

# actionaid Uganda Weekly

May 23 — 29

In continuation with our Education features, we bring to you Pajobi Primary school's Blind unit that is groping in the dark. The visually impaired students have one room to use as a dormitory, class room, resource centre and store. The testimonies of the hardships in the unit are moving. Read for your self by clicking [Here](#). Welcome to this edition of the Weekly.

## Heated, Lively Debate at the People's Parliament



(Left) Below and above, Dr Peter warns the NARO officials against sugar coating the health risks associated with the consumption of GMOs. Middle-Above; a rural woman farmer stresses a point against the current bill. Middle-Below is AAU's Fred Kawooya demanding for a re-drafting of the Bill. Right is the Speaker of the People's Parliament; Agnes Nandutu interacting with the Bill Opposers.

It was a heated, lively, stalemated and sterile debate as the Members of the People's parliament debated the Biotechnology and Biosafety Bill 2012. The People's Parliament is a show on NTV Uganda that gives ordinary citizens a chance to debate issues that are pertinent to every day lives. The show takes a form of a mock Parliament with opposers and proposers of a motion moderated by the Speaker.

ActionAid and its partners under the Food Rights Alliance (FRA) demanded for a re-draft of the bill to include clauses that protect Ugandans against being exposed to Genetically Improved Organisms (GMO) while the proposers want the bill passed in its current form.

"We want a law which has clauses related to labelling of GMO products on the market because not all Ugandan are interested in consuming GMOs. The Biotechnology Bill 2012 does not provide for Labelling of GMO products which contradicts the international provisions Uganda is signatory to", stated AAU's Fred Kawooya-The Policy and Campaigns Manager.

Agnes Kirabo, the Coordinator of FRA added that the committee which approves Biotechnology Researches geared at introducing GMOs in Uganda is composed of Scientists who are participating in the on-going GMOs research which she said, is a conflict of interest because majority of the stakeholder (small scale farmers) are not represented on such committees.

While the proposing team from the National Agriculture Research Organisation (NARO) advanced that Genetically Engineered products will help the country in improving food and cash crop production, this was dismissed by the opposers who stated that growing GMO crops in the country will increase the cost of doing agriculture because GMO crops require much application of insect and pesticide as well as fertilizers while the scientists in the house added that the technology is not environmentally friendly.

During the debate, it became glaringly clear that the current bill which the 9th Parliament refused to pass has many loopholes because it doesn't protect Ugandans against GMOs and in addition ,farmers are not represented on the National Biotechnology Committee.

"We find it troubling that a country which is fourth in the production of organic foods in the world and first in Africa opts to improve on food production by supporting them with quality Agricultural inputs" stated Dr. Giregon Olupot of Makerere University's College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences.

Dr Peter, a specialists in adult diseases pointed out that unfortunately, the non of the people proposing the Bill in its current form is mandated to even prescribe a pain killer. He said that most of the adult diseases they treat at the National Referral Hospital are a result of what people eat.

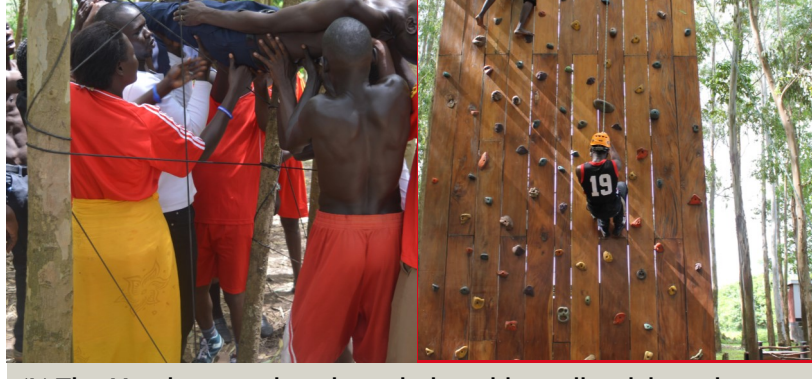
"Have you ever wondered why organic foods in the Developed Countries are only affordable to the rich? We must take precaution to protect our organic foods and our health", he appealed.

Since the tabling of the Bill in the Parliament, Ugandan scientists have been conducting GMO crops trials especially for crops such as Cotton , maize, Cassava but such crops cannot be released for commercialization before the legislators pass laws which regulates the application of the technology.

It was a shame when NARO denied conducting GMO crop trials on Cotton in Serere, only to change statement and claim that they are not mandated to speak for NARO when AAU presented them with evidence to that effect.

The debate continues next Saturday on NTV. Please don't miss . Equip yourself with knowledge and information to effectively demand for a better legislation.

## Youth Unite for Stronger Campaign Movement in Northern Uganda



(L) The Youth were taken through the spider wall activity to boost their planning and team work and the climbing wall on the left to boost self confidence and courage



(L) The River crossing activity sparked problem solving, team work and critical thinking. Right is the elected executive.

Last week, the youth from Northern Uganda held a three day joint community Monitors Review meeting at Koro Sports Outreach centre in Gulu District. The meeting was attended by 50 community monitors and Activistas from Pader, Agago, Amuru, Nwoya and Gulu. The meeting was called for the youth to share their experiences and foster peer learning on how to improve the advocacy engagements for better service delivery in the region.

Patrick Ojok, a Community Monitor from Nwoya shared his life transforming experience, challenging colleagues that transformation of their communities begins with them.

"With the many capacity enhancement programs by ActionAid, I started a piggery project. I have been able to employ a number of youths without jobs. Many have also learnt from me and have started their own projects. We have also started a community school to reduce on the long distances that students had to walk to school. We have joined leadership. This is the way to go. We should stop talking and walk the talk", he inspired.

