SEATINI

Strengthening Africa in World Trade

SPECIAL Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SEATINI UGANDA

Dear Comrades and Valued Stakeholders,
Warm greetings from the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI).

As we enter the nineth month of the year, I want to express my gratitude for your unwavering support and partnership. Together, we have made significant strides towards our mission *"to strengthen stakeholders' capacity to effectively influence trade, fiscal and investment related policies and processes for the realization of sustained equitable development and improved livelihoods in Uganda and the East African region"*

In this special edition of our newsletter, I am excited to share some of the key highlights around our pursuit for pro development trade, fiscal and investment policies and practices at all levels:

- We conducted various engagements aimed at enhancing stakeholders' knowledge and understanding on trade, fiscal and investment related issues. SEATINI has continued to engage key stakeholders towards enhancing their knowledge on the dynamics of global trade including EU's unilateral Directives and their implications on Africa's agriculture sector and the coffee sub sector in particular. These efforts are also aimed at promoting equitable and transformative EU-Africa Trade and Investment relations.
- SEATINI and Tax Justice Network Africa in partnership with the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) strengthened the capacity of selected journalists to effectively report on Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) and their impact on Domestic Revenue Mobilization and service delivery. Together with ACME, we provided journalists with the essential knowledge and tools to effectively understand and monitor the implementation of the Uganda National Budget for FY 2024/25.
- We continued to work closely with various strategic partners, relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, CSOs and networks, Intergovernmental Institutions Private Sector Associations to deliver on our mandate. Notably, SEATINI maintained her strategic partnerships with relevant MDAs and Intergovernmental Institutions such as Ministry of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives (MTIC), Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED), Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), Ministry of East African Community Affairs (MEACA), Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda Coffee Development Authority, East African Legislative Assembly, Parliamentary Committees on Finance, Trade, Agriculture, among other key institutions.
- SEATINI has continued to engage the diverse media towards putting pertinent issues in the public domain, enhancing their knowledge on various trade, fiscal and investment related issues. On 6th August 2024, SEATINI together with regional consortiums (TJNA, AFRODAD and Stop the Bleeding Consortium TJNA, AFRODAD and Stop the Bleeding Consortium) working on tax, debt, and IFF related issues held a Virtual Presser on Reforming of the Global Financial and Economic Architecture.
- We continued to generate and disseminate various knowledge products to enhance the capacity of stakeholders and inform policy decisions and discourses on trade, fiscal and investment related issues.
- Our team of resident experts have continued to engage in and influence key policy processes in addition to amplifying voices and promoting agency of key stakeholders in such policy processes at all levels. We continue to advocate for inclusive and equitable trade, fiscal and investment related practices.
- The Graduate Trainee Program being conducted by SEATINI is one of SEATINI's flagship programs aimed at shaping the next generation of critical thinkers, policy analysts and social justice champions. We have now embarked on our Fourth Cohort of the Program with graduates from various disciplines within Uganda and internationally.
- Together with other National Budget Month Partners, SEATINI successfully organized the East Africa Community FY 2024/25 Dialogue on Debt and Tax. This remains pivotal in shaping regional perspectives on trade, fiscal and investment related issues.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to the quest for social justice in all our pursuits.

Your continued support has been instrumental in our success. I invite you to continue this journey with us as we strive to promote a more just, equitable and sustainable world for all.
We look forward to your feedback.

Ms. Jane Nalunga
Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda

Securing the Future of Africa's Coffee Trade: Stakeholders Make Proposals towards Complying with EU Regulations

Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI Uganda gives key remarks at the meeting

The global coffee market is experiencing robust growth, with a projected market value of $132.1 billion in 2024, anticipated to reach $166.4 billion by 2029, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of approximately 5.2% during this period. This surge is driven by increasing coffee consumption in both established markets like North America and Europe, as well as emerging markets in Asia and Eastern Europe, where coffee culture is rapidly developing.

Climate change among other factors have started to impact South American and Southeast Asian countries like Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, and Indonesia who were the traditional powerhouses of the coffee industry paving the way for African nations to step into the spotlight. African countries such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda are now recognized for producing some of the world's finest coffee beans. As the global demand for high-quality coffee surges, Africa's potential to dominate this market has become increasingly apparent. However, to secure this future, Africa's coffee sector must navigate emerging policy shifts and challenges, including new European Union regulations that could impact its access to crucial markets.

Specifically, the European Union's Regulation on deforestation free products (EUDR) establishes an exacting due diligence process for companies regarding the import of deforestation risk products such as palm oil, timber, cocoa, coffee, leather, wood, pulp, and furniture among others. For countries such as Uganda, nearly 60% of its coffee is exported to the EU and 40% to Italy. Thus, the European Union is a very important export market for coffee and most of Uganda's agricultural products.

While delivering the keynote address on behalf of the Executive Director of the International Coffee Organization (ICO), Mr. Dock No, Statistical Coordinator at ICO stressed Africa must move beyond exporting green beans and start capturing more value within the continent. "The future of coffee lies in creating a sustainable, highvalue product that meets international standards," he emphasized.

As part of our continued efforts to interrogate the evolving global trade policy landscape and its far-reaching implications, SEATINI Uganda organized a hybrid meeting on 27th August 2024 under the theme "Securing the Future of Africa's Coffee Trade".

Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI Uganda, emphasized the urgency of securing the future of Africa's coffee industry. She pointed out that countries like Uganda, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, which heavily rely on coffee exports, are particularly vulnerable to these regulatory shifts. "To secure the future of our coffee sector, we must tackle the various challenges head-on," Ms. Nalunga stressed.

According to Dr. Gerald Kyalo, Director of Development Services at the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) in the 2023/2024 fiscal year, Uganda exported 6.1 million bags of coffee, generating US$ 1.1 billion. This amount represented 77% of the annual target of 8 million bags, marking the highest revenue Uganda has ever earned from coffee in a single fiscal year. However, he warned that maintaining this momentum will be challenging under the new EU regulations.

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda noted that various global shifts, including the European Union Directives such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) have significant impacts on the agricultural sector

Mr. Richard Okot, Assistant Commissioner at the MTIC sharing key insights at the meeting

Mr. Dock No, Statistical Coordinator at the International Coffee Organization (ICO)

Dr. Gerald Kyalo, Director of Development Services, UCDA shares key efforts undertaken by UCDA

Mr. Antonie Fountain, Co-founder and Managing Director of the VOICE and VOCAL Networks joined the meeting virtually and shared key insights

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda moderating the meeting

and the coffee value chain. According to Mr. Kafeero, these dynamics introduce new and mandatory requirements for coffee value chain actors, which have direct implications on the coffee value chain and coffee exports to the EU.

Despite efforts by Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) to meet the various EUDR regulations, there is still a lot more to be done if Uganda is to meet the December 30th, 2024, compliance deadline.

Dr. Gerald Kyalo, noted that UCDA has developed a geo-spatial monitoring and evaluation system to enhance extension services and improve farmer registration, a critical step towards compliance.

"In preparation for the EUDR, UCDA has also partnered with the private sector to ensure comprehensive awareness about the regulations. SEATINI Uganda and other partners have contributed significantly to this effort, helping many value chain actors understand the necessity of compliance," Dr. Kyalo further noted.

Mr. Antonie Fountain, Co-founder and Managing Director of the VOICE and VOCAL Networks, highlighted that unlocking Africa's coffee potential requires bridging the gap between regulatory requirements and the practical realities faced by smallholder farmers. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that compliance measures do not impose excessive burdens on these farmers.

Mr. Richard Okot, Assistant Commissioner for External Trade at the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives (MTIC), called for a coordinated regional approach to address the challenges posed by the EUDR. "No country can tackle this alone. We need collaborative efforts across Africa to build resilient value chains that can withstand the pressure of these new regulations," he noted. Mr. Okot also emphasized the importance of research and development to improve coffee yields without expanding into forested areas.

Despite the challenges cited, there was a consensus that Uganda's coffee sector can still thrive if it adapts quickly and strategically. "The future of Uganda's coffee trade hinges on our ability to comply with these regulations while simultaneously innovating and expanding our market reach," Mr Okot advised.

SEATINI continues to spearhead discussions on fair trade practices that benefit all value chain actors, aimined to ensure African agricultural products meet trade requirements and secure market access.

Group photo showing a some of physical participants including members of CSOs, government MDAs, farmers and the media

Group photo of participants at the dialogue

SEATINI Uganda Explores Impacts of EU Directives on Uganda's Coffee Sector

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Uganda's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employment, with coffee as a primary cash crop and top export earner. As Uganda navigates the emerging trade requirements and sustainability regulations, particularly the European Union (EU) Directives such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D) and the European Union Deforestation Directive (EUDR), it is imperative to examine their implications on our agricultural sector, especially coffee sub sector.

In partnership with the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), SEATINI organized the National Stakeholders' Dialogue on the European Union Directives and their implications on the Coffee Value Chain on the 11th of July 2024.

Mr. Hebert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager of SEATINI Uganda, opened the discussions by highlighting the resilience of the coffee sector amidst many challenges like climate change and fluctuating market prices. "The coffee sector continues to be a vital part of our economy. At SEATINI, we pride ourselves in maintaining and nurturing strategic partnerships for greater outreach among key stakeholder constituencies," he noted. He emphasized the agility and adaptability of small-scale farmers in ensuring their crucial role in the agricultural sector.

Mr. Hebert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda makes opening remarks at the dialogue

Dr. Gerald Kyalo, Director of Development Services at UCDA, outlined the stringent nature of the new EU regulations. "EU regulations are retrospective: any coffee from deforested lands after 2020 risks rejection. Uganda must implement due diligence measures to protect exports and the environment." He further elaborated on the importance of compliance, stating, "Uganda's coffee faces new EU regulations on deforestation-free products. Every batch must prove its origin without any trace of forest degradation. Compliance not only ensures continued market access but also reinforces our commitment to environmental sustainability."

