



Strengthening Africa in World Trade

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SEATINI UGANDA

Dear Comrades and Friends,

As we reflect on the month of October 2024, SEATINI Uganda is proud to continue advancing its mission to promote Africa's sustainable development through Africentric, policy-oriented solutions that are rooted in people-centered alternatives. Last month, our efforts at national, regional, continental, and global levels strengthened our commitment to addressing the challenges facing Africa, while advocating for policies that foster inclusive and equitable development.

At the national level, SEATINI Uganda has actively participated in key policy consultations and advocacy efforts aimed at strengthening Uganda's trade and development frameworks. We engaged with policymakers, civil society organizations, and local communities to promote more inclusive and sustainable economic policies that are not only economically sound but also socially equitable. In particular, we worked to ensure that marginalized groups, especially youth and women, are integral to the development process.

SEATINI Uganda also had an interface with the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industries and Fisheries to introduce the Petition to the Speaker on the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), advocating for its alignment with Uganda's trade and agricultural policies. Additionally, SEATINI was recognized as the Second Runner-up in the Non-Government Organizations and Associations category at the Institute of Corporate Governance of Uganda's Third Corporate Governance Awards held on October 18, 2024, a testament to our ongoing commitment to promoting governance and accountability in the sector.

At the regional level, SEATINI, in collaboration with Third World Network Africa, jointly organized the East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Forum on the implementation of the AfCFTA. This forum facilitated critical discussions on regional integration and how the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can unlock greater opportunities for economic cooperation and trade across the continent.

In addition, SEATINI Uganda, together with other African Biodiversity Network (ABN) partners, presented findings of a joint study report on *"Building Farmer Managed Seed Systems: Preserving Indigenous Seeds in East Africa"* to the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) Committee on Agriculture, Tourism, and Natural Resources. This was part of our advocacy to influence pro-development, agriculture-related policies in East Africa, with a strong focus on preserving indigenous seed systems.

On the continental level, SEATINI Uganda was actively in-

involved in the Africa Business and Human Rights Forum 2024, where we advocated for stronger human rights considerations in business practices, particularly in sectors with high environmental and social impacts.

Globally, SEATINI continued its active participation in international policy dialogues. We joined the 2024 IMF and World Bank Group Annual Spring Meetings, where we co-organized sessions during the Civil Society Policy Forum to influence global debate on trade, climate change, and development finance, with a focus on ensuring structural transformation of African economies towards exiting the current debt trap.

SEATINI Uganda actively participated in the 2024 World Social Forum, representing the Civil Society Financing for Development Mechanism. The forum's focus was on how financing for development can advance human rights for all. Additionally, SEATINI took part in a key panel discussion organized by the Centre for Finance and Development (CFD) and UNCTAD, which marked the 40th anniversary of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) Report. The session critically assessed progress and ongoing challenges in securing sustainable development for LDCs.

As we continue to engage proactively in key policy processes, SEATINI Uganda remains steadfast in advancing research-driven, policy-oriented solutions that align with Africa's development aspirations and the continent's pursuit of structural economic transformation. Our work is focused on advocating for equitable economic policies, promoting social justice and human rights, and advancing sustainable development. We are particularly committed to empowering vulnerable groups, including women and youth, ensuring that their voices and needs are integral to policy discussions and outcomes. Through these efforts, SEATINI Uganda strives to contribute to a more inclusive and just socio-economic landscape for all.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our stakeholders including policymakers, donors, civil society organizations, youth, and women whose continued support and partnership enable us to undertake this vital work.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,



Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda





L-R, Mr. Dison B. Okumu, the Chief Executive Officer of ICGU handing over an award certificate to SEATINI's Programs and Communications Manager, Mr. Herbert Kafeero

SEATINI Uganda Recognized for Excellence in Corporate Governance at the 2024 ICGU Awards

On October 18, 2024, SEATINI Uganda was recognized as the second runner-up in the Non-Government Organizations and Associations category at the Institute of Corporate Governance of Uganda's (ICGU) Third Corporate Governance Awards. The event, themed "Resilience and Sustainable Impact," acknowledged organizations that demonstrate leadership in corporate governance. Other NGOs recognized included TPO Uganda and the Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau. The selection process involved an independent assessment by PwC Uganda. SEATINI Uganda is one of the leading African think tanks and a premier center of excellence specializing in trade, tax, and investment research and advocacy. The organization is dedicated to promoting transparency, accountability, and equitable policies in trade, taxation, and investment at national, regional, and global levels. With a focus on enhancing policy frameworks, SEATINI plays a key role in advocating for good governance practices that cater to the needs of modern economies and

marginalized communities.