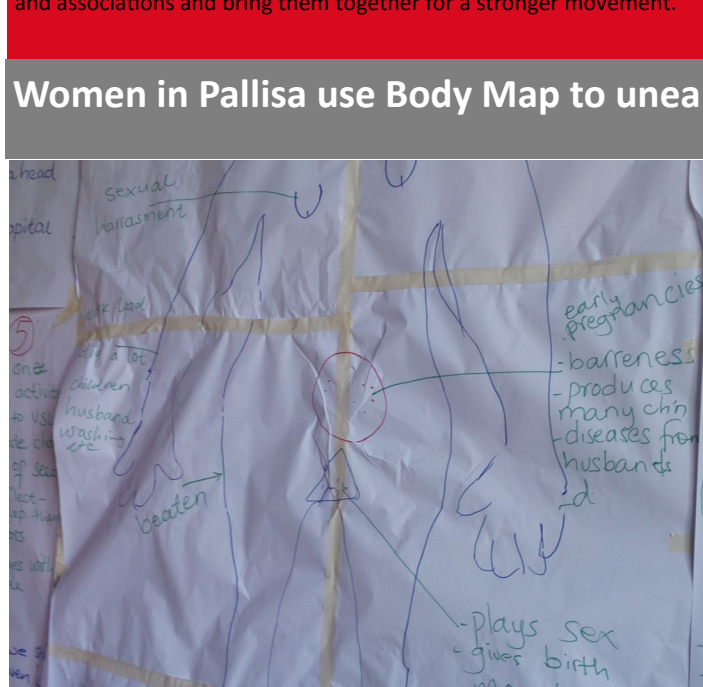
Patrick is the current L.C5 Councilor in Nwoya.

To prepare the youth for advocacy in the complex and shrinking political space, they were taken through practical learning activities on the principles of leadership, creativity in campaigns, planning, critical thinking, cultivating team spirit and social cohesion.

At the end of the meeting, the youth organized themselves into the Northern Uganda Community Monitors and Activista Association with the vision of building a strong movement of the youth to lead a campaign against the persistent challenges that the region has faced in the past two decades for the desired socio-economic and political reforms.

The group went ahead to elect a seven member executive committee. Their first task will be to map out all youth groups and associations and bring them together for a stronger movement.

## Women in Pallisa use Body Map to unearth serouse Rights Violations



Using this body map, the women demonstrated the different violations that the body parts attract and why they fight to have control of over their bodies.

ActionAid is known for its firm belief in community driven processes and the use of participatory tools to facilitate this.

Participatory tools are being heavily used in the ongoing nationwide Participatory Review and Reflection Processes (PRRPs), an important tradition the organization uses to engender the active involvement of people living in poverty, other stakeholders, including Local Government to provide honest feedback about our work, hold us accountable to our promises and together plan for the future.

This year's PRRPs are unique in the sense that they are being used to inform both ActionAid Uganda and the Global Strategy. In addition to the usual feedback and mutual accountability, AAU is generating a wide range of community priorities that can be used to shape the future direction of ActionAid Uganda and globally.

In Pallisa ,ordinary women have demonstrated extraordinary courage, confidence and clarity in providing feedback to ActionAid and identifying

priorities for the future.

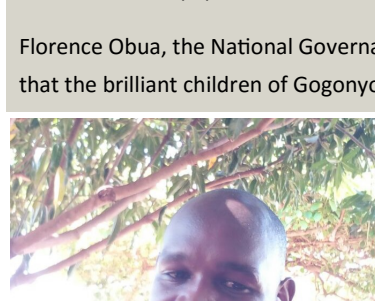
Using a series of tools such as the Community River of Life, the Pairwise Ranking and Body Map, women living in poverty have shown the structural obstacles to their full emancipation. While using the Body Map, they were able to show the use of each and every body part and the rights violations that they attract - they demonstrated why they fight to have control over their bodies, they showed us how the works of their hands and bodies are so important for society but not valued or recognized. They demonstrated the burden of care work, the denial of basic rights and demanded that these must remain priorities in the next strategy.

The PRRPs continue this week in Northern Uganda and West Nile.

## Flowers for the Pallisa team-Our Bloggers of the week!!

The ActionAid Pallisa PRRP Team left the community PRRPs very excited and enriched. All of them decided to write blogs about their experiences during the field activities. Read these impressive accounts of active participation of people living in poverty, and get inspired to send in your account. Writing is not Rocket science. Its about putting your thoughts and observations on paper. Just like these!!

Florence Obua, the National Governance Coordinator writes about the challenge of child programming for the future that the brilliant children of Gogonyo put for ActionAid's future work! Read her Blog [Here](#).



Read about the Cluster Coordinator's (Agrey) reflections on why we should think of another term other than 'sponsored children' [Here](#)



Dorah, the Pallisa Cluster Finance Officer shares her experience as the Chief Editor of the Pallisa PRRP Reports -How easy is it to edit your boss's work? Find out [Here](#)



Another interesting read by the Pallisa cluster driver-Chebe. He narrates how the country driver travelled at the back of the pickup to protect his— Turkey. This story [Here](#)

## WEEK AHEAD:

- The ActionAid leadership and Program staff are all in the field taking part in the Participatory Review and Reflection Processes in all five AAU clusters. The meetings are part of the CSPV consultation and development process. We have AAU clusters. The meetings are part of the CSPV Fundraising Director will lead the PRRP in Nebbi Cluster. The Programs Director will lead the process in Masindi while the Country Director will support the process in Pader and Gulu.

- Don't miss the continuation of the People's Parliament this Saturday as the CSOs and Rural farmers express their dissatisfaction with the Bio Technology and Bio Safety Bill 2012. Tune in to NTV at 8pm.