

Dear Reader, thank you to all those who have been following our Gender Based Violence features on the Bukedde TV program, Buli Mukyala. Just in case you missed, we shall be sharing with you links to the feature on YouTube in our next weekly edition. Today, we continue with our quality education campaign.

7000 Pupils have lessons under trees!



Over 7000 pupils in Nebbi study under trees. When it rains, they don't study. Worse still, they sit either on the wet ground or on stones or bricks. How easy is it to write from the ground? Join the campaign, support these children by sharing these images with the Ministers of Education and Sports.

Over 7,000 pupils in Nebbi district who enrolled in government-aided primary schools have their lessons under trees. The district Education Officer informed the Weekly that pupils in lower primary were most affected by the shortage of classrooms. The ActionAid team visited one of the schools in the district, Angir Primary school.

The conditions at Angir primary school may be described as hellish; no library, a tree shade for a classroom and no office space for the head teacher. When the author of this story visited the school on a rainy morning, she found Jane Kabalisa Onangiu, the school's head teacher, marking scripts in a congested room, which doubles as a library for her school.

Bogged down with inadequate infrastructure for all the pupils, the school management has been forced to teach primaries one to three together under a tree. When I arrived at the school, I saw hundreds of pupils clumped together under a mango tree trying to recite a few lines from story books. Although it was drizzling, the pupils went about their routine recitals unabated. Some sat on the muddy floor while majority were on bricks.

"These bricks are what we use as furniture here. I have never sat on a bench. When it rains, we do not come to school and when it is too hot, it becomes uncomfortable for us too," says Mungu Acen, a P3 pupil.

Acen envisions becoming a teacher in future just like many in her class, but their teacher Godwin Orombi is afraid that these ambitions will not come to fruition if the pupils have to study under such unbearable conditions. Many of them are struggling to learn and speak English and thus; so, most of the lessons are conducted in Alur.

Kabalisa Onangiu says it is difficult and unsafe to conduct lessons during the rainy season, as it exposes children to complications such as pneumonia. She says two pupils had to drop out of the school early this term due to chest complications.

According to her, the school which has 13 teachers, currently also lacks other amenities required for learning, including desks and chairs. This has forced parents to withdraw their children from the school. She notes that enrolment is usually high in P1 but this tremendously reduces in higher classes.

To solve the school's problems, Kabalisa urges government to construct two more classroom blocks and a staff room. She also calls for increased quarterly funding which is currently at UGX 1.5m. Join us by delivering this message to our Ministers of Education. These pupils, just like any other deserve better. Prioritizing the education sector can change the situation in Angir for the better.

The Bennet land questions; who has the answers?



Bennet Community leaders, AAU staff, Uganda Land Alliance team and the lawyer) after a strategizing meeting last Monday at AAU offices.

The Bennet community in the Eastern District of Kapchorwa to date struggles for recognition and restoration of their right to access, control and ownership of their land amidst a lot of repression from the Uganda Wildlife Authority.

In 2004, they had hoped that the outcome of the court case filed on their behalf: "Miscellaneous Case No. 001 of 2004: Uganda Land Alliance Ltd (Applicant) versus Uganda Wildlife Authority and Attorney General (Respondents)" would bring an end to the land conflict. With anticipation and anxiety, hundreds of the Bennet people trekked the over 84km journey to the Mbale High Court to listen to the verdict.

Indeed, their land which they had fought for through mobilizing public opinion in solidarity, advocacy directed to power holders, legally but also physically was declared to be theirs.

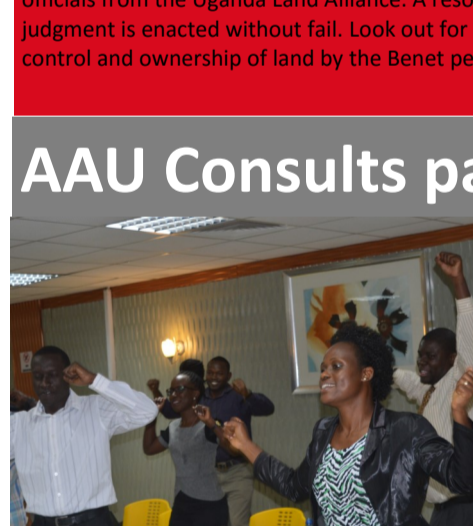
The court judgement was issued in the form of a Consent Judgement/Decree, which is arrived at by agreement between the parties to a case and is endorsed by the court, but settled in advance of full court proceedings.