SEATINI focuses on strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to influence trade, fiscal and investment related policies and processes through research and advocacy, information generation and dissemination, targeted training and capacity building, alliance building and networking that equips stakeholders including government officials (policy makers and technocrats), private sector, MSMEs, Civil Society Organizations, farmers, youth and women with the tools and knowledge necessary to achieve pro development outcomes.

As a knowledge hub, SEATINI conducts rigorous, Africa-centric research on policy issues related to trade, fiscal matters, and investment. This research generates alternative development policy proposals that are centered on the needs of the people, with a focus on improving livelihoods and fostering sustainable development. Through publications, workshops, and conferences, SEATINI shares its findings, fostering a culture of learning and continuous im-

provement in governance practices.

Over the years, SEATINI's advocacy efforts have highlighted the importance of robust, transparent policies in driving sustainable, people-centered development. Central to the organization's mission is its commitment to inclusivity and gender equity. SEATINI actively amplifies the voices of marginalized groups, including women, ensuring their representation in decision-making processes and creating platforms for these communities to advocate for their rights. Through its targeted programs, SEATINI empowers marginalized groups to influence policy processes and contribute to building more equitable societies.

As SEATINI continues its work, it remains steadfast in its commitment to advocating for pro-development policies and practices in trade, fiscal matters, and investment. The organization is dedicated to being a catalyst for change, contributing to a future where ethical practices underpin both economic growth and social development.



Participants posing for a group photo during the Joint EAC and SADC Regional Forum on the AfCFTA Implementation

Collaborative Efforts as the Key to Unlocking AfCFTA's Full Potential

As it stands today, global trade has not sufficiently benefited Africa. Countries on the continent primarily export raw and semi-processed goods while relying heavily on imports of manufactured products. A transformation of the global trading system is crucial towards breaking this vicious cycle and transforming Africa's primary exports of low-value commodities. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is a key initiative aimed at boosting Africa's productive capacities and intra-African trade. At the recent "Joint EAC and SADC Regional Forum on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)," implemented by SEATINI, TWN Africa and Endacid, regional actors and stakeholders gathered from across the African continent made various concrete proposals regarding the effective implementation of the AfCFTA towards promoting Africa's structural transformation.

Ms. Jane Nalunga, the Executive Director of SEATINI Uganda, opened the regional forum by outlining Africa's long-standing challenges. Despite increasing industrialization and GDP growth, Africa's trade must undergo significant transformation. While intra-African trade needs to expand, trade for its own sake is not the solution, especially in the context of the climate crisis. Ms. Nalunga stressed that collective efforts are required to tackle these challenges effectively.



SEATINI Uganda's Executive Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga giving remarks during the Joint Regional Forum

A key issue raised by Mr. Oduor Ongwen, a seasoned trade expert, was Africa's need for greater self-sufficiency, as the continent imports much of what it consumes. To foster sustainable development, regional cooperation is essential, especially in making regional value chains a reality. Collaborative efforts, such as implementing common standards like minimum wages, were suggested to promote fairness in the labor market. However, challenges remain in execution, particularly due to the large informal workforce. Ensuring cooperation and attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in strategic sectors can support Africa's quest for structural transformation.

Dr. Andrew Mold, Chief Regional Integration Officer for Eastern Africa at the United Nations Economic Commission

for Africa, noted that while African nations currently have limited influence in global trade, they stand a stronger chance when united. For AfCFTA to succeed, Africa's largest economies and companies must shoulder greater responsibility. Currently, 1% of African companies account for 75% of total exports. It is also vital to better communicate the benefits of AfCFTA to the public, with a focus on how citizens, rather than firms, will benefit.

