

Weekly

Aug 14— 19



Last week, the 3rd ActionAid Women's Forum was held. The stories of change in the lives of the women as a result of the last two forums were amazing, and heart warming. The Country Director pledged to ring-fence the Women Forum budget to ensure that it happens every year. He also committed to work towards improving the working conditions for the women to increase female staff retention!

The impact of the Women's Forum..



Above: L-R: The ladies during an aerobics session. Centre and right are the ladies exchanging gifts at the event. **Below:** Nutritionist Christine speaking to the ladies. Centre is Catherine from Jubilee insurance tipping ladies on retirement packages while right is Arthur closing the forum.

The 4th annual ActionAid Women's forum was held last week at Royal suites in Bugolobi. The highlight of this year's forum is not necessarily the very inspiring and empowering activities that were lined up for the ladies, but the stories of change.

"After attending the last women's forum, I resolved to work towards attaining financial stability. In the last one year, I have saved UGX12000000/=," stated one of the ladies.

"I have started a primary school with about 250 pupils ,thanks to the inspiring entrepreneurial talk from the last Women's forum", added another lady.

"I got the courage and confidence to leave a violent relationship. I attribute this to the women's forum", stated another.

"I have enrolled to study my Masters degree, thanks to the Women's forum that has tipped us to add value to ourselves". In fact, seven other ladies testified to have enrolled for higher studies.

"I have given my partner an ultimatum, he either marries me legally or I leave the relationship".

Many ladies stated that they have acquired pieces of land in their names thanks to the forum.

The stories of change were as many as the Women in the organisation as each of them had a success to attribute to the forum.

During the three day event, the ladies were tipped on work life balance by solome Nakaweesi Kimbugwe. She encouraged the ladies to pave their way into top management positions but should never forget to have *'me time'*.

The ladies were also guided on healthy living through good nutrition by re-known nutritionist Christine Anyumel. To further boost the entrepreneurial skills, the ladies visited the Uganda Industrial Research Institute. While there, they were trained on how to make lotions, yoghurt, ice-cream, crafts from local materials among others. Many of the ladies booked with the institute to have thorough training in making some commodities during their annual leaves.

Arthur Larok, the Country Director of ActionAid joined the ladies on the 3rd day to officially close the forum. He stated that it was a deep honour for him to have access to the women's forum. He told the women that Feminism is not entirely about women but the structural issues that stop women from progressing.

"If these structural issues are addressed, women will be on top. We must unearth the invisible and hidden power", he said while responding to some of the issues that the women raised as challenges in the work place.

Arthur committed that before the midterm review of the yet to be launched 5th Strategy Paper, there will be a 10% increase of the women in leadership positions within the organisation. He also pledged to improve the working conditions of the women in order to reduce the percentage of the women who leave the organisation to less than 10%.

Lastly, Arthur committed to ring - fence the budget of the Women's forum.

"With all the stories of change I have heard here, the Women's forum is worth the investment. I will ensure that just like salaries, the budget of the forum is not touched", he affirmed to a thunderous applauded from the ladies.

The ladies elected new office bearers (there is no ruling pakalast in women's forum).

Ms. Jennipher Achaloi was elected chairperson, deputized by Ms. Cherukut Sisco Zaitun. Ms Esther Babirye will be the forum's Treasurer while Samanya Rita Kyategeka will be the Secretary. The committee is tasked with the development of a Forum's strategic plan among other activities.

At the end of the three day forum, the ladies exchanged gifts to seal off their sisterhood and cut cake to celebrate the so many achievements.

AAU Staff SACCO continues to grow!



A member of the SACCO making a submission during the meeting last Saturday

The ActionAid Uganda Staff Sacco Ltd held its 3rd annual General meeting last Saturday at the ActionAid head offices in Kansanga.

The Chairperson of the Sacco, Ms Saida Bogere welcomed members to the meeting and assuring them that her committee is still committed to the principles of good corporate governance as articulated in the savings and credit cooperative bylaws and this has led to the steady growth of the SACCO

"It gives me a lot of pride to inform you that the SACCO has become profitable with over half a billion shillings and is currently declaring an interest of UGX 40270893 on savings with 24 new members registered in 2016 alone", she noted.

Saida also suggested that the SACCO needs to continue exploring avenues of expanding its operations by introducing innovative products and services to broaden its revenue base and improve service delivery to its members.

During the meeting, members approved the float of dormant shares. It is hoped that this will improve the revenue base of the SACCO. Members were also pleased to note that the SACCO accounts and operations were audited and declared unqualified. The Audit report was hence approved.

The AGM elected a supervisory committee of three people; Yuda Rwakogo, Ernest Kaddu and Esther Kiseembo. This was in line with the recently passed Cooperative societies Act. The committee is expected to retire annually.

An investment plan was presented to the members and approved with amendments. The committee under the guidance of the Supervisory committee is expected to carry out a thorough investment analysis of the proposed businesses (Transport and Real Estate) and present it to the members before investment starts.

The SACCO's proposed annual budget was also approved with amendments. Thank you for saving with the ActionAid SACCO, and for those who are not saving with it, you can at least borrow from it at the best interest rate in the country.

Resource Mobilizers moved by work in Pader!



The guests took off time to listen to the accounts of community members on the impact of the funds they mobilize.

Last week, ActionAid Pader hosted guests from **Ayuda En Accion**(Spanish). The organisation based in Spain mobilizes donors who donate money channelled to ActionAid Uganda (Pader) through ActionAid Spain.

The guests held meetings with the AAU team in Pader led by the Manager of Partnerships and Capacity Building, Richard Olong and Job Bua, the Program Officer in Pader. They also interacted with the district leadership and braved the muddy roads to visit the communities.

The guests said that they were privileged to visit Pader, which is the youngest LRP that they have supported with resource mobilization from Spain (supported since 2012)

"We now understand the post conflict context that the LRP operates in. We have a better understanding of the injustices in the community and the uniqueness of the interventions",

they said.

Richard Olong added that the fact that ActionAid Uganda's Child Sponsorship relationship with Spain comes to an end in 2020, the visit was timely as it could potentially positively influence the funding relationship after 2020.

"The visitors saw for themselves the work AAU has done with the financial support from Spain. They saw the work that remains to be done in the years to come which needs financial support", he said, adding that the interaction that the guests had with the war victims left them on tears.

Reflections from the CD; Impressed with the Women's Forum!



Today, Arthur speaks to the men who made a lot of noise last week when the women left them in office to go for their three days Women's forum.

He writes that ,

"This year's meeting was very special for me, not just because I was given a rousing and special welcome and warm hugs after being away from the country for long but more importantly because of what I heard them discuss and resolve. There have always been some misgivings mainly by male staff (*with a few female ones*) about the efficacy of the Women's Forum as a 'safe-space' for female staff. They raise many questions such as - why don't we allow men to attend? What concrete results come out of such forums? Why should the organisation invest in such a forum at a time when funding is a challenge for most development organisations, ActionAid inclusive? These questions reflect as much a lack of understanding of what the essence of the Women's Forum is, as a re-affirmation of a patriarchal mentality and stereotypes that many male and some female staff hold".

[Read the full blog on Arthur's reflections on the Women's forum here](#)

WEEK AHEAD:

- The Programs Director, Harriet Gimbo is still in Myanmar supporting the ActionAid office develop a Country Strategy Paper
- The Fundraising Director is in Lira for an engagement with the Lango leadership over the proposed land amendment Bill
- The Country Director will be in Ntungamo this week for a CSO leaders meeting
- The Country Director will also attend a CSO leaders meeting on Land reforms at the at Uganda Land Alliance