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Inside ActionAid Uganda

Christine Aboke joins as our new Human Resource and Organisational Effectiveness (HROE) Director on 20th May.

Board Evaluation Report finalised, giving a decisive statement on very good Board performance.

External Audit Report completed, giving a good bill of health for our 2012 performance. Monitoring & Evaluation framework completed

All is set for the **ActionAid Uganda General Assembly**, slated for 21st and 22nd

May at Colline Hotel, Mukono.

The Country Director Staff Award, 1st and 2nd quarter 2013

May: Chris Musiime, Managing Editor, Oil in Uganda, for commendable backup and successful delivery of high quality of the 5th edition of Oil in Uganda newsletter. In addition Chris did a good show at the COMESA conference in Munyonyo.

Communications team for updating and improving the web site.

April: Fred Wandera, Kalangala LRP Coordinator, for his passion and dedication in sharing information on tax issues, an extremely important campaigns issue for ActionAid this year.

Finance team for managing the audit process successfully and obtaining a clean audit report for 2012.

March: Catherine Tumusiime, outgoing HROD Director, for her successful review of the Community Intermediates structure.

February: Saida Bogere, Sponsorship Coordinator, for her generous, tireless, energetic efforts, with creativity and communicative skills, in steering the process leading up to establishing and registering the staff SACCO.

January: Harriet Gimbo, Program
Development Manager, for having
successfully conducted the Partnership
Forum and delivered the partner files on
time

Administration team for successfully installing the security system which has so far been efficient.

The CD's Award was introduced in January 2013 and is given each month to motivate and appreciate ActionAid staff members or departments who have diligently performed their tasks. In addition, the staff must show respect and practice of ActionAid values, timeliness on extra tasks, responsiveness to communication and creativity and innovation at work.

Cover photo: Women from the WORIA project by the source of their irrigation system. Read more on page 4



Cannibalizing Land

The dynamics in the liberalised global food systems

By Fredrick Kawooya

Think of your last meal. That defines who you are. 'You are what you eat', is a common phrase among the nutritionist circles and this phrase should not be taken lightly. It just tells that what you eat has bearing on health and social-political and economic stature.

Countries like USA have perhaps clearly grasped this simple logic, of course from their experience and it has proved one of their strongest tools in their wake to control the world.

That is why countries invest massively in their farmers to produce what they define as food to their people and whoever tries to touch their food system, will face utmost resistance.

Within the definitions of capitalist ideology, where focus is on accumulation of value over productive property, agriculture becomes a part of geoglobal politics and neo-colonialism. Agriculture has proved more resistant to the capitalist logic of accumulation because it requires extensive amounts of land, and is a risky place to seek a profit, particularly when compared to producing durable goods in factories. As such, large-scale capitalists have had a strong interest in reducing these risks and refashioning agriculture toward a factory model.

Post-World War II technologies and research succeeded in increasing the potential to extract profits from agriculture, indirectly through sale of agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, chemicals, equipment), and the transformation or distribution of outputs. Two different strategies, biological and legal, enforced through World Trade Organization

were employed to manage short circuiting the possibilities for accumulation.

Legal strategies for example through granting patent protections to certain seeds, genes and technologies were introduced, and eventually full patent protections for the transgenic seeds commercialized in the 1990s. But the legal strategy is expensive, constrained to a limited length of time (e.g.17–20 years), and largely ineffective in the Global South due to lack of government enforcement, hence biological strategy is most feasible option.

The capitalists concentrated for example the development of hybrid crops eliminating incentives to replant saved seeds to give same yield (when hybrid seed is replanted, yields are far below the original seed and it's advisable to buy new seed). This does not exist in a system where farmers can save and replant, and it means that farmers have to depend on the market.

Companies have massively invested in creating transgenic, patented seeds incapable of self-reproducing –Terminator technology - and are doing all they can to consolidate and to monopolize global markets.