He also made it clear that while Africa's domestic market is often criticized, it holds more potential than is commonly perceived, particularly given the continent's vast geography and its post-colonial trajectory. However, the risk remains that foreign investors could exploit the free market, gaining disproportionate advantages. The challenge lies in the structure of global trade, which has historically marginalized Africa.

To move beyond this cycle of dependency, Africa needs to implement coordinated and unified efforts. Addressing these structural issues will enable the continent to reconfigure its trade policies for the benefit of its economies, rather than primarily serving external interests. Collaboration and leadership from Africa's largest economic players will be crucial for the success of AfCFTA and the continent's broader economic future and structural transformation.



ABN members during the presentation and on the extreme right handing over copies of the study report to the Chairperson of the EALA committee on Agriculture, Tourism and Natural Resources

Strengthening Farmer-Managed Seed Systems: ABN Partners Engage with EALA Committee

On October 28, 2024, members of the African Biodiversity Network (ABN), including representatives from SEATINI-Uganda, TABIO, MEAP, AFRICE, NAPE, and BIBA Kenya, convened for a crucial dialogue with the East Africa Legislative Assembly (EALA) Committee on Agriculture, Tourism, and Natural Resources. This engagement focused on the findings of a joint study titled "Building Farmer-Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) and Preserving Indigenous Seeds in East Africa." This collaborative effort aims to enhance agricultural sustainability and food and seed security across the region.

The discussions underscored the critical importance of FMSS in East Africa, where an estimated 60-80% of seeds used by smallholder farmers are sourced from these systems. The study highlights the vital role farmer-managed systems play in conserving indigenous seeds and promoting biodiversity, which are essential for resilient agricultural practices.

"As ABN partners, we recognize that small-scale farmers possess invaluable knowledge about seed systems. They

can identify which seeds are best suited to local conditions, thereby safeguarding food security and farmers' livelihoods," emphasized Mr. Kafeero Herbert, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI-Uganda, during the presentation.

During the meeting, various representatives from ABN partner organizations presented case studies and key findings and advocated for policies that recognize and promote FMSS, uphold farmers' rights, and protect the region's rich biodiversity. The discussions were dynamic and focused, reflecting the urgent need for legislative frameworks that empower local farmers and respect their traditional practices.

Engaging with the EALA Committee was a strategic effort to influence the enactment of supportive policies that could significantly enhance the livelihoods of farmers throughout East Africa. By fostering dialogue between grassroots organizations and legislative bodies, ABN partners aimed to create an environment where farmer-managed systems are not only ac-

knowledgeable but actively supported. The Chairperson of the Committee, Hon. Francoise Uwumukiza, stressed the need to align discussions with Agenda 2030 and the African Agenda 2063 to ensure that rural prosperity and agricultural transformation are achieved for all.

In addition, Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, Program Officer for Trade Justice at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized that to preserve indigenous seed systems, the EALA Committee should examine the intellectual property policy landscape at both international and regional levels to inform policy development for preserving FMSS.

This collaboration is vital for safeguarding indigenous seeds and empowering farmers, ensuring they have the rights and resources necessary to manage their own seed systems effectively. Integrating traditional knowledge with contemporary agricultural practices can lead to sustainable food production, enhance food and seed security, and contribute to biodiversity preservation. "There is a growing trend of farmer de-



Cross section view of participants during the meeting with EALA ATNR Committee



Immediate Left, Mr. Denis Tabaro, Executive Director, AFRICE who also represented the ABN General Coordinator together with other ABN members sharing a light together during the meeting

pendence on seed companies. Urgent action is needed for farmers to reclaim ownership and control over their seeds and establish seed banks. Furthermore, research on indigenous seeds must be prioritized to maximize production," commented Hon. Dr. Gladness Salema, EALA representative from Tanzania,

during the engagement.

