



act:onaid

A JOURNEY OF
30 YEARS
in Uganda

Images and Stories of Transformed Lives and Societies





act!onaid



1982 - 2012

History & Photo Book

Images and Stories of Transformed Lives and Societies in Uganda



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Our Vision

“A world without poverty and injustice in which every person enjoys their right to a life with dignity”

Our Mission

“To work with poor and excluded people to eradicate poverty and injustice”

Our Values

Mutual Respect, requiring us to recognise the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity.

Equity and Justice, requiring us to work to ensure equal opportunity to everyone, irrespective of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, HIV status, colour, class, ethnicity, disability, location and religion.

Honesty and Transparency, being accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and open in our judgments and communications with others.

Solidarity with the Poor, powerless and excluded will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty.

Courage of Conviction, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty.

Independence from any religious or party-political affiliation.

Humility in our presentation and behaviour, recognising that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty.



Where we are in Uganda

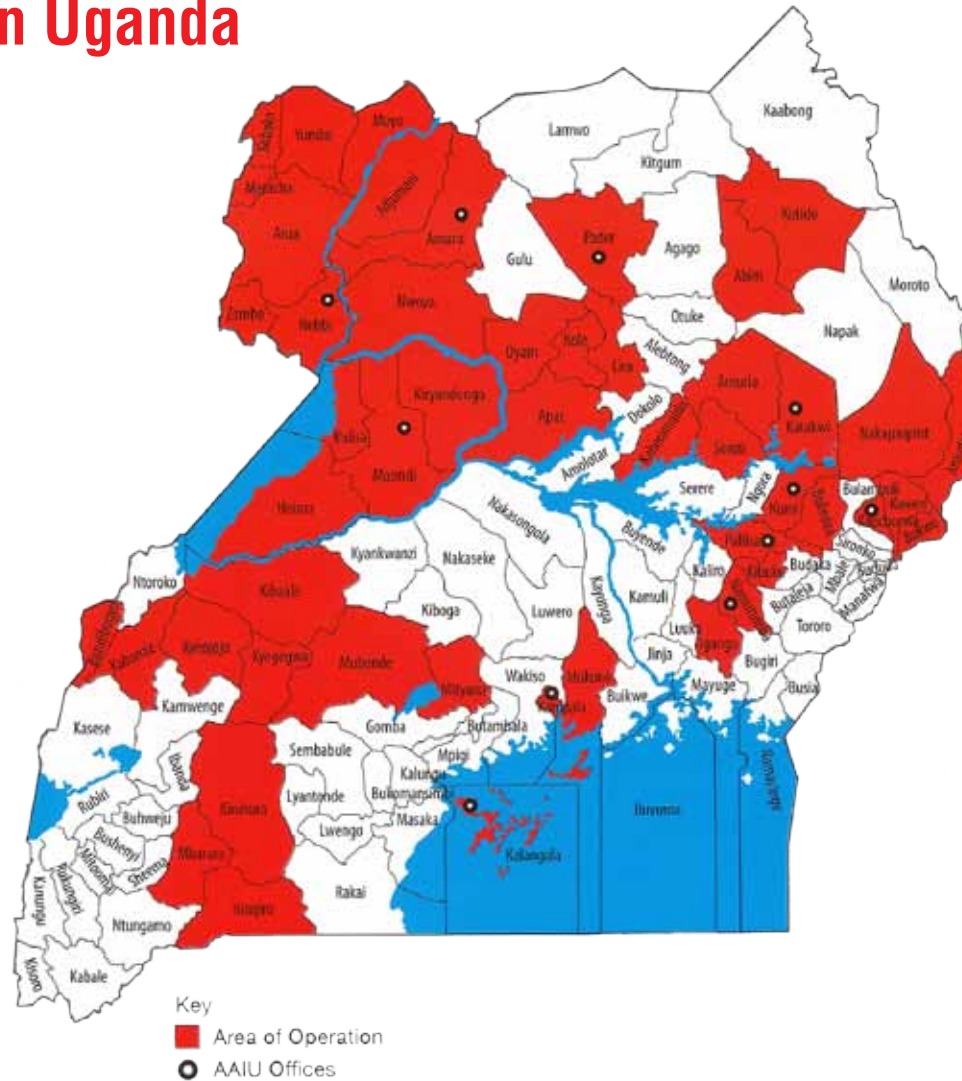




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Acronyms

ADF	-	Allied Democratic Forces
AIDS	-	Acquired Immunal Deficiency Syndromme
ALPS	-	Accountability Learning and Planning System
CBAS	-	Community Based Accounting Systems
CBMES	-	Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System
CBO	-	Community Based Organisation
DA	-	Development Area
ELSE	-	Empowering Life Skills in Education
HIV	-	Human Immunal Deficiency Virus
IDP	-	Internally Displaced People
KADEFO	-	Kalangala District Education Forum
KAPHOFAN-	-	Kalangala District Forum of People living with HIV/AIDS Network
MDGs	-	Millenium Development Goals
MTEP	-	Mubende Teacher Education Programme
NIFAED	-	Nakaseeta Institute for Adult Education and Development.
NFE	-	Non Formal Education
NUACC	-	Northern Uganda Anti-corruption Coalition
PRA	-	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PDCs	-	Parish Development Committees
PICs	-	Project Implementation Committees
SACCO	-	Savings and Credit Co-operative Society
TAACC	-	The Apac Anti-Corruption Coalition
TASO	-	The AIDS Support Organisation
ULA	-	Uganda Land Alliance
UPPAP	-	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process



Foreword

By James Otto

Attempting to recount a 30 Year Journey, even for a human being alone is not easy. Doing it for an Organisation that has had over 500 staff in the last 30 years is certainly more daunting.

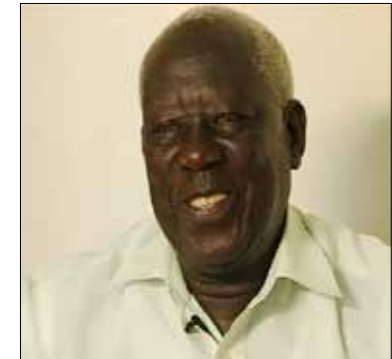
However, through a combination of in depth institutional memory from some of the most dedicated individuals who are or have worked with ActionAid, a visit to our archives of photos and stories of change and finally a re-visit by Wizarts Media to some of our work sites across the country, we have succeeded in marshalling a Journey of 30 Years of ActionAid in Uganda. And while we know this is not complete with all the details of everything that defines this remarkable organisation, we trust that it gives our readers a sense of what we have been and aspire to be.

From the highlands of Kapchorwa, the mountains of the moon in Rwenzori, the plains of Teso, the rich lands of Buganda, islands of Kalangala to the resilient people and societies in Northern Uganda, we have in this History and Photo Book traced a journey of ActionAid in Uganda since 1982. This journey has been one of unquestionable accomplishments - personal triumphs and transformed societies, but also one of enduring challenges; those of hope amidst despair and finally of dreams and promises yet to be fully achieved.

As ActionAid dreams of “a world without poverty and injustice, in which every person enjoys their right to a life with dignity”, we are aware that there is a long journey to cover. However we believe and are driven by our courage of conviction. And so at the end of this book, we dare dream of ActionAid’s golden jubilee in Uganda in 2032 - it is an attractive prospect which we know we must work hard to realize, but surely can!

As I welcome you to enjoy our story of accomplishments and promise yet to come, I also call upon you all to partner with us to make Uganda and indeed the world a better place for us today, for our children tomorrow and our children’s children, generations to come!

May ActionAid’s prayer, in which I do committedly believe, that the struggle on our dream comes true and be sustainable as a result of our collective efforts! ■



James Otto
Chairperson - ActionAid Uganda



*Artistic impression of the Late
Bishop Yokana Mukasa*

How and Where it all started

Bishop Yokana Mukasa

1982 was the 20th year of Uganda's sovereignty as a nation. The country had shown a lot of promise at its independence. Unfortunately this promise was marred by dirty politics. In the place of a prosperous future came civil strife and unrest, a military coup, and a liberation war, which set the country's economy and human rights record on back footing.

And more was happening to Uganda's checkered history; by 1982 five rebel groups were fighting the Obote II regime. This put the expected economic recovery in the aftermath of the Idi Amin regime on ice. Everything was in shambles; roads were in a deplorable state. Schools were run down and some were used as fortresses. Hospitals were overcrowded with patients and yet they lacked medicine.

The epicenter of the rebellion was the Luwero Triangle and Mityana become a refuge for those fleeing the violence of the Luwero Triangle. This influx of people from the troubled regions to Mityana, further put the district's social services into immense strain.

