



## Weekly

May 22— 28

During the annual General Assembly conducted over the weekend, the AAU 5th Country strategic Paper; ***Strengthening struggles for social justice(2018-2023)*** was approved. The strategy will see transformation from the charitable organisation that AAU is to one that empowers citizens to demand what is rightfully theirs! Congratulations AAU!

### General Assembly approves new country strategy, Board members Appointed!



**Above: Left**- Ms Regina Bafaki and Ms Rita Chiro were both appointed as members of the ActionAid Governing Board. **Right**- Mr. George Opule from KPMG published ActionAid's clean opinion audit report.

**Below: Left**- Mr. Benson Ekwee was elected as the convener of the 12th General Assembly. **Right**- Ms. Tina Musuya was elected as the co. convener.

Last Saturday, ActionAid Uganda successfully conducted its 11<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly at Hotel Africana. Ms. Rita Hope Aciro, the convener of the day excellently moderated the highly active and well attended assembly.

In her opening remarks, the Chairperson of the AAU Governing Board, Dr Consolata Kabonesa welcomed members and thanked them for their sustained support to ActionAid Uganda.

"This year is special because today, we have before you a new strategy that will guide the organisation for the coming five years", she said.

#### Audit Report

During the meeting, Mr. George Opule, an Auditor from KPMG, the external firm that audits ActionAid confirmed to the Assembly that the report issued on the Financial Statements of ActionAid is **unqualified** or a **Clean opinion** based on a clean audit conducted by KPMG.

"We have audited the financial statements of ActionAid . They give a true and fair view of the financial position of ActionAid Uganda", he said.

The Auditor was however asked to explain how reliable and honest their opinions are especially in light with the PANAMA papers that revealed that audit firms facilitate illegitimate transactions.

Mr Opule assured the house that KPMG as a firm upholds zero tolerance to ethical bleaches and poor accounting standards and hence their opinions are honest and legitimate.

The Treasurer of the AAU Board, Ms. Evelyn Mugenyi moved a motion to appoint BDO East Africa as the external auditors of the Organisation for the next four years and this was seconded and passed.

#### Other Resolutions

The Assembly amended several clauses in the constitution including the Vision, Mission, and objectives of the Organisation among others to suit with the 5<sup>th</sup> Country Strategic Paper which was also approved.

The strategy; **strengthening struggles for social Justice** will see ActionAid change from being purely a charitable Organisation to one which empowers citizens to demand for what is rightfully theirs and make Government accountable to its citizens. The strategy will also draw efforts to building resilience to the adverse effects of climate change. However, Women Rights will continue to remain a priority in the programming. Other amendments passed include electing of a co. Convener of the Assembly and allowing members to attend the meetings through skype or phone calls among others. On that note, Mr Benson Ekwee was elected as the convener of the 12<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and Ms. Tina Musuya was elected as a co. convener. This means that in the event that Mr. Benson is not available, then Ms Tina takes over the convening role.

#### New Board Members

The General Assembly also approved and appointed Ms. Regina Bafaki, the Executive Director of ACFODE and Ms. Rita Chiro, the Executive Director of UWONET as new Governing Board members of ActionAid Uganda.

#### Tribute to James Otto

The General Assembly took off time in the morning hours to hold a special tribute/lecture in honour of the late James Otto, the longest serving Chairperson of the ActionAid Governing Board. The lecture was attended by James' widow and sons.

The meeting closed with commitment from the members of the General Assembly to continue with their support to the organisation to ensure a smooth transition as directed by the 5<sup>th</sup> country Strategic Paper.

### Remembering James Otto: family and Assembly members speak out!



Mrs Otto Speaks at the memorial lecture last Saturday. She said that her late husband warned her that it would not be easy without him but she would manage with prayer.

Assembly, James's widow and sons.

Irene Ovonji, the CEO of FIDA and former Board Chairperson of ActionAid International spoke about James as a man who not only emphasized the power of Action but also the power of ideas.

"James was not afraid to fight any human rights related violations. He did this with passion, energy and determination to attain a just society" she said.

Ms. Ovonji challenged everyone in the house to work towards a just Uganda as this is one of the things that will ensure James Rests in peace.

Mrs Otto stated that all that Irene had said describes whom her husband was.

"This lecture has evoked memories of my husband. He was all those things that Irene has said. He was very prayerful. Before he breathed his last, he asked us to pray together. He later told me that life would not be easy without him but I should remember to always pray just as we have always done", she said with tears welling in her eyes.

