

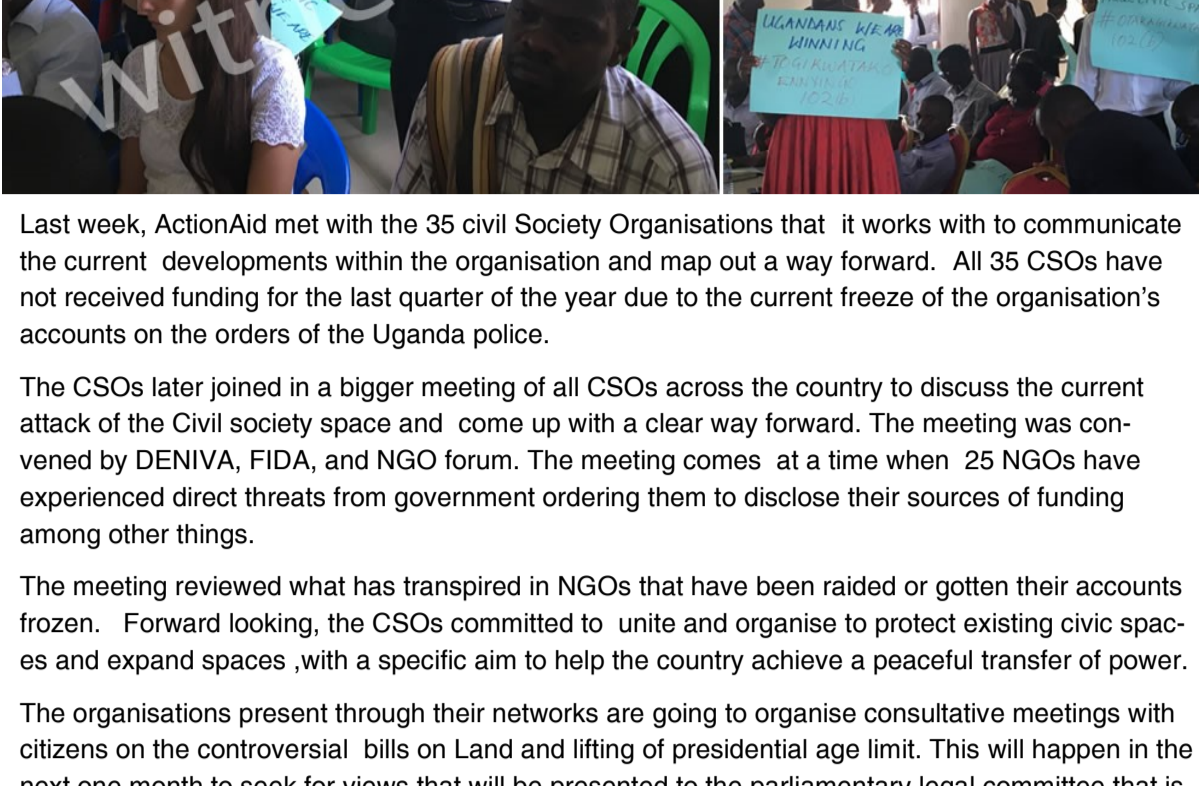
Weekly

Oct 23 - 29



The public continues to be astonished by the fact that ActionAid Uganda staff continue to report to their different offices not to posture but actually work. In this edition of the weekly, we speak to some staff and they tell us what their units are up to, their fears, learnings and hopes. Welcome to this weekly edition.

CSOs Push back Govt Interference!



Last week, ActionAid met with the 35 civil Society Organisations that it works with to communicate the current developments within the organisation and map out a way forward. All 35 CSOs have not received funding for the last quarter of the year due to the current freeze of the organisation's accounts on the orders of the Uganda police.

The CSOs later joined in a bigger meeting of all CSOs across the country to discuss the current attack of the Civil society space and come up with a clear way forward. The meeting was convened by DENIVA, FIDA, and NGO forum. The meeting comes at a time when 25 NGOs have experienced direct threats from government ordering them to disclose their sources of funding among other things.

