

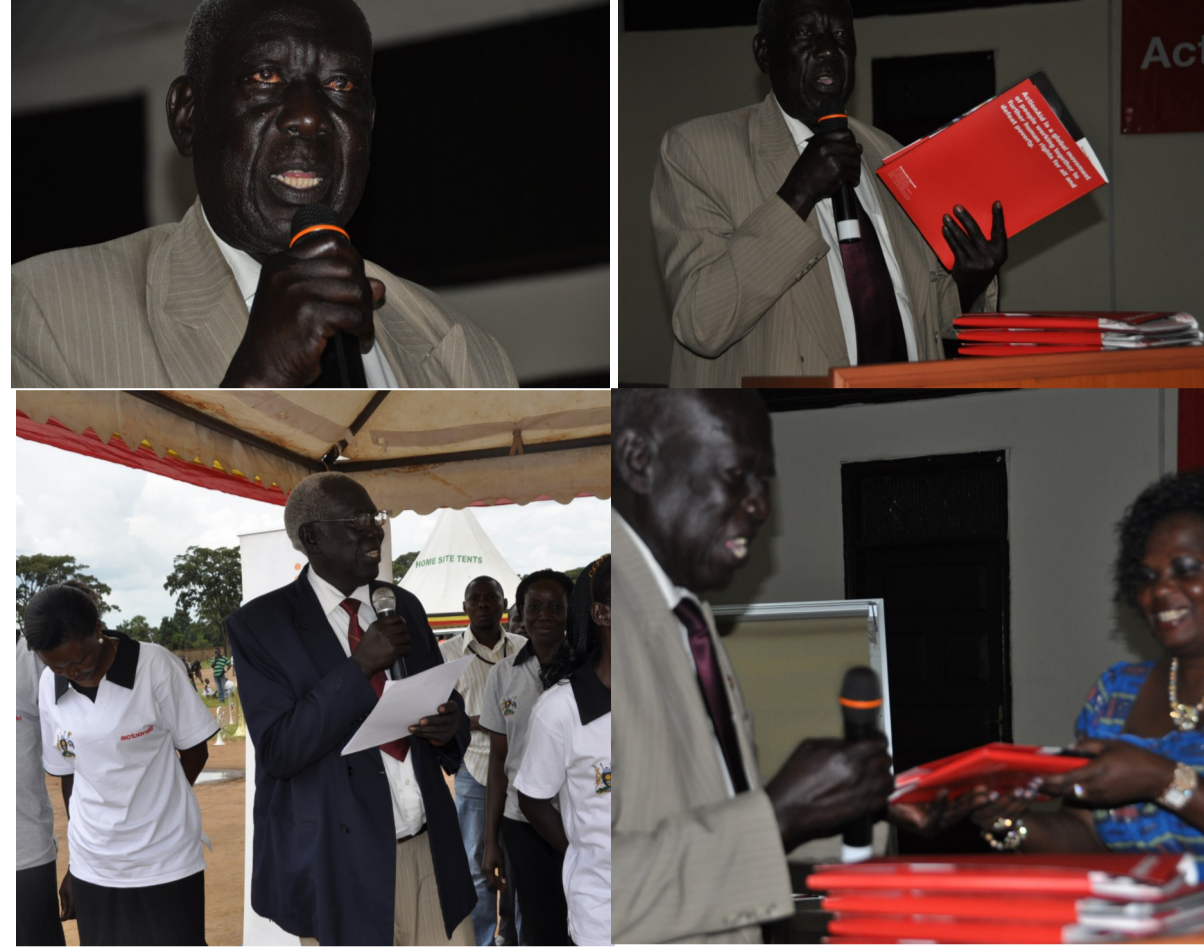
actionaid Uganda Weekly

Sept 18 – 25



Dear Reader, today, we mourn James AA. Otto, the gentleman behind the current ActionAid Uganda affiliate status. This has been one of the most difficult editions of the Weekly that I have produced this year. Rest in peace James! In the photo, James (on red tie) joins in a dance at the launch of the Gulu GBV shelter-2014.

Celebrating the Life of James AA. Otto



The above photos capture some of James's moments with ActionAid. He led from the front but also from behind. He was a statesman. He loved ActionAid. He hated injustice. We shall miss you James!

It is not easy to eulogize a hardworking, principled and loving man. It's much harder to speak of a man, who worked so hard for ActionAid, the wider civil society and development generally in Uganda. How hard it is, to write this tribute for a father, a statesman, a man of integrity!

Today, ActionAid joins the rest of the world to remember and celebrate the life of James Otto, a founding Trustee of ActionAid Uganda and a permanent member of the ActionAid Uganda General Assembly.

His battle with a Kidney Complication

James passed on, Friday morning at Kirudu hospital, where he had been admitted two days earlier. According to Arthur Larok, the Country Director of ActionAid Uganda, James has been battling a kidney problem for close to a year now.

When he stepped down as the Chairperson of ActionAid Uganda National Governing Board, he was its longest serving member. At the time he was diagnosed with a kidney problem, James had just been appointed a member to the ActionAid International Governance, Board and Development Committee (GBDC), a very important body for ActionAid international. This reflected the absolute trust that the organisation had in James. Unfortunately, he couldn't take this up because of his health condition that required two rounds of a dialysis procedure every week.

Chris Kinyanjui, the Deputy CEO of ActionAid international upon receiving the news of James's passing on extended heartfelt condolences to James's wife and children.

"On behalf of the GBDC (the Board committee that James was a member of), the CEO and International Leadership Team I would like to convey our heartfelt condolences to James' wife and children and his extended family and to the AA Uganda Board and Management on this sad loss of a dear comrade and friend".

