

Weekly

Sept 12– 18



Dear Reader, these are the pretty smiles of the children from the Bennet Community. Unfortunately, they have been denied education and health services in their land. Join the campaign for the urgent exclusion of the Bennet land from the UWA boundaries. [Click Here for details](#). And [Here to view the video](#). Welcome to this edition of the Weekly!

Women Activists not threatened by arrests!



Left-Above: The women thrown on a police pickup after arrest. They were not shaken by the Police intimidation. **Right-above :** The women Activists held hands and prayed in solidarity on arrival at Kiira Police station. **Left-Below:** The Women Activists in a cell at Kiira Police station. **Right-Below :** is another Police Pickup carrying Women Activists.

Uganda police on Tuesday arrested at least two dozen women activists after breaking up a protest against a move to remove the age limit for judges and the Electoral Commission officials.

ActionAid and other Activists said they suspected that the private member Bill tabled in Parliament by Nakifuma County MP Robert Kafeero Sekitoleko is a ruse to pave way for the amendment of Article 102 (b) of the Constitution to remove presidential age cap from the current 75 years.

“We as the women’s movement in Uganda, we are committed to working for a people-centred government and we disagree with the intent and the spirit of the motion. Therefore, we felt that today, we needed to come out as well and elicit public support” said Ms Eunice Musiime, the executive director Akina Mama Wa Africa.

ActionAid together with members of the Women’s platform had planned to walk from the Constitution Square to the Chogm gardens near Parliament before handing over a memorandum to Parliament. Unfortunately, police cordoned off the entire route and arrested the Activists.

Among those arrested was former Uganda’s ambassador to Washington Edith Ssempala and Sheila Muwanga, the deputy executive director at the Foundation for Human Rights initiative (FHRI). The women were later released without charge after brief detention at Kiira Police station outside Kampala. The ActionAid team; Nivatiti Nandujja, Samanya Kyategeka and Fiona Awilli narrowly survived arrest. By the time they reached the National theatre to join the other women activists, the venue was already sealed off.

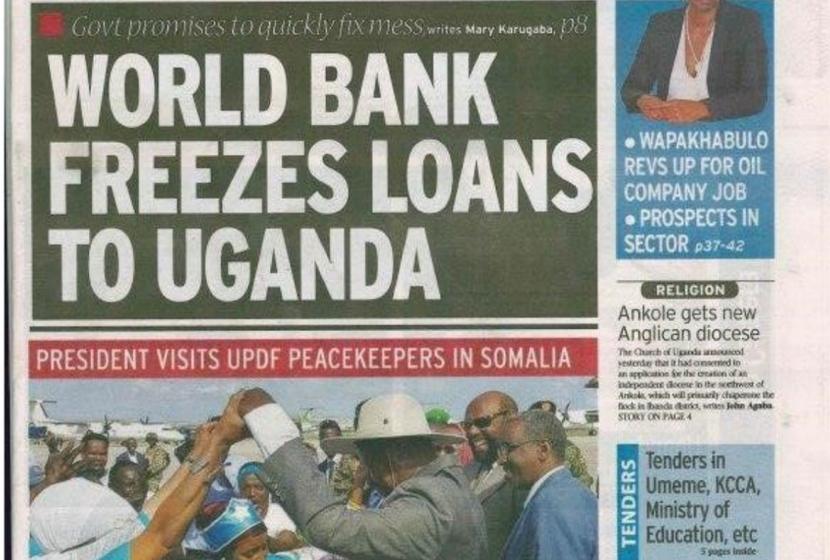
On August 25, 2016 Mr Kafeero Sekitoleko tabled a motion before Parliament seeking to amend the Constitution to remove the retirement age of judges from the current 70 years. The motion has however elicited a lot of suspicion from the public who see it as a move that would enable President Yoweri Museveni, 72, be eligible for another term in office.

However, the women were not shaken by the arrests. The activists continue to reject the proposal to remove age limits of those appointed to serve on the Electoral Commission and judges because citizens through the Citizen Compact on Free and Fair Elections, made clear proposals for substantive electoral reforms.

“We reject piecemeal reforms, especially given that the current Electoral Commission has twice been found, by our courts, to have grossly mismanaged elections. We cannot afford to have it continue to manage the electoral process in its current form. We appeal to the Rt. Hon. Speaker Rebecca Kadaga and Deputy Speaker Jacob Oulanya who hold the same positions as they did during the 9th Parliament and whom we believe are fully conversant with the political history of Uganda to exercise their duty and ensure that the will of Ugandans remains supreme in our Nation’s Parliament. In light of 38% youth unemployment and 400,000 graduates competing for 80,000 jobs annually, Ugandans have a responsibility to provide opportunities for the younger generation to serve the country”, reads part of the statement.

[Click here to watch the video on this story.](#)

CSO’s Write to World Bank on Rising Debt!



After the CSO Press Conference on Tuesday, Ugandans woke up to the above headline in the New Vision. According to AAU’s Arthur Larok, is a great success for this advocacy drive. Unfortunately, the story is not on line. Please get a copy of the last Thursday vision and follow the developments.