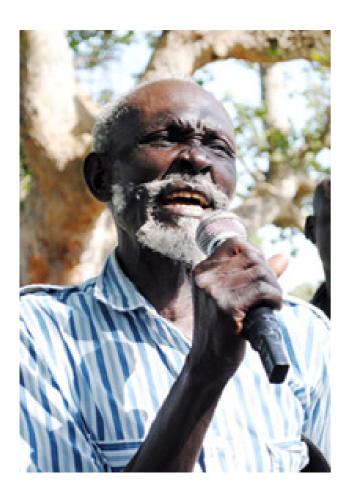
Their global expansion is facilitated by trade agreements enforced through arrangements such as the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights agreement (TRIPs) and unjust neoliberal system that places powers in the hands of private sector. Perhaps the most common reason for our politicians to abdicate their roles is because 'Uganda is running a liberalized and private sector economy.

Cannibalizing land

So what has this meant for the farmers featuring in the unleveled field? There has been ideological drive to turn entire production focused on market without leveling the field (agriculture is beyond market). And because demand for agricultural products is relatively inelastic, any increase in production is likely to produce surpluses which reduce the prices in a free market. When supply exceeds demand, farmers receive lower prices for their input because they continue to sell their produce in a raw form. Not like in the western world where arrangements were already made to process and arrange for ready markets for their farmers.

But the prices of seed and other inputs are kept up because of the monopolistic nature of the input market. To survive in the game, farmers must specialize and maximize the economies of scale by expanding their scale hence encouraging mono cropping and extensive dependency on the market for fertilizers, seed and other chemicals. Of course for smallholder farmers, who own 3-5 acres, they are highly limited in this model and cannot break even in a highly poorly functioning market. This expansion only results in additional treadmill e.g. in seed, fertilizers, chemicals to the benefit of multinational corporations and the rich countries.

Those that are unable to keep up with this treadmill will fall off, or exit farming altogether. Their land ends up being cannibalized for private investment by the companies from the North to produce food and raw materials.



Okiror, a farmer from Magoro, Katakwi district addressing Members of Parliament on the sorry state of Agriculture in his district



The MPs were shocked to find a huge and active crowd in Katakw

MPs facing an unknown reality

By Akorikin Francis

Jubilations, anxiousness, ululations greeted MPs as they met farmers of Magoro Sub County during a parliamentary visit to Katakwi on 17th May 2013.. For the first time in history, people of Magoro were able to have direct dialogue with Members of Parliament of the Forum on Food Security, Population and Development. As part of the policy advocacy, ActionAid in close partnership with Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) organized a field exposure visit for MPs on the agriculture committee of Parliament to Katakwi district. The visit was organized to specifically provide a platform of direct interface between farmers and policy makers, and provide small holder farmers an opportunity to make contributions to national debates on government budgets and plans for the next financial year.

Katakwi district, like many districts in Uganda continues to experience food shortages mainly due to climate changes effects of drought, floods, water logging, limited access to extension services, poor markets, inputs pests and diseases etc. Amidst all these challenges, government budget support to agriculture in the district has stagnated between 7 and 8 per cent during the last 3 years.

ActionAid and Teso Anti-Corruption Coalition have been implementing a Public Financing for agriculture in the district. The project mobilizes and builds the capacity of communities to track and monitor resource utilization of agriculture projects like NAADS, NUSAF and PRDP.

The project advocates for increased budget allocation to agriculture by government in line with the NDP, DSIP and CAADP commitments through promoting participation of small holders farmers, particularly women, in the planning budgeting processes of government.

However, despite of the considerable progress registered by the project, policy makers have reluctantly appreciated the relevance of allocating more resources to agriculture. It's under this background that ActionAid organized this exposure visit.

Let them come, we will tell them our problems and priorities to guide their legislative work! Was one of the common expressions that the people of Magoro, Katakwi district told us during the mobilization process for the Parliamentary visit to Magoro. MPs were shocked to find over a thousand farmers waiting for them at Omasia Primary school for the dialogue. For the farmers, this was an opportune moment to directly tell MPs their challenges while for MPs this was a moment of getting realities of how farmers are battling with production challenges to make ends meet. Standing in a scorching sun, farmers were able to tell MPs what they think would unlock their potentials. Key among the community demands was stopping land grabbing, water harvesting and storage from floods through construction and dams, w water can be used during scarcity and for irrigation. Increasing the budget allocation to agriculture, facilitating extension workers, to effectively perform their duties and widening market opportunities for farmer's products.