The introduction of tools such as the Geospatial Monitoring and Evaluation System and the Farmer Registration App has been pivotal. These tools ensure compliance with the EUDR by capturing detailed production and farmer data. "Since January 2023, UCDA and the private sector in the coffee industry have partnered for EU awareness sessions. The National Coffee Act (2021) and draft Coffee Regulation align with EU standards," Dr. Kyalo added.

The dialogue also addressed the need for inclusive decision-making processes. Hon. Christine Kaaya stressed the importance of involving civil society organizations like SEATINI in the EU Directives committee to ensure that all stakeholders in Uganda's coffee sector are represented. "Representation matters for sustainable progress," she asserted.

Hon. Kadogo Babirye Veronica, Mp of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), highlighted the importance of enhancing traceability systems to meet EU requirements. "To ensure our coffee remains competitive and desirable in international markets, UCDA's efforts must focus on enhancing the traceability system.

Dr. Gerald Kyalo, Director of Development Services at UCDA explaining EUDR in the context of Uganda

Hon. Linda Agnes Auma, Chairperson of the Agriculture Committee in the Parliament of Uganda

Meeting EU requirements is essential for our third-largest export, crucial for Uganda's economy."

Mr. Edward Mukiibi, Executive Director of Slow Foods Uganda, underscored the environmental impact of agricultural practices. "We must stop the denial and acknowledge the impact of our actions. Sugar cane and oil palm are already depleting our forests, and we cannot let coffee follow suit. Let's work together to ensure sustainable practices and protect our environment."

The need for a collaborative approach in tackling trade challenges was echoed by Mr. Richard Okot Okello, Assistant Commissioner for External Trade at the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives. "Trade dynamics have evolved. To tackle current challenges, we must develop a collaborative model that engages all stakeholders in the coffee value chain. How long will we rely on exporting raw green coffee? Adding value to even half of our 7 million bags could significantly increase our earnings."

The discussions also touched on diversifying markets beyond the EU. "We must diversify our markets beyond the EU. Huge opportunities exist in North Africa, China, and India. Segmenting our producers and targeting compliant markets is key," Mr. Okot suggested.

Mr. Steve Hodges, Executive Director of Uganda Agribusiness Alliance Ltd, emphasized the necessity of similar systems for other agricultural products. "While Uganda's coffee sector progresses with farmer registration, similar systems are essential for fresh fruits and vegetables. These steps are necessary to align with and exceed EU standards, ensuring our agricultural exports maintain compliance and competitiveness in global markets."

Concerns about misconceptions among farmers regarding the Coffee Act were raised by Ms. Nabukwasi Jane, Community Monitor at SEATINI Uganda. "There is a misconception among farmers that registration under the Coffee Act could lead to higher taxes. We must reassure them that the process aims to enhance support and not impose additional financial burdens."

The importance of extension workers in implementing these directives was highlighted by Mr. Caleb Gumisiriza, Director of Policy at Uganda National Farmers Federation. "Extension workers are our frontline educators and mobilizers in implementing these directives. Empowering them with the right tools and information is crucial for effective compliance across the coffee sector."

Hon. Linda Agnes Auma, Chairperson of the Agriculture Committee in the Parliament of Uganda, commended SEATINI's efforts. "SEATINI has been instrumental in raising awareness and mobilizing stakeholders to engage in these crucial discussions. Their dedication to advocating for fair trade policies is unmatched."

However, challenges remain, as government delays in releasing funds for agricultural projects continue to hinder effective implementation. "Government delays in releasing funds for agricultural projects not only frustrate effective implementation but also undermine the sector's growth potential," Hon. Auma pointed out.

In closing, the dialogue Hon Auma reiterated the need for unity and collaboration. "We are willing to collaborate and must speak with one language to ensure our collective goals are achieved. This unity is crucial for navigating challenges and maximizing opportunities in our coffee sector," Hon. Auma concluded.

Overall, SEATINI Uganda remains committed to advocating for investment policies, laws, and agreements that balance the rights of investors with their obligations to the state and host communities. The organization continues to analyze the implications of international trade and sustainability regulations, striving to ensure that Uganda's coffee sector thrives in a rapidly evolving global market.

Hon. Kadogo Babirye Veronica sharing remarks during the dialogue

Empowering Journalists: Tackling Illicit Financial Flows in Uganda

The fight against illicit financial flows (IFFs) from Africa is more urgent than ever. This urgency was highlighted by the AU/ECA High-Level Panel on IFFs, chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, during his presentation at the 24th AU Summit in Addis Ababa in 2015. Based on the GFI calculations, the panel highlighted an annual increase in illicit outflows of 20.2%. These outflows deprive the continent of vital resources needed for development and investment in critical public service delivery. African countries are heavily reliant on natural resources extraction which is vulnerable to revenue leakages, which undermines the continents' economic stability and development aspirations.

The rise of the digital economy and new technologies has further complicated efforts to combat IFFs, introducing sophisticated methods for financial evasion. Various studies have highlighted the critical role of civil society organizations and the multi-stakeholder approach, in tackling the IFFs in the African continent including media, NGOs, academia, and think tanks. For these groups to be effective in their advocacy, activism and research, however, they must operate in an environment that provides them with the necessary freedoms and legal space.

The media continues to play a crucial role in uncovering financial crimes, notably demonstrated by the Panama Papers leak, which exposed extensive global financial malfeasance and triggered widespread investigations. However, not all financial crimes make the headlines, highlighting the need for journalists to enhance their skills and expertise to effectively report on these intricate issues.

> **"This capacity-building initiative for journalists is part of our efforts to ensure they understand and appreciate the link between DRM and IFFs to inform effective, accurate, and impactful reporting on these critical issues."**

In response to this need, SEATINI, in partnership with the Tax Justice Network

Ms. Teddy Nannozi, Training Consultant, during her presentation

Africa (TJNA) and the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME), recently concluded a transformative five-day training workshop for selected journalists from Uganda. This initiative comes at a critical time as Africa faces escalating challenges from illicit outflows that continue to threaten its development ambitions and

Journalists, during one of the sessions economic stability.

The workshop provided journalists from various areas of Uganda including Busoga region, West Nile region, Kampala metropolitan areas and mineral rich areas of Tororo and Buliisa with deeper understanding of IFFs and their implication to Uganda's domestic resource mobilization (DRM) efforts. The participating journalists had a unique opportunity to interreact with experts in the fields of Financial management, taxation, law enforcement, professional journalism and advocacy, significantly enriching their learning experience and equipping them with the tools necessary to effectively report on these complex issues.

Mr. Natukunda Kenneth, Directorate of Analysis & Monitoring at the Financial Intelligence Authority

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized the training's goal: "This capacity-building initiative for journalists is part of our efforts to ensure they understand and appreciate the link between DRM and IFFs to inform effective, accurate, and impactful reporting on these critical issues."

Mr. Kafeero noted the staggering financial loss Africa faces: "Every year, Africa loses $88.6 billion due to IFFs, about 3.7% of the continent's GDP. This amount is nearly equal to the combined total of annual Official Development Assistance and foreign direct investment."

Ms. Teddy Nannozi, Training Consultant, explained IFFs: "Illicit Financial Flows involve money that's illegally earned, transferred, or used across borders, often linked to tax evasion, corruption, and organized crime. Tackling IFFs strengthens economies and fosters trust." She highlighted that "around

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator, FFD, SEATINI Uganda during his presentation at the training for selected journalists from Uganda on illicit financial flows and domestic reveneue mobilisation.

Mr. Michael Masembe, Acting Manager of Tax Education at Uganda Revenue Authority during his presentation

Mr. Mutumba Mark, Program Officer for International Tax Policy and Governance at SEATINI Uganda

He warned of the harm caused by IFFs: "Multinational corporations often use transfer pricing to shift profits across borders, reducing their tax liabilities."

Mr. Mutumba Mark, Program Officer, International Tax Policy and Governance at SEATINI Uganda, offered an introduction to international tax policy: "International tax principles aren't formal laws but are guided by the concepts of territoriality and nationality. Understanding these can help navigate global tax systems." He emphasized the importance of the Territoriality Concept, or Source Taxation, which gives states the right to tax income and profits from sources within their borders.

Mr. Natukunda Kenneth, Directorate of Analysis & Monitoring at the Financial Intelligence Authority, addressed legal frameworks against IFFs and money laundering: "Money laundering hides the origins of illegal funds, making them appear legitimate. It's a crucial step in integrating illicit financial flows into the legal system." He highlighted Uganda's Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2013, which establishes the Financial Intelligence Authority to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

Ms. Catherine Namuli Mugerwa, Compliance and Enforcement Officer at Uganda Registration Services Bureau, presented on beneficial ownership transparency: "Beneficial Ownership Transparency is key to improving our investment climate and preventing illicit financial flows. It strengthens accountability and curbs corruption." She noted Uganda's new Companies (Amendment) Act 2022, which requires all companies to maintain a register of beneficial owners.

As a result of the training, journalists gained a deeper understanding of IFFs and DRM and were provided with a platform to share experiences and strategies for tracking and reporting IFFs. The event underscored the importance of empowering media practitioners to foster a more transparent and accountable financial environment in Uganda and across Africa.

Ms. Catherine Namuli Mugerwa, Compliance and Enforcement Officer at Uganda Registration Services Bureau

Group photo of key participants including leaders from workers unions, civil society, members of parliament, representatives from mining communities.