One of the sons present added that he learnt later in life that his father only held an Ordinary level Certificate. He asked him how he managed to travel the world with minimal education.

"He told me that while I should struggle to attain the highest degree in the land, I should also work to attain a degree in life. My father had a degree in life" he said.

Nicholus Opiyo, the vice Chairperson of the ActionAid Governing Board informed the house that James started the first Public library in Gulu.

"The library was absolutely free. We walk in, read and I can confidently state that the information I read from the books shaped my career path".

Nicholus added that James did not stop at setting up a library. He interacted with the youth, often teaching them about national politics at the time, hence increasing their knowledge levels and making them interested in the affairs of their country.

Charles Mwanguhya Mpagi, a Journalist and member of the ActionAid Board described James as a man with an infectious smile that left an indelible mark on people. He added that James possessed a unique ability of connecting issues across the country.

Mr. Benson Ekwee Ocen, remembers James by the advice he passed on to him 15 years ago.

"He told me that if I want to change the world, I must be courageous, knowledgeable and consistent. That the world labours people who keep shifting like shadows. Those words have never left my life."

The Chairperson of the AAU Governing Board , Dr Consolata Kabonesa stated that James was not only an elder but a role model. She called on the house to emulate what she saw and experienced in James. [Click here to hear James speak during his last interview with ActionAid.](#)

### ActionAid Joins Activists to Demand for independent inquiry in Kasese Killings

Last Friday, ActionAid together with 40 other organizations appealed to the Ugandan government to facilitate independent and transparent investigations, and hold security forces accountable for the November 2016 clashes in Kasese district. In a Press Conference, the Activists urged the government to invite relevant African Commission experts and United Nations special rapporteurs to participate in investigations.

"At a time when the public trust in many inconclusive investigations into several murders in Uganda continues to wane, the government ought to accept international cooperation and support to restore trust in its commitment to investigate and act on these atrocities," read ActionAid's position on the matter.

The coalition questioned why no military or police personnel have been charged for their conduct during the violence that preceded the arrest of Charles Wesley Mumbere, the King of Rwenzuru Kingdom and 180 of his subjects. Mumbere and his subjects, most of them royal guards, have since been charged with murder, treason, and terrorism, among other crimes.

"The Ugandan government took significant steps to charge almost 200 civilians for their alleged involvement in the violence in Kasese. But six months after this unexplained and overwhelming use of lethal force by the police and military, the government has taken no steps at all to investigate their role or to provide justice for the many victims", stated Ms. Maria Burnett, the East Africa Director at Human Rights Watch.

Although government put the death toll from the clashes at 103 people, a report by Human rights Watch indicates that at least 55 people, including 14 police officers, were killed on November 26, and that more than 100 people were killed by joint security forces during the attack on the Rwenzuru Palace compound.