The discussions were lively and filled with hope. Hon. Milton Mawuma, leader of the parliamentary delegation made passionate promise to table the views of the farmers to relevant authorities for redress. To the community, at least they felt relieved that their views had been heard. As ActionAid Uganda, we are satisfied that our advocacy efforts have been improved by participation of local voices in the policy discussions of the way forward of agriculture in Uganda and this event marks beginning of continuous debate of policy discussions on agriculture development in the country.

Women and food rights

Australian NGO
Cooperation
Programme (ANCP)
directly supports 500
smallholder farmers
and 1,800 indirectly
under women's rights
in agriculture (WORIA)
project to improve
food security at
household levels.



Grace Chemayek with a bag of sweet potato vines distributed under ANCP WORIA supported project in May, 2012 at Kapteret sub-county

The GMO trap

The GMO strategy by multi national companies is intended to promote mono crop farming and essentially to provide market for the patented western technologies. It is known that two genes are particularly targeted for this arrangement. The Monsanto's herbicide resistance, to provide market for chemicals such as Roundup and others and Monsanto's patented genes for resistance to pests.

These companies are also getting rights over other genes for vitamins which they will be trading with us. So by taking on GM, besides the side effects of these crops, farmers for example growing GM maize will be wooed in continuously buying Roundup to weed their maize, and will have to pay royalties to Monsanto. The seeds require extensive use of fertilisers and of course the yield will seem amazing. As a consequence, farmers will abandon their own traditional seed and before they know it, they can only have maize if they bought this entire package from the market hence depending on Monsanto for production. No food shall be produced in the world that we do not control seems to be the agenda for Monsanto.

Traditional storing methods increase food security

By Patrick Kitiyo

Almost a year ago, smallholder women farmers in Kapteret were struggling with food insecurity. This was a result of two critical factors: cattle rustling which resulted into the displacement of people, leaving the area to be inhabited by wild game over the last 3 decades and the looming harsh climatic conditions linked to the effects of climate change. With support from Australian NGO Cooperation Programme (ANCP) through ActionAid, the reverse in food security is likely to be history as farmers have resorted to ancient food preservation and irrigation methods.

Drying of food stuffs has traditionally been an important part of preservation among the Sabiny community. However, over time due to land fragmentation and commercialization of small holder farming it became harder for smallholder farmers to practice it.

"ActionAid supported us through awareness drives on local methods that enhance food security. The present is refocusing on the past to rekindle food preservation methods, to improve food security", proudly noted Grace Chemayek a smallholder woman farmer.

After relative peace has returned due to governments' efforts to stamp out cattle rustlers, smallholder farmers in Kapteret sub-county were supported with sweet potato vines to improve food security in the area. The need for potato vines and cassava cutting was identified through a food security analysis by ActionAid together with the farmers as drought resistant food crops.

The sweet potatoes are eaten fresh and when in excess dried and preserved for time when there

is no food in the garden. They are then peeled and dried in sun shine to ensure healthy natural preservation and stored to be eaten at the time of need. Dried peeled sweet potato tubers are kept in food stores, and this will generate significant income at the time of food scarcity around June.

The high level of land fragmentation has not limited these farmers. In their women groups, they hire land to plant the food resistant crops while others intercropped with others crops like banana plantations, maize and cassava farms. Joined hiring of land has fostered togetherness, unity and development of stronger associations and networks among smallholder women farmers. By working together in organized groups, the smallholder women farmers are better able to add value to their plans through generation of ideas for preservation and group sales. The groups have also provided the farmers a unique bargaining power to tap into the technical assistance provided by the NAADS programme. The produce from the gardens will go a long way for basic needs, school fees and clothing.

The distribution of sweet potato vines to smallholder women farmers has been critical in improving food security in Kapteret sub-county in Kapchorwa district. The sweet potato gardens were cleared off in December, 2012 through harvesting of the tubers.

Smallholder women farmers now constitute themselves into a legal entity and later a social movement to become a bigger force in engagement of local government authorities and specifically programs to be responsive to access to quality seed and agro-inputs for small holder farmers as an integral aspect of promoting food security.

Indigenous practices in food preservation

By Miriam Cherukut

In the dry season, Ongino sub-county experiences the worst effects of climate change characterised by drought and famine. It is hard to imagine how people in this sub-county which is located in Kumi District survive when the heat from the sun is at its peak.

