



## Weekly

AUG 21— 27

Dear Reader, Last Friday, the youths from the agri-business caravan sang and danced to the launch of a five year campaign: **Youth in Agri-Business: Feeding the World, Changing lives!**

## Youth in Agribusiness Campaign Launched!



During the launch of the five year campaign, the youths committed to embrace agriculture to improve their livelihoods and transform their country through music and drama. They were also awarded certificates for successfully completing the Agri-Business Caravan in Western Uganda.

Last Friday, ActionAid in partnership with AgriProFocus and UHURU Institute launched a 5 year campaign dubbed **“Youth in Agri-Business: Feeding the World, Changing Lives!”** at Hotel Africana. The purpose of the campaign is to motivate youth to join agribusiness by addressing traditional barriers to their participation in agriculture. The campaign also seeks to bring together different youth leaders, Agribusiness Experts, Research Institutions, Academia, Private businesses, International Agencies and Development Partners to engage in drawing actionable commitments towards creating an enabling environment that supports youth in agribusiness.

The launch of the campaign was preceded by a 7-day Youth in Agribusiness Caravan under the theme, **“Youth in Agribusiness for Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Development”**.

Ms. Samanya Kyategeka, the AAU Communications Officer on behalf of the organization’s Country Director stated that Uganda has the 2<sup>nd</sup> youngest population in the World and this presents an opportunity for the youth to provide labour in the Agri-Business sector. Citing the 2014 report titled: **“Youth and agriculture: Key challenges and concrete solutions”** by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which identified six challenges that bar youth from joining agriculture, Samanya said that together with partners, these challenges will be addressed by the campaign.

The report cites insufficient access to knowledge, information and education; limited access to land; inadequate access to financial services; difficulties accessing green jobs; limited access to markets and limited involvement in policy dialogue. These are the issues that you and me must address”, she said.

Samanya added that all stakeholders should work towards making agriculture as attractive as the blue collar jobs, bodaboda or even betting.

UHURU Institute’s Jane Okello called upon Government to invest in more agribusiness centers of excellence based on competitive advantages of different regions across the country like the Presidential Initiative on Banana Industrial Development (PIBID) in Bushenyi district.

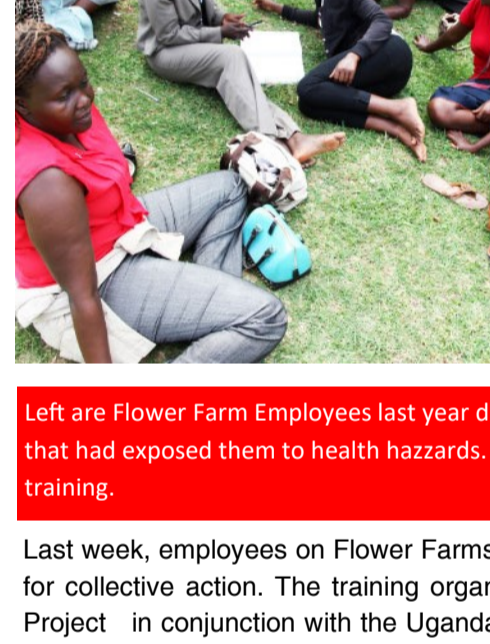
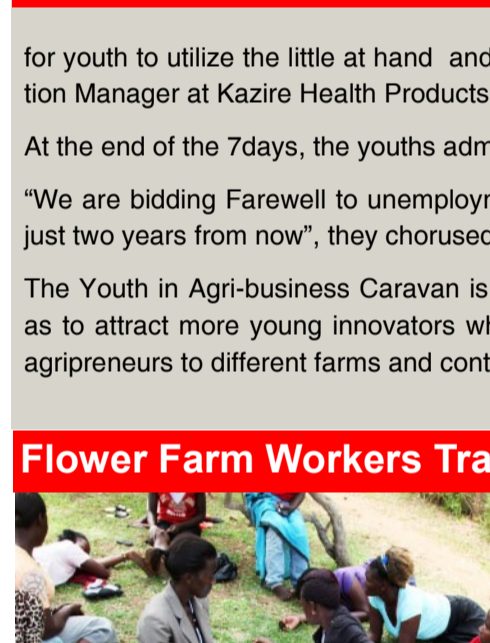
Prof. Florence Muranga, Executive Director at the Presidential Initiative on Banana Industrial Development (PIBID) encouraged youth to develop cooperatives in order to reach new markets and to have a sustainable value chain.