The meeting reviewed what has transpired in NGOs that have been raided or gotten their accounts frozen. Forward looking, the CSOs committed to unite and organise to protect existing civic spaces and expand spaces, with a specific aim to help the country achieve a peaceful transfer of power.

The organisations present through their networks are going to organise consultative meetings with citizens on the controversial bills on Land and lifting of presidential age limit. This will happen in the next one month to seek for views that will be presented to the parliamentary legal committee that is reviewing the respective Bills.

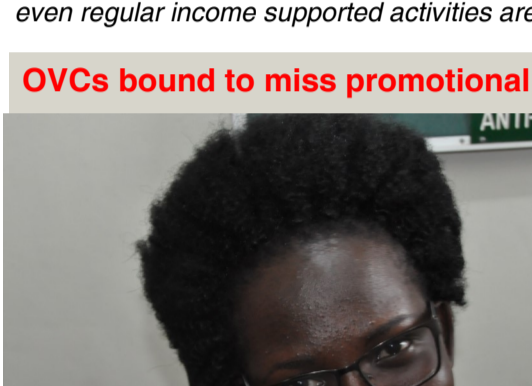
In a joint statement made to the media after the meeting, the NGOs leaders demanded that government stops its current intimidation and attack on civic organizations. The organizations also appealed to the donor community and development partners to respect the legitimate initiatives that citizens have come up with and steer clear of stifling them merely because of the funding and support they extend to them.

[Read related article in the media here.](#)

Staff speak out following Police siege!

After the news of the freezing of ActionAid accounts went out, so many people expected that staff will sit at home and wait to resume work after the accounts are unfrozen. While in the different spaces, the question on every one's lips has been; Are you people still working? The answer is yes. ActionAid offices remain open and staff continue to work at ensuring that social injustice is eradicated in the country. To confirm this, the Weekly team spoke to staff both at the head and Cluster offices. They answer your questions on how they are managing under the circumstances.

Finance unit busy with 2018 Planning and budgeting Cycle-Ernest Kaddu



Ernest Kaddu, AAU's Finance Manager

"The finance unit is currently using this time to complete the 2018 planning and budgeting cycle, cleaning of the books of accounts while preparing for both the upcoming interim external audit and the international audit both due in early November.

Residual funds that were held at the field offices at the time of the accounts' freeze have been used to secure cluster office operations for the short term to ensure that offices do not go down on any utility like water, electricity, communication and security.

However, all the major field operations are constrained by the lack of money as we have not processed any cash flows to any field offices over the last month. Most hard hit are the various directly donor supported projects that had funds channelled in-country through the frozen accounts. On the flip side, even regular income supported activities are fully grounded by the current situation."

OVCs bound to miss promotional Exams, no fees for them-Fiona Awili



Partnerships Officer, Fiona Awili

"The freezing of ActionAid Uganda's accounts has a profound effect in the day to day operations of our partner organizations and the communities we serve. It is very unfortunate that this incident happened when our partners (30 organizations) had not received their funding for the fourth quarter; (October-December). Five more organisations which we fund and partner with on a utility based arrangement have also been affected.

Tusitukirewamu and Makerere Women Development Association (MAWDA) who work with Orphans and Vulnerable Children are worst hit. Due to the accounts freeze, they have not received funding to pay for both school fees and scholastic materials for the children. This being a promotional term, the pupils are quite anxious and worried.

We have communicated to all our partners about the current developments and we pray that the Government will reconsider their stand on our accounts and Uganda as a whole."

We feel supported and will deliver on our obligations-Sheila Bukirwa



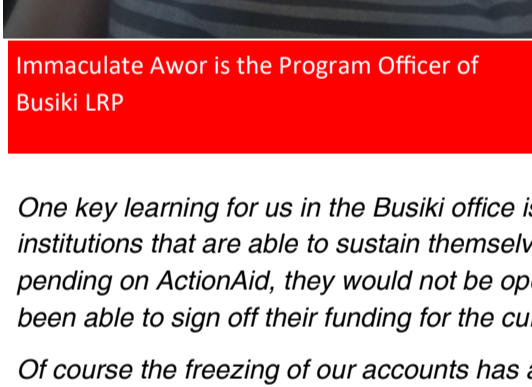
Sheila, the Sponsorship Coordinator prepares child messages for postage

"The sponsorship unit operations have continued to run normally despite the prevailing circumstances. Once supporters have signed up, they are promised a minimum of two updates annually to be sent in June and December. In order to deliver these on time, the process should start early with collection of child messages as well as success stories. Thankfully, by the time the AAU offices were raided by police, our colleagues in the field offices had already started the message collection process. The messages have since been delivered to our unit for further checks and preparation for postage to our supporters.