Bishop Yokana Mukasa, the Bishop of Mityana saw a problem in his diocese that had to be addressed. A man reputed for his intelligence, hard work, and pragmatism, he set about looking for solutions. He used the platform – the pulpit; preaching on how to survive and have a productive livelihood even under considerable social strain. He however knew that his sermons alone could not solve the community's problems.

The Bishop knew he needed some kind of miracle. In 1982, he attended a church conference in Nairobi, Kenya. At the conference, he heard about ActionAid and the good work it had been carrying out in the country for the past decade. The Bishop carried out a little research on the organization and he found that their vision was in line with his own. He found out that they wanted to eradicate poverty and empower people. Their model of changing communities through child sponsorship impressed him.

On returning home from Kenya, the Bishop immediately sought permission from the church leadership to invite ActionAid to his diocese. When he was granted permission, he immediately wrote a letter of invitation to ActionAid Kenya. The positive response to his letter was the seed that gave rise to ActionAid International Uganda. ■

Tracing the Roots:



The Journey of ActionAid in Uganda

By Charles Businge & Anthony Wasswa

ActionAid was founded in 1972 as a British Christian Youth Appeal known as Action in Distress by Cecil Jackson Cole, a philanthropist. In the same year it established programmes in Kenya and India. The organisation established links in other European countries and was renamed ActionAid in the 1980s. In 1999, the various chapters of ActionAid formed an alliance called the ActionAid Alliance with a coordinating office in Brussels. In 2003, the organisation became officially registered as ActionAid International with six founding organisations - AA UK, AA Italy, AA Greece, AA Ireland, AA Brasil and AA USA. The founding organisations agreed a federal structure with a two tier governance model: a Governing Board and General Assembly at international level and semi-autonomous structures - national boards and General Assemblies at the country level.

In Uganda the organisation was introduced as a cross-border initiative from Kenya in 1982 and became a fully-fledged country programme in 1986. Since then ActionAid in Uganda has gone through transformations in governance and programming, becoming the 2nd affiliate in Africa to attain full membership to ActionAid International Federation in 2010. Below are the significant phases in the 30 Year Journey!

Integrated Rural Development Phase 1982-1993

When ActionAid set foot in Uganda, it adopted an integrated rural development approach from 1982 - 1993. This approach was largely a response to an ineffective civil service with limited capacity to deliver basic social services especially in hard to reach areas of the country like Bundibugyo. The approach was to bridge the gaps in service delivery in areas of:

- Agricultural extension - provision of seeds and pesticide and assisting children to set up agricultural demonstration gardens based at school.



Charles Businge
Former Country Director



Anthony Wasswa
Former Country Director

- Health - supporting immunisation of children, extension on basic health and nutrition at household level.
- Education - supporting education activities at school (construction of classrooms, teachers houses and school toilets; school desks, uniforms, providing teacher clothing, school lunch and teacher training)
- Water and sanitation - supporting water and sanitation services, sinking of shallow wells and opening up rural feeder roads.

The support was hinged around the sponsored child at the school and in the community where the child lived. This approach saw the introduction of the Development Area (DA) model which aimed at concentrating development assistance in a defined area with sponsored children.

Learning Points

Despite the level of investment, communities largely remained recipients of development assistance from philanthropic individuals from Europe. Community expectations for direct services were very high. It was also difficult to satisfy the myriad of community needs. For example, a teacher in one of the schools in Mityana had a problem writing on the black board because turning to write would expose his buttocks to the pupils because his trousers were torn. This experience made ActionAid to start a programme of providing clothes to teachers. This approach could not be sustained as ActionAid did not have the financial and human resources to meet all the needs in the community. It also made communities dependent on external assistance. On the other hand, whereas school-based demonstration gardens were meant to set an example of best agricultural practices to the community, it posed a cultural challenge where the adults in communities were expected to learn from the young pupils.

Thematic Focus 1993-1999

In what was referred to as moving forward into the 90s which was informed by lessons from the previous period, ActionAid adopted

a thematic approach. The focus was in promoting community empowerment through:

- Community capacity building initiatives that saw the introduction of participatory approaches such as Community Based Accounting Systems (CBAS),
- Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (CBMES),
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), REFLECT, Stepping Stones and Community Based Planning as core components in the design and implementation of programming.
- Communities being encouraged to enhance local ownership of development projects through contribution of local materials and participation in the management of initiated projects. This approach introduced Project Implementation Committees (PICs) and Parish Development Committees (PDCs). Most of these approaches have since been adopted by other organisations and within government.

The period also witnessed closer collaboration with government structures and other partners in implementing programmes such as the Mubende Teacher Education Programme (MTEP) which was implemented in collaboration with Ministry of Education to improve skills for licenced teachers; PAPSCA in Kamuli - implemented in collaboration with the World Bank and Government of Uganda; Mubende feeder roads project implemented in close collaboration with Mubende district local government and financial support from AGDI VOCA; Non Formal Education (NFE) in Mubende supported by DFID and Comic Relief and Empowering Life Skills in Education (ELSE) in collaboration with Masindi district local government.

The period marked the development of our first country strategy which introduced a dimension of urban poverty in areas like Bwaise a suburb of Kampala city and a plethora of other projects across the country in areas of micro credit and HIV/AIDs response. Finally, the period saw the appointment of the 1st Ugandan country director (Mr Anthony Wasswa)

and an exponential expansion of programmes in all regions of the country.

Rethinking Approaches: Rights Based Programming and Deepening Partnerships 2000-'05

This period marked an emphasis on deepening community empowerment from a rights perspective. ActionAid also realised that to ensure sustainable programmes, it needed to nurture and strengthen partnerships with community-based organisations. While partnerships existed with a few organisations under the projects units in the previous period, this period saw significant growth in partnerships with the number growing to 200 at one time. Most of the community organisations were directly funded by ActionAid and some took over partial management of child sponsorship programmes. The approach included reorganisation of the traditional DA structure to increase its programming scope and coverage, reduce its operational structure, transferring development processes to the local communities and their organisations. ActionAid International Uganda pioneered the consolidation and accountability and planning system called KANAMBUT which later transformed into an organisation wide Accountability Learning and Planning System (ALPS) framework that still exists today.

In the same period, programming emphasis shifted towards a direct engagement with policy issues on poverty, trade, aid effectiveness and education. In the districts, the focus was now on empowering communities to actively participate in local government planning, and monitoring allocation and utilisation of public resources sent to the districts to improve service delivery. At national level, ActionAid worked with other like-minded organisations to influence government policy and bring poor people's voices on the policy table informed by its work on the ground and through initiatives such as the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Process (UPPAP).

Learning Points

The partnership approach came with new needs and challenges around partners' internal governance, lack of requisite skills in programming and M&E and challenges in partner accountability that ActionAid staff had not been adequately prepared to deal with. The introduction of rights based programming was resisted by many staff and partners as they did not see the inherent transformative power to build civic consciousness and demand for responsive and accountable governance. To many staff it was easier to engage in direct services rather than burn the candle in policy analysis and mobilising communities to influence change in a non-responsive public system.

There was also a lack of an organisation wide articulation of what Rights Based Approaches entailed and a dedicated attempt to build staff skills to match new programming expectations, which resulted in budget underspends and many staff leaving the organisation. The partnership approach had also not been well understood by many staff and partners and depicting ActionAid as a donor a perception which still exists today. To some communities, ActionAid was seen to have abandoned them and handed them to yet other development partners!!

Deepening Rights Based Work and National Governance: 2006 and Still Rolling!

Learning from the initial period of introducing rights based programming, ActionAid renewed its commitment to deepen its rights based work and this has involved an elaborate articulation of its rights based approach. It has also involved deeper reflections around partnerships and efforts to promote strategic partnerships that can create meaningful and sustained change based on principles of mutual respect, accountability and a desire to make an impact.

The period has also involved an articulation and deepening of the

organisation's federal governance model built on principles of mutual accountability and responsibility across members. Governance development was a federation-wide aspiration as part of the organisation's internationalisation project aimed at creating a unified governance model with a two tier governance structure creating legal national organisations which are federated at the international level. In 2006, AAIU became an Associate member of AAI federation - a transitional state towards full membership (Affiliate) which it attained in 2009. The internationalisation process has also created space for new organisations with similar values, vision and mission to join AAI federation and this triggered mergers where joining organisations had programmes in countries where ActionAid was already operating. In Uganda MS, a Danish organisation merged with ActionAid Uganda with opportunities such as growing partnership income and reducing dependency on child sponsorship, but also challenges of culture clashes in development and approaches.