Amongst the terms of the Judgement was the recognition of the Bennet community as the "historical and indigenous" inhabitants of the area; their right to live and conduct 'agricultural activities' in the areas they currently inhabit; and the right to immediate redress for imbalances in education, infrastructure, health and social services.

Unfortunately, the Bennet people have not lived to witness the roll out of this consent judgment. They are still landless and often harassed by the Uganda Wildlife Officials who constantly tell them that they have no right to own or live on the land. Several power holders have been to the community, often making contradiction statements and promises for and against the Bennet people.

ActionAid last week held a meeting with the Bennet community leadres, the lawyer who has been handling the case and officials from the Uganda Land Alliance. A resolve was made to rollout a campaign that will see to it that the consent judgment is enacted without fail. Look out for developments on this and support the realisation of the right to access, control and ownership of land by the Bennet people.

AAU Consults partners-CSPV developmet



National partners take part in an energizer session.



The livelihoods National partners during a group discussion



The youth thinking team reflects last Thursday .

Last week, ActionAid conducted a national participatory review and reflection process. The activity is part of the AAU country Strategic Paper V (CSPV) development process. AAU has been implementing its fourth strategic paper which will be coming to an end next year.

The meeting was attended by representatives from AAU's national partners such as CSBAG, FIDA-Uganda, Uganda National NGO Forum, LASPNET, UHURU Institute, FOWODE, ACCU among others.

Participants acknowledged that AAU has performed exceptionally well in the past four years of the fourth strategy implementation.

"ActionAid has utilized the existing structures such as the board, management and program staff. These are all involved in the AAU work and processes. I want to believe that it's these strong Governance structures that have enabled the organisation to perform well", explained Elone Natumanya, the Programs Manager at the Uganda Parliamentary youth forum.

Carol Namagembe of CSBAG added that AAU had effectively influenced the fiscal cycle of Uganda.

"They have effectively monitored and influenced resource mobilization, allocation and utilization. We have seen an increase in the budgetary allocation to the priority sectors of Health, Education and Agriculture" she added.

The partners however challenged AAU to devote more resources to influencing national level processes and challenges such as public procurement and economic policy frameworks.

"AAU should also develop its programming to bridge the generational gap between the youth and elders in the community. The youth should be at the forefront of AAU future engagements. The reason is quite clear; majority of Uganda's population are youths", elaborated Leonard Okello, the Executive Director of Uhuru Institute.

The Women Rights working group also advised that AAU strengthens its relations and work with cultural and religious leaders at all levels to effectively challenge the patriarchal practices in society that undermine women and girls empowerment.

"Most of the issues fuelling the abuse of women and girls rights are enshrined in cultural and religious practices. AAU needs to bring cultural and religious leaders on board in the fight for the dignity of women and girls", cited Harriet Nabankema, the legal Aid clinic Manager at FIDA Uganda.

Harriet Gimbo, the Programs Director at AAU thanked the partners for their criticism and oversites.

"We are not our own mirror. We thank you for being our mirrors. All the feedback is going to be consolidated and act as a basis for our CSPV strategy development", she said, adding that the organisation would get back to the partners with a finer document for review.

Betty Namatovu shares insights at staff meeting!



Moments from the staff meeting. Right-below is Betty Namatovu, fresh from Haiti

ActionAid conducted its staff meeting last week on Friday. The meeting saw different units present their accomplishments for the reporting period and priorities for the next months.

Betty Namatovu, AAU's Sponsorship officer who has been on Secondment in ActionAid Haiti as the Sponsorship Coordinator seized the opportunity to share her experience of working in Haiti for the last six months. She informed colleagues that it's essential for all people dealing in social work to have fluency in at least two internationally spoken languages.

"Haiti is a French speaking country and I had to adjust. I used my basic French to get around", she said.

Betty added that implementation of sponsorship activities should not be biased to families with sponsored children. Instead, programs should be designed to ensure inclusiveness of both sponsored and unsponsored children.

Arthur Larok, AAU's Country Director challenged staff to make personal reflections on how much they have done since the year become and commit to improve it in the remaining four months this year.

WEEK AHEAD:

- AAU will take part in the National GBV conference this Thursday at Hotel Africana.
- AAU leadership team will meet at Royal Suits this Tuesday to review the draft zero ActionAid International strategy.