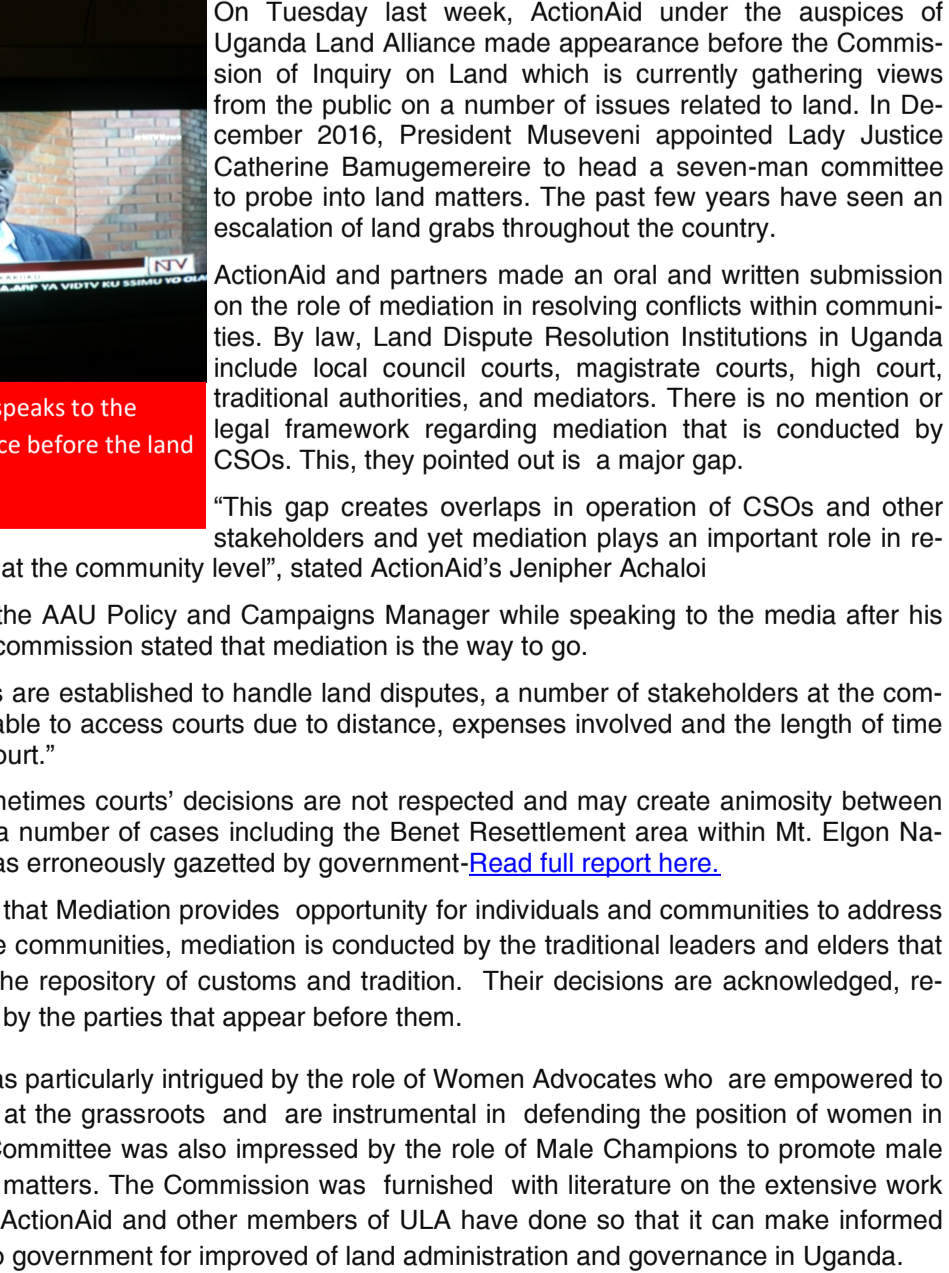
Burnett said that the government should not continue to hide under the guise of politics to deny justice to its citizens. She said that government is supposed to account for what happened in Kasese.

Irene Ovonji Odida, the Executive Director for Uganda Women Lawyers Association( FIDA) asked the public to demand that government explains its position in ensuring that the people of Kasese obtain justice. Ovonji challenged the Defence and Internal Affairs committee of Parliament to spell out what they have done in addressing excesses from the Kasese clashes. She noted that several members of parliament have left the mass murders in Kasese as an issue of the area MPs.

Godber Tumushabe, also an Activist noted that it is wrong for citizens to keep silent on such matters adding that government institutions would not be sufficient for a thorough investigation.

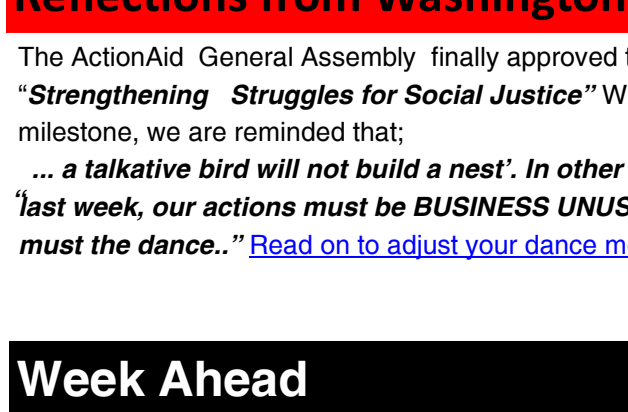
"The world is watching how the government of Uganda is responding to the Kasese killings," said Kerry Kennedy, the President of Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, adding that nothing less than a comprehensive, credible, and independent investigation into the role played by security forces in the deaths of over one hundred Ugandans is acceptable.

Some of the organizations represented at the Press conference include Advocates for Research in Development, Akina Mama Wa Afrika , Anti-Mines Network-Rwenzori (AMNET-FR), Centre for Constitutional Governance , Chapter Four Uganda, Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda , Foundation for Human Rights Initiative and the US based Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights among others.