Learning Points

Better articulation of our Human Rights Based Approach is improving staff and partner appreciation in the transformative effect of this approach to enable build a people's agency and critical mass of advocates for positive and sustained positive change. This will however require a conscious and dedicated engagement across people in civil society, in government and other forms of organisation to build resilience in dealing with complex rights and governance issues that create and sustain poverty, vulnerability and injustice. A focus on deepening programming around youth and women as drivers of change is critical in building a critical mass of change makers. ■

Stories & Images

HIV/AIDS

Noerine Kaleeba with a solemn and cheerful voice welcomed us into her office. From the neat look of her office and the international accolades in the background, it was easy to tell that she is an accomplished woman. This firm, accomplished woman was not always like this. In 1986, her life was quiet different. She was married and working as an orthopaedic specialist at Mulago hospital. Her career and social life were where she wanted them to be.

But in that very year she lost her husband to AIDS and found out that she had also contracted the virus. This was a testing time for Noerine and it needed someone with a backbone to make it through. At the time AIDS was perceived as a punishment for sin or as a result of witchcraft. The stigma was so high that even the health campaigns carried out were negatively skewed. The 'love carefully' campaign implied that the victims of the disease had been promiscuous, the 'AIDS KILLS' warning that it was the end of the road for the patients.

Noerine could not take this kind of attitude. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, she started mobilizing those who were affected and infected by AIDS. Noerine and 15 colleagues started this mobilization initiative so that those affected and infected by the disease could reclaim their position in society. This effort gave birth to The Aids Support Organization - TASO. Like most beginnings, theirs was not easy. They had the energy and the will but they lacked funds and needed technical support. Unfortunately society's focus was only on prevention and 'positive living' hadn't yet been perceived as a possibility. This proved to be a barrier for TASO in accessing funds or technical support from organizations or the general public.

In 1987 Colin Williams, the then country Director of ActionAid Uganda,

Championing a Global Response

heard about TASO and its 'positive living' drive. He attended one of their meetings and as Noerine put it with a subtle smile, "he was infected" by their enthusiasm. There and then he decided against all odds that ActionAid would give TASO a shot in the arm. Noerine's restrained smile begins to appear more frequently as she begins to tell us about their progress. That very year they received their first funding of 1000 pounds from ActionAid. ActionAid didn't stop at that but it also gave them technical support. They were given a staff member from ActionAid to help them organize systems. "The system of accountability" Noerine emphasizes "has been the pillar for TASO's survival."

Noerine's work did not go unnoticed and in 1993 she was invited to be a trustee of ActionAid Uganda and she accepted this invitation. Shortly after that, she was elected to be chairperson of ActionAid International an experience that she describes as 'building the boat while sailing'.

In her term as chairperson, ActionAid transformed to get a more global presence. It shifted its headquarters from London to Johannesburg. This was followed by the creation of ActionAid International board. This board needed thorough leadership and Noerine Kaleeba was selected to chair it. It is this faith and pragmatism that have earned her and TASO international recognition. In 1995, TASO received The Belgian International King Baudouin Prize for development; she also won the Doctor of Humane Letters. Sheer will power and dedication have made TASO among the organizations with most positive impact on the African continent. It has in fact grown to be bigger than its mother-ActionAid, in Uganda.

Noerine Kaleeba's life is one that can be described as purposeful and it can be said that she is positively affecting the world. ■



Noerine Kaleeba, Founder -TASO



A counselling session at TASO.



The fight against HIV/AIDS starts young

Kalangala Islands

Fighting HIV/AIDS in high risk places

The main island of the Ssesse archipelago, Bugala, sees an influx of migrant laborers on the palm tree farms, tourists on its white sand resorts, and fishermen chasing fish all year round. All the three groups spend their money lavishly and have a high effective demand for sex.

Prostitutes from Masaka flood the island year round. They mostly target the 20th and 30th days of the month when the casual laborers are paid. The demand is so high that in Kitobo landing site, there is a brothel known as 'mukaagi' (at the door) because as one customer is being served, another is knocking at the door.

In 2000, Henry Mukasa a policeman and native of Ssesse island contracted HIV. He was depressed and did not know what to do next. It was then that he met Polly who was also HIV positive, and she assured him that he could live a full and healthy life even though he had HIV/AIDS. In 2003, the Kalangala District Forum of People living with HIV/AIDS Network (KAPHOFAN) was formed, to help empower victims of the disease. It was set up with the help of ActionAid Uganda and continues to receive ActionAid support.

Today KAPHOFAN has helped create village groups. In these groups, HIV/AIDS patients are sensitized and are in turn sensitizing the community on the HIV/AIDS scourge. The groups are encouraging positive living and even have income generating activities that they are carrying out.

KAPHOFAN has had a great impact on the fight against stigma. The

Community Based Organization has a sex worker representative on its committee and it has encouraged many sex workers to test and live positively. The workers are continuously encouraged to practice condom use and so are their clients.

The sex trade may not stop now but KAPHOFAN is surely closing the door to HIV/AIDS and opening one to positive living. KAPHOFAN eri 'mukaagi' (KAPHOFAN is at the door). ■



KAPHOFAN facilitator doing community mobilisation

Eternally Grateful

Nabaterega's Story

In 2001 Nabaterega started falling sick repeatedly. She had a feeling she may be HIV positive but was afraid of what would happen if she was to confirm this nightmare. The thought of it stressed her and what worried her even more was her son Sharif. Sharif had grown thin and a naked, naïve eye would conclude he was HIV positive. Nabaterega, who goes by the name Maama Sharif in Kasamba, was afraid that she had infected her son with the deadly virus, and dealt with her guilt and fear by living in denial – attributing her illness to witchcraft.

Her husband is a fisherman and he was away for most of the time when she needed moral support. She was alone, in denial yet at the same time in self judgment for ruining her son's life. In her perpetual melancholy, her friend Zalwango a KAPHOFAN facilitator counselled and advised her to get herself and her son tested. Nabaterega was afraid but with the support of the friend, she managed to do it.

Fortunately, Sharif was simply malnourished. On the other hand Nabaterega is HIV positive. Thankfully her husband has been supportive although he is negative. Today Maama Sharif no longer lives with the worry of child's health because she knows the truth. She is also living positively and is no longer in her unproductive denial. ■





Nabaterega and her children

Eternally Grateful

Nakabuubi's Story

The rain pelted hard on the wooden and iron sheet structure where Nakabuubi Milly sat to tell her story. The ambient noise did not dampen her cheerful mood and not even the fact that she is HIV positive. Here is a woman whom you could say has been given a new lease on life after fighting off stigma and understanding the benefits of positive living.

Milly contracted HIV/AIDS in 2001 shortly after her mother who had been helping her with the education of her children died. Milly was in a dilemma but got counselling from KAPHOFAN (Kalangala District Forum of People living with HIV/AIDS Network) and she started living positive. Her worry is that her body has rejected anti-biotics like septrine which is crucial in fighting off opportunistic infections. But today Milly is strong and fending for her family thanks to KAPHOFAN. From her herd of goats she has managed to educate her son and daughter who are in senior six and senior four respectively.

Milly is fulfilled knowing that her children are going far in life given the decent education she has given them. She hopes to see her son go to university next year. KAPHOFAN gave Milly: HOPE. ■





Nakabuubi narrating her story

Restoring our culture!

The Story of the Banwisi reclaiming their language

The Banwisi people speak their language with smooth sibilant sounds; the nuances only distinct to them. When saying hello to an individual they say “Mesai”, when saying hello to a group of people they say “mwesai.” This unique Bantu language was on the verge of extinction and until 1992 had never been recorded. Lubwisi, as it is called, only existed orally and in a great diversity of other language hence being at a risk of being adulterated and lost.

In 1962, the people on the Bundibugyo slopes of the Rwenzori Mountain started the Rwenzururu movement. It was a movement to liberate themselves from the imperialist dominion of the Tooro kingdom (a kingdom to the east of Bundibugyo). The Banwisi participated and their liberation was a great achievement. However, it posed a new challenge. They needed to revive their own language and culture, since for over 200 years the Banwisi and their neighbors the Bamba had been using Lutooro for all official purposes. In fact they struggled with this identity crisis for about 30 years.

In 1993 when ActionAid started its activities in Bundibugyo district, Wilson Spella a retired civil servant and acting Prime Minister of the Banwisi joined ActionAid. Through a methodology called REFLECT, where a community is involved in identifying the problems it faces and in identifying local solutions to the problem, ActionAid knew that a literacy programme in the local language was important. And so Wilson Spella with help from ActionAid was trained in linguistics and he played a lead

role in developing the Lubwisi autography, which culminated in the creation of a 700 word Lubwisi dictionary.