Last week, ActionAid joined other civil society Organisations to caution the Ugandan Government against the increased borrowing to finance the several ambitious projects at hand.

According to Arthur Larok, the Country Director at ActionAid Uganda, Uganda’s bulging national debt, if not checked is likely to worsen the cost of living in addition to burdening the consumer with more taxes.

Over the years, Uganda’s debt has been rising steadily at 2 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP)— an annual measure for determining the country’s economic performance. Uganda’s external debt according to Bank of Uganda is currently estimated at about \$5 billion (about Shs17 trillion) and domestic debt (treasury bills and bonds) at Shs11.612 trillion by end of June 2016. This projection puts Uganda among the highly indebted countries, with a worrying external debt raising concerns on the country’s capacity to pay back.

Julius Kapwepwe, the Director of Programs at the Uganda debt network while addressing journalists at a press conference convened by CSO leaders warned that this upward growth of the Country’s debt will have negative effects of Ugandans as they will have to pay back the debts.

“This may lead our country to fall into the unsustainable debt burden status in the long run”, he warned.

Ugandan CSOs have since drafted an open letter to the World bank, one of Uganda’s biggest source of loans to among others have all projects financed by the World Bank negotiated in an inclusive and transparent manner.

“We are also demanding for a re-evaluation of all current and future projects supported by the World Bank as these should all be based on clear commitments by our Government to respect the rights and freedoms of the citizens”, he said.

The letter is also demanding that all World Bank supported projects go through competitive bidding processes in order to increase the level of transparency, accountability and value for money. This will ensure that only the best companies from all over the world get the right projects for the benefit of citizens.

[Click here to read the Open letter to the World Bank.](#)

#Women2kilimanjaro-Penninah will be climbing!



Peninnah, in red Gomesi will be leading her colleagues to the foot of Mt Kilimanjaro for the historic climb in demand for their land rights. I will be there, please join us.

Imagine being told you couldn’t own something because you’re a woman. Being kicked from your land and your home for not being a man.

This is not something that women in rural communities across Uganda and the rest of Africa have to imagine. Despite working on and caring for small farms all over the Country and meeting over 80% of the country’s food needs, women own just 10% of Ugandan land.

Land means everything to farmers in Uganda. Without it, there is no way to grow produce – which means no income, and no food on the table. It means not having money to send your children to school.

This situation is not only for Ugandan Women. Across Africa, more women are standing up to raise their voices and demand their rights access, control and own land.

This October, Ugandan Women will join their colleagues from all-over Africa to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa’s highest peak.

“If African Governments have failed to listen, the women are going to climb to the highest peak in Africa to raise their voices for the world to hear, and they will demand equal land rights for women from the world leaders”, stated Fredrick Kawooya, the Manager-Policy and Campaigns at AAU.

Penninah, a rural woman farmer from Bukedea is one of the Ugandan Women determined to climb Kilimanjaro.

“I am going to climb to the top,” she says, “Because I have to go and speak”.

Speaking to Penninah, it becomes abundantly clear why land rights are what women like her are fighting for. Land is what farmers literally build their lives upon. And for many women in rural Africa, it means the difference between being independent and living a life devoid of freedom and opportunity.

Last week, AAU held a Twitter activation exercise for three hours to rally the world to support the Women’s Rights to land, as a build up to the Kilimanjaro climb. The three hour exercise was able to reach over 2million people all over the world.

Join women like Peninah at the foot of Mt Kilimanjaro, in solidarity to demand for their land rights. For details, please contact info.uganda@actionaid.org.

ActionAid in the Media

ActionAid and the Civil societies in Uganda’s reaction to the rising National debt and the decision to write an open letter to the World Bank has received a lot of media attention and coverage. The whole of last week, the media was filled with stories, commentaries, interviews and talk shows given by CSO leaders on the subject.

- ⇒ Arthur Larok, AAU’s Country Director was hosted on Spectrum (Radio One) last Thursday. He eloquently but calmly interfaced with the Minister, highlighting why Ugandans should be worried about the increasing debt.
- ⇒ Under the headline ;World Bank suspends lending to Uganda, Chimp Reports, an online media Organisation wrote a comprehensive article on the same. [Read full story Here.](#)
- ⇒ NTV Uganda also gave remarkable coverage to the subject. It not only produced a story but also conducted a number of interviews in regard to the subject with CSO leaders. [Watch the NTV story Here.](#)
- ⇒ The Daily Monitor covered the story under the headline; Civil Society cautions Government on rising debt. [Read the full story here](#)
- ⇒ WBS television was not left out. [View its televised news story on the subject here](#) under the headline; World Bank Pinned for abating corruption.

WEEK AHEAD:

- ⇒ As October draws near, AAU is currently working around the clock to ensure that the rural women are ready for set off to Mt Kilimanjaro. The Weekly will keep you informed, at every step of the journey.
- ⇒ A media team is in the field this week to collect stories on the effects of corruption on service delivery in Northern Uganda. These will be produced in the quarterly Newsletter; the Northern Watch. Look out for the next issue.