SEATINI Uganda holds a National Dialogue on the Implications of Sino-Africa/Uganda Extractives related Investments on the Hos Communities' Human and Environmental Ri

China has become one of the biggest players in the global extractive resource supply chain, along with increasing extractive resource demand for green industries. Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) annual flows to Africa also known as Overseas Foreign Direct Investment have been steadily increasingly since 2003. Chinese companies especially Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOE) backed by Chinese own development banks have assumed a significant share of dominance in Africa's extractives sector. These companies have contributed to the creation of industrial zones, spurred industrialization, job creation, and economic growth. However, these investments have also contributed to environmental, human rights, and socio-cultural challenges.

In light of this, SEATINI Uganda organized a high-level multi-stakeholder dialogue on 11th July July 2024 under the theme "Implications of Sino-Africa/Uganda Extractives related Investments on the Host Communities' Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights." The dialogue highlighted both the benefits and challenges associated with Chinese investments in Uganda.

As part of his opening remarks, Mr. Kafeero Herbert, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, stressed that critical minerals are a key asset in the transition to clean energy and decarbonization. "The energy transition discourse is increasingly gaining momentum, and global attention is on Africa given that the continent is home to sizeable reserves of the world's critical energy transition minerals," he noted.

Mr. Kafeero further elucidated on China's role in this sector, stating, "China has become a major player in the energy transition, dominating the mining and refining of critical minerals and manufacturing of solar panels. China's relationship with Africa has been growing since the 1970s and deepened further in 2000 with the Forum on China and Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Today, China is also a major trading partner with Africa."

While acknowledging the benefits of FDI, Mr. Kafeero also pointed out the associated risks. "Foreign Direct Investment is recognized as critical in Africa's quest for economic growth. However, increasingly, foreign direct investments have become synonymous with human and environmental rights violations. We must address these concerns to strike a balance between the rights of investors and their obligations to the host communities and the state. As SEATINI, we believe in a win-win situation where communities, investors, and states all benefit from sustainable investment practices. Everyone should thrive!"

Hon. Rwakajara Arinaitwe, Member of Parliament and Workers' Representative, echoed these concerns. "Labour is the engine of an economy. However, the engine is not adequately serviced as labour is the most exploited factor of production. Workers' rights need to be prioritized and protected. Foreign direct investments often result in human and environmental rights violations. We must address these critical issues for the benefit of host communities."

He further highlighted the challenges of implementing policies, saying, "The implementation of legislation and policies remains a very big challenge, even where they are in place. Casualization has become permanent. Companies employ many on temporary contracts, leading to exploitation without benefits or job security. We allow investors to repatriate all their profits, leading to depleted resources and little benefit for local workers. It's time to check ourselves and ensure sustainable investments."

Ms. Constance Achom Okollet, Chairperson of Osukuru United Women's Network, shared a grim reality faced by local communities. "Investors promised jobs but brought exploitation. Communities sold land cheaply, now face homelessness and suffering. The impact of these companies is devastating. Abandoned mining pits,

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Hon. Rwakajara Arinaitwe, Member of Parliament and Workers' Representative making his remarks during the dialogue

Ms. Constance Achom Okollet, Chairperson of Osukuru United Women's Network sharing experiences of the members of mining communities in Tororo

Mr. Kafeero Herbert, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda giving opening remarks at the dialogue

broken homes, and increased sickness like epilepsy and mental health issues plague our communities."

She stressed the need for genuine and beneficial investments, "Pollution from factories has made it impossible to grow green vegetables or drink clean water. The community is left to fend for itself against the harmful effects of these investments. Our policymakers must implement and enforce policies to protect our communities from exploitation and environmental degradation. We need change now."

Mr. Benard Mujuni, Commissioner for Equity and Rights at the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, emphasized the importance of informed consent and social impact assessments. "Informed consent is a very fundamental principle in land acquisition, resettlement, or even investment. It's essential for protecting human rights and ensuring fair treatment of communities."

He continued, "The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights maps out areas of human rights protection and access to remedy. It is a crucial tool for sustainable and equitable development. Social impact assessments and accountability are critical for investment and development interventions. These measures help mitigate negative impacts on communities and ensure fair benefit-sharing agreements."

Mr. Denis Mugagga, Head of the Climate Finance Unit at the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, provided a financial perspective. "Our partnerships, especially with China, have raised over $2.5 billion in the past seven years, significantly boosting our infrastructure and energy development. Through innovative financing mechanisms like carbon markets and the development of a national green taxonomy, we aim to ensure that green investments create decent jobs and contribute to sustainable development."

Ms. Jacinta Achieng, Chemist, Geothermal Resources at the Ministry of Energy & Mineral Development highlighted the need for a localized approach to energy transition. "Our energy transition must be domesticated to suit our needs. For us, clean energy means moving away from biomass, which accounts for 83% of our energy use, to more affordable and renewable sources like hydropower."

Ms. Hope Waira, Senior Investment Executive at Uganda Investment Authority, stressed the need for balanced investment treaties and agreements. "Investment treaties must prioritize protections for both investors and our nation. Let us ensure fairness in the arbitration process."

In his remarks, Mr. Jacob Eyeru, Chairperson of the National Youth Council Uganda, called for greater support for young entrepreneurs. "In Uganda, the promise of industrial parks and tax incentives must be matched with efforts to support young entrepreneurs, ensuring they have the necessary resources and environment to grow and sustain their businesses."

Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, Trade Policy Analyst at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized the importance of capacity building and inclusive dialogue. "We need to enhance the capacity and create platforms for discussion to align investments with the evolving landscape and ensure they support both our economy and livelihoods. Communities must have a voice in the investment process. Impact assessments should reflect their concerns, and we need mechanisms to rejuvenate affected areas."

Over the years, SEATINI Uganda has been at the forefront of advocating for investment policies, laws, and agreements that balance the rights of investors with their obligations to the state and host communities.

Currently, SEATINI is deeply engaged in analyzing the Sino-Africa trade and investment relations in the context of the energy transition.

SEATINI Uganda Enhances Technical Capacity of Local Government Officials for Improved Local Revenue Management in Buliisa District

SEATINI Uganda, in partnership with Oxfam Uganda, KAWIDA Uganda with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) is implementing the project "The Fair Recovery – Strengthened Civil Society and Media for Fiscal Justice in Tororo Municipality and Buliisa District." This project aims to enhance tax revenue and public budgets, ensuring they are progressive and gender-sensitive, thus promoting fiscal justice in Africa.

On 10th July 2024, SEATINI Uganda organized a technical capacity-building training for lower local governments from Buliisa District. The focus was on local revenue management and the adoption of local revenue automation systems (IRAS) and elogRev. This two-day session was designed to equip Parish Chiefs with the skills needed to manage automated local revenue collection systems and elogRev, aiming to improve local revenue management in Buliisa District.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Dr. Levi Musinguzi Bahemuka, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Buliisa District, emphasized the importance of transparency and trustworthy revenue collection for delivering essential services. He highlighted that improved revenue performance through efficient systems and fostering accountability and transparency within communities is crucial for lobbying for budget increments for Buliisa District.

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Tax Policy Analyst at SEATINI Uganda, stressed that accountability leads to compliance. He noted that when taxpayers see their money being used for development and social welfare, they are more willing to pay taxes. A good tax system should raise revenue from all sources and treat taxpayers equally, whether local or foreign, based on regulations.

"Through Taxation, citizens entrust the government with a share of their incomes and in return expect efficient delivery of services"- He emphasized.

Mr. Henry Ssemanda, a Public Financial Management Advisor and Consultant, underscored the expectation that taxes collected by the government are used for public benefit, not just for those who make the payments.

At the conclusion of the two-day training, officials committed to making Buliisa District one of the leading districts in providing services to the people. This will be achieved through effective revenue collection, particularly using the IRAS and elogRev systems, which require payments through online automated systems.

The technical capacity-building support for lower local governments on local revenue management and automated systems of revenue collection is crucial. This initiative aligns with Buliisa District Local Government's request to SEATINI for technical support on basic revenue mobilization. It is expected to significantly improve local revenue management and automation processes, contributing to better service delivery and maintenance of public assets in Buliisa District.

CSOs call for Comprehensive Review of the Investment Code Act, 2019

SEATINI Uganda together with other relevant CSOs working on trade and investment related issues called for a comprehensive review of the 2019 Investment Code Act. The review of the Investment Code Act 2019 is aimed at addressing critical issues such as business and human rights, among other significant concerns.

The call for review was made during a working group (Investment Core Group) meeting held on 14th June 2024. The meeting brought together representatives from various CSOs working on trade and investment-related issues to analyze the evolving investment policy landscape at national, regional, continental, and global levels. The goal is to foster pro-development investment policy frameworks.

In his remarks, Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized that forming the Investment Core Group is part of SEATINI's efforts towards building a strong coalition that will champion and advocate for the review of Uganda's Investment Code Act, 2019. He noted that there are numerous gaps in the Investment Code Act, 2019 and that there is an urgent need to address the gaps especially in view of emerging issues such as energy transition among others.

"As part of our collective efforts, the

Investment Core Group will examine the investment policy landscape at multiple levels: nationally, focusing on the Investment Code Act 2019 and other investment-related policy related issues; at the continental and global levels," he added.

Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI Uganda, stressed the importance of clearly defining the objectives of Uganda's investment legal framework and assessing whether the current Investment Code 2019 is fit for purpose. "There is need for a conducive policy environment that supports not only civil society actors but also empowers our governments to enact laws that serve the public interest," she noted.

Ms. Nalunga further emphasized that any investment agreement should be balanced, creating a win-win situation for the government, the environment, investors, local communities, and all people.

On her part, Ms. Pheona Nabassa, Executive Director, Fidelis Leadership Institute, underscored the need to revisit Uganda's trade and investment policies and frameworks to review them in line with the evolving global economic conditions, technological advancements, and shifts in the geopolitical landscape.