Dr. Olupot Giregon, a researcher at Makerere University also tipped the youth not to bank on Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) as the magic bullet to bumper harvests but rather invest in organic farming.

“GMOs are a modern biotechnology which is a weapon for advancing interests of a special social, political, economic, or sinister group. I urge you all to oppose the National Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill in its current form because it has been tailored give GMOs the leverage to dominate our markets”.

The meeting was attended by Government officials from the Ministries of Finance; Trade & Industry; Gender, Labor and Social Development; Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries. Others included officials from Narrow, Operation Wealth Creation, Makerere University and District Officials from the YESSEN areas of operation,

## After two Years, we shall tell our story— Youth



Pictorial of the youths at the different Farms in Western Uganda.

ActionAid under the EU funded Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Self-Employment and National Development (YESSEN) project together with Partners successfully conducted a seven-day youth in Agri-Business Caravan. The caravan which took the Western Uganda route brought together 65 start up and progressive youth entrepreneurs in the agri-food sector from both rural and urban areas including the five districts of YESSEN Project Implementation (Amuru, Lira, Kotido, Nwoya, Pader).

According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics, out of over 80% of the country’s population employed by agriculture, only 35% are youth between ages of 18 and 35. The caravan was hence organized to encourage more youth to get involved in commercial agriculture by unlocking their mindsets and motivating them to join employment opportunities in agriculture value chains through providing real life experiences by successful youth agripreneurs.

“Our aim was to change the mindset of youth into believing that agriculture is highly profitable and practicing it is a business. We are glad to have attained that, and a lot more in this caravan,” stated AAU’s Communication Officer.

While they travelled across western Uganda through districts of Masaka, Mbarara, Ntungamo, Bushenyi, Kasese and Fortportal, youth were exposed to ways of addressing traditional barriers to their participation in agriculture such as limited access to resources like land, capital and labour.

The caravan created a platform for joint actions in motivating youth into agribusiness through peer to peer exchanges and learning from youth led agribusiness enterprises such as Ericson Dairy Farm, Delta Bees Uganda Limited, and Divine Vegetables Farm among others in Ntungamo, Bushenyi, and Fort Portal respectively.

Mr. Samuel Abanyu, the Director at Delta Bees advised the youth to add value to their products in order to increase their market value

Youth were also encouraged to have work ethics such as integrity, patience, hard work and passion for agriculture in order to prosper in that line of business. They were also urged to test and sample their soils before venturing into crop farming in order to maximize yields.

In an effort to curb the issue of limited resources like land, capital and labor, the youth on the caravan were encouraged to start small, utilize the available resources, and to keep growing.

