



## **MONITORING VISIT TO ASSESS TOTs ADVOCACY & CAMPAIGN WORK IN THE REGIONS OF WEST NILE, ACHOLI AND TESO.**



*NA members of Nampumpum Sub-county in Kotido District during the monitoring visit.*

SEATINI Uganda with support from OXFAM organized monitoring visits to assess TOTs advocacy campaign work in West Nile (Arua & Koboko), Acholi (Pader & Agago) and Teso (Soroti, Serere & Kotido) regions. This was done alongside other partners who included; Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), AFIC, CEFORD, PAC, WORUDET and CEWIT under the Financing for Development Project. The project envisions an efficient public finance system in Uganda that promotes fiscal measures for enhanced inclusive growth and active participation of citizens.

The visits aimed at assessing the collaboration under the financing for development project at national and subnational level, analyze the work done by Trainers of Trainers (TOTs) since the past engagements under the F4D organized by CEWIT in 2016 & SEATINI in 2017 and finally review the work of the Neighborhood Assemblies located in their respective regions.

During the visits, it was observed that gaps still exist between the policy makers and citizens on issues pertaining the tax policy and practices. It is therefore imperative that citizens, policy makers, civil society, academia and government technocrats come together to strategize on developing more progressive tax policies for the country. World over, capacity building has been an integral part of advocacy and policy influence. Through this project, a number of interventions have taken place since its inception in 2016 using different approaches and strategies.

In Teso region, Julius Arugo from Public affairs Centre Uganda (PAC) as well as the coordinator in the region briefed the team on the current developments within the various communities among

which were; 17 trainings targeting Neighborhood Assemblies, private sector based in trading centers and community members. 120 Training manuals disseminated to Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), regional Mayors, Sub-County's, NAs & TOTs in the region.

In West Nile (Arua & Koboko) region, Ayeyo Kennedy the coordinator of the regions, briefed the team on the activities that the two NAs (AMUDRILE Women's Group for Development & Boliye) had implemented within the communities for the past period.



***A temporally bridge connecting Nampumpum Sub-county constructed with the NAs intervention after heavy rains washed away the old one***

Among the key successes has been the recruitment of a new Sub-County Parish chiefs from within the Neighborhood Assembly members of different locations who have ensured improved collections and service delivery. This has brought a close link between the tax paying communities and the administrative local governments.

After civic engagements & trainings, a majority of locals have had a change of heart and attitude towards payment of tax and have thus started to appreciate its importance by paying their equal share of tax. The old habits of concealing businesses from tax assessors seems to be gradually phasing out over time.

The various district leadership have expressed their appreciation for the programme and have offered to willingly collaborate with the NAs towards awareness raising among the community on tax, budget and access to information related issues.

There has been an increase in the compliance levels which has been attributed to the locals witnessing the outcome of their taxes and proper utilization of the collected taxes. Hygiene facilities (toilets) have been constructed for primary schools as a result of parents engaging council officials to do more for improved kid's welfare. Some health facilities have been equipped with new maternity beds for expectant mothers.





*NA members of Boriye in Koboko district*

NAs advocated for the construction of a bridge (Orah Bridge) in Arua which had broken down hampering the smooth movement of goods and services. In kotido district, Nampumpum sub-county, the connection bridge was washed away as a result of the heavy rains which also claimed the lives of 7 local women. However after the NAs intervention with the RDC, a temporally concrete bridge was constructed and a permanent one to be set up after allocation of funds in the new financial year.

Sensitization and training have had an impact on the locals and resulted into reduced levels of school dropouts. This has been as a result of parents paying taxes and local councils setting up good schools for improved education.

However a number of challenges still hinder the NAs performance;

- Lack of key information especially in regards to the threshold for taxable commodities.
- Poor communication skills by concerned authorities in the course of collecting tax fees.
- Understaffing of sub-county officials has resulted in low collections and inability to traverse most villages. There is also understaffing within the hospitals (Health Centre IV) which leads to poor service delivery.
- Exclusion of locals from the budgeting and planning process limits them from prioritizing their community needs.
- High demands and expectations from the public in regards to service delivery. In the education sector, there are schools that are not producing good grades. For instance out of the 8 primary schools in Paimol sub-county (Agago district), only one school got a first

grade which doesn't reflect well to parents. Teachers are also transferred without immediate replacements.

- Cases of double taxation in the form of market entry and loading fees.
- Spending at source is still a major problem and cross cutting along most regions.
- Companies that win tenders to collect revenue on behalf of the local government tend to put in place hiked tax rates and yet the local officials do less to intervene. This has resulted in a number of farmers to sell their produce outside the designated places resulting to tax evasion and lost revenues to the local government.

As a way forward;

- Local officials need to re-visit the planning and budgeting process starting from the local level to enable the TOTs monitor the process.
- Periodical capacity building for the neighborhood assemblies should be put in place.
- Linkage of taxation, budgeting, planning and service delivery.
- Translation of information requests into local languages for local to better understand.
- Local council officials to get more involved in the activities of the neighborhood assemblies.
- Develop an action plan (Oxfam) for the next 3 years for the continuation of the project.



***Monitoring team members from Oxfam, SEATINI, CSBAG, CEWIT, AFRIC, PAC, CEFORD & WORUDET.***