An official communication was prepared and shared with all the Funding Affiliates who then took up the responsibility of handling any inquiries that were bound to arise relating to the incidents. In addition, the Child Sponsorship & Individual Giving Advisor at ActionAid International is in touch with us on a regular basis to check our progress with the work.

In general, we feel supported as a unit and are positive that we will be able to deliver the communications to our supporters as expected."

We have strengthened copying mechanisms- David Moses Okello



David Moses Okello is the Coordinator of the ActionAid Gulu Cluster

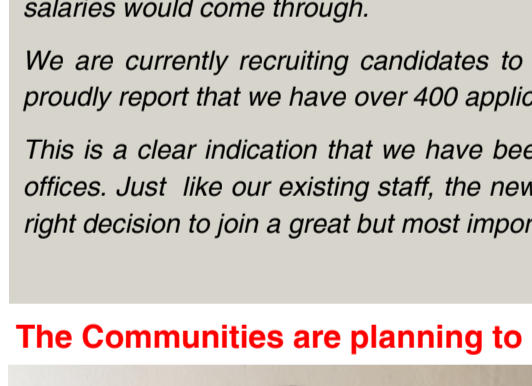
"I feel very positive after a number of actions taken by management but also local initiatives undertaken at the cluster, including team building exercise. This has enabled us strengthen copying mechanisms but also created a platform for us to get regular and timely feedback from the communities we work with and other stakeholders.

However, it does not rule out the fact that we are operating under difficulties with most of the planned activities affected. We have not been able to respond to the several requests for support from local governments, Police and other partners. We particularly failed to support Amuru District that had requested for help in transporting examination materials (for the current National examinations) to the hard to reach areas of the district.

Operations at the three GBV shelters of Gulu, Lira and Amuru have continued. Majority of the cases being handled have been referred by the Police which institution ordered for the freezing of our accounts.

We have embarked on a road map to inform communities that we work with about the developments within the organisation. We have also called for patience from our service providers as management continues to work for the unfreezing of the accounts. We are also investing more time to scan out incidences of negative misrepresentation of our interventions "

The siege of our offices has given us leverage- Immaculate Awor



Immaculate Awor is the Program Officer of Busiki LRP

"For me, this whole experience has proved what I have always told family and friends about ActionAid, that our work as an organization speaks for itself and that it's not just talk but a walk of the talk; giving a voice to the voiceless, siding with the poor and excluded and empowering people to claim and defend their rights. The siege of our offices and freezing of our accounts has given us leverage because people have come to recognize ActionAid for what we do especially those who appreciate democracy and good governance. It has also made me appreciate the fact that not everyone believes in what we do and that anytime you stand for the truth, you should expect a lot of opposition especially from those who would rather keep citizens in ignorance so as to exploit them. I will however not fail to mention that because of the overall situation, there is some anxiety and a lot of uncertainty especially about what the future holds.

One key learning for us in the Busiki office is the importance of building strong structures/institutions that are able to sustain themselves. This applies to our partners. If they were solely depending on ActionAid, they would not be operating in the current circumstances where we have not been able to sign off their funding for the current quarter.

Of course the freezing of our accounts has affected our field operations. That notwithstanding, we have had an opportunity to positively engage the partners and communities to allay fears of some stakeholders who believe it is the end of the road for the organization. Worth mentioning is the support from some district officials (I won't mention names and titles) who are actually concerned about the impact this whole situation is having on the community and suggesting ways of reversing the developments."

We are working day and night to maintain staff motivation- Mathias Nyombi



Mathias Nyombi, the HR officer at ActionAid runs through some of the hundreds of applications for the five vacant positions.