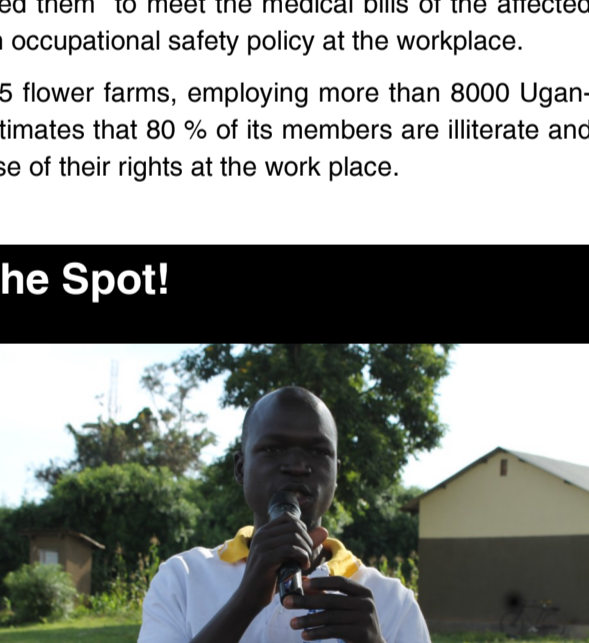
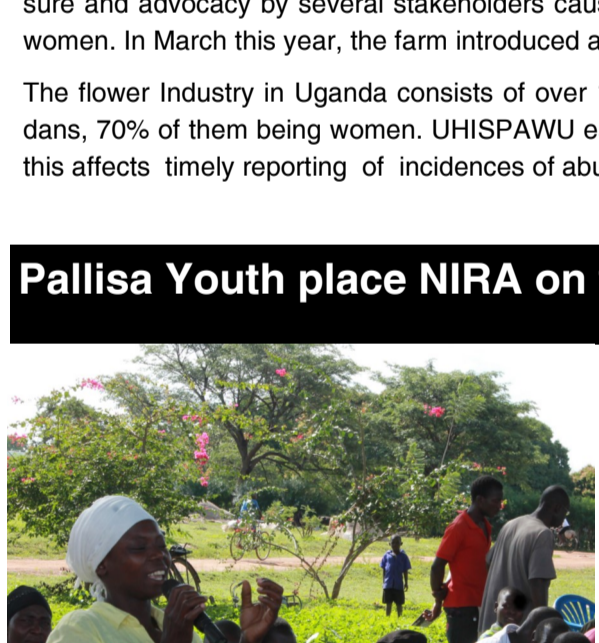
“Resources can never be readily available. It is important for youth to utilize the little at hand and expand gradually,” said Mr. Dickson Musasizi, the Production Manager at Kazire Health Products Limited in Mbarara district.

At the end of the 7days, the youths admitted that the caravan was long overdue.

“We are bidding Farewell to unemployment, poverty and seeking for jobs. We shall write our story just two years from now”, they chorused.

The Youth in Agri-Business Caravan is scheduled for the next five years so as to attract more young innovators who are passionate about agri-business and to expose more agripreneurs to different farms and contemporary farming methods.

## Flower Farm Workers Trained to adopt Collective Action



Left are Flower Farm Employees last year during the sit down protest following the poor working conditions that had exposed them to health hazards. Right are the workers during the Women Only session at the training.

Last week, employees on Flower Farms (majority being women) were trained in organizational skills for collective action. The training organized by ActionAid under the Fair, Green and Global (FGG) Project in conjunction with the Uganda Horticulture Industry Service Providers and Workers Union (UHISPAWU) took place at Katomi Kingdom Resort on the shores of Lake Victoria.

The training is part of an empowerment plan to enable the women in flower farms to organize themselves to be able to bargain for better pay and working conditions as well as respect of their rights by the employers.

The training equipped the participants with knowledge on trade unionism, their functions and challenges.