Ongino sub-county is well known for drought and famine during the dry season and floods during the wet season.

ActionAid has been working with the people in Ongino sub-county since 2000 to fight hunger which is still a common phenomenon in the sub county. Through the STAR and REFLECT approaches to address these challenges to improve the food security of the most poor people, especially the women and children, who are affected most when drought/famine strikes since they depend on their farms for their livelihoods.

According to Mr. Omoding Rogers who is the coordinator of Kumi Network for Development Organisations, "people in Ongino are ready and willing to work hard to produce food for their families and for sale but when drought or floods destroy their crops, there is nothing much the community can do as it is beyond their control." As a result they are exposed to food insecurity and because of the extreme weather conditions they are discouraged to farm on a large scale.

In addition, many people have abandoned the traditional food storage and preservation practices in the disguise of modernisation and this has increased their vulnerability to hunger and food insecurity.

Traditionally, people had their techniques of preserving food e.g. through drying, smoking, boiling, hanging in the roofs etc in preparation for any disaster and during the time of the long dry spell families were able to sustain themselves. Food security was assured unlike today where even with the so many ideas, technologies and improvements in agriculture, many women and children continue to starve.

The women of Toto Odwee womens group, ensuring daily supply of food in their families is a priority. The training in value addition and food preservation organised by ActionAid, Kumi Local Rights Programme was indeed a blessing for these women who got knowledge and skills from their facilitator Acom Stella. At the entrance to Stella's home stands 7 pot-like shaped granaries smartly covered with grass thatched roofs. 3 girls joined us to open one of the granaries that still has an estimated two bags of dried ground nuts with the other two containing ground nuts and millet.

"We have a culture of not emptying the granary, we only remove the food we harvested the previous season when the new harvest comes, so I will reserve at least 2 basins of the seeds until October when the rest of the food will be ready for harvest", Stella narrates. A method they refer to as cleaning and preparing the stores for the new harvest.

In 2012, ActionAid Kumi Local Rights Programme trained 40 farmers including facilitators from 24 STAR/REFLECT groups on value addition and simple food preservation techniques. Stella is grateful to ActionAid for the training that was conducted under the AUSAID funded Food for Thought project that equipped her with simple methods of food preservation which in turn she was able to impact to her group members. She adds that she just didn't tell them what to do but



Acom Packing her product

she helped them do it through demonstrations and mentoring sessions.

Stella has managed to dry some of the excess food, especially vegetables some of which she sells in order to buy other basic needs like salt, sugar and paraffin as well as scholastic material for her school going children.

She displays a variety of packed vegetables sealed as if for export in polythene packs. The vegetables and food she still had in store included malakany, cucumber, millet and alelot which she says she has preserved since November 2012.

However, despite the successes, Stella expresses some challenges, like limited market for her products and most of the women have limited access to land, which directly affects their production. With one of the problems solved which is value addition. Acom Stella together with other farmers are looking forward to in being able to pool their products for marketing as this will build their bargaining power.



Stella and her 6 granaries







Apolot Christine in her Banana plantation

Adaptation to climate change

By Chandia Benadette Kodili

World over, experts say that the impact of globalization trends on social welfare has been felt to different degrees based on quite a number of aspects such as the level of wealth and geographical situation of a particular society. The ecological trends have over the years increasingly changed as attributed to several causes which include the increased alteration in the ozone layer dynamics. These changes have hit more the global south nature the most. Much as significant steps are taken in addressing climate change concerns including the Kyoto and COP meetings, the impact of climatic changes in the global south are diverse and a reality to the locals.

Much has been discussed around the solutions for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Steadily and increasingly, adaptation has been promoted compared to the earlier mitigation gospel which seemed a rather non-holistic approach to this global problem presenting a cure which did not entirely consider the hotter and poor parts of the globe, thus ignoring the vulnerable people who have little to do with the causes of the problem.