Wilson now works as a local language promoter for material productions. Primary Schools in Bundibugyo have story books and text books in lubwisi for pupils of primary one to primary three. Some of these have been published with support from ActionAid.

Although Wilson says they face some challenges like inadequate number of teachers to teach the language and lack of a library to promote the reading culture, he acknowledges that they have made great strides.

He believes that culture is embedded in language and that without culture one lacks self identity. He says that “among the languages born in Babel was Lubwisi and if it is not written it will die.” ■



Wilson Spella, the Prime Minister of the Banwisi

Unity!

Harnessing one leadership from diversity

The Langi are historically connected to the Luo-speaking people who originated from Bar-el-ghazel, in present day South Sudan. For a long time, they had been living as a loose confederation of clans. Each clan with its own clan leader. This inhibited them from having a central figure head through whom they could solve their social and cultural issues.

One of the most pressing cultural issues was that the girl child was being treated like a second rate human being, and women experiencing domestic violence bore it as their cross to carry. When ActionAid chose to change this situation it was aware that Issues like this could not be directly solved by civil society as they were culturally entrenched.

An indirect approach had to be used, but the fact that the Langi did not have a cultural leader unifying the different clans meant that there was no central figure through whom these regressive beliefs and attitudes could be changed.

ActionAid worked with different clan leaders and had a series of discussions and trainings with them to find a solution to these problems. This approach bore fruit for the elders and clan heads decided to have one leader to unify the Langi and be their opinion leader.

In 2001, Josam Odur was elected by other Owitong (clan leaders) to be the Wonyaci (cultural leader) of the Langi.

Today the Langi are unified and hold pride in their Wonyaci. His positive attitude towards women is breaking the shackles that for centuries held the daughters of Gibil back.

Wapwoyo ActionAid.





A young Lango boy on the shores of Lake Kyoga

Overcoming barriers!

The Story of John Nyandera in Kyegegwa

This cheerful middle aged man with a wealth of smiles could be mistaken for a completely able bodied man if it was not for his white cane.

John Nyandera lost his sight at the age of 19. This was the time he had a bright future ahead of him. He had two choices; either to break down or to soldier up and face this new challenge that life had thrown at him.

John made the right choice, he soldiered up. He got rehabilitation and acquired skills in brail reading and writing, agriculture practices and mobility and orientation.

John was ready to work and impact his community. He knew that he had to start from the bottom because “when you start from up , you fall”. His main problem was that people belittled him and confused his disability for inability but he was ready to prove them wrong. John started farming and even got married to Margaret Kambara with whom he has a son currently pursuing a degree in civil engineering at Mountains of the Moon Univesity. He proved to be very progressive. He knew he needed to impact his society so that the disabled wouldn't be looked at as burdens but as useful individuals in society. He joined the people with disabilities in kyegegwa and together they started carrying out sensitization campaigns especially on Voice of Toro something he attributes to Action Aid's support.

His presence on the airwaves made him famous in the region and when he stood for the position of councillor, he got a landslide victory. The fact that people with sight voted for a blind man put a smile on John's face. This was just the beginning. His influence has been ever growing and he was voted to chair the production and resources committee. President Yoweri Museveni recently donated a pickup truck to him. This car has made John's mobilization work much easier and more effective.

Together with the members on the people with disabilities committee John fights for the rights and empowerment for people with disabilities. They have managed to set up a school for the deaf and are currently building a technical training centre to give practical skills to the deaf.

For John Nyandera, the journey hasn't been easy but when you look at him now, you see a fulfilled individual and according to him, he couldn't have achieved all this on his own. ■

“I am what I am today because of friends” John says. “thank you ActionAid for walking with the people of Kyegegwa in their journey to empowerment.”



John Nyandera, with the Deputy Headteacher of Kinyinyi School for the Deaf

Against all odds!

Kinyinyi School of the Deaf proves that Disability is not Inability

In 1990 the land on which the Kinyinyi School of the deaf now stands was a bush. John was touched by the fact that unlike him there were people who couldn't effectively communicate simply because they were deaf and lacked education.

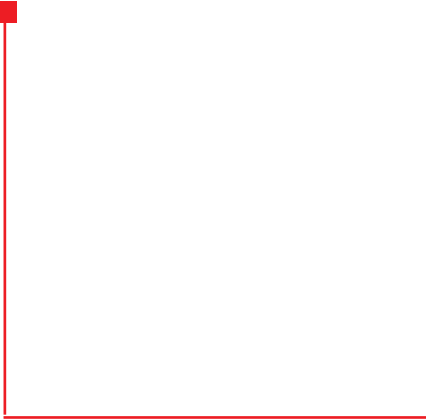
In March, of 1990 he consulted UNAD and they willingly provided the professional advice he needed on setting up a school for the deaf. He now had two problems; no land and funds for construction. He spoke to his mother-in-law who offered him the piece of land on which the school now stands. Being the lobbyist that he is, he approached World Vision and ActionAid who helped construct classrooms and dormitories. Twenty two years down the road the school boasts of 80 pupils, and is of benefit to the community from which it buys food and is erasing stigma against the deaf.

There was silence on the premises though we saw a few pupils scattered on the compound. The sound of a monotone drum beat broke this silence and we were informed by Grace that the pupils were having their Sunday service in one of classrooms. We rushed to the classroom. They were singing in rhythmical silence. The spectacle amazed and humbled me. I had never thought of music without sound, of enthusiastic praise without noise. It almost brought tears to my eyes simply because for a moment there I was ashamed of myself. Ashamed of the foolish ingratitude I have at times, of taking things for granted. This heavenly silent service touched me beyond what I can explain. I later met Mr

Mulungi a deaf instructor who is also deaf. He signed his appreciation to action aid which translated to us by Grace. He also 'baptized' us with sign names. Philip he named 'big cheeks', Kamara 'the beard', Joshua 'long forehead' and if your to call me in sign language , you would have had to touch your nose('long nose').

We headed back to Kyegegwa town with Mr Mulungi and John. John told us a story about a bicycle ride he once had with the rider being a deaf man. John was the ears and the deaf man was the eyes. What a unique partnership. Well from the depth of Kyegegwa's heart thank you ActionAid for partnering with them.

As John would put it, they are on the right track. ■





A class for the deaf during Sunday School

Inspired by ActionAid

Disaster turned to fortune

Glenburnie Primary School is a small neat school with the fruit trees in its compound tagged with interesting texts. One jacaranda tree has “I have worth”; a jack fruit tree “I have value” and another mango tree “unique”. Cheerful pupils play dodge ball, soccer, and run about the school grounds. These pupils are the fruits of seeds that ActionAid had planted back in 1982.

Mr Lukwago Paul the owner of the school was an ActionAid field officer in 1980s, for the Mityana region. During this time he participated in setting up 42 schools. This experience inspired him to set up his own school that would provide quality education for his community.

Among the schools he was involved in setting up is Butega Primary School, about 3 miles from Glenburnie Primary School. Butega Primary School seats on spacious grounds that it shares with a church. It has two class room blocks and staff quarters at the back.

In 1982 the school was a semi-permanent structure that doubled as a church on Sundays. One rainy day the structure collapsed. Luckily, the pupils were not hurt. This unfortunate event was in fact the beginning of a new Butega Primary School.

Today, the school has a Uganda National Examinations Board Centre number, 350 pupils and counting. ■



Mr. Lukwago, the founder of Glenburnie Primary School

A mustard seed blossoms

Jane Yiga's remarkable turnaround

Thirty years ago the women of Nakaseeta had only two roles in their society; to be wives to their husbands and good mothers to their children. Jane Yiga, a senior 3 dropout, was no exception to the rule and she was good at what she did. It was customary to see her with a hoe early in the morning heading to the family shamba or in the smoke-infested kitchen preparing a meal for her family.

In 1990, ActionAid started its work in Nakaseeta, Mityana and it needed two local facilitators to run the project. Unfortunately, only men seemed to be available, but ActionAid insisted on having one man and one woman. Jane a short humble lady with warm eyes and a willing spirit was selected. For her this meant crossing the rubicon to victory for both herself and her community.

She was trained for two weeks and started out as a facilitator for adult education. Working with ActionAid helped build her confidence and character. She transformed from a person with a low self-esteem who found it hard to express herself in English to one who addressed crowds, wrote reports and now runs a Community Based Organisation. With time she was selected as a councillor on the district level and also worked as a coordinator of ActionAid within the district.

