



Dear Reader, we have not stopped with the Education campaign, and we intend not to stop until action is taken by the Education Ministry. This week, the Minister of Education and Sports, Hon Janet Museveni will be in West Nile. We hope she will pass by Pajobi and see these visually impaired pupils groping in the dark. Welcome to the Weekly!

Nebbi visually impaired pupils groping in the dark!



(Left) Janipher Atimango, a Primary seven pupil at the school hopes that more govt revenue to the facility can bring light to her seemingly blinded life. Right-above is six year old Joseph Opilo. Right-below is another visually impaired pupil at the facility.

Joseph Opilo carefully moves his hands along two metallic bed rails lined on either side in order to gain stability as he moves. The six-year-old was born blind and has had to learn to use his hands and feet to 'see'. When he was four years old, Opilo's parents told him he could do anything the normal children would and that they would enroll him into a special-needs school when he turned five. His parents bred Opilo with so much determination that when he enrolled into school last year, he was ready to learn how to read and write, according to Maureen Ayabotho, one of the two special-needs teachers at Pajobi primary school.

"He is a fast learner. In just one year that he has been here, he has been able to learn to tell what type of animal has been carved out of a wooden craft," says Ayabotho.

Located in Nebbi town council, the school is famed for having one of the oldest units that provide formal education to blind pupils. In line with the education ministry's policy on inclusive education, the school caters for both blind and sighted learners. The school's current enrolment is 902, with three of these being completely blind, while another two partially blind.

Gofin Okumu, another special-needs teacher at the school, is an alumnus of the school. The teacher, who was blinded by measles during his infancy, testifies that hundreds of blind pupils from the unit have enrolled into secondary school.

"Anything that the sighted pupils can do, the blind can also do and we are teaching blind pupils to survive and excel amid difficult situations," Okumu narrates adding that the blind unit uses the comprehensive curriculum for basic education and runs the regular school calendar of three terms in one academic year.

However, testimonies of hardship in this unit are moving. For starters, the blind pupils are restricted to a one classroom that doubles as their dormitory, also catering for both male and female pupils. When I visited the school, I found Jennifer Atimango, one of the three completely-blind pupils, laying her bed, as she readied herself for class. Atimango shares this room with Opilo and another boy, as well as the partially-blind pupils, a boy and a girl. Thus the room has six beds for the learners. After five minutes, she negotiated her way through the narrow path separating the girls' beds from the boys', in order to 'get to' class. Her classroom, at the front of the room, features three chairs and one desk. This unit has no library and the pupils have to rely entirely on their teacher's notes. Atimango, who says she hopes to become a lawyer one day, has no choice but to work with what is available.

Paulino Avola, Pajobi's head teacher, is beside himself with explanations for the trying circumstances.

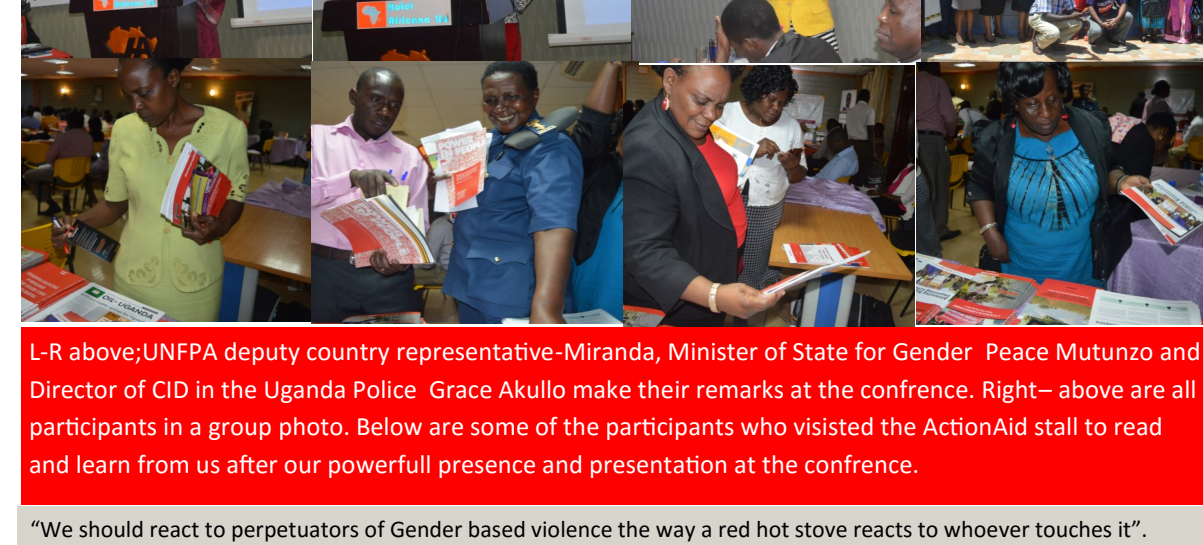
"There is a big challenge of lack of infrastructure and scholastic materials such as braille paper and braille machines. And we have not received the quarterly funding of Shs 2.5m for the blind unit for one and half years now," adds Avola.