At the end of the meeting, the Investment Core Group agreed to undertake a Clause-by Clause analysis of the Investment Code Act 2019 and also develop a policy statement that will inform the advocacy towards the review of the Investment Code Act 2019 and to identify key issues that need to be included to be incorporated into the Investment Code.

Over the years, SEATINI has been advocating for the review of the Investment Code Act, 2019, to address various gaps and also incorporate provisions on Human Rights Impact Assessments and Performance Requirements, among others. There is an urgent need for an investment legal framework that aligns with current and future challenges.

Group photo: Key distinguished speakers and guests pose for a group photo with Rt. Hon. Alitwala Kadaga, the 1st Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of EAC Affairs

SEATINI, MoFPED, URA and MEACA Hold 4th EAC Post Budget Dialogue on Tax and Debt

In a bid to enhance stakeholders' awareness on fiscal and trade related measures and their impact on EAC regional integration, SEATINI Uganda, Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development, the Ministry of East African Community Affairs (MEACA) among other partners organized the Fourth Edition of the East African Community (EAC) Financial Year (FY) 2024/25 Post Budget Dialogue on Tax and Debt.

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, set the scene for the Dialogue by emphasizing that the dialogue provides a platform for EAC citizens and stakeholders to enrich their understanding of fiscal related policies at the EAC level. Mr. Kafeero acknowledged the good working relationship that SEATINI and other CSOs continue to have with relevant government institution like the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MoFPED), as well as the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) that continue their doors to civil society organizations towards deepening citizens engagement and awareness on a wide range of fiscal related issues.

Mr. Kafeero applauded the Government of Uganda for setting out key growth drivers in the National Budget for financial year 2024/25. These growth drivers include Agro-Industrialization, Tourism development, Mineral development including oil and gas, and Science, Technology and Innovation. "A driver without fuel cannot accelerate development effectively," he reiterated.

Ms. Catherine Donovan Kyokunda, Commissioner Legal Services and Board Affairs at URA noted that the National Budget is not just a financial plan, but rather a blueprint that shapes Uganda's priorities and commitments. "Every budget item represents a decision to shape our collective future, underscoring the need for diverse perspectives from all stakeholders," Ms. Kyokunda highlighted.

Ms. Kyokunda acknowledged the collaborative efforts of EAC partner states in harmonizing tax policies. "Regional integration is pivotal for expanding investment opportunities and economic growth," she stated. She noted that harmonizing tax regimes and coordinating taxation systems will bolster the regional market's functionality and curb detrimental tax practices.

Citing the public protests in Kenya regarding their Finance Bill, Hon. Sarah Opendi noted that, "It is very important for governments to listen, because at the end of the day these budgets are financed through domestic revenues largely paid by citizens."

Rt.Hon Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, the 1st Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for EAC Affairs of Uganda and the chief guest of the dialogue acknowledged the role played by SEATINI in consistently providing information to both policy makers and citizens to guide policy related discussions.

Rt. Hon. Kadaga highlighted the need to review the EAC Treaty to accommodate the expanded membership and evolving economic landscape. "We are very far behind on amendments," she noted. These updates harmonize fiscal measures and ensure effective governance frameworks across member states, vital for sustaining economic growth and stability within the community.

Rt.Hon. Kadaga also emphasized the importance of harmonizing taxation regimes within the East African Community (EAC) to foster a conducive environment for investment and economic growth. "Taxation is the lifeblood of our governments, enabling us to fund essential public services, invest in infrastructure, and promote social welfare," she noted. Rt.Hon. Kadaga stressed that equitable and efficient tax policies encourage investment and support business development. She also encouraged the EAC Partner States to coordinate their tax systems to prevent tax measures that could negatively impact the regional market, thereby promoting a more integrated and prosperous economic community.

Mr. Moses Kaggwa, Acting Director of Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Finance, Planning & Economic Development

Mr. Moses Kaggwa, Acting Director of Economic Affairs, MoFPED giving a keynote address at the dialogue

Rt.Hon Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga, the 1st Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for EAC Affairs of Uganda shares opening remarks at the dialogue

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda giving remarks on behalf of the SEATINI Uganda Executive Director at the Dialogue

(MoFPED), in his keynote address emphasized the timeliness of the dialogue in shedding light on East African Community (EAC) regional integration issues, highlighting that the fiscal integration agenda aims to reduce borrowing to only critical and strategic investments, increase revenue collection, and achieve macroeconomic leverage. "Uganda's public debt to GDP was 46.9% in June 2023, and is expected to be 47.9% this fiscal year," he stated, noting that it remains below the 52.4% threshold provided in the Charter for Fiscal Responsibility.

Mr. Kaggwa noted that intra-EAC trade had increased by 13.2% from USD 10.6 billion in 2022 to USD 12.1 billion in 2023. He highlighted the importance of exploiting the benefits of an expanded market at both regional and global levels, urging collaboration between the public and private sectors, as well as civil society.

Mr. Kaggwa elaborated on the comprehensive review of the Common External Tariffs (CETs) agreed upon in the region, designed to mitigate trade distortions, protect regional industries, and enhance competitiveness. He however noted the challenges associated with CET, such as dynamics in industrial development and sector-specific protectionisms and emphasized Uganda's commitment to effective implementation starting July 2024.

Further, Mr. Kaggwa highlighted the institutional mechanisms in place, such as the ministerial Council, to fast-track the implementation of a single regional customs territory and grant preferential treatment to goods originating from COMESA and SADC. "Uganda views large markets as useful for supporting more regional trade and enhanced incomes, while expanding opportunities for national transformation," he asserted.

Ms. Mariam Babu, Chairperson of the Women's Cross-Border Traders' Cooperative Society, emphasized the importance of inclusive policies that support small-scale traders, particularly women. She acknowledged the EAC's efforts to implement favorable policies, such as the simplified trade regime and customs union rules of origin, which exempt goods below USD 2,000 originating in the region from import duty. However, Babu highlighted persistent challenges, including double taxation, informal fees, and limited access to accurate tax information. "Our request is simple: let us be part of the process of tax formulation, as these taxes directly affect us," she stressed.

Mr. Robert Ssuuna, a Tax, Trade, and Investments Consultant, addressed the issue of illicit financial flows (IFFs) and their detrimental impact on revenue mobilization. He pointed out that Africa loses approximately USD 88 billion annually to IFFs, which significantly hampers efforts to address budget deficits. Mr. Ssuuna called for increased collaboration between state institutions and the implementation of measures to promote tax transparency, such as beneficial ownership registers. He emphasized the need for building state capacities to effectively combat these financial malpractices and ensure that resources are utilized for national development.

SEATINI Uganda Debt and Aid Policy Analyst, Ms. Hilda Tumuhe, raised critical concerns about the sustainability of debt within Uganda and its implications for regional economies. "While Uganda's resource envelope shows allocations for government programs, the increasing portion allocated to debt servicing poses significant challenges," she noted. She emphasized the need for careful consideration of expenditure needs amidst growing debt obligations, particularly as the share of domestic debt escalates annually.

She stressed the importance of monitoring and fiscal discipline to ensure that only concessional and productive debts are acquired, aligning with policies that promote sustainable economic growth and mitigate the negative impact of debt on revenue mobilization within the EAC.

The frameworks governing public debt management within the EAC are crucial in maintaining fiscal stability. However, as highlighted by Tumuhe, breaches in debt thresholds underscore the challenges in debt management across member states. This not only affects revenue streams but also impacts regional economic outlooks. Ms. Tumuhe advocated for enhanced monitoring and collaboration among EAC states to address these challenges collectively.

Over the years SEATINI has continued to engage and collaborate with like-minded civil society actors and policy actors from across East Africa to fast-track the economic integration of the region to promote sustainable social-economic development.

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) in March 2024, passed a motion urging the fast-tracking of tax policy harmonization to remove distortions and promote investment. Harmonizing fiscal policies, particularly tax and debt policies, is essential for synchronized economic policies and regional unity. This translates to eliminating policy loopholes that could hinder free movement, creating a level playing field for businesses, and encouraging investment across borders.

Combatting Corruption Requires Unified Efforts

Corruption remains a significant obstacle to development across Eastern Africa. The World Bank estimates that corruption costs the region over $50 billion annually, siphoning away resources from vital public services like healthcare and education. This weakens governance, stifles economic growth by an estimated 2 percentage points per year, and disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable populations. Further compounding the issue, illicit financial flows (IFFs), often facilitated by corruption, are estimated to drain between $30 billion and $60 billion from Eastern Africa each year. These stolen resources could be used to fund vital infrastructure projects, improve education and healthcare systems, and lift millions out of poverty.

To address this complex challenge, representatives from ten Eastern African nations convened at the Regional Conference of the Eastern Africa Anti-Corruption Platform, held in Nairobi, Kenya, from May 22nd to 23rd, 2024. The conference served as a platform for stakeholders to share best practices, identify areas for collaboration, and develop new strategies to combat corruption. SEATINI Uganda, a leading civil society organization (CSO) focused on pro-development trade, fiscal, and investment policies, actively participated in the conference, bringing their expertise to the discussions.

Distinguished signatories, including Mr. Felix Koskei, Chief of Staff and Head of Public Service of Kenya, and Hon. Beti Kamya Turwomwe, Inspector General of Government (IGG) and President of the Eastern Africa Association of Anti-corruption Authorities (EAAACA), underscored the urgent need for regional collaboration and public participation in the fight against corruption.

Reflecting on the urgency of the fight against corruption, Mr. Felix Koskei emphasized, "Corruption undermines democracy, distorts markets, erodes quality of life, fosters crime and terrorism, skews distribution of resources, and reinforces exclusion and discrimination." He highlighted the importance of collective action in tackling this pervasive issue.