In 1998, ActionAid stopped direct support to projects having done significant capacity building. It is then Jane Yiga started a community based organization - the Nakaseeta Institute for Adult Education and Development. Its vision is simple: to empower the locals and to eradicate

poverty. Jane has successfully applied the skills and implementation techniques she learnt from ActionAid to the Nakaseeta Institute of Adult Education and Development (NIFAED). A case in point is the REFLECT methodology that NIFAED has effectively used. In this methodology, they identify issues, analyze them, brainstorm on local solutions to the problems, and seek for support needed solve the problems.

This methodology has enabled them construct shallow wells, initiate economic activities like chicken and piggery projects for members, and it has enabled them set up a revolving fund to ensure members have access to cash to engage in enterprise. Among the group enterprises is a chair hire business for a widow group.

NIFAED has built a rock solid reputation for its efficiency and thorough management of millions of shillings on different projects. Tanda Primary School and Nakaseeta Muslim School have received sewing machines from NIFAED to provide handy skills to their students. People living with HIV/AIDS are also being economically empowered by NIFAED through the STAR methodology (Societies Tackling AIDS Through Rights).

The story of Jane Yiga is one that shows the magnitude of change an individual willing to learn can bring to an entire community. It is testimony of the value of ActionAid's capacity building programs. In Jane Yiga's case, the adage "Educate a woman, and you educate a nation" holds truth. ■



Jane Yiga in her office

A glimmer of hope!

Benet children continue to believe

Mengya Primary School has a panoramic view of barley and maize plantations that stretch over 6,000 hectares. But this view to kill, is one that may soon be lost. The school made of one big wood and iron sheet block is here illegally. It seats on part of the 2000 hectares of land gazetted by the Government of Uganda as a forest reserve on which no permanent structures may be built.

The story of Mengya primary school is a microcosm of the Benet people, who have had to live on their land in constant tension and confrontation with the Government. While the land they occupy is their ancestral land, they are forced to live on it as though they are refugees. Theirs homes are temporary shelters and their occupation of their land has been made illegitimate.

The game rangers, who are the face of Government to this community, are infamous for their hostility towards the Benet. One wonders why, given that the forests in which the game once roamed, have long since been cleared by outsiders.

In the meantime the pupils of Mengya Primary School have to cope with the leaking school roof and muddy floors whenever it rains. Jiggers among students are a common occurrence.

The odds are stacked against the pupils of this school in meeting their aspirations, yet they still dream. One student when asked: “what do you want to be when you grow up?” answered; “a doctor.” When asked why he said: “Pauline is sick, Chebet is sick, no doctor, no hospital,” then swiftly run away.

Today’s problems are not stopping the Benet from dreaming of a better tomorrow.

A lobby group known as the Benet lobby group is fighting for the rights of the Benet children to education, healthcare, and other social services. This group is a ‘work in progress’ that ActionAid started after campaigns of public awareness on the plight of the Benet community.

Its overall objective is to win back the land rights of the Benet people. ■



Some of the pupils of Mengya Primary School

Following their dreams and not fish!

Children of Kibanga can now concentrate on education

Kibanga Church of Uganda Primary School was founded in 1919 by the Church of Uganda and it has been the pinnacle of primary education in Ssesse islands for the past 93 years. Given the scarcity of schools on the islands this comes as no surprise.

Ssesse is comprised of 84 islands; 62 of the 84 are inhabited, but only 11 of these islands have schools. The pupils on islands without schools use canoes daily to sail to the islands with schools and then trek to the school.

The scarcity of schools is not simply a result of poverty, but is explained by other factors such as the low populations on some of the islands and the nomadic nature of fishing families. Fishermen typically move from one island to another following the fish, and they tend to move with their families. Therefore a teacher that taught 80 pupils the previous term may teach 5 pupils the next term because the other 75 moved with their families in such of bigger fish.

This nomadic lifestyle has proved to be a big hinderance to education in the Ssesse islands. Fortunately, in 2003 a Community Based Organisation called the Kalangala District Education Forum (KADEFO) was formed. Its mission was to ease the access to education and improve the quality of education on the islands. To achieve this goal KADEFO, with support from ActionAid, started building dormitories for schools so that the sons and daughters of fishermen did not have to follow the fish. Kibanga Primary School was one of the beneficiaries of this initiative and now

has two dormitories that accommodate 80 pupils. 72 of the 80 pupils are not from the main island, Bugala, and as a result the schools results have greatly improved in the recent past.

Kibanga primary school continues to work with KADEFO and is now involved in a food production and storage project with the Community Based Organisation. KADEFO helped Kibanga Primary School acquire land for farming and the pupils now feed on some of the school's produce.

This 93 year old giant is growing stronger and so are many other schools that have partnered with KADEFO. The children of Ssesse can now stop following fish and start following their dreams. ■





Some of the pupils of Kibanga Primary School during a Music, Dance and Drama Class

The phenix rises from Kaweeri

Facing extinction, Kitemba Primary becomes a model school

The displacement of the community in Kaweeri didn't discriminate between man or woman, institution or bar. The whole land was cleared so that clonal coffee could thrive.

Kitemba Primary School was no exception to this tsunami-like clearing. Like everything in Kaweeri, it had to move or cease to exist for a moment or even forever. The school was transferred to Busubizi Parish. It had to start from a scratch. A good Samaritan, David Sekandi, donated land and the Government compensated the school by constructing five classroom blocks. Despite that, the school still had many challenges. The enrollment was still low, there was no access to clean water, it only had 68 desks, they had no library, no sanitary facilities or even playing grounds. It was in a dire state.

It was in this state when David Onyango was posted here as a headmaster of the school. This situation was very discomfoting for David. You could see the disgust he had from the deeply trenched lines on his face and the emphatic gestures he made as he narrated his story.

David Onyango had come to Mubende as a young boy with his mother Nekesa Esther who worked with ActionAid from 1988-1996. Having known his mother to be a lover of development, it didn't sit well with him to head a school in this situation. From 2005- 2007, the school's sorry state was the nightmare that crowded his sleep. He tried to access Government intervention but all he got was perpetual procrastination.

In 2007, David decided he had enough. Together with his staff they wrote a proposal to ActionAid who he had heard could be a good development

partner. The proposal was sent to ActionAid and an inception meeting was held. At the meeting, parents and pupils were consulted, the proposal was seconded and a 150 Million budget was put in place.

ActionAid managed to link Kitemba Primary School to cyclists in Scotland. The cyclists led by David Rose and Paulo Davis started a charity bicycle ride from Augra, Scotland to Mubende, Uganda. These gracious cyclists cycled from Scotland via Germany down to Ethiopia then to Kenya and finally to Mubende, Uganda. This 9500 km journey managed to raise the 150 million shillings to put the school on course.

In 2008, a foundation stone was laid on one of the two blocks that had been constructed. Three pit latrines and a wash room were constructed to suit the girl child's sanitation needs. The school and the community no longer have to share water with livestock since two boreholes were setup, one for the school and another for the community and both have water users committees for maintenance. 75 desks, 14 chairs and two cupboards were also provided.

The developments didn't stop at that. The cyclists knew what work without play does to Jack, so they set up a soccer field and a net ball court and provided 15 quality balls.

David's smile is like a stamp on the impact ActionAid has had on Kitemba Primary School. According to David when he first came to the school in 2005, it was on the brink of extinction, six years later it is a model school for Mubende district. ■



Some of the pupils of Kitemba Primary school posing for the camera.

Dangerous business!

Fighting Corruption in Apac

When ActionAid opened an office in Apac in 1998, it found the district lacking. Apac had few schools, few health centers, few pit latrines, and hardly had any access to clean water. However, inasmuch as ActionAid was in Apac to give a helping hand; it also knew that such help was useless if the people were not collectively involved in seeking for solutions to problems in their community. So instead of offering handouts, ActionAid started a community mobilization drive through which it groomed active citizenry. Put simply, it got members of the community focused on finding local solutions to their problems.

Through this community mobilization, one Tom Opwonya was inspired to start the Apac Anti-Corruption Coalition (TAACC) in 2001 to wage a war on institutional corruption in the district. He fought this war passionately and with impact that he earned himself the name 'SUPERMAN'.

Superman's office is wall papered with news paper clippings of corruption sagas that TAACC has unearthed within the region. The unearthing of illegal solicitation of funds to the tune of 30 million shillings within the courts of law, and exposing fraud of up to 200 million shillings within the water department stand out.

In this war on institutional corruption, TAACC is also educating the populace on their rights - for instance, the fact that they should not pay for a police bond and that court bail is refundable.

