



Weekly
March 14— 20

When students of Manchester University visited MAWDA, an ActionAid partner last week, they did not stop at the MAWDA offices. They were taken to Northern, Western, Eastern and Central Uganda by these Orphans and vulnerable children. The traditional dances won the children ululations and standing ovations by the visitors. Welcome to this weekly edition.

AAU Thrills Manchester students



(Left) AAU's communications officer (in green) responds to the Governance students queries last Tuesday. Right Above is the MAWDA program Officer speaking about the urban youth work. Right below is the MAWDA Executive Director (Nuru) speaking to a section of students about working with orphans and vulnerable children.

ActionAid Uganda and its partner, Makerere Women Development Association(MAWDA) hosted 49 students from The Manchester University last Tuesday.

The students, currently pursuing their Masters Degrees in Global development and related disciplines came to learn about ActionAid's anti-corruption work and its partnerships.

AAU's Communications Officer, Samanya thanked the students for choosing to learn from ActionAid. She spoke about ActionAid's way of work through the Human Rights Based approach (HRBA) that leaves communities more empowered and self-sustaining.

"In her work, ActionAid believes that the poor and marginalised communities are key players in their own development and not just passive recipients of aid and social services", she said, adding that AAU ensures that all its strategies are empowering and participation of the affected communities is both a process and a goal.

Samanya stated that AAU invests in building partnerships, analyses and confronts the unjust power relations, advances the rights of women and stands by being accountable and transparent.

The students indulged AAU and MAWDA staff in a question and answer session about the Anticorruption, livelihoods, Women Rights and the Orphans& vulnerable children work. At the end of the day, the students were humbled by the reception accorded to them and the thorough responses attained.

"We thank the beautiful children for the traditional dances. With their performance, we have interacted with Northern, Eastern, central and Western Uganda with just the four traditional dances", they said.

Prof Harrison Samuels, who led the students added that their visit objective had been surpassed.

"We have interacted with some of the beneficiaries and they collaborate what Samanya has just told us about AAU and its partners. The visit has also sparked the reasoning of our students. We are humbled and we want to come again", he concluded.

Civil society are not saboteurs-UN



Fred Kawooya presenting the proposal on shrinking political space

In the week ending, AAU participated in the 2nd General Assembly Meeting of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in Dar es Salaam; Tanzania.

The meeting was intended to revitalise the involvement of regional civil societies in the implementation of the pact on security, stability and development. During the meeting, the increasing levels of retrogression in the region in respect for human rights and the growing level of electoral authoritarianism, political fragmentation, shrinking political space and the tight grip on the states by the minority ruling elites and their parties that is breeding conflict in the region were top on the agenda.

Fredrick Kawooya, the Policy and Campaigns Manager at ActionAid presented the Project Proposal on Shrinking Political Space and the advancing political transition agenda in the region for consideration at the forum.

The special Envoy of the UN Secretary General to the Great Lakes region added that the Shrinking space for citizens to engage, and a tight grip on the state by the ruling elites and their parties are signs of authoritarianism in the region and a legitimate concern since armed conflict in the region have been strongly linked to a history of exclusion under autocratic regimes.

'As leaders we need to be more accountable and ready to listen to our people. We need to protect and promote Civil Society since they always represent the voices of marginalised. Let us look at them as partners and not saboteurs', he added.



A section of the ICGLR leaders listen to the deliberations.

Mr Joseph Butiku, the Chairperson of the ICGLR concluded that there was no need for reinventing the wheel as both the problems and solutions of the region are in black and white.

"All we need to do is to hold our leaders accountable for what they have committed to do in these instruments".

On next steps, Fredrick Kawooya informed this publication that AAU will engage the Government of Uganda to ensure respect and protection of Civil society space. AAU will also be working with Kenya to develop a regional program on shrinking space and political transition for possible funding.

The ICGLR establishment was based on the recognition that civil society is critical in addressing political instability and conflicts in the region particularly by ensuring the governments implement the existing protocols they have committed to particularly the Dar es salaam declaration (2004) that is meant to entrench rule of law and principles of democracy and good governance which are the core causes of conflict in the region.

AAU takes DGF to Mubende mining camps

Last Wednesday, ActionAid's Oil in Uganda Unit took a team from DGF on a guided tour of the Mubende Gold Mines. The Team comprised of Theo-the Chairman of the DGF Steering Committee; Mars-a member of the Steering Committee from Danish Embassy; Fergal-Component Manager and Annet-Program Assistant in the Voice and Accountability Component. The Team visited three mining camps in the Bukuya/Kassanda area and was interested in seeing how the miners live, the kind of activities they do and how women are involved in mining activities. They were particularly shocked at the levels of poverty in the camps, the very poor living conditions, the high population of both children and adults and the abundant use of mercury and cyanide in the mining operations especially by women.

They thanked the miners on how AAU has built their capacity in safer mining practices and supported them in their struggle to obtain mineral rights from the government in order to sustain their livelihoods.

The Team was impressed by AAU's work especially the way we have supported the women to organise themselves and form a strong lobbying platform. They strongly noted the abundant use of mercury by women in the mines without any protective gear which has the potential of causing serious health problems for them.

AAU delivers Legal services at door step



In hard to reach communities like Amudat District in Eastern Uganda, the social service delivery is poor in both quantity and quality. The situation is even worse with the legal services.

According to Hope Wambi, the Coordinator of the European Union Funded Eliminating Violence against Children Project (EC-VAC), the entire Amudat has no Court of law or state attorney. While the cases of child rights abuse such as Female Genital Cutting and forced marriages are rampant, justice for the children is very difficult to attain because the families of the abused children usually don't have money for transport to Nakapiripiriti, where the nearest Courts of law are located.

To break down these barriers, the EC VAC project has adopted the Mobile Legal clinic model. Working with the project takes legal officers on ground and these handle cases.

different stakeholders' in the district, the project takes legal officers on ground and these handle cases.

"When we get to the community, we don't just offer legal services but also sensitize the communities about the existing laws and the justice system", stated Hope Wambi during a phone interview.

Hope added that the legal aid team does not station in one place but offers door to door legal information and referrals.

Evelyn Okello is one of the women who have benefitted from the mobile clinic.

"My land was grabbed by my in-laws after my husband died. My children dropped out of school because I was not able to work and get their school fees. Unfortunately, I did not know that what I had been subjected to was illegal. However, I got the legal advice at my door step, and worked as advised. Am sure of gaining back access and control of my land soon", she said.

EC-VAC project reports that so far, 500 women and children in Amudat District have been reached with the mobile legal aid activities that are conducted every quarter.

Jiggers: A story that needs change

Jiggers continue to be reported as a major public health problem in Uganda, particularly Namutumba district. They have become a community horror increasing poverty and social exclusion of the affected people and sometimes leading to death.

Unfortunately, this public health problem has been shrouded in cultural superstition, with many community members claiming that jiggers are a manifestation of a cultural curse or witchcraft.

AAU is now using school parades, inspections, dialogues and drama to address this public health scourge. Read more [Here](#).

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WEEK AHEAD:

- The Extractives Governance unit will this week conduct debates among secondary schools in Buliisa to increase their knowledge on oil issues in their district
- AAU will hold a National workshop to launch the findings of the Teso water for Production study at Hotel Africana this Thursday.