Hon. Beti Kamya Turwomwe, in her address, urged anti-corruption agencies and stakeholders to mobilize the public in the fight against corruption, emphasizing that citizens are the main victims of poor-quality service delivery. She appreciated the collaboration between UNODC and EAAACA in organizing the conference, noting it as a milestone in the region's efforts to eradicate corruption.

Ms. Tumuhe Hilda, Program Officer for Debt and Aid at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized the urgent need to tackle illicit financial flows to secure the region's economic future. "Illicit financial flows and corruption siphon away between $30 billion and $60 billion from East Africa each year, which undermines our capacity to fund essential public services and development projects," Tumuhe remarked. "Strengthening and harmonizing legal frameworks across East African countries is crucial to facilitate the efficient recovery of stolen assets and to combat these illicit activities effectively."

Hilda also underscored the significance of robust fiscal policies and transparency in public procurement processes. "Public procurement is a major area vulnerable to corruption, leading to significant losses of public funds and resources. By adopting transparent and competitive procurement processes, and utilizing digital tools for real-time monitoring, we can greatly reduce opportunities for corruption," she stated. "Ensuring the prudent, transparent, and accountable utilization of public resources is key to improving public trust in government institutions and fostering an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth and investment."

The conference discussions revolved around four thematic areas: Asset Recovery and Financial Investigations, Whistle-blower Protection, Public Procurement and Integrity Systems, and Private Sector Collective

L-R: AFRODAD's Policy Analyst, Shem Otieno, SEATINI's Debt and Aid Policy Analyst, Hilda Tumuhe, Diakonia Africa's Programme Manager, Africa Economic Justice, Sandra Kidwingira sharing a light moment with Francesco Checchi, the Team Lead, Africa Anti-Corruption Hub during the UNODC

Action against Corruption. Each thematic area highlighted specific challenges and recommendations put forth by civil society organizations (CSOs) and government representatives.

CSOs called for the development, strengthening, and harmonization of legal frameworks across East African countries to facilitate efficient asset recovery and financial investigations. They emphasized the need for specialized training programs for financial investigators and improved inter-agency cooperation to streamline efforts in combating financial corruption.

Furthermore, CSOs advocated for the enactment of comprehensive whistle-blower protection laws and the establishment of independent oversight bodies to monitor and enforce these measures. They stressed the importance of public awareness campaigns and training for government officials on handling whistle-blower reports appropriately.

In the realm of public procurement, CSOs called for the implementation of transparent and competitive procurement processes, along with the establishment of independent oversight bodies to ensure compliance and accountability. They emphasized the utilization of digital tools for real-time monitoring and reporting of procurement activities to reduce opportunities for corruption.

Additionally, CSOs emphasized the importance of promoting public-private sector collaboration in the fight against corruption and strengthening regulatory frameworks to ensure adherence to anti-corruption standards. They highlighted the need for incentives for companies demonstrating a commitment to integrity and transparency.

SEATINI Uganda continues to engage various stakeholders at the sub-national, national, regional, and international levels to advocate for the prudent, transparent, and accountable utilization of public resources.

Hon. Milton Muwuma addressing the press and stakeholders at the press conference during the Parliamentary Nutrition Week.

Uganda's National Nutrition Week: A Call to Combat Malnutrition and Promote Food Security

Despite its reputation as a food basket in the East African region, Uganda faces alarming rates of malnutrition. According to UNICEF, over one-third (more than 2.4 million) of young children in Uganda are stunted due to malnutrition, which has irreversible consequences. In response, SEATINI Uganda, the Parliament of Uganda, and other civil society organizations held National Nutrition Week from 23rd to 28th May 2024, coinciding with World Nutrition Day, under the auspices of the Uganda Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security (UPA-FNS).

The week-long activities aimed at raising awareness and mobilize action to improve nutrition across various sectors and demographics. This year's theme, "Beyond the Table," emphasized the entire food journey from farm to fork, including aspects of food production, distribution, and sustainability.

On 23rd May, the campaign kicked off with a press conference at the Parliament of Uganda. Civil society organizations, development partners, and Parliamentarians highlighted the need for strategic actions to combat malnutrition. Hon. Milton Muwuma, chairperson of UPA-FNS, stressed the importance of fiscal measures such as increasing taxes on Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSBs), which are a major contributor to non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

"The need for a Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) is critical in shaping policies that promote the right to adequate food," stated Mr. Lubega Jonathan, Program Officer for Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation at SEATINI Uganda. "This model will help guide the development of laws, policies, and regulations to ensure better nutrition for all Ugandans."

From 24th to 26th May, SEATINI Uganda joined other stakeholders in Kabarole District, Fort Portal City, and Kamwenge District for field engagements. These activities included meetings with district officials, public awareness campaigns, and radio talk shows to discuss the importance of improving diets, particularly for children. During these engagements, 1,225 signatures were collected from various stakeholders in support of the petition to the Ministry of Health for the adoption of the NPM. "The community's response was overwhelming," noted Mr. Lubega. "People understand the urgent need for policies that promote healthy dietary environments."

On 27th May, a significant meeting

Mr. Lubega Jonathan, Program Officer, Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation (center) together with the coalition members pose for a group photo during the field engagements.

Hon. Phyllis Chemtai, the Chief Guest and other stakeholders join SEATINI for photo moment to show solidarity and promote the "Know What You Eat" Campaign

was held with Kamwenge District leaders, resulting in signed commitments to end malnutrition. Hon. Milton Muwuma highlighted several key findings, including the socio-economic challenges that prevent access to nutritious food, ignorance about malnutrition, and issues like alcoholism and gender-based violence that exacerbate the problem. During this meeting, Mr. Lubega reiterated SEATINI Uganda's support for proposals to develop local ordinances to promote nutrition and emphasized the need for regulating school food environments. The district leaders committed to several actions, including accelerating nutrition programs, enhancing budget strategies for nutrition, and conducting food safety awareness campaigns.

The week-long activities were concluded on 28th May with a celebration in Kamwenge district. The Assistant Commissioner for Food and Nutrition Security at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) underscored the importance of food security for national development. "Malnutrition is a major hindrance to development," he stated. "It's crucial that we all take action to address this issue."

Key commitments from MAAIF included establishing an agricultural tracking system, fast-tracking the review of food and nutrition policies, and promoting environmentally friendly agricultural practices. The guest of honor, Hon. Phyllis Chemtai, Woman MP for Kapchorwa, reiterated the importance of nutrition in socio-economic development and pledged continued support for stakeholders' efforts.

Hon. Phyllis Chemtai, representing Hon. Anita Annet Among, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, noted that nutrition is a fundamental right. "This year's theme reminds us to address the root causes of malnutrition, such as lack of access to nutritious food," she added.

Throughout the week, SEATINI Uganda played a pivotal role in creating awareness about food safety through the "Know What You Eat" campaign. SEATINI's advocacy for the Nutrient Profiling Model was a central component of the week's activities, highlighting the importance of this tool in combating malnutrition.

Group photo showing participants from civil society, media and relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies

Advocating for Pro development Trade and Fiscal Policies to Combat NCDs

In a landmark National event set to transform Uganda's public health landscape, SEATINI Uganda in collaboration with Centre for Food and Adequate Living Rights (CEFROHT), Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) Uganda and Consent-Uganda launched the Uganda National Nutrient Profiling Model on June 13, 2024. This marks a significant step towards addressing malnutrition and promoting healthier dietary practices in the country.

The event, attracted key stakeholders, including policymakers from Parliament, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Ministry of Health, the Uganda National Bureau of Standards, academia and the media.

Dr. Charles Oyoo Akiya, Commissioner of Health Services for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) at the Ministry of Health, presented alarming statistics that underscored the urgency of the issue. He revealed that 22% of Ugandans are at high risk of dying prematurely due to NCDs, and 33% of all deaths in Uganda are NCD-related. He cited physical inactivity, high alcohol consumption, tobacco use, emotional stress, and excessive intake of saturated fats, sugar-sweetened beverages, and salt as major contributors to this health crisis.

Ms. Samalie Namukose, Assistant Commissioner of the Nutrition Department in the Ministry of Health, explained that the Uganda National Nutrient Profiling Model is designed to evaluate the nutritional quality of foods and beverages available in the market. By assessing nutrient content, the model aims to inform consumers, guide food manufacturers, and assist policymakers in making evidence-based decisions to promote healthier dietary choices.

Speaking at the launch, Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, Program Officer for Trade Justice at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized the critical intersection of trade and public health. She highlighted that poor public health, driven by inadequate nutrition, undermines the very foundations of a thriving market and poses a significant security threat. "Food is a trade issue that should be handled with care. Poor public health creates a weak market and can be a security issue," Mbabazi stated.

Ms. Mbabazi also noted that is a need for trade policies that align with health objectives. She emphasized that trade should not compromise the right to health and adequate nutrition. "As traders conduct their business, they must not undermine public access to nutritious and safe food," she urged. Mbabazi also highlighted the significant role of fiscal policies in promoting public health, advocating for prioritizing preventive health measures in the national budget. "The budget increase to 72 trillion shillings must prioritize preventive health measures to curb rising non-communicable disease costs and bolster national productivity," she noted.

The launch of the Nutrient Profiling Model, which includes front-of-pack labeling to help consumers make informed choices, was seen as a crucial step forward. Dr. David

Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, Trade Policy Analyst at SEATINI makes remarks at the launch

Key stakeholders led by Hon. Milton Muwuma, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security (center) to launch the Nutrient Profiling Model Project

Kabanda, Executive Director of CEFROHT, underscored the dire consequences of unhealthy diets, pointing out that food, which should nourish us, has become a leading cause of death due to NCDs. Dr. Kabanda emphasized that food is now a commodity, and questioned whether those engaged in food manufacturing should continue doing so at the detriment of public health.