To make ends meet and ensure that the unit keeps functioning, Avola says, the school administration keeps borrowing money from the Parents and Teachers Association. To add to the challenges, the blind pupils have to share the school's only two latrine stances with other children. Unfortunately, the blind unit does not have electricity. Avola has since decided to appeal to government to provide more infrastructure at the school, such as building more latrines and dormitories.

"We appeal to government to fulfil its funding promise, so that we are able to have operational equipment such as talking calculators and braille books availed and on time."

For now, Avola tells ActionAid that the number of blind pupils has dropped from 11 to three in 2015, due to the numerous challenges faced by the learners at the school. Over to you our readers; share this message widely. These pupils deserve better.

GBV is Intimate Terrorism –Detective Grace Akullo!



L-R above;UNFPA deputy country representative-Miranda, Minister of State for Gender Peace Mutunzo and Director of CID in the Uganda Police Grace Akullo make their remarks at the conference. Right- above are all participants in a group photo. Below are some of the participants who visited the ActionAid stall to read and learn from us after our powerful presence and presentation at the conference.

"We should react to perpetrators of Gender based violence the way a red hot stove reacts to whoever touches it". These were the words of Hon Peace Mutunzo, the Minister of State for Gender and Cultural Affairs during the National dialogue on GBV. The event, held at Hotel Africana was attended by UN agencies such as UNFPA&UNHCR, representatives from related Ministries and local Governments, the civil society fraternity, The Uganda Police, survivors of GBV among others.

ActionAid Uganda, presented a documentary on the 16 year old Gloria (not real name) who was defiled repeatedly by her own father with the knowledge of her mother. The emotional story of Gloria's experience and her ability to pick up her self and concentrate on her studies caused hums and whorls among participants. Others geared and insulted the shameless man who met his death while in prison. Gloria will be sitting for her Uganda certificate of education in October this year. She aspires to be a Lawyer. She is grateful to the support from ActionAid that enabled her to get justice for the abuse subjected to her.

Samanya Kyategeka, the Communications Officer at ActionAid while speaking to participants appealed to parents to protect their children from such cases of violation, that seem to be on the increase.

Jane(not real name) a survivor from Katakwi also shared her bad experience with GBV that caused her to lose her teeth. She also survived being burned from her grass thatched house. She spoke about her difficult in accessing police and medical forms as all service providers wanted a bribe for the forms.

Hon Peace in reaction informed the meeting that the cost of GBV in the country was escalating and had to be checked.

Dr Muliki Kadiku Joyce, the Minister of State for Primary Health Care added that the Ministry of Health spends UGX18.3 Billion on handling the GBV effects. The police spend UGX19.3 billion while the local councils spend UGX12.7 billion on the same annually.

Grace Akullo, the Director of Criminal Investigations in the Uganda Police urged all stake holders to always ensure that the evidence is preserved for the successful prosecution of the perpetrators.

"On several occasions, we have been accused of frustrating cases. Unfortunately, we cannot manufacture evidence. Once we don't have the evidence, then we are bound to loose the case", she explained while calling for a training of all GBV service providers on how to preserve evidence.

The meeting ended with a commitment from Government and other actors to work towards a GBV free Uganda.

AAU critically reviews draft zero of ActionAid Int. Strategy

On Tuesday last week, ActionAid staff were joined by the AAU Governing board members in a feedback meeting on the first draft of the ActionAid International next strategy. The document, dubbed draft zero arose from the 122 big ideas submitted by all ActionAid member countries worldwide including Uganda.

Dr Consolata Kabonesa, the Chairperson of the AAU Governing board informed the meeting that transformation is key and we should all open our minds and work towards it. Speaking about the recent Governing Board and Directors forum that she attended in Maputo recently, Consolata stated that if we don't change, then we risk being taken over by other organisations.

"We don't want to see other programs closing", she added.

She also explained that while in Maputo, the organisers of the forum used different scenarios to explain the future of ActionAid.

"Some of the scenarios were radicle and they tickled our thinking on how we can change ActionAid for the better", she cited.

Judy Kamanyi, an AAU Board member pointed out that draft zero of the strategy lacked an emphasis on Gender equality, and yet this is emphasized in all international documents.

"I don't like the fact that gender equality is not strongly emphasized. If we leave it out, how shall we then be able to report on its progress?" she stated, an observation that was shared by majority of the participants.