TAACC has not stopped at that, it has gone on to enhance budget tracking. TAACC has 80 women within the community working as budget trackers and 126 independent budget trackers backing them up. It chose to use women because it is the women who spend more time interfacing with health centers, schools and other Government social service providers. These women were given free mobile phones which they use to text their complaints and observations to a consolidated data bank. The officers at TAACC then analyze the data, track the frequency of complaints and act upon it.

Besides institutional corruption, TAACC also fights corruption in democracy. This is through election monitoring and civic education.

Their work is endless and it has inspired the birth of similar civil society organization, such as the Northern Uganda Anti-corruption Coalition which picked a leaf from TAACC.

From the look on superman's face, TAACC is not about to stop, they are flying higher. ■



Tom Opwonya, a.k.a SUPERMAN, pointing out at some of his recent accomplishments

Bubukwanga Health Centre

Saving lives of mothers and children in Bundibugyo

Bubukwanga Health Centre Maternity Ward was set up as an extension to the Government Health Centre in 1998 by ActionAid.

Federes Kizza a.k.a Maama John, a pulp woman with strong arms and an unedited smile, had delivered a healthy baby boy a week earlier but she still looked pretty fit and ready for action.

Simon is her second son to be born at Bubukwanga Health Centre. Her beaming smile was due to the fact that this maternity ward had saved the women of her area from walking more than 10 miles to access health services. This Health Centre provides them with pre-natal services, facilitates the actual delivery and also provides them post-natal services.

In 1998 when ActionAid set up this Maternity Ward, Bubukwanga was infested with Allied Democratic Force rebels. These throat-cutting rebels that used their victims as road blocks didn't stop ActionAid from their humanitarian cause. They fought for life where others perpetrated death. The level of appreciation that the people have towards ActionAid for being there for them in good and bad times, is profound.

Federes Kizza smiles because of ActionAid, because of life. ■





Federess Kizza can now afford a "smile again"

A Fighting Chance!

A Consent Judgement gives the Benet hope

Once upon a time the Konja people lived on the top of the Mt. Elgon. They lived happily and in harmony with the forest. In 1936, the colonial British Government decided that the place wasn't fit for human settlement and therefore gazetted it as a forest reserve without the knowledge of the locals. In time the population of the Dorob (Swahili for forest dwellers) grew, the British didn't evict them but rather taxed them and prohibited them from farming in the forest reserve. Their only option was to trade in bamboo with their Sabinu brothers in the lower lands.

Unfortunately they couldn't settle in the lower lands due to the Karamojong invasions and in fact some of their sabinu brothers run up to the mountain for refuge. So they were still landless in their ancestors land but due to population pressure they started sporadic farming across the forest. By the early 70s one of sons of the soil Mr Moses Mwanga had been educated and was a grade 3 teacher. Moses and other Dorob elders started to lobby the Government so that they could have land of their own. In 1973 the Government of Idi Amin Dada gave them a listening ear. They were given time to identify land where they could live as a consolidated community and hence cease sporadic cultivation of the forest. They identified the land between river Kele and River Kaptakoi.

Tens years later six zones were created and land was allocated to families by Government. Finally, Dorob were finally rightful citizens of their ancestors land. They would live on this land and watch the water falls sip from the cliff like their ancestors had done, they would farm the land, marry and see their sons and daughters grow on the land with

good schools, hospitals and roads.

The sad thing about the break of dawn is that you wake up from the dream. It was just the beginning of the 'once upon time' as they got to learn. A mistake had been made. The Dorob were supposed to settle within 6,000 hectares between the Kele and Kaptakoi rivers, but during the 1983 Government survey, they had been given an additional 2000 hectares to the south.

This meant that the Dorob could not legally cultivate these 2000 hectares since the 1993 parliament had without their knowledge and opinion rendered it a national park. This national park has no wild animals since the Uganda Wildlife Authority had cleared the trees. No permanent structure could be set up, nor could roads, schools or health centers be built.

The 2000 hectares is a strip of 3kms long between the cliff line also called the 'red line' and the 6000 hectare line. According to the Dorob leaders this land was rightfully theirs because there were parts of the 6000 hectares that weren't suitable for cultivation and settlement. The Dorob leaders tried to inform the locals that this land was rightfully theirs but the people had been made to believe nothing was ever theirs and the leaders found their efforts insufficient. A stronger force was needed for this conquest.

In 1999, ActionAid was in the Kapchorwa area with the aim of building schools. When ActionAid reached the Benet, Dorob area it realized that

before it built schools there was an emergency lesson on land rights that the locals needed. Some Dorob still thought they were on Government land. The elders were greatly appreciative of this intervention.

With legal help from the Uganda Land Alliance, and facilitation from ActionAid, the Dorob took the Government of Uganda to court. On 27th, October 2005 they won a consent judgment against the Government of Uganda. This means that the 2000 hectares is rightfully theirs.

However, before the Dorob can legally occupy this land, the Parliament of Uganda has to de-gazette it. ■



Rightful ownership is at sight for the Dorob

Fighting Injustice

People's struggle for their land in Kaweeri

Coffee is a beverage of choice for many and for others; it is a tree of money. Kaweeri has one of the biggest coffee plantations in Uganda yet the crop is perceived as a curse by the locals. This is solely because in 2001 over 400 families were evicted from their land to make way for the plantation that sits on 12 square miles.

The people of Kaweeri lost the thing that matters most. It is not just their land, access to clean water or their schools; it is their homes. Andrew Kayiira a grade 3 teacher was part of the statistic of people forcefully evicted from this land. Kayiira a man of modest means had 5 acres of land on which he was farming to support his family. 2001 brought the loss of both his home, and the livelihood of his farm. This wave of misfortune hit hundreds of families and life in Kaweeri has never the same. Families have had to eke a living from scratch, but they are not being dispossessed without a fight.

That very year Kayiira and other family heads mobilized the evictees and formed a group called Wake up. Under this pressure group the people of Kaweeri started to demand for what is rightfully theirs – their land. They went to the courts of law, but the initial ruling was not in their favour. In fact, according to the ruling they had to pay damages worth 400 million shillings (\$400,000 then) before the case could get any other hearing. The people of Kaweeri who were simple tailors, farmers, teachers, house wives, had no clue of where to get this kind of money.

They had lost round one but luckily their noise got ActionAid's attention. ActionAid helped them pay the required deposit of 200 million shilling. This gave the people of Kaweeri a fighting chance. Their determination is so great that Kayiira went back to school and is currently pursuing a diploma in law at the Law Development Centre to have better understanding of the legal system and how it can be used to protect ordinary citizens. For the past eleven years the people of Kaweeri have tussled with the Newman group in court and are hopeful justice will prevail. They have not just stopped at carrying out legal action but have also lobbied for justice at an international level. The Wake up group has most recently presented a report to United Nations Human Rights Commission showing the injustice that they suffered. UNHCR has demanded an explanation from the German Government on the actions of its citizens in Uganda and a response is awaited.

These simple men and women know what is theirs and are fighting for it as best they can. ■



Mr. Kayira stressing a point

Turnaround!

From displacement to rewards of cocoa farming

Buhakakitara Parish is about 5kms from the Uganda-Congo Border. To get to it one has to follow the Nyahuka road that snakes the imposing Rwenzori Mountain. Cocoa plantations cover the slopes of this part of the mountain and a whiff of cocoa beans drifts in the gentle breeze. About 15 years ago (in the late 1990s) a rebel group called the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) used this beautiful landscape as their fortress to kill, rape and loot from the locals. The Nyahuka road was then impassable, and unattended cocoa plantations looked more like forests. A reign of terror was imposed on the people of Buhakakitara that stalled any economic progress and virtually cut off this part of Uganda from the rest.

The terror and blood-letting that was wrought the Bakonjo, Bamba, Banwisi, and the Congolese (main ethnic groups in this area) forced them to huddle together in Buhakakitara for their security. Buhakakitara then became a camp for Internally Displaced People (IDP camp).

In 2001, with a return of relative peace, ActionAid came to help the displaced people of Buhakakitara. The displaced people were provided with food. However, handouts would not do. ActionAid decided to do more to empower the people. This could not be done if the people were not healthy, so ActionAid built health units. The people also needed shelter so iron sheets were provided. However the iron sheets would be useless if the people did not know how to build permanent structures so the youth were trained on how to make bricks for permanent structures

which they could also sell. This former IDP camp is now a beehive of activity.