Mr. Kimera Henry, Team Leader of Consent-Uganda, highlighted the prevalence of unhealthy, carbonated drinks in areas where many Ugandans live, and called on the media to investigate why schools prefer fast and junk foods over home-cooked meals. Dr. Rehema Namaganda, Executive Director of FIAN Uganda, stressed that food should be seen as medicine and not poison. She advocated for a system where Ugandans can feed themselves with dignity, emphasizing the need for nutritious food.

Mr. Kwizera Christopher, Country Manager of Uganda NCD Alliance, underscored the pervasive threat of NCDs, noting that 75% of Ugandans diagnosed with cancer at the Uganda Cancer Institute die within a year.

Hon. Lulume Bayiga and Agnes Taaka, who are part of the Uganda Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security, noted that implementing the Nutrient Profiling Model will help establish standards and guidelines that prioritize the nutritional value of foods, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of the population.

SEATINI Uganda's involvement in this transformative initiative underscores the vital link between economic practices and public health. By advocating for policies that prioritize nutritious food and preventive health measures, SEATINI aims to ensure that trade contributes to promoting the well-being of Ugandans.

Group photo: MPs pose for a photo moment with SEATINI Uganda staff after meeting

SEATINI Uganda and Parliament Strengthen Collaboration on Agriculture, Trade, Finance, and Debt

On June 14, 2024, SEATINI Uganda held a crucial meeting with members of Parliament to advance key advocacy and policy issues related to agriculture, trade, finance, and debt. This strategic session aimed to bolster policymakers' participation in these vital sectors and enhance collaborative efforts between SEATINI and Parliament.

The meeting was chaired by Hon. Milton Muwuma, Chairperson of the Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security. In his opening remarks, Hon. Muwuma emphasized the importance of timely discussions on food and agriculture, particularly in light of the upcoming parliamentary debates on the budget and the State of the Nation Address. He expressed gratitude to SEATINI for initiating the dialogue, stating, "Food and agriculture require strong focus given the negative health and economic implications from unhealthy food environments."

Mr. Mutumba Mark Program Officer for International Tax and Governance at SEATINI Uganda provided an overview of the organization's mission and recent activities, setting the stage for a detailed discussion on several pressing issues.

Mr. Lubega Jonathan the Program Officer for Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation at SEATINI Uganda then outlined key topics, including the GMO debate, seed systems, the European Union Declaration on Deforestation (EUDR), the Nutrient Profiling Model project, aflatoxins in the food system, and the trade and use of agrochemicals.

Addressing the GMO debate, Mr. Lubega referenced a policy paper developed by SEATINI, noting that three out of four recommendations were adopted by the East African Community (EAC). However, at the national level, the GMO Prohibition Bill, developed by a private member, has long been stalled. "We urgently need Parliament to discuss the progress on the European Union Regulation on Deforestation-free products (EUDR)," he stressed, citing the impending implementation deadline of December 29, 2024.

The session also highlighted the critical need for passing the Coffee Regulations. Mr. Lubega urged policymakers to engage in discussions on this issue, which is vital for Uganda's agricultural sector. Furthermore, under the Nutrient Profiling Model project, SEATINI is mandated to engage with MPs, local leaders, and communities. Mr. Lubega sought cooperation in the project's implementation, including signing a petition to the Ministry of Health.

Another pressing issue raised was the need for a favorable policy framework on aflatoxins control. "Parliament must create a discussion on aflatoxins, which pose significant health risks," Mr. Lubega emphasized. Additionally, he called for attention to the harmful effects of

agrochemicals, particularly the ban on glyphosates, to protect public health and the environment.

Hon. Nsaba Buturo speaking on the GMO Bill, expressed concerns about Western ideologies undermining African sovereignty, especially in the seed sector controlled by multinational companies. "GMOs are meant to cause the extinction of indigenous seeds, and action is needed now," he declared. Despite opposition from the Committee of Science and the Attorney General, Hon. Buturo pledged to continue advocating for the GMO Prohibition Bill and a bill promoting local seed preservation.

Reflecting the meeting's proactive spirit, Hon. Muwuma committed to organizing a meeting with the Speaker to revisit the GMO Prohibition Bill. "We must bring back the discussion of the GMO Prohibition Bill to protect our agricultural heritage," he said.

To ensure continued progress, several follow-up actions were outlined. SEATINI will organize capacity-building sessions for MPs on debt dynamics, and a meeting with the Speaker to discuss the GMO Prohibition Bill. Additionally, efforts will be made to further unpack the GMO topic and legal framework for MPs. SEATINI will also develop issue papers on the EUDR and the seed sector, highlighting the need for a Seed Tribunal, to be presented in Parliament during the Prime Minister's time. Lastly, a meeting with the Uganda Parliamentary Alliance on Food and Nutrition Security (UPA-FNS) will be scheduled to develop a work plan for agreed activities.

> **"GMOs are meant to cause the extinction of indigenous seeds, and action is needed now...**
> **Hon. Nsaba Buturo**

This meeting marked a pivotal step in reinforcing the collaborative relationship between SEATINI Uganda and Parliament. By addressing these pressing issues and setting a clear agenda for follow-up actions, SEATINI and Ugandan policymakers are poised to make significant strides in enhancing agriculture, trade, finance, and debt policies for the betterment of the nation.

As part of its policy advocacy efforts, SEATINI Uganda continues to engage policymakers at sub-national, national, and regional levels to discuss trade, investment, and fiscal policy issues, promoting pro-people and pro-development policies hinged on social justice.

Representatives from various Community Based Organizations (CBOs), rightsholders, media professionals, and local government officials Pose for a group photo after the capacity-building training

SEATINI Uganda Empowers Communities to Hold Corporations Accountable

The need for corporations and commercial investment schemes to respect host communities' Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights cannot be over emphasized. Ensuring that communities have greater power and agency to hold corporations accountable is crucial in making investments work for all.

By the end of 2022, Chinese enterprises had poured over $692 million into Uganda through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This wave of investment, largely driven by the Belt and Road Initiative, spans various sectors including agriculture, infrastructure, natural resources, and more. Reports from the Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability (UCCA) indicate that around 200 Chinese firms are currently operating in Uganda, contributing significantly to the nation's economic landscape.

Despite the potential economic benefits, these investments have often been synonymous with violations of Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights (ESCERS). Issues such as land grabbing, casualization of labor, poor salary remittances, and non-compliance with labor laws are rampant. Government efforts seem skewed towards protecting investor interests rather than addressing the grievances of the local communities.

SEATINI Uganda is undertaking various efforts towards ensuring that the voices of local communities are heard and respected amidst the rapid influx of Chinese investments. On June 13, 2024, SEATINI conducted a capacity-building training in Tororo District, aimed at empowering Community Based Organizations (CBOs), rightsholders, media professionals, and local government officials to demand accountability and engage effectively with government bodies and investors.

During the training, communities and rightsholders, media practitioners, and local government officials shared their experiences and concerns on the multifaceted impacts of increasing Chinese investments, highlighting both the positive and negative effects on their communities.

"Pollution from investments impacts our community as factory waste contaminates our rivers and streams, leading to diseases," says Ms. Achieng Grace from Tororo District. She further added that their animals fall ill after drinking the contaminated water.

"Exploitation and sudden contract terminations by investors impact us personally, as they often end our contracts without notice", Mr. Obonyo John, a community member, Tororo district revealed.

While making his presentation, Mr Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda, making his presentation at the capacity-building training

Ms. Sophie Ms. Namonye, Climate Change Officer, Ministry of Water and Environment, during her presentation at the capacity-building training

Ms.Suzan Asemenye, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Tororo district her presentation at the capacity-building training

Community members and rightsholders during the capacity-building training

Manager at SEATINI Uganda noted that SEATINI undertook research that revealed a growing trend of human and environmental rights violations especially in land-based investment schemes. Workers in these commercial investment schemes work under precarious conditions.

"The issue of interrogating activities undertaken by various investment schemes is crucial because these communities host the investments. We have high expectations, especially regarding job creation, but the jobs we receive are often lower-paying ones," he added.

Mr. Kafeero stressed the need to review the Investment Code Act 2019 to address the gaps and include provisions on performance human rights, social cultural and environmental impact assessments among others.

Ms. Sophie Namonye, Climate Change Officer at the Ministry of Water and Environment, emphasized that "Unsustainable agricultural practices, such as excessive fertilizer use and farming in wetlands, can cause atmospheric pollution." She also urged rightsholders to plant trees on their unused land, highlighting that this not only conserves the environment but also provides an opportunity to sell the trees for profit in the future.

Ms. Suzan Asemenye, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Tororo district thanked SEATINI Uganda for organizing the capacity-building training, which empowered community members to understand the impact of Sino-Africa investments in the host communities.

"As leaders and stakeholders, it's crucial for us to be knowledgeable. With knowledge, we can effectively advocate for, engage with, and articulate issues in our community," she added.

The training underscored the urgent need for continuous dialogue and engagement between local communities, Chinese investors, and Government Agencies.

Group photo of participants at the capacity building dialogue

Addressing Illicit Financial Flows: A Pathway to Sustainable Development

In the quest for sustainable development and poverty reduction, African leaders are increasingly recognizing the critical importance of boosting tax revenues. A unified and strategic approach is essential to curb the massive outflow of resources through illicit financial activities. This challenge necessitates deliberate reforms to harness and manage resources effectively, transforming these funds into a robust mechanism for domestic resource mobilization and ultimately driving the continent's development.

Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) and the taxation of Transnational Corporations (TNCs) remain significant hurdles for Africa. Since the establishment of the High-Level Panel on IFFs in 2012 and the subsequent launch of its recommendations in 2015, efforts by organizations like UNECA, AU, TJN-A, and various civil societies have been instrumental. These platforms, including the African Parliamentary Network on Illicit Financial Flows and Taxation (APNIFFT) and its national counterpart, the Uganda Parliamentary Network on Illicit Financial Flows and Tax Justice (UPNIFFT), empower African legislators to address IFFs and tax injustice. Such initiatives foster dialogue and capacity-building among parliamentarians on issues of illicit financial flows, tax governance, and domestic resource mobilization.

