in a mud. On seeing them, the driver knelt in mud to seek for forgiveness and begged them for a hand to remove the vehicle from where it was stuck. This draws to one very simple: be friendly at all times for all people will come to your rescue the same way ActionAid is a darling of the community due to their good deeds. Giriki River Primary School built for the community will go a long way in changing many lives in Kween District and far.

The Giriki Community Communiqué

Prepared by women of Giriki on behalf of the larger community and presented to the representative of the Minister of Education and Sports

We, the women and community of Giriki, would like to use this function to share our painful experiences, joy for the support in resettling our community, raise our demands with the Government and express our commitment to work for poverty eradication and justice for all girls, women and people of Greater Ngenge.

Where we are coming from!

We the people of Greater Ngenge have undergone painful experiences arising out of poverty and injustices, including:

- Insecurity to persons and property leading to loss of lives, low household incomes and household food insecurity, displacement in camps, loss of means of livelihoods resulting from cattle rustling, natural disasters especially floods and drought which had led to abandonment of agriculture.
- Insufficient and poor quality services such as health, education, roads and agricultural extension both in terms of service but also infrastructure;
- Harmful cultural norms and practices that have perpetuated Gender Based Violence resulting to psychological, social and physical trauma and indignity especially to girls and women; and
- Limited access to justice especially for the girls and women who suffer indignity perpetuated by several socio cultural and economic conditions mentioned above.

Still we are Grateful!

As a people, we refuse to accept a life confined to the above. We have opened up to work with various development agencies (State and non state). In this regard, we express our appreciation for all the efforts and results attained in re-settling our community and addressing our rights. We would like to hereby thank the following:

- **ActionAid International Uganda** for mobilising the communities, building our understanding of our rights, funding programmes that include construction of houses for former IDPs, collective framing to restore household food security, construction and equipping of Giriki Health Centre II, construction of water sources, construction of an eight classroom block and accommodation for two teachers, providing midday meals to 763 pupils, installation of a 20 horse-power grain mill for the school and supporting the cultivation and planting of a 20 acre school garden amongst others.

- **Ministry of Health** for enlisting the health centre to national medical supplies and paying for the two medical staff.
- **Ministry of Education and Sports** for allocating an examination centre number for Greek River Primary School; and
- **Kween District Local Government** for the political and administrative guidance to the sub-county and the community in re-settling our community.

Looking Forward

We have come a long way, and know that there is still a longer way to go in order to sustain the gains we have registered as a people in the journey to our vision of a life of dignity for all. We make the following demands of key duty bearers as below:

- **Ministry of Education and Sports** enlists Greek River Primary School to the Grant Aided schools to benefit from all the Universal Primary Education entitlements that include government payroll, capitation and school facilities grants, enrol the teacher on the hard to reach benefit scheme, stock the school with instructional materials, and support the school feeding programme to ensure enrolment, retention and transition to secondary or tertiary level; construct and equip a government aided secondary and technical schools in the Greater Ngenge;
- **Office of the Prime Minister (OPM)** provides greater focus on funding the Giriki community resettlement, reintegration and rehabilitation through supporting construction of more school infrastructure, provision of school furniture and other services within the PRDP and NUSAF II facilities;
- **Ministry of Health** upgrades Giriki Health Centre II to Health Centre IV with a resident doctor, fully equipped theatre, child and maternal services amongst others;
- **Ministry of Works and Transport** upgrades the community access roads to central government roads and fund their construction to increase access to markets and aide provision of social services which will address the continuous failure by the private contractors;
- **Ministry of Energy** extends electric power supply to the district to support health and education services, and development of local artisans which will provide jobs for the youth;

- **Ministry of Security and Ministry of Defence** ensure a permanent deployment of adequate security personnel to address the threats from armed stock rustlers;
- **District Local Government** ensures that programmes designed to benefit the women and other poor and vulnerable people like Community Driven Development (CDD), grants for the people with disabilities and others reach them and are fully accounted for;
- **The Members of Parliament** implement their election manifestos to Giriki community, meet to consult with and account to the Giriki women and community four times in a year and champion their issues at district and national level;
- **Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development** supports the operations of women rights institutions in the district to ensure increased access to justice for girls and women; and
- **Cultural leaders and especially men** spearhead joint efforts to abandon harmful practices which infringe on the rights of girls and women that include female genital mutilation, ownership rights to productive resources by women, early and forced marriage, and participation of women and youth in leadership and discussion making.

Playing Our Part!

As a people and as leaders with a stake in the future of our community, we commit to do the following:

- Continue to mobilise and act against Gender Based Violence and support survivors to access justice;
- Monitor performance of government programmes and use the finding to hold public officers accountable;
- Act together in solidarity with like minded organisations to protect, and support the girl child at the family, community and instructional level;
- Work hard to overcome low household incomes; and

Above all, we resolve to set up a taskforce to oversee the process of following up with various duty-bearers and on the key outstanding work to make the school and the community achieve its vision. We also commit to play our part in maintaining a clean, safe and healthy environment for all children in the school.

ActionAid International Uganda

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