On the mountain slopes large cocoa plantations are back to life. The locals working in groups maintain and harvest their cocoa collectively. The Nyahuka road also has several trucks plying it – a sign of growing business. The former IDP camp is now a trading hub, and by the looks of things, it is only getting on its feet. ■



A Cocoa plantation in Bundibugyo

Joy in a far off place

Children in Kween can now go to school

The Greek river is found in a remote part of Uganda in a little known district called Kween. The river was named by a Greek geology researcher who was in the Kween and was fascinated by the terrain and the river it is however pronounced *Griki* in the vernacular of the land. The people who live along the Greek River are *Sabiny*. However, their land lay idle and unoccupied for a long time because they had been displaced by the *Pokot* cattle rustlers. Resettlement even after the raids abated, was difficult for there existed neither infrastructure nor social amenities. ActionAid therefore moved in with a view of facilitating the resettlement process. Its first activity was an agriculture project but the harsh weather did not favour it and it was therefore hard for the locals to sustain. The locals felt the need for a school and Health Centre was more pressing, and ActionAid opted to support this. The school is Greek Primary School and it shares the same land as the Health Centre.

By the look of things, the school is managing. It owns its own mill where it mills its maize flour and from which it earns extra income. The mill also provides the food for the pupils and most students appear happy.

The Giriki River Community have a stake in success of this school, and support however the can. This is from activities such as slashing the school grounds to providing food for the students.

2015 is the year the school expects to be coded, effectively becoming a government supported school. ■





The children of Greek River Primary all smiles at their School

Incentive to return

Ana Banan's story

Her name is Ana Banan and she has a banana smile. She is stout and quick on her feet. Word is that this is how she fled the cattle raids of the Pokot and Karamajong cattle rustlers not once, not twice, but repeatedly over the years – dating back to the 1960s. She jokingly says, “I was running from the Karamajong raiders, before I could walk.”

The last Pokot raid forced her family to settle in Kapchorwa. But home, they say, is where the heart is and for Banan her heart was where the terror was – in the Griki plains. For years the sentiment Banan had for her home was that of nostalgia and fear. But by 2001 the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) had managed to contain the Karamajong raiders.

Shortly after, ActionAid came in to help the displaced community resettle. Banan on hearing the news of relative security and a relief group immediately packed her bags, gathered her family, and returned home to the Griki plains. ■





Ana Banan narrating her story

From Doubt to Joy

Eliphaz Mutyaba's story

Mr Mutyaba Eliphaz is one of the pioneering members of ActionAid. He is a short, bald man in his 70s with the energy of a 20 year old and the soul of a child. Eliphaz speaks of how despite being part of the ActionAid projects in 1982, it all seemed like a waste of time then.

He planted trees provided by ActionAid at the probing of his elder brother but attached no value to them. He witnessed the construction of a valley dam and considered it as one big waste of time, energy and money.

Thirty years on, his message to ActionAid is one of gratitude for its contribution to the Kasikombe community. Resting under the shade of one of the trees he planted, he looks a happy and satisfied man. But he has got more to show. He leads the way to the valley dam, and once there he pauses as though to observe a moment of silence, and then he says: "Most of the people we started ActionAid with are gone (dead), but what we started lives on. ■"





Mr. Mutyaba pointing at the valley dam

Transformation

A Transformer that Transformed Kasambya in Mubende

Kasambya Trading Centre is a hive of activity that a Sunday here feels like a Monday elsewhere. The narratives of translated movies, blaring music, traffic noise, tinkering of metal fabricators, and human hullabaloo fills the atmosphere. Tucked away in Mubende district, 140kms from Kampala, one would never expect such a remote trading centre to have this pace of life.

It all started when ActionAid helped put up a transformer to support the upcoming business hub. This transformer became the hinge point for Kasambya.

Today Kasambya is crowded with all sorts of business. Visible among these are grass hopper harvesters, restaurants, a maize mills, salons, video halls, and metal fabricators.

The trading centre has had a population boom, but manages to keep its youths occupied. Yesiga Andrew is a young man who owns a welding business. He started out as a plumber prior to the transformer being installed in the area. Business was slow and he was struggling to make ends meet. Like the rest of the town the arrival of the transformer was his turning point. When electricity arrived, Andrew decided to change his business from plumbing to welding which proved to be more lucrative. The welding business has enabled him educate his two sisters and expand into the fabrication business.

Yesiga Andrew is going places and so is Kasambya. It has had a population and business boom in recent years so much so that it now needs a second transformer and is soon getting to a municipality status. ■





Yesiga Andrew at work

Triumphs from a 'weak majority'

The Women of Buhakakitara in Bundibugyo

There is no greater challenge than to see simple people do great things. The women of Buhakakitara are surely challenged. Gertrude Tebarugura is a short lady in her mid-seventies but looks firm and full of life. Like most people in the former Internally Displaced People's Camp, she was dealt a harsh blow by the Allied Democratic Front (ADF) insurgency. For her this guerilla war meant the scattering of her family and the destruction of her the cocoa farming that she had gainfully carried out her whole adult life.

2001 was the peak of her despair. Believing many of her family members and friends to be dead and at the mercy of government and other agencies for food, she was devastated. Luckily for her it is at this point ActionAid came in to help in the rehabilitation of the displaced people of the Bundibugyo. This brought a ray of hope into her life.

ActionAid provided the camp inhabitants with relief aid ranging from food and medical supplies to iron sheets and blankets. However that was just the beginning. ActionAid also helped organize women like Gertrude into groups. It educated them on how to work together to generate and manage their funds. This ActionAid initiative shifted women from the position of a weak majority, to a position of a significant force. They stopped merely accepting their circumstances as fate, and took an active role in shaping the reality around them. The women of Buhakakitara were helped start a saving project. Through this saving program, they involved in the cocoa business. They farm, dry and sell their cocoa and even act as marketing agents other farmers.

Gertrude says the savings groups have helped the women of Buhakakitara gain financial independence. This Independence in a post insurgency world has given women a bigger role in the decision making process at the family and community levels. It has also enabled them to contribute to their own growth and to that of their community. ■



Gertrude drying her cocoa beans

Reaping from Cooperation

A Collective store making a difference in Chawente

When ActionAid wanted to pilot its projects in Apac, it had its identification process begin in Chawente sub county – a name that means the place of cows. Local leaders and active citizens were selected to decide which development projects would best suit their needs.

James Egwar and his comrades from Atongtidi Parish decided that among other things they needed a storage facility for their seasonal produce. Besides livestock rearing, they grow sunflower, soya beans, maize and sim sim. The problem they had was that they were fetching low prices on market because they were selling as individuals. The choice of having a storage facility turned out to be a logical one as it helped consolidate them. In 1996, construction began on a piece of land donated by the late Mr Bwot who was a simple tailor.

Today the 3 chamber store is run by four villages of Teilwa, Akaidebe, Acamanumu and Baropok. They have a management and marketing committee elected by the villagers for two year terms. The four villages collect their harvest here and their marketing committee gets the market with the most suitable price. At the moment they are renting one room out to the Chawente SACCO and use the other two rooms whenever the harvest is available. This store has had a spillover effect on the community. In the last Annual General Meeting, the four villages agreed to use their dividends for the renovation of the Chawente Primary School staff quarters and kitchen.

The school, staff quarters, and kitchen have indeed been renovated. If you are looking for an active citizenry, the people of Chawente are a perfect example. ■





James Egwar recalls with joy their partnership with ActionAid



“We used to sleep at the borehole but not anymore”

Roselyn Edong lives in Aornga village in Nambyeso sub county and is a mother of five and a dedicated home maker. Aornga village is 3kms away from Lake Kyoga. Ironically before 1997 the whole village had limited access to clean water as it had only one borehole. This meant that all the families within the radius of 5kms had to depend on this one borehole. If you were late you might as well have gone with your mattress and have some rest before you could actually access the water.

Edong who could have been working spent her time at the borehole with three of her daughters who should have been at school. The community was stagnant because of the lack of access to clean water. ActionAid saw the plight of this community and felt empathetic. It mobilized the community, sensitized them and linked them to philanthropists. To do this ActionAid needed the photographs of the children for whom it was getting penpal sponsors. This proved to be a hard task as one zone was skeptical and declined to have its children’s photographs taken. The other locals complied and as a result a shallow well, a valley dam and a second borehole were setup using the funds from the children’s penpals. Interestingly, the zone that refused to cooperate was the furthest from the original borehole. When the funds for the second borehole came, it was constructed in this zone to ease the lives of the locals. That unbiased service is exceptional.

Using people like Roselyn Edong ActionAid continues to raise community awareness and today, the boreholes is maintained by the village borehole committee. Aoronga is now moving forward. ■



No longer at the looming task of long distances to water points



The queues at the borehole are a thing of the past



Even the uncooperative zone got a borehole



Succeeding where all had failed!