Truly, the people are trying to adapt. However, it is important that the international process like the high level conferences meeting and the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change issues come to a conclusive agreement of financing climate change adaptation so that, Apolot Christine, a woman farmer, in Katakwi and others can use more sustainable methods of water harvesting and storage that can eventually be used in the extreme drought times for irrigation. In Eastern Uganda, the district of Katakwi has experienced grave changes in the climate pattern in the past five years that have intensified and created extremities of the floods and drought incidents to unpredictable patterns and lengths. In turn

these have created unspeakable levels of hunger and food insecurity as well increased levels of poverty. Amazingly, not all hope is gone; a new ray of dawn in adaptation is being experienced by the local communities in Katakwi. Adaptation for survival to the effects of climate change has caused the people of Katakwi to make new discoveries of food such as wild fruits and leaves which were in the past not part of the menu, and new breeds of food such as rice have emerged to utilize the water logging resulting from floods and during droughts.

Cheaply constructed artificial dams are becoming a more common occurrence in Katakwi district and spreading quickly to the neighboring areas. This very low cost intervention of water preservation can save the lives of households during spells of drought for some months. The traditional approaches to climate adaptation contribute immensely to the welfare of local communities for basic survival in the adverse conditions of climate change. It is these local solutions and many more that poor communities like Katakwi and others in the global south need to survive the adverse effects of climate change. It is imperative therefore that global and national policies promote adaptation through financing to the local means of survival. This money could be used for valley dams to store water during the rainy season that can be used for irrigation in the dry times. Apolot Christine says:

"Whenever it rained, we left the gardens redundant especially the water logged areas until the water cleared, however today we cannot sit back and watch our children die of hunger. We have to adapt to the situation. Now we grow Rice and Matoke when there is plenty of water"



7



Who can study on an empty stomach?

By Solomon Silwany

With the introduction of UPE in Uganda, the Government expected parents to play the role of providing lunch for their children, which had hitherto been provided by schools as part of the fees paid. But for many of Uganda's eight million primary school going children and about half a million in secondary schools a regular meal of any type at school is a farfetched a dream. Nutritionists and health experts say it is not just a meal pupils need but regular and balanced feeding including breakfast before they leave home or break tea at school.

Also analysis of the information extracted from several studies shows that school feeding programs positively affect school enrolment and attendance rates, especially for in rural schools where families struggle to feed the large number of children in the household.

Educationists have argued that lack of a midday meal contributes significantly to poor results, as children are overcome by hunger pangs and either play truant as they search for something to eat or just fall asleep. For many children it is a reality that needs to be forcefully brought to light to duty bearers, so as to get some concrete action.

In a research that was conducted by Uganda National Teachers Union UNATU in 70 UPE schools and 30 USE schools in 10 districts in different regions in the country, Pallisa inclusive, found that irrespective of consistence and quality, 42% of the UPE schools and over 79% of USE schools had a daily meal at least. In many instances though, children across the country go home for lunch, and for those from far off the

option is to have a drink at the borehole and just scavenge for mangoes.

Children in Pallisa, Budaka and Kibuku districts walk approximately 5 - 10 kilometres to their different primary schools after first supporting their parents with work in the garden in the morning before they finally move to school on empty stomachs every day.

It is rather hard to focus in class while one's stomach is rumbling and one feels compelled to find something to eat first. To many children obeying this natural call is a matter of survival, so they stay off school and in the case of girls their vulnerability is heightened, as those who prey on innocents use this to offer them what to eat in exchange for sex.

In the UPE policy, one could see that children had become isolated, with the power of them accessing meals falling in to the hands of their unwilling parents. In October 2010 a school feeding project was piloted in four primary schools in Buseta, Nankodo, Gogonyo and Naboa in Kibuku, Pallisa and Budaka districts. The pilot was meant to highlight the reality that with food more children could go to school, their comprehension of what was being taught would rise and thus increase their performance and enrolment.

ActionAid supported schools with construction of complete kitchens and flour for porridge making. To make the school feeding sustainable, schools were asked to form committees that would manage the school feeding program. They would also identify school gardens where

School Feeding Program

ActionAid has launched a number of initiatives for school feeding programs in the target areas. The 11 schools are serving a meal of healthy and nutritious corn soy porridge to more than 8000 pupils. The daily breakfast has been a huge success. The porridge has attracted new pupils, reduced absenteeism and improved the school and learning environment.