In response to these challenges, SEATINI Uganda, in collaboration with the Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA) and UPNIFFT, organized a capacity-building meeting to enhance the understanding of Parliamentarians on the nexus between IFFs and domestic resource mobilization. By equipping lawmakers with the necessary knowledge and tools, this initiative seeks to foster fair taxation policies and legislative frameworks.

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development (FFD) brought to light the fact that; "Uganda loses over $222 million annually to illicit financial flows. Addressing this leakage is crucial for boosting domestic revenue and reducing dependency on external borrowing," he added. Mr. Kittengo highlighted how multinational corporations exploit sophisticated tax planning strategies to avoid paying taxes in their operational regions, thus exacerbating inequality and undermining public trust in corporate responsibility. Furthermore, weak governance capacity fosters political instability, facilitating IFFs. Strengthening oversight and administrative capabilities is essential to combatting this issue effectively.

Hon. Sarah Opendi, Vice Chairperson of UPNIFFT, reinforced the legislative perspective, stating, "As MPs, it's our duty to close loopholes and strengthen our financial laws. Let's enact reforms that prevent illicit flows and secure Uganda's resources for development." She pointed out that

corruption alone costs Uganda between 8 to 10 trillion annually. "Imagine someone claiming they built a 'Sheraton' using income from a small school or health center. Money laundering is real and rampant," Hon. Opendi added, emphasizing the need for stringent enforcement to curb these losses and ensure funds support national development.

Ms. Nelly Busingye, the Partnerships and Institutional Learning Manager at the Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA) highlighted the significance of collaboration between civil society and Parliamentarians. "The collaboration between civil society and parliamentarians on tax-related issues and illicit financial flows has evolved significantly. It is crucial for shaping effective governance," she stated. Ms. Busingye also stressed the importance of Uganda's active participation in global tax reforms to safeguard national interests and influence international policies. She mentioned Uganda's removal from the grey list as a significant boost to investor confidence, underscoring the critical conversations within Parliament and civil society that facilitated this achievement.

Mr. Gerald Namoma Principal Economist on Tax Policy from the Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) discussed the regional dimension of addressing IFFs. "Addressing IFFs within a regional framework like the East African Community (EAC) is crucial. For example, Kenya's Financial Center initiatives should be aligned with EAC standards to mitigate regional risks," he explained. Namoma pointed out that the EAC framework's power lies in its ability to coordinate efforts among member states to prevent facilitation of IFFs due to regulatory gaps in one country. He also highlighted the importance of tax treaties in resolving conflicts between taxing rights, while cautioning against their potential abuse. Uganda is currently reviewing and updating its tax treaties to close gaps and prevent exploitation.

Robert Ssuuna, a Tax, Trade and Investment Policy Analyst, brought an international perspective to the discussion. "We have been condemned to think corruption is an African issue, but what of the one (Western countries) that where the stolen money is transferred and saved?" he questioned, urging a global approach to combating IFFs.

Dr. Bazira Henry, Executive Director of the Water Governance Institute, challenged the rationale behind tax incentives. "Why do we give tax incentives holidays to people who are still to take the money anyway through tax avoidance and tax planning? Is it a trend that we are following because other nations are also offering incentives?" he asked, emphasizing the need to reassess such policies.

The capacity-building session organized by SEATINI, TJNA, and UPNIFFT is a timely intervention aimed at equipping parliamentarians with the knowledge and tools necessary to tackle IFFs and promote fair taxation policies. As the 12th Pan African Conference on Illicit Financial Flows approaches, the insights and recommendations from this meeting will be crucial in shaping effective strategies to curb IFFs and enhance DRM in Uganda and across Africa.

Over the years, SEATINI Uganda has put up concerted efforts by engaging various stakeholder who include policy makers, civil society organizations and networks and citizens at the sub national, national, regional, and global levels to advocate for tax justice where everyone pays their fair share and receives fair value for the tax through service delivery.

Hon. Sarah Opendi, Vice Chairperson of UPNIFFT sharing her remarks.

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development giving remarks during the meeting

L-R Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda, Ms. Jane Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda, Mr. John Bosco Kalisa, Executive Director, EABC, Mr. George Odongo, EALA Member and Mr. Nelson Rukiza, Manager, Trade Finance Stanbic Bank Tanzania pose for a group photo after a successful discussion at the SEATINI Uganda's session titled "From Paper to Action: Readiness to Trade Under the AfCFTA," during the EACSOF Summit 2024.

From Paper to Action: Assessing Readiness to Trade Under the AfCFTA

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a significant initiative under the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 aimed at promoting industrialization, sustainable development, and economic integration across Africa. As the world's largest free trade area, AfCFTA seeks to eliminate trade barriers, enhance intra-Africa trade, and boost value-added production across all service sectors.

During the East African Civil Society Summit held from the 18th to the 21st in Arusha, Tanzania, SEATINI Uganda organized a session under the theme; "From Paper to Action: Assessing Readiness to Trade Under the AfCFTA.". This session which focused on the practical implementation of the AfCFTA was also aimed at enhancing awareness, and effective engagement of key stakeholders including CSOs, Private Sector/MSMEs, Youth, and Women on the AfCFTA negotiations and implementation processes.

While giving her remarks, Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI Uganda, stressed the importance of establishing supportive structures at the East African Community (EAC) and respective country levels to facilitate AfCFTA trade.

"We need to identify opportunities and also address the challenges arising from phase one of the Guided Trade Initiatives to move the AfCFTA from theory to practical implementation," she emphasized.

Ms. Nalunga also discussed key challenges facing the AfCFTA, including inadequate transport infrastructure and national debts limiting investment among others. She contributed to proposing solutions such as enhancing local production, addressing non-tariff barriers, and streamlining trade regulations. Ms.

Ms. Jane Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda, during her presentation at the SEATINI Uganda's session titled "From Paper to Action: Readiness to Trade Under the AfCFTA," during the EACSOF Summit 2024.

L-R Ms. Jane Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda, Mr. John Bosco Kalisa, the then Executive Director, EABC, Hon. George Odongo, EALA Member and Mr. Nelson Rukiza, Manager, Trade Finance Stanbic Bank Tanzania during a panel discussion at the SEATINI Uganda's session titled "From Paper to Action: Readiness to Trade Under the AfCFTA," during the EACSOF Summit 2024.

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda moderating SEATINI Uganda's session titled "From Paper to Action: Assessing Readiness to Trade Under the AfCFTA," during the EACSOF Summit 2024.

Nalunga highlighted the critical need for affordable financing for MSMEs and manufacturers to ensure the AfCFTA's success.

Mr. John Bosco Kalisa, the then Executive Director of the East African Business Council (EABC), underscored the importance of creating a conducive environment for private sector growth and shared prosperity:

"Governments must be held accountable for their commitments under the AfCFTA to ensure that the agreement benefits all citizens," he emphasized.

Mr. George Odongo, a Member of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), emphasized the necessity for deeper integration among regional economic blocs to support the Pan-African trade agenda. He called for the elimination of non-tariff barriers to maximize the benefits of AfCFTA:

"The success of AfCFTA hinges on regional economic blocs achieving sufficient integration to effectively support the Pan-African trade agenda," he remarked.

Mr. Nelson Rukiza, Manager of Trade Finance at Stanbic Bank Tanzania, highlighted the role of financial institutions in facilitating trade within the East African Community:

"Setting unified rules under the EAC is crucial for financial institutions. It provides clarity and enables us to better support SMEs and traders," he explained.

The session provided a platform for stakeholders to assess the EAC's readiness to trade under the AfCFTA, share insights across sectors, and outline actionable steps to ensure equitable benefits, especially for marginalized groups in the region. The emphasis was on translating plans into tangible actions to realize the full potential of AfCFTA on the ground.

Navigating the Nexus between Trade and Debt: SEATINI Leads a Session at DaDA II

Public debt has become a central issue for many African countries, influencing their ability to engage in both domestic and international trade. While borrowing can provide the necessary funds to support critical sectors and spur economic growth, mismanagement and unfavorable borrowing terms often exacerbate financial burdens. Over the past decade, Africa's total debt has surged by 183%, with interest payments increasing by 132%. This trend highlights the significant role of debt in financing trade-related investments but also underscores the challenges of managing such debt effectively.

Trade and debt are intrinsically linked, with debt financing being a critical mechanism for many African nations to support trade and development. Countries often resort to borrowing to finance infrastructure and social services essential for trade. However, this reliance on debt, especially under unfavorable conditions from creditors, can undermine economic stability and growth. The impact of debt on trade is multifaceted, affecting everything from market access to competitiveness and economic resilience.

To address these issues, SEATINI Uganda, in collaboration with AFRODAD, organized a session during the Debt and Development Academy (DADA) in Arusha. This meeting aimed to explore the nexus between trade and debt, examining both the benefits and drawbacks of debt financing. By bringing together experts and stakeholders, SEATINI seeks to foster a deeper understanding of these issues and develop strategies to leverage debt for sustainable development while mitigating its risks. The goal is to advocate for reforms in global financial and trade policies that better support African economies in achieving sustainable growth.

Debt plays a dual role in the economic landscape of African countries, acting both as a catalyst for development and a potential impediment to trade. "Public Debt is a double-edged sword," noted a key speaker at the recent DADA hosted by AFRODAD in Arusha. This sentiment echoes the prevailing concern that while debt can provide the necessary funds to spur trade-related investments, the increasing debt burden, often accompanied by unfavorable loan terms, undermines the economic stability and trade capabilities of African nations.

