

Weekly

September 15—21

The Minister of Finance, Hon Maria Kiwanuka, launching the new analyses of double taxation treaties signed by Uganda.

Uganda's Minister of Finance lauds ActionAid

On September 18th, SEATINI-Uganda and ActionAid Uganda launched an analysis of the double taxation treaties Uganda has signed with Mauritius and the Netherlands. The event brought together members of the Civil Society, research institutions and academia, media, Uganda Revenue Authority, MPs from committees of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, National Economy, Budget and Tourism and Trade.

Exciting discussions revealed structural challenges and lack of frameworks to guide treaty negotiation process in Uganda. The MPs in the trade committee noted that treaties were mostly negotiated in sector silos. It was also made clear that in most negotiations the frameworks were set forth by the other treaty parties and did not necessarily reflect Uganda's position. MPs raised their concerns on only being part of ratifications instead of being involved in the negotiation process.

The Minister of Finance, Hon Maria Kiwanuka pointed out that the ministry's monolithic approach in negotiations of tax treaties was one that focused on the 'the greatest good for the greatest number'. She mentioned that the government, as indicated in the tax policy reforms in the 2014/15 budget, is focused on developing a policy framework to negotiate tax treaties in the future and through these efforts, a Uganda Model treaty will be developed. The Minister lauded the efforts of ActionAid and SEATINI to venture into a very complex field of taxation, and commended efforts to bring different stakeholders on board.

An important lesson was the rather weak comprehension of the media on tax issues and thus the need for ActionAid, as part of the Tax Power Campaign to design a media literacy and engagement programme on Tax issues.

To access the full report, click on this [link](#)

Read more in the Observer [here](#).

And [here](#)

ActionAid convenes Working Group on 'Expanding Uganda's Tax Base'!

ActionAid on September 16 convened a small working group comprising of representatives from KPMG, Price Water House Coopers, SEATINI, ACCU and ActionAid, to reflect on and develop a civil society perspective paper on how to expand Uganda's tax base. The paper is being developed for consideration of the National Planning Authority (NPA) as it develops the 2nd National Development Plan (NDP). Working with an associate of ActionAid, Dr Fred Muhumuza, an economist and former advisor to the Minister of Finance now working with KPMG, ActionAid is aware that revenue generation is as much a political as it is a technical issue: so who to tax and where to tax is often driven by political imperatives.

While acknowledging that domestic resource mobilisation and expanding the tax base is constrained more by GDP growth as opposed to the tax system, key issues discussed included: VAT and implications on the poor mainly in agriculture, the huge informal sector, the largely un-taxed booming real estate sector, and politics around regulation of tax incentives.

Finally, it was agreed that in terms of framing, the final paper ought to have a social justice as well as a return on investment perspective. Ideas included: focus on agriculture induced growth, proposals on formalising sections of the informal sector while protecting basic services for people living in poverty, and addressing the industrial policy necessary reforms.

Join the debate and share your views with Sarah Muyonga on sarah.muyonga@actionaid.org, and look out for the final paper on our website by the end of the month.

Donor Peter Falvey visits rural farmers



Potential donor Peter Falvey, an Australian philanthropist, had an eventful roundtrip to witness ActionAid's work with creating sustainable livelihood for especially women in Northern and Eastern Uganda. Among other places, he visited Usuk where he was welcomed by a very excited group of Smallholder Farmers.

To mark the beginning of the meeting, "the Village Mass Choir" comprising of smallholder farmers from Usuk sang in appreciation of ActionAid's interventions with the support of Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australian Government (DFAT) that have transformed livelihoods. You can access and play the "amateur video" song using this [link](#).

Both men and women of all ages responded to Peter's questions with originality and confidence. Peter asked two very important questions during the community meeting: 1) what was life like before ActionAid's interventions and what has changed in your life? 2) What are the mistakes of ActionAid or things that you would recommend that ActionAid should do differently?

In Pader, Peter Falvey had fruitful discussions with board chair James A.A. Otto which gave him a wide understanding of the national context and as to what is required to improve livelihood and dignity to people in post conflict areas.

Information is key to good governance of the extractive sector

Last week ActionAid Uganda in partnership with MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation (TCDC) in Arusha, organized a three-day regional Extractive seminar in Kampala that attracted over 200 participants from across the East Africa region.

The conference was held at Golf Course Hotel and focused on deepening CSOs, private sector and Government Officials' understanding of Transparency and Accountability of the Extractive sector in East Africa.

Norwegian Ambassador H.E Thorbjorn Gaustadsaether called upon the Ugandan Government to demonstrate transparency and accountability, by always providing information regarding the extractive sector to its citizens. He recommended that Civil Society and Media should be given space and opportunity to probe and promote transparency and accountability because of the rampant corruption in East Africa.

Presentations from the Auditor General, Association of Uganda Oil and Gas Service Providers and Hon. Theodore Sekikubo, all focused on enforcing transparency and accountability of the extractive sector and on the need be more vigilant on whom that could happen as a result of the extractive industry.

Corruption, Political instability and limited access to information were highlighted as the major challenges in achieving the desired transparency.

Arthur Larok, CD AAU, challenged the participants to educate ordinary people with the new found knowledge and skills, speak out against injustice everywhere, take the initiative to seek the truth, be exemplary in words and in action in the fight for transparency and accountability of the extractive sector.

The participants agreed that there was urgent need to form a working group on extractive industries that will monitor the checks and balances and ensure that all revenues generated from the extractive sector benefits the public.



The participants posed for a group photo in Kampala after serious deliberations on how well they can engage their governments to ensure transparency and accountability of the Extractive sector

Fighting the VAT on Agricultural inputs

We have been fighting the adding of 18% VAT on agricultural inputs and the issue has reached Parliament and Cabinet. The debates in parliament are debated as [evidenced here](#).

Read about how Ugandan youth has found the beauty of farming [here](#)

Click [here](#) to read the latest issue of Black Monday

Minister pledge to support women farmers at Rwanda Forum



Last week, ActionAid Uganda and ActionAid International organized unprecedented Rural Women Farmers' Forum in Kigali where the Rwandan Minister for Agriculture promised to support women farmers.

The theme was "Africa Agriculture Development; Need to Promote Investment in Smallholder Women Farmers". 78 female farmers from 8 African countries, 15 government officials of parliament, representatives of AU, 6 international Development agencies, 8 journalists, and over 25 Civil Society Organizations were represented at the innovative forum.

The Rwandan Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Mukeshimana Gerardine pledged on behalf of Rwanda and other African Governments to invest more in rural women farmers and smallholder farmers in general.

4 Ugandan farmers participated and they left more than their footprints at the forum. They were dominant participants in the two days event in leadership, creativity, discussions, gallery presentation, and making final resolutions. Uganda participants received applause from both the organizers and government officials for providing leadership and creativity in all the activities at the event including panel discussions. Uganda presented and pledged to support this process at all levels and were instrumental in the draft of the Communique at the Forum.