Christine and Johnson find peace after mediation

The path to Siwa Johnson's home is lined with Arabica coffee shrubs. His compound is clean, a sign of a hardworking family. He has two kraals of cows, a passion fruit garden and a plot of potatoes. He is married to Christine Tibet a petit woman, with slit eyes. They have three boys and three girls and there is a warmth in their home. From the look of things, they are happily married. But things have not always been this way.

In 2011, Johnson beat his wife. He beat her hard and he beat her routinely. The reason he beat her was because she wanted him to pay his daughters tuition at university. Johnson saw no point in paying tuition for the girls at a tertiary level. To make matters worse, he was having financial difficulties and did not want to sell his livestock for tuition. Christine was worried that the girls were going to be dismissed from the University and kept pestering him to sell his livestock despite the threat of more beatings.

Attempts at arbitration through the clan chairman yielded nothing for Johnson proved to be an artful dodger. Christine was in a dilemma; her marriage was falling apart and her daughters' future was in jeopardy. It was at this time that a friend pointed Christine to ActionAid. Christine somehow managed to convince her husband to go along with her to ActionAid. This visit changed Johnson's perspective of things. He also learnt that dialogue is actually a better method than violence.

Their two daughters now study at Islamic University in Uganda. The violence that had become a part of their marriage is now something of the past. ■





Joyous embrace! Johnson jokes with his wife Christine

Turning Point

Assumpta Tibamwenda's Story

My cousin delivered a brown envelope at my house in Hoima. ActionAid needed a woman as a Development Officer for a project in Mityana. A quick look at the job made me resolve to apply. Little did I know that this would be my real turning point in life from the professional public administrator that I was, to a well-grounded development worker and resolute gender advocate in Uganda and beyond.

Following my participation in the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing 1995, my report noted that ActionAid lacked a gender policy, hence heavily relying on anecdotal best practices regenerated from its work. The resounding result of this meeting was an agreement to hold the 1st ever ActionAid Gender International Conference in Jinja, in April, 1996. It gave birth to the development of First ActionAid Gender Policy which today addresses fulfilment of women's rights, beyond the gender issues in the organization.

In December 1996, I joined a World Bank funded project where I still work. My work in Government has taken the mode of "a whole system transplant" from ActionAid methodologies and best practices. I have been instrumental in key programme designs that have raised the gender bar at Central and Local Government levels. Among those are the development of the National Gender Policy in 1997 with subsequent review in 2007, review of the National Plan of Action for Women and the development of several gender planning and budgeting guidelines.

At the professional level, I am a true embodiment of such iterative personal development which has empowered me to demand for better gender responsive development concessions for Uganda's growing population. I do this with a passion and conviction. ■



Ms. Assumpta in her office at the MInistry of Local Government. She is full of praises for ActionAid

Gains beyond biological destiny!

Leya Chede's Story

Over the years, ActionAid through its work has enabled women to claim more public space, balance of power in the domestic and private spheres. This is manifested by the internal process in ActionAid of promoting gender equality particularly addressing women's rights through leadership and balanced staff numbers, a ratio that currently stands at 47:53 for women and men respectively.

Through REFLECT - a key ActionAid community mobilization methodology, we have mobilised and organised 5444 women and 2130 men to join adult learning circles. In these circles key milestones on women's rights and empowerment have emerged and discussed among others as presented by Leya Chede, a beneficiary, Buseta in Pallisa district.

"Before I joined REFLECT in 2000 I was shy and closed behind doors to attend to my domestic chores. I couldn't read nor write. A friend told me about the circle in my village and encouraged me to join. I shared the idea fearfully with my husband and started; after a while, I wrote Mrs. Leya Chede which I placed on our bed as a surprise for him. He appreciated and encouraged me to continue attending circle sessions.

Overtime I benefited from a livelihood program that yielded income and saw us build a house and send our children to school. His attitude

towards me changed and eventually I was elected a secretary for environment on my village and later representative of the Parish at the sub county. I continue to mobilise fellow women in the village to join the circles for empowerment. I and my family are different today". ■



Leya Achede with a very appreciative smile on her

Dreams of our Golden Jubilee in 2032!

By Arthur LAROK

The stories of personal triumphs, societal change, innovation, institutional growth as well as development challenges and lessons captured in the preceding pages are testimony of accomplishments registered by ActionAid that are worth celebrating!

We have touched lives of people living with HIV/AIDS and given them a reason to be, we have changed the lives of many women from near and far and made them believe and discover the innate potential they possess to change their lives and the communities they live in. We have nurtured and supported several civil society organisations, some of which have grown much bigger than ActionAid International Uganda. We have also invested in infrastructure, skills development and pride ourselves in several innovations that have been taken on within the International Federation that ActionAid is and also by several Government departments.

Despite the above gains, we dare dream for more! We dare dream for more because while we pride ourselves as an organisation and as a country to have taken tremendous development strides, our vision of 'a world without poverty and injustice in which everyone enjoys their right to a life with dignity' is still a distant dream.

The injustice of poverty in Uganda remains for all to see, inequality is deepening and deprivation of some sections of society is worsening. Uganda's population is growing at an unsustainable rate of 3.2% per annum, unmatched by the slow growth in our economy leading to strains on natural resources and existing infrastructure. The population boom and youth bulge presents more of a challenge than an opportunity for now because our younger generation are going to school but not learning enough skills to transform their societies, the quality of social services is declining and we are witnessing a slowdown and even possible death of the rural because of the strange development logic that forcefully but artificially celebrates a growing service sector driven by private capital at the expense of adequate financing to an agricultural sector that still employs over 73% of our population and feeds even much more.

The biggest challenge to Uganda's governance today appears to be 'failing leadership' at different levels, including within civil society. Many who occupy leadership positions either use it to amass private wealth,

ActionAid International Uganda
History and Photo Book

1982-2012



Arthur LAROK
Country Director - ActionAid Uganda

extend personal or group interest in a grand 'kleptocratic' regime that condones corruption with impunity and reproduces the exploitative governance styles that we knew the colonial era and military dictatorships to be. The much needed 'servant leadership' that ActionAid believes in remains a possibility but requires a lot more courage to confront existing bottlenecks.

BUT! We dare not get overwhelmed by the challenge before us, for Uganda is a country 'gifted by nature', with a reasonable human resource base that can take advantage of advancement in science and technology, the resilience of our people and the growing civic competences to transform the present challenges into opportunities. While working towards a country in unity and equal opportunity for all to live a life in dignity, as an organisation, we dare dream of our Golden Jubilee in 2032 being one in which:

ActionAid International Uganda is a financially autonomous National Institution of people's pride with a significant presence and property in all regions of Uganda, touching the lives of at least 15 million people and unlocking their potential as an anti poverty movement for self and societal transformation.

To achieve this, we need to take one step at a time. To start with, we must achieve and exceed the targets in our current Country Strategy Paper (CSP IV) which runs till 2017. In this CSP IV, we articulate 3 mission priorities: a) women's rights and gender equality; b) sustainable livelihoods; and c) strengthening local democracy. Through these areas, we commit to reach 40,000 women, 7,000 girls 41,800 people living in extreme vulnerability and hundreds of civil society organisations and their networks at local and national level to engage public officials and institutions in respect of civil liberties and in demanding for accountability for the provision of quality and timely social and judicial services.

Building on and beyond the current Country Strategy, we are determined to invest more in transforming the rural by investing more in social enterprises that will unlock the potential of Uganda's farmer-folk to work collectively to put money in their pockets and invest in education. Through collective action, we are confident that our farmers will get a better deal from their hard labour. Starting with our own cooperative, we plan to join others to strengthen a cooperatives revivalist movement that we believe is necessary for financial autonomy of our people, as well as the growth and development of organic people's movements across the country - in rural and in urban places especially the small but fast growing middle class in Uganda.

We will continue to invest heavily in women, youth and children programming so as to transform the current demographic challenge into an opportunity.

Of particular attention in all we do is close attention to the leadership question in Uganda, both at the political and civil society level for we strongly believe that without good leadership, all our gains as an organisation, a country and a people will be eroded. We therefore will invest in building a cadre of leaders that can entrench a 'servant leadership' culture and selflessly serve Uganda in politics and in civil society!

That is our dream! Good things lie ahead! We just need to work harder to get there! ■



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ActionAid is an international anti-poverty agency working in over 40 countries, taking sides with poor people to end poverty and injustice together.



“I am what I am today because of friends. Thank you ActionAid for walking with the people of Kyegegwa in their journey to empowerment”

John Nyandera

“I wrote Mrs. Leya Chede which I placed on our bed as a surprise for him. He appreciated and encouraged me to continue attending circle sessions.”

Leya Chede

“We used to sleep at the borehole but not anymore”

Roselyn Edong

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