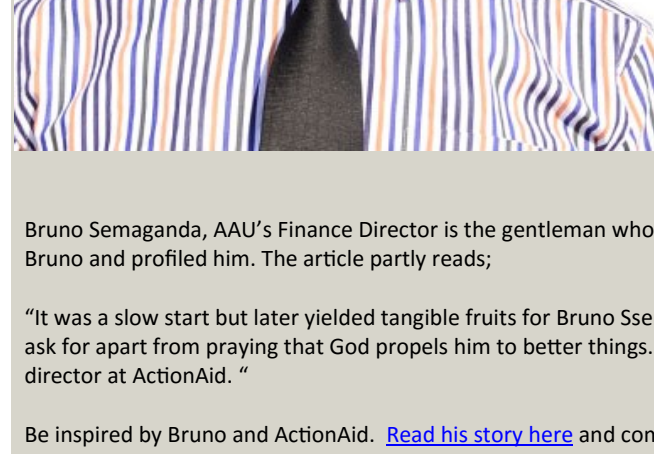
Participants also observed that the youth had not been given context in the document.

Dr Consolata stressed that we must always remember that the youth make up majority of Africa's population. Failure to contextualise them will make it difficult to develop programs to address their issues.

After analysing the entire document including the changing context, vision, mission & identity and the strategic direction among others, all feedback was compiled into a three page document to be shared with the International drafting team. Arthur Larok, the AAU Country Director is a member of this team.

We are now looking forward to the review of draft one and two before the final approval of the strategy expected in December this year at the extra ordinary assembly in Arusha.

Patiently moving to the top-Bruno Semaganda



He is handsome! He is hardworking! He is result oriented! He takes criticism positively. He is well educated! He smiles even as he affirms that he will not approve a given expenditure. He will ask you why you want to execute a given activity even when you did not plan for it.

He has extensive in-depth knowledge of the financial industry. Under his leadership, the ActionAid Uganda Finance team has won several Financial reporting awards!

He is confident while making sound financial decisions for the Organisation! He is a persuasive and confident communicator. He ably deals with colleagues, both senior and junior in a respectful and cordial manner.

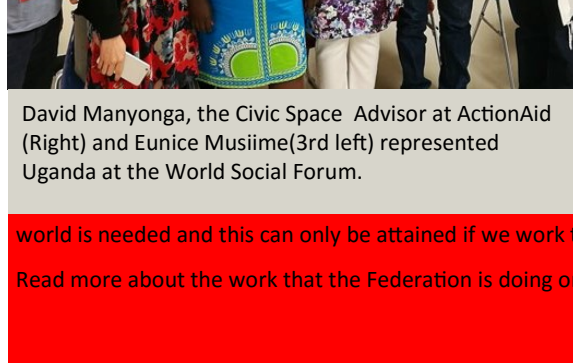
Yes, allow me to add that he has this unique sense of fashion and style. I cant recall the number of times I have admired his shirts, belts, neck ties.....let me stop the list here.

Bruno Semaganda, AAU's Finance Director is the gentleman who owns the above description. The Daily Monitor visited Bruno and profiled him. The article partly reads;

"It was a slow start but later yielded tangible fruits for Bruno Ssemaganda, 33. For now, there is nothing better he can ask for apart from praying that God propels him to better things. He has risen from a graduate trainee to finance director at ActionAid. "

Be inspired by Bruno and ActionAid. [Read his story here](#) and commit to become a Director in the next few years. Congratulations Bruno!

World social forum speaks out on Shrinking Political space



Last week, the Civic Space Advisor at ActionAid Uganda, David Manyonga, was in Canada attending one of the global Civil Society gatherings, the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Montreal. Organised as a global convergence for civil society, the WSF was attended by tens of thousands of people from non-governmental organizations and social movements.

All participants expressed their aspiration to build a sustainable and inclusive world, where every person has a place and can be heard. The 2016 WSF theme was 'Another World is needed. Together, it is possible!'

ActionAid, as an organization championing an initiative seeking to secure and expand political space globally hosted a session, '*Mobilizing across Borders to defend and Expand Civil and Political Space*'.

David spoke about the struggles of social formations in Zimbabwe. Other panelists echoed the need to build alliance and enhance solidarity across the globe to push against shrinking space. From Guatemala, to Zimbabwe, Uganda, Burundi, Asia and globally, it emerged clearly that another world is needed and this can only be attained if we work together.

Read more about the work that the Federation is doing on Shrinking Political Space [Here](#).

WEEK AHEAD:

The Country Director will be travelling to Johannesburg on 22nd-29th August 2016 to participate in the drafting of the International Strategy. Our Programmes Director, Harriet Robina Gimbo shall be the acting Country Director.

The Civic Space Advisor will be in Arusha, Tanzania to attend two activities, the Africa Civil Society Initiative conference; and the Shrinking Political Space (SPS) curriculum validation workshop.