One of the primary issues discussed during the SEATINI-convened session on trade and debt was the nature of debt financing. Loans with high-interest rates, often variable, and resource-backed terms can lead to financial instability. Moreover, aid and debt relief, while beneficial in the short term, are frequently conditional on implementing austerity measures. These measures, such as reduced social spending, can weaken human capital, thereby adversely affecting trade. The case of Zambia was highlighted as a cautionary tale, where debt relief conditions led to a vicious cycle of borrowing and economic strain. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) like privatization and trade liberalization have also been scrutinized for their mixed impact on economic growth and trade competitiveness.

Debt financing is crucial for funding critical sectors like infrastructure, which supports trade. However, as Jane Nalunga, Executive Director of SEATINI Uganda, pointed out, "Debt should be managed prudently to avoid undermining trade and economic growth." During the DADA meeting, it was evident that many African countries are caught in a cycle where continuous revenue shortages force them to rely heavily on borrowing. This reliance is often exploited by creditors through unfavorable lending terms, which do not necessarily spur trade or development.

Cross sectional view of participants at DaDa II

Ms Jane Nalunga, SEATINI Uganda ED shares key remarks during the session

The discussions also underscored the role of international financial institutions. Policies advised by entities like the IMF and World Bank, although aimed at stabilizing economies, often include conditions that lead to financial liberalization and capital flight. Such policies can erode state capacity to manage their economies effectively, leaving borrowing as the primary option to finance development. "Trade liberalization has facilitated capital flight from Africa," one participant noted, highlighting the need for a balanced approach to economic policies that support both debt management and trade enhancement.

To navigate the complexities of debt and trade, SEATINI advocates for reforms in the global financial and trade architecture. The goal is to develop sustainable debt financing options that do not compromise economic growth or trade. Jane Nalunga emphasized the importance of linking debt management to financial architecture and the real economy, advocating for rethinking economic policies related to trade, investment, and industry. "Africa is starved of resources to finance its development and to service the loans acquired," Nalunga stated, highlighting the vicious cycle of weak economies and continuous borrowing due to narrow tax bases.

The meeting's follow-up actions focus on monitoring the implementation of commitments made by participants towards these reforms. By fostering discussions and advocating for policy changes, SEATINI and its partners aim to create a more favorable environment for sustainable development and trade in Africa. As Africa strives to achieve its development goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, understanding and managing the nexus between debt and trade will be crucial. The dialogue underscored the need for deliberate interventions to boost trade and economic stability, ultimately breaking the cycle of debt dependency.

Over the years, SEATINI has continued to advocate for prudent debt management among African countries through efficient utilization of debt for profitable pro-development purposes. Debt has become more expensive to acquire and harder to pay back, leaving many nations in a debt trap. We ultimately encourage the improvement of domestic resource mobilization policies, practices, and measures because the most reliable source of development funding is domestically mobilized revenue.

SEATINI conducts capacity-building session on Local Revenue Management and automation on Revenue Management in Tororo

Local governments in Uganda continue to grapple with the challenge of generating sufficient local revenue to finance their budgets and support development needs. Despite legislative provisions under Section 80 (1) of the Local Government Act CAP 243, which empower local governments to levy, charge, and collect fees and taxes, many are still unable to achieve financial independence and accountability. This shortfall hampers service delivery and maintenance of public assets. The Local Government Finance Commission (LGFC) reports improvements in local revenue collection, from UGX 196 billion in FY2017/18 to UGX 291 billion in FY2021/22. However, these figures remain below the set targets due to gaps in policy and legal frameworks, weak administrative capacities, and low adoption of revenue automation systems.

To address these challenges, SEATINI Uganda, in partnership with Osukuru United Women's Network with support from Oxfam Uganda and Norad-Uganda, organized a two-day technical capacity-building session on local revenue management and automation. The training, held on July 18th and 19th, 2024, in the Tororo district, targeted lower local government officials, including parish chiefs and town agents. This initiative aimed to enhance their understanding and appreciation of local revenue mobilization and the use of automated systems such as the Integrated Revenue Administration System (IRAS) and the Electronic Local Government Revenue (eLogRev) system.

Ms. Constance Okollet, Chairperson of the Osukuru United Women's Network, highlighted the significance of the training session as a pivotal step towards effective revenue mobilization. She acknowledged the proactive role of the district leadership in recognizing the need for such capacity-building initiatives. "This training is an important engagement on revenue mobilization that was requested by the district leadership," she remarked. Ms. Okollet emphasized that empowering local government officials with the necessary skills and knowledge is crucial for fostering financial independence and enhancing service delivery within the community. Her comments underscored the collective commitment to building a transparent and efficient local revenue system, which is vital for the sustainable development of the district.

> **We have realized that over the years, multiple sources of revenue have been dwindling. Countries now, more than ever, need to rely on domestic revenue and specifically local revenue.**

Mr. Okea John, the LC5 Chairperson of Tororo district, delivered a candid and impassioned speech. Addressing the assembled local government officials, Mr. Okea highlighted the critical need for transparency and accountability in revenue management. "Many of you do not want to declare revenue sources. You do not declare, but you collect from those sources, and the money goes into your pockets," he stated bluntly. His warning was clear: "If you haven't declared, you should meditate and pray that you won't be discovered. Because if we catch you, you will lose your job."

Mr. Okea also stressed the importance of community engagement and visibility of local government officials. "We need chiefs who are known in the community. If I move to your parish, any household should be able to know you. If not, you are useless and should be retired in the public interest," he declared. He underscored the role of these officials in mobilizing people to benefit from the Parish Development Model (PDM) at the household level.

The session underscored the urgent need for capacity building in local revenue management and the adoption of automated systems such as the Integrated Revenue Administration System (IRAS) and the Electronic Local Government Revenue (eLogRev) system. By enhancing the skills and integrity of local government officials, SEATINI Uganda and its partners aim to create a more transparent and efficient revenue collection system that can better support local development needs.

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development at SEATINI Uganda, echoed Mr. Okea's sentiments and further elaborated on the pressing need for improved local revenue mobilization. "We have realized that over the years, other sources of development funding have been dwindling, and domestic resource mobilization, which also includes local revenue mobilization, is the most feasible option," he remarked. Mr. Kittengo emphasized that in the face of declining

Aerial view of Participants during the training at Tororo District Hall

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development at SEATINI Uganda gives his opening remarks

Ms. Constance Okollet, Chairperson of the Osukuru United Women's Network gives his opening remarks

Mr. Okea John, the LC5 Chairperson of Tororo district officially opens the meeting

external funding, local governments must strengthen their capacity to generate and manage their own revenues. He urged the local leaders to actively engage and seek clarity on the various aspects of revenue management being discussed. "My expectation of the leaders here today is to ask, ask, and ask as many questions as possible," he encouraged. This proactive approach is essential for ensuring that the officials not only understand the theoretical aspects of revenue collection but also can apply these concepts effectively in their daily operations.

Highlighting the broader fiscal landscape, Mr. Kittengo noted, "We have realized that over the years, multiple sources of revenue have been dwindling. Countries now, more than ever, need to rely on domestic revenue and specifically local revenue." This shift towards greater reliance on local revenue is critical for achieving fiscal sustainability and reducing dependency on external aid, aligning with the objectives of the training session.

Over the years, SEATINI Uganda, through her Financing for Development programs, has continued to engage at both the subnational and national levels to promote social development through domestic revenue mobilization and civic engagement, ensuring that everyone pays their fair share of taxes. This ongoing commitment is pivotal in driving sustainable development and financial independence for local governments across Uganda.

SEATINI Uganda presenting CSO Proposals to the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries regarding the Contract Farming Bill, 2023.

SEATINI Uganda Engages with the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries on the Contract Farming Bill, 2023

On 8th August 2024, SEATINI Uganda presented CSO Proposals on the Contract Farming Bill, 2023 to the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries. The Contract Farming Bill, 2023, as published in the Uganda Gazette on May 26th, 2023, seeks to establish a legal framework to govern the consolidation of land for commercial agriculture, the sale of future agricultural produce at agreed prices, and the supply of farm services between farmers and buyers.

The agriculture sector is a cornerstone of Uganda's economy, contributing approximately 23.7% to the GDP and providing livelihoods for 64% of the population. However, despite its importance, the sector is plagued with numerous challenges, including land fragmentation, limited access to farm inputs, and undeveloped value chains. The Contract Farming Bill aims to address some of these issues by providing a structured approach to contract and block farming, which have been increasingly embraced by Ugandan farmers as a means to secure agricultural credit, quality inputs, and assured markets.

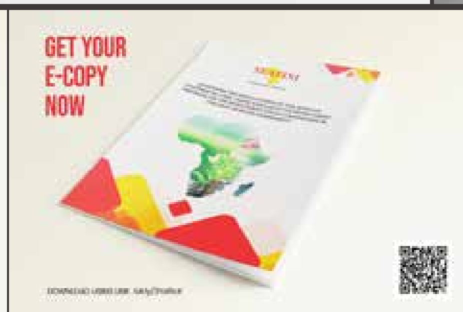
Mr. Herbert Kafeero Programs and Communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda during his presentation to the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries regarding the Contract Farming Bill, 2023.

During the interface with the Parliamentary Committee, SEATINI highlighted several critical areas of concern within the Contract Farming Bill, offering insightful recommendations to enhance the Bill's effectiveness and ensure it serves the best interests of all parties involved.

SEATINI Uganda's engagement with the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries underscored the organization's commitment to ensuring that the Contract Farming Bill, 2023, is robust and equitable.

By offering people centered and sustainable recommendations and advocating for the inclusion of various provisions, SEATINI continues to play a pivotal role in shaping policies that promote sustainable development and improved livelihoods for all Ugandans.

Some of our latest knowledge products



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