



## Weekly

Feb 20 — 26

Dear Reader, welcome to today's edition of the Weekly. In the photo, Natives of Oduoro village in Kumi district show off their bumper cassava harvest. They benefitted from ActionAid's Securing Food Rights in Agriculture Project that was funded by Australian Aid.

## CSOs demand for transparency in oil contracts!



ActionAid staff and other partners address the press after delivering the petition last Tuesday at the AAU offices.

Last Week, ActionAid and other like minded CSOs petitioned the Parliamentary Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and state enterprises demanding for greater transparency in oil contracts and related transactions.

"We invite the committee to address itself to issues of transparency by the Government of Uganda regarding oil transactions", read part of the petition.

The petitioners made reference to the Memorandum of understanding signed in 2011 between the Ugandan Government, Uganda Revenue Authority and Tullow oil that was marked private and confidential.

"It is inconceivable that Government and public sector agencies can enter into contracts that are considered "Private". How can matters of tax payable to Government of Uganda be considered a private matter? We believe that in spite of the continuous assurances by Government of Uganda officials that oil will not become a curse, the level of secrecy with which Government is transacting business with regard to oil and gas resources is the very definition of an oil curse", stated ActionAid's Fredrick Kawooya.

The petitioners also demanded that the committee holds public and private sector officials accountable for the decisions they took.

"It is extremely important that the committee interests itself in understanding why members of the public sector would consider payment of taxes a private matter."

In that regard, the petitioners demanded that the officials who signed the MoU of March 15, 2011 be summoned to testify before the Committee with regard to the presumed "private and confidential" nature of the MoU. Some of the officials include Hillary Onek, Allen Kagina and Doris Akol among others.

The Katuntu led committee is currently investigating whether Uganda Public Service Standing Orders were abused by the 42 officials who met the President and demanded for a reward after winning two separate cases against Heritage Oil and Gas Company and Tullow Oil. The committee is also investigating why Shs52b in supplementary requests was advanced to mostly Justice Ministry officials across six financial years yet the government knew of the ongoing oil cases and could have budgeted beforehand.

Mr Katuntu's committee is also looking into claims that public officers solicited for a payment, honorarium, bonus or "golden handshake" totalling Shs 6b from the President contrary to standard practices of rewarding public officers.

## ActionAid and FAO in Research collaboration



ActionAid together with the FAO officials after the meeting at the AAU offices last week

The study will cover the three components of Micro-economic analysis at small holder level, Macro- economic analysis that will identify the different policies and issues affecting the behaviour of the farmer and the Political economy affecting the agricultural sector and the farmer at household level.

ActionAid was assigned to contribute to the research by handling the chapter on Political economy whose sections of the narrative will cover but not limited to; Evaluating policy shifts and their impact on the farmer, Militarisation of agriculture, corruption and abuse of funds designated for agriculture among others.

According to James Ameda, the Fundraising Coordinator at ActionAid, AAU will also include a component on public service delivery system.

"The section will look into Government agricultural structures, staffing levels, inefficiencies and an interplay between decentralization across districts", he said.

The research is expected to be used as an advocacy tool with parliamentarians, key stakeholders in the budget preparation process, agricultural sector working groups, civil society advocacy and academia (Institute of Agriculture) in campaigning for improved agricultural policies.

The research is expected to be complete by May 2017, just in time to inform the budget reading.

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## ActionAid unveils Youth Empowerment Project



ActionAid staff introduce the project to stakeholders

Last week, ActionAid unveiled a new project to the people of Northern Uganda. The Youth Empowerment for Self-employment and National Development (YESSEN) is co-funded by ActionAid (20%) and the European Union (80%).

The project aims at reaching out to children and youths (out of school) to engage in gainful economic activities. While the large number of young people in Uganda's population has the potential to be a tremendous asset for the country, Uganda's youth need opportunities in order to prosper. While solid unemployment estimates are rare, the country's deputy prime minister has reported that the unemployment rate among Ugandan youth is more than 22 percent, and even higher among young people with university degrees and youth living in Northern Uganda.

By targeting the youth, ActionAid believes that the country can be transformed economically and political stability can be attained once

the youth are strategically guided.

The project design was informed by a study "*Lost opportunities, gaps in youth policy and programming in Uganda*", 2012/2013.

During the inception meeting attended by key stakeholders in Northern Uganda, participants noted that the project was timely as it will not only complement the National Youth Livelihoods Program but also will address the high levels of youth unemployment in the region.

They however guided that life skills training, career guidance and entrepreneurship component be embedded. Gulu's Resident District Commissioner, Mr Mohammad Abigaba added that lack of proper guidance to youth will only waste the Project resources.

The ActionAid team promised to incorporate the aspects raised in the project for the total transformation of the youths and the region at large during the four year project period.

## Legal Aid clinic attracts hundreds in Katakwi



Above: Some of the community members who came for the legal aid clinic.

The Katakwi Gender Based Violence Shelter together with its partners from the Police, Courts of Law and the Uganda Law Society conducted a legal aid clinic in the district.

The legal aid clinics specifically targeted the sub-counties of Omodoi and Palam. According to the Uganda Police and the GBV shelter records, the two sub-counties account for the highest numbers of GBV related cases and crimes reported at the Police and shelter over the past five years.

Miriam Cherukut, the Katakwi Cluster Coordinator believes that the GBV crimes are actually higher but few are reported because the survivors are kept off by the long distances from the shelter.

"That is the main reason why we decided to take the services closer to the people", she said.

During the legal aid clinic, the GBV shelter opened over 25 new files for survivors mainly women and children who have been abused but could not report because of the long distances. In total, the event attracted over 300 participants who came to seek legal advice, report cases and follow up on their cases among others.

During the Activity, participants were challenged to identify the most rampant human rights violation in the community. While the list seemed endless, land grabs and GBV related crimes topped the list. Charles Akori, the area LC1 Chairperson added that the village lost five adults due to land related conflicts. He called on ActionAid and its partners to work towards bringing the services nearer to the people.

ActionAid will be conducting the legal aid clinics every month in the move to indeed take the services nearer to the people.

## Pallisa conducts Reflection Action Training

The pallisa Cluster spent the whole of last week training Reflection Action Facilitators on AAU's participatory methodology known as Reflection Action. The methodology emphasizes participatory tools for ownership of programs by communities. The methodology also helps individuals, groups and communities to reflect on their experiences and actions in order to engage in a process of continuous learning and development.

While some of the Reflect facilitators have been working with ActionAid for the last 16 years, the training was still very timely as it acted as a refresher. Agrey Kibet, the Cluster Coordinator and Shiba Namulindwa, the Cluster Program Officer facilitated the training in a participatory way that ensured thorough grasping of the concepts and practical learning.

Participants were challenged that the reflection process starts from personal analysis of their own context and builds in a cumulative way, considering the connections between the local, national and international levels. The participants were in agreement that Reflection Action is the bedrock for building a people agency, starting with their own conscientization.

Participants were also introduced to the different aspects of power, that is Power within, Power to, Power with and Power over. The participants realized that they possess the power to confront unequal relations if they work in alliances, partnerships and coalitions.

## WEEK AHEAD:

- Harriet Gimbo, AAU's Programs Director is in Johannesburg for the Regional Country Directors' meeting. She is representing AAU's Country Director who is currently on study leave.