"The children are more focused and their performance is improving. The results we have now are the best we have had in 10 years and the school enrolment has increased over 50% from less than 500 in 2009 to 765 in 2010. Furthermore, we can see a change in the development of the children's social skills, they are more friendly, they help each other and often share mugs. It is a new kind of solidarity we haven't experienced before."

Abdul Turumanya, Dep. Head Teacher, Bulima PS, Masindi District.

"I like the school food because I am no longer hungry all the time and I don't fall asleep during classes like I used to. At my home we only eat supper so before I walked tomy grandmother's house three kilometers from here to eat lunch or I went looking for food around the trading centre, but now I can stay at the school allday with the other children."

Justus, P6 pupil at Kigulya PS, Masindi District.

children themselves would plant maize and soya, and parents were mobilised to contribute in kind, especially after harvest when food was in plenty. This food would then be stored and used sparingly through out the school year. Currently, all the four schools have school gardens and children are actively involved in planting and weeding maize, with other schools in the neighbourhood replicating the program.. Two of the schools (Gogonyo primary and Nankodo) were supported with milling machines which serve the purpose of milling their own maize, while at the same time generating income for the school from neighbouring households who use the mill at a subsidised price. The funds from the mill purchase maize in the lean periods and also open up gardens at the beginning of the planting season.

In a small way, ActionAid can say the pilot has contributed towards the recent relaxing of the rigid stance taken by the ministry of education towards parents making monetary contributions, at least now, in certain circumstances, parents can be asked to pay a little, so that children can study with full stomachs and hopefully full heads!

Managing Weeds with your pump; are you safe with that Chemical?

By Fredrick Kawooya

If you have moved around the country side, you will notice the rate at which the poor farmers are adopting chemical means to manage weeds. Among the most common is the use of Roundup to manage what farmers feel is stubborn weeds. The reason is that this is a cheap means to manages the fast growing weeds at the time when access to labour and related cost is increasingly going high.

On the façade and in the short run, yes, it is cheaper but in the long run, the cost could be higher than what is written on the label. Scientific evidence shows that many of the promoted chemicals are not safe both health wise and environmentally.

For example the famous herbicide used to kill weed, Roundup, has been linked to a range of health problems and diseases including Parkinsons, infertility and cancer.

According to the April, 2013 scientific journal authored by Stephanie Seneff, a research scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the residues of "glyphosate," the chief ingredient in Roundup weed killer enhances the damaging effects of other food-borne chemical residues and toxins in the environment, thus disrupting normal body functions and induce disease.

While the Multinational Companies has continued to deny that their number of their lead products could have such effects, evidence continues to underpin this.

Last week, a court in France ruled that Monsanto's Lasso weed killer that contains alachlor chemical, as its active ingredient caused a certain Paul Francois to develop long life neurological damage that manifests as persistent memory loss, headaches, and stuttering during speech.



Paul, a 47 year old farmer, sued Monsanto in 2004 after inhaling the Lasso product while cleaning his sprayer. Not long after he experienced symptoms that prevented him from working.

This same chemical is common in Uganda under the brand name Lasso EC and many farmers are ignorantly buying this as pre-emergence herbicide to control annual grasses and certain broadleaf weeds in maize, dry beans, peanuts, soybeans.

The package to the chemical is deceitful and does not provide adequate warning about the dangers of exposure to the weed killer for the unsuspecting farmers, who are continuing to expose themselves to such chemicals. Yet nobody is telling Ugandans the dangers of using chemicals, and most farmers are not educated on how to handle the chemicals and cannot even read the labels to understand the respective doses and use such measures as change in the colour of water to tell the right dose.

It is surprising in Uganda that nobody seems to

care for the poor as long as they can buy the technology in quest for being modern farmers. It is in Uganda where modernising agriculture has been defined to mean using more external inputs like fertilisers and other chemicals.

We have continued to modernise with a hand hoe and investing in sustainable production does not seem to be a priority to the government. But rather the focus has been given to promoting high external input and mono crop farming. Access to labour saving technologies like walking tractors and managing weeds with legumes like Mucuna which would work in smallholder farmers but no effort is given to these.

The pull and push systems have been documented on managing pests like the maize stalk borer by planting elephant grass around maize to attract the pest and intercropping the field with legumes but this does not seem to make sense to the capitalist.

ActionAid Uganda

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