R-L: Human Rights Lawyer and AAU Governing Board Deputy Chairperson Mr Nicholus Opiyo, FIDA CEO Ms. Irene Ovonji and Ms. Maria Burnett of Human Rights Watch at the press conference last Friday.

### YESSSEN Rollout goes to Amuru and Kotido!



Some of the youth who are set to benefit from the project during the meeting. They were tipped to take the project seriously.

Last Week, ActionAid continued with the Participatory Consultation meetings for the Youth Empowerment for Self-Employment and National Development (YESSSEN) Project in the districts of implementation. After successfully meeting with the Nwoya District leadership earlier in the month, a similar meetings were conducted with the Amuru and Kotido district Stakeholders. YESSSEN Project aims at reaching out to children and youths (out of school) to engage in gainful economic activities. It is being co-funded by ActionAid and European Union.

Mr. Kidega Samuel, the Amuru District Commercial Officer thanked ActionAid for considering Amuru for implementation of the project. He cautioned that the selection criteria for the project beneficiaries should be free and fair to promote community ownership of the project.

Ms Apiyo Catherine, the AG-LCV Chairperson at the meeting advised the youth to take the project seriously to boost their livelihoods.

"I also want to guide that only youth who have the zeal to change their livelihoods are the ones who should be selected to benefit from the project. We should not waste resources", she appealed.

In Kotido, the stakeholders agreed to a selection committee comprising of the L.C.1, parish chiefs and youth chairpersons. The meeting agreed that all youth benefit from the project will be vetted by the youth council at the sub country and district level.

The YESSSEN project aims at reducing youth unemployment through quality education and skills development, achieving food security and improving nutrition, sustainable utilization of natural resources and increased resilience to climate change.

### ActionAid at Land commission of inquiry!



AAU's Fred Kawooya speaks to the media after appearance before the land commission.

On Tuesday last week, ActionAid under the auspices of Uganda Land Alliance made appearance before the Commission of Inquiry on Land which is currently gathering views from the public on a number of issues related to land. In December 2016, President Museveni appointed Lady Justice Catherine Bamugemereire to head a seven-man committee to probe into land matters. The past few years have seen an escalation of land grabs throughout the country.

ActionAid and partners made an oral and written submission on the role of mediation in resolving conflicts within communities. By law, Land Dispute Resolution Institutions in Uganda include local council courts, magistrate courts, high court, traditional authorities, and mediators. There is no mention or legal framework regarding mediation that is conducted by CSOs. This, they pointed out is a major gap.

"This gap creates overlaps in operation of CSOs and other stakeholders and yet mediation plays an important role in resolving land conflict at the community level", stated ActionAid's Jenipher Achaloi

Fredrick Kawooya, the AAU Policy and Campaigns Manager while speaking to the media after his interaction with the commission stated that mediation is the way to go.

"Although the courts are established to handle land disputes, a number of stakeholders at the community level are unable to access courts due to distance, expenses involved and the length of time that cases take to court."

He added that 'Sometimes courts' decisions are not respected and may create animosity between parties as seen by a number of cases including the Benet Resettlement area within Mt. Elgon National Park which was erroneously gazetted by government- [Read full report here.](#)

The team reasoned that Mediation provides opportunity for individuals and communities to address such conflicts. In the communities, mediation is conducted by the traditional leaders and elders that are believed to be the repository of customs and tradition. Their decisions are acknowledged, respected and upheld by the parties that appear before them.

The Commission was particularly intrigued by the role of Women Advocates who are empowered to mediate land cases at the grassroots and are instrumental in defending the position of women in land matters. The Committee was also impressed by the role of Male Champions to promote male involvement in land matters. The Commission was furnished with literature on the extensive work related to land that ActionAid and other members of ULA have done so that it can make informed recommendations to government for improved of land administration and governance in Uganda.

### Reflections from Washington

The ActionAid General Assembly finally approved the organisation's 5th Country Strategic paper; ***Strengthening Struggles for Social Justice***" While we may want to sing and celebrate to this milestone, we are reminded that;

***... a talkative bird will not build a nest! In other words, time is now for action! Like I stated 'last week, our actions must be BUSINESS UNUSUAL for the music has changed and so must the dance..'*** [Read on to adjust your dance moves according to the new tune!](#)

### Week Ahead

- This Thursday, ActionAid will hold a breakfast meeting on countering restrictions on freedom of expression through cyber laws.