This meeting represents a significant step toward fostering a more inclusive agricultural policy framework in East Africa. ABN partners remain committed to continuing this dialogue, advocating for farmers' rights, and promoting

practices that protect the environment and support local communities. Future efforts may include developing further research and establishing learning centers to strengthen the case for promoting FMSS in the East African region.

SEATINI-Uganda at the 2024 IMF and World Bank Annual Spring Meetings: Key Highlights and Discussions

The 2024 Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG) took place from October 21-26, 2024, in Washington D.C., with the core ministerial meetings and events held from October 22-25. These meetings are a significant platform for global leaders including Finance Ministers, Central Bank Governors, private sector representatives, civil society organizations (CSOs), and academic experts to discuss pressing international economic issues and coordinate policy responses. This year, the meetings focused on key global challenges, including the world economic outlook, global financial stability, poverty reduction, inclusive economic growth, and climate change.

The IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings serve as critical forums for tackling global economic challenges and facilitating collaboration across sectors. During this year's sessions, the World Bank unveiled its Scorecard, a tool designed to enhance accountability and track progress on global development goals. The Scorecard consolidates indicators from various arms of the World Bank including the International Development Association (IDA), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) focusing on 22 key indicators that assess progress in critical areas such as debt sustainability, social safety nets, and education.

As part of the discussions, SEATINI-Uganda's Executive Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga, participated in high-profile sessions and presented on key issues affecting the Global South, including fiscal injustices, financial inclusion, and the impact of debt policies on developing countries.

Financial Inclusion and Gender

Ms. Nalunga presented at a session titled "Problematizing the Bank's Reliance on Financial Inclusion, from the Gender Strategy to the Corporate Scorecard." One of the major points raised was the



The Executive Director, SEATINI-Uganda Ms. Jane Nalunga presented during the session on "Problematizing the Bank's Reliance on Financial Inclusion, from the Gender Strategy to the Corporate Scorecard"

unrealistic nature of using the number of women with bank accounts as a measure of financial inclusion. Many women open accounts only to receive loans, but these accounts often remain dormant because they are not used for regular financial transactions.

The Impact of IMF and World Bank Policies on Commercial Banks

The IMF and World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and other financial policies have been criticized for contributing to the collapse of local commercial banks. This has hindered the effective implementation of programs intended to empower women and support economic development. Ms. Nalunga emphasized that resources are often diverted from development initiatives towards system strengthening, further exacerbating the challenges faced by low-income countries.

The Debt Trap: Implications for Developing Countries

The burden of debt remains one of the most critical issues discussed at the meeting. Many low- and middle-income countries, such as Uganda, are caught in a vicious cycle of borrowing.

For example, Uganda is expected to generate just 33.33% of its revenue in FY 2025/26 yet is required to allocate 34% of its budget to debt servicing. This means governments are forced to borrow more to meet basic service delivery needs, negatively impacting on the most vulnerable populations.

During the session titled "A Tale of Two Emergencies," Mr. Jason Braganza, Executive Director of AFRODAD, emphasized:

"The ongoing debt and fiscal crises have highlighted growing frustration and discontent across the Global South. Public outcry over the harsh realities of austerity measures has become a dominant theme, as citizens in developing nations continue to shoulder the heavy burden of economic policies that seem to deepen, rather than resolve, their struggles."

The Role of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) and Taxation

Illicit financial flows (IFFs) and tax evasion continue to drain resources from developing countries, contributing to their indebtedness.



1st from the Left, SEATINI Uganda's Executive Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga together with other CSO representatives and panelists during a session titled "A Tale of Two Emergencies," hosted by AFRODAD during the Civil Society Policy Forum as part of the IMF-WBG Annual Meetings

Ms. Nalunga highlighted the need for stronger international cooperation to combat these issues. One suggestion is to strengthen the global tax system, ensuring that multinational corporations (MNCs) pay their fair share of taxes, which will help reduce the tax burden on poorer citizens. Additionally, there was a call for the establishment of a global asset registry to track wealth and minimize IFFs.

The Need for a More Inclusive Global Tax System

The current global tax system often benefits the wealthiest, while burdening the poor. CSOs and stakeholders were urged to continue advocating for progressive