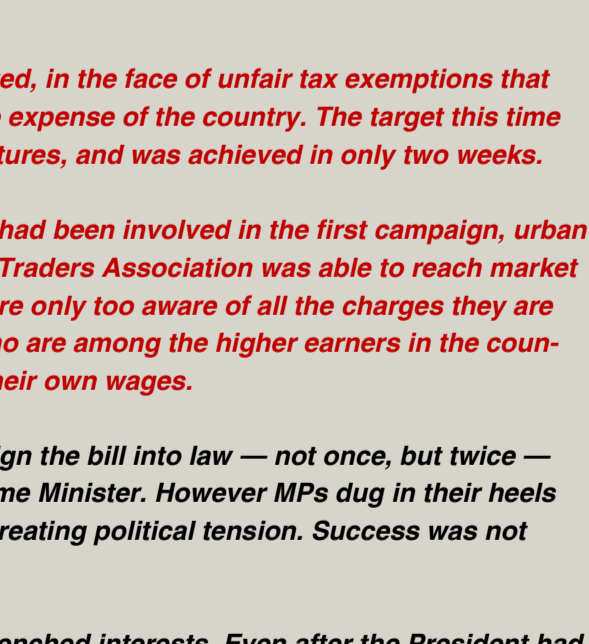
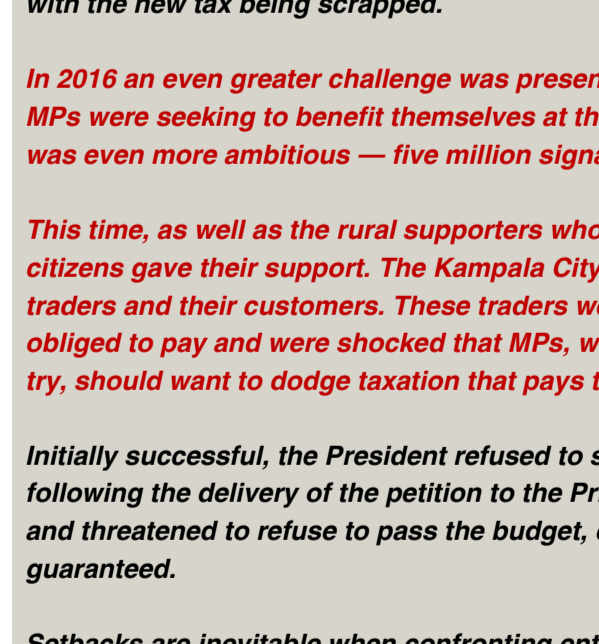
One of the Facilitators emphasized the importance of belonging to a Trade Union. He tipped the workers on the power in big numbers, urging those that are not members of the Horticulture Trade union to join.

During the training, the facilitators provided for a **Women only session**. This was intended to provide a safe space for women to speak out about their unique challenges such as sexual harassment and exploitation at the work place. The women learnt from each other how to address the challenge and chose leaders among themselves to provide a support system in case of such harassment.

In November last year, the media broke the story of over 70 women working with Royal Zan Vanten flower farm that were exposed to a chemical that burnt their bodies. Some of them were hospitalized with gruesome wounds. Although the company was hesitant to admit liability, pressure and advocacy by several stakeholders caused them to meet the medical bills of the affected women. In March this year, the farm introduced an occupational safety policy at the workplace.

The flower industry in Uganda consists of over 15 flower farms, employing more than 8000 Ugandans, 70% of them being women. UHISPAWU estimates that 80% of their members are illiterate and this affects timely reporting of incidences of abuse of their rights at the work place.

## Pallisa Youth place NIRA on the Spot!



At the Community Baraza, the Speakers decried the corruption and lack of Transparency in NIRA. They promised not to rest until they have got an explanation from the Authority.

During the Community Barazas organized last week in Gogonyo and Pallisa Town Council, the National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) was put on the spot to explain how recruitment is conducted in the Authority. The Angry youths stated that the Authority lacks transparency and is very corrupt. They cited the recent call for applications by the Authority for enrollment Officers to support the registration of young people in schools.

“While I have all the necessary qualifications, I was never called for interviews. I was shocked to find that people who don’t even meet the set criteria (Minimum of a Diploma) were the ones awarded the jobs”, stated one of the youths.

The District Officer in charge of NIRA distinguished herself from the issue, claiming that all recruitments were conducted at the head office in Kampala.

“What I can state here is that NIRA needed only 200 officers yet the applicants were over 600. However, I don’t know which criteria was used although I believe that the best candidates got the jobs”, she said amidst yells and jeers from the charged crowd.