"The most critical resource in any organization is the Human Capital". Notwithstanding the disruptions by the raids, freezing of our operating accounts, and the ongoing police investigations, our Human Resource has been and is still very committed to our struggles and aspirations. We develop clear work plans for all our institutional activities, and set key deliverables for each of our staff, both resourced and non-resourced for our effective operation. And because of our relevance in the communities where we operate and the country at large; we have continued to ensure that our staff accomplish all activities that we had committed funds to before the closure of our accounts,

We have also urged our staff to continue reporting and accounting on all activities that do not necessarily require funding. The unit has also devoted time to adequately prepare staff for any eventualities but working day and night to maintain their motivation in the current situation.

During this period of interruptions, we have attracted more human capital who strongly believe in our mission. The five new staff happily signed their contracts even when they were not sure if their salaries would come through.

We are currently recruiting candidates to fill five vacant positions before the year ends. We can proudly report that we have 400 applications for these positions.

This is a clear indication that we have been and are still relevant to the communities beyond our offices. Just like our existing staff, the new staff feel more energized and proud to have made the right decision to join a great but most importantly an impactful institution."

The Communities are planning to demonstrate- Benjamin Tukei



Tukei is the Program Officer at the ActionAid Katakwi Cluster

"I feel government is acting irresponsible to the needs of the communities whom we work for. However, I have made sure that I'm present in most of the district engagements which has surprised many district officials who expect us to be closed and at home.

Fortunate or unfortunate, the wider community is aware about the developments. A section of community members whom we work with directly have expressed concern over the matter. The people from Usuk sub country are threatening to demonstrate against the freezing of the accounts. They feel that government's move to freeze the accounts of AAU, the organisation that is supporting them to better livelihoods is a direct attack on them.

My greatest fear is that we shall not be able to accomplish this year's activities which will negatively affect the communities we work with. I also fear that if the situation does not change, we may end up losing several strategic partners and staff."

Work continues at the women Protection Centre despite limitations- Jennifer Ayot



Jenipher is the program officer of Gulu GBV shelter.

"I feel very hopeful that in due course the situation will normalise. As we wait for that time however there is need to continue to support one another.

At the Gulu GBV shelter, the team took time to pay courtesy calls to key partners to inform them about the developments and emphasize the fact that our offices are open and we are continuing to work normally except for some of the field activities which requires logistics. We have also taken the opportunity at different spaces to inform the stakeholders on the current situation, who have been very supportive and understanding. Work has continued normally at the Women Protection Centre despite the limitations."

Women Rights Platform meeting held in South Africa



The first Women Rights Platform meeting was held last week in South Africa. The meeting was the first of its kind after the approval of the ActionAid International strategy- Action for Global Justice.

The meeting was convened to create collective thinking on programme design and learning priorities for two International Priority areas of Unpaid Care & Decent Work (Economic Justice) and Ending Violence and Exclusion of Marginalized and Targeted Women. AAU's Program Director; Harriet Gimbo joined colleagues from the entire ActionAid federation to internalise the global strategy and unpack the Women Rights priorities.

"We were able to deepen our understanding of power, its dimensions, intersectional feminism and its analysis. We also designed an integrated programme framework and Monitoring Evaluation and Learning agenda", she said adding that the team also understood the synergies and linkages to guide collective efforts of the Women Rights International platform.

There was a ground breaking session on working with social movements shared by three women from the famous fees must fall South Africa campaign, women affected by mining and the Rambo activists alliance respectively.

The experiences shared enabled participants to appreciate that one can be an activist from wherever they are by doing something that they are passionate about which can later grow into a stronger collective agenda.

"The activists also emphasised self-care in activism as there is significant psychological strain around the world order today hence sustainability of movements starts with sustainability of the self", stated Harriet.

Moving forward, the Women Rights platform will be completing and sharing the program frameworks as well as sharing their planned programs in the Humanitarian, livelihoods and Governance platforms as well as the youth working group.

Week Ahead

- The ActionAid international Secretariat has sent two staff to Uganda to support the team amidst the prevailing situation.
- ActionAid Uganda Staff at the Head office will have a one day meeting with the Global Security Advisor