In August this year, James's health further deteriorated when he was diagnosed with another condition that affected his blood levels and required him to go through regular blood transfusion. On Tuesday this week, James complained to his family of general body weakness and chest pain and was subsequently admitted to hospital. Despite the medical attention accorded to him, he breathed his last on Friday morning.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to the Board of AAU who approved a financial assistance for his treatment. We are also very grateful to both local and international ActionAid staff, friends and well-wishers of James who have been making a modest monthly financial contribution to support the family and James's treatment.

Dr Consolata Kabonesa, the Chairperson of the ActionAid Uganda Governing Board could not hold back her sombre mood. She spoke of James as a true, honest and hardworking gentleman with an adoration that he so rightly earned.

"James always challenged us to work towards improving the lives of people living in poverty and those in the margins of society. In the arc of his life, we see a man who earned his place in history through struggle, hard work and integrity. We have lost an important pillar of ActionAid and the Social Justice movement in Uganda. It is impossible to replace some one of his personality."

Let James Continue Living

One way in which we can keep James alive in our midst is to follow what he stood for. James not only taught us the power of action, but he also taught us the power of ideas; the importance of reason and arguments and not might. He taught us about the need to listen, not only to those you agree but also those you don't agree with. He was an accommodative, tolerant but principled and firm man.

JB Kwesiga, a member of the ActionAid Governing board remembers James as a gentleman who fought many human rights related "battles", some of them ending up in courts. Despite the "battles", he did not give up. In fact the battles made him more determined to fight on.

James's dream for ActionAid was that it grows in its stature as a locally rooted, nationally, regionally as well as globally connected organisation. He fully understood that the injustice of poverty couldn't be fought from only one location. He dreamed of an ActionAid Uganda that is financially sustainable, credible and relevant to the needs of people living in poverty and facing injustices. It is this dream that should give us the driving conviction to keep James amidst us even when he is physically not with us.

For ActionAiders and other Ugandans reading this, James's passing is rightly a time of mourning, but also a time to celebrate his life as well as to recommit to his dedicated service to institutional building as well as social justice.

After James, our father, our comrade and friend is finally laid to rest, we must search for the strength to keep doing that which would make him rest in peace. What a magnificent person James was! We will miss him deeply but believe and pray that God will receive him in His mercy having been a true believer in his lifetime. May his soul rest in peace.

Our Last Weekly feature on James!



The Weekly publication of 15th June 2015 extensively featured James. The publication captured James dancing, smiling and hugging our current Board Chairperson, Dr Consolata at the General Assembly that had been held the previous weekend! In that General Assembly, James made his last appearance as the Chairperson of the AAU Governing Board. He handed over power to Dr Consolata Kabonesa in a jovial and celebratory way.

On the occasion, James walked up to me and said;

"My daughter, I having been reading the Weekly publication, but I had never put face to the producer. I actually thought that Samanya is a man. Thank you for the commitment. The sky is the limit for you" he said while patting my back.

I could write an entire story about what those words meant and still mean to me. I can write millions of pages to try and explain how I feel now! I will remember those words forever, the words of a kind and loving father, who refused to call me an employee of ActionAid but his daughter.

[Click Here for our last feature on James.](#)

#James's Legacy; A must Watch!



"I want to see ActionAid Uganda up there, shining in glory, in its own home. With a new country strategy which will address issues around poverty in its totality."

Those were the last words of James to ActionAid Uganda. The communications unit produced this video last year. Looking back, we are excited that we produced it then. James, whom we gave a number of copies of this production was able to hear the so many nice words that colleagues had to say about him.

Unfortunately, this video may cause tears to well in your eyes. [Click and listen to James's Legacy!](#)

Condolence Messages trickle in....

This is very sad and tragic. The late James Otto contributed tremendously to ActionAid and was very instrumental at the national and international level. He was highly valued at both levels. We are going to miss him a lot. May the Almighty God give courage to the family. May the lord rest his soul in eternal peace- Dr Consolata Kabonesa- Chairperson of AAU Governing Board.)

*With great sadness I convey our condolences to all of you and to James' family. James has been such a great leader, comrade and friend. He has guided and supported me on several occasions and shaped my views about human rights and resistance. My thoughts are with James' family and with AA Uganda team and board. In solidarity-*Adriano Campolina-ActionAid International CEO.

I worked under James as board member and chair of AAU and I remember his calm demeanor in his approach to issues and commitment to social justice issues. He had become a friend. While we knew the complexity of the sickness he was battling, he always kept the smile when people visited him. He has done his part on earth and we all need to celebrate his achievements. May his soul rest in eternal peace- Charles Businge-Regional Director: Southern and Eastern Africa-ActionAid.

*I'm so sad to hear about James Otto. We only have had a chance to meet occasionally in the past years, but I always considered him a mentor, to whom I could go whenever I needed support in deepening the understanding of my role as a national chair, then as an international board member of ActionAid. I'm very much grateful for the privilege I've had to know him, as well as for his help and wisdom-*Chiara from Berlin.

WEEK AHEAD:

- ⇒ There will be mass at Christ the King Church in Kampala on Tuesday 27th September and the body will be taken to Gulu district on Tuesday afternoon. There will be a vigil at his home in Gulu (within the municipality) on Tuesday.
- ⇒ On Wednesday, there will be another mass in Holy Rosary in Gulu Town and then the body will be taken to the Gulu Local Government where the Council has requested for a special ceremony and then later that day, the body will be taken to Pader where burial will take place on Thursday.