Alex Sebunya, the District Internal Security Officer asked the youth to remain calm as his team investigates the irregularities of awarding jobs without sitting for interviews plus the allegation of unqualified officers holding offices.

The youth however promised not to stop until this issue has been addressed satisfactorily.

The key lesson from this Baraza is that youth unemployment in the country, which currently stands at 62% of the total youth population accounting for about 4.2 million youths can easily fuel violence if not addressed immediately.

The Baraza organized by ActionAid Pallisa Cluster attracted 300 community members including the District and Political leaders. Other issues discussed during the meeting included the quality of education, health and agriculture among others.

## Mobilizing Millions : AAU Tax Power Wins

**When an unexpected measure was announced that would hit poor farmers with a new tax, ActionAid Uganda swung into action. With deep roots in rural communities and a network of trusted partners, ActionAid organised a petition campaign and gathered over one million signatures within just a few weeks.**

**Although many people in rural areas had not really thought about taxation before, they could plainly see the injustice of being taxed more while receiving fewer public services. Influential supporters in parliament backed the campaign and it won a resounding success with the new tax being scrapped.**

**In 2016 an even greater challenge was presented, in the face of unfair tax exemptions that MPs were seeking to benefit themselves at the expense of the country. The target this time was even more ambitious — five million signatures, and was achieved in only two weeks.**

**This time, as well as the rural supporters who had been involved in the first campaign, urban citizens gave their support. The Kampala City Traders Association was able to reach market traders and their customers. These traders were only too aware of all the charges they are obliged to pay and were shocked that MPs, who are among the higher earners in the country, should want to dodge taxation that pays their own wages.**

**Initially successful, the President refused to sign the bill into law — not once, but twice — following the delivery of the petition to the Prime Minister. However MPs dug in their heels and threatened to refuse to pass the budget, creating political tension. Success was not guaranteed.**

**Setbacks are inevitable when confronting entrenched interests. Even after the President had signed the bill, the story was far from over. The coalition built around this issue, as a strong issue of principle as well as lost revenue, is confident that this tax exemption is unconstitutional and can be challenged in the courts.**

**The Uganda Law Society is the latest of the coalition partners to take the baton and once the bill is published will be challenging its legality. Throughout the campaign the media has assisted the mobilisation and kept the issue under debate nationwide.**

**These mass mobilisations have helped to inform citizens about their rights and provided them with a channel to make their voices heard. Its these mobilizations that AAU will be using in our next Strategy Paper, to be launched soon.**

[Read and view this ActionAid Uganda success on this link .](#)

## Perspectives from the Country Director

**Adapt or Perish on Highway Five** is Arthur’s latest publication. Therein, he shares essential shifts in the transition from AAU’s Country Strategy Paper IV to the 5<sup>th</sup> Strategy Paper.

He writes that, “this week starting 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2017 will go into our historical trajectory as the one in which leaders of AA Uganda convening, on behalf of 120 staff, numerous communities and people living in poverty and facing oppression made a choice between two diametrically opposed propositions. On the one hand, we have an opportunity to take a bold step to deliver on a new ambitious country strategy that requires important shifts in the way we imagine, think and operate. And on the other, is a choice to engage a reverse gear and move back into being a complicit NGO content to remain in a ‘comfort zone’ with little or nothing to offer in a fast-changing and tough operating context.”

He concludes by assuring his team that;

“We have what it takes: an inspiring vision, clear cut mission and the essential value base and experience to see us through. This journey is not for the faint-hearted though. We need strong mental alignment to the new direction and all staff who are ready to make this shift will be supported on the journey BUT those who feel we have taken too difficult a path for their comprehension or one that is diametrically opposed to their understanding of what needs to be done, will also be supported, in a different way.”

[Read the full publication here.](#)

## Week Ahead

- The ActionAid Leadership team is in Royal Suites in Bugolobi this week to plan for the launch and rollout of the 5<sup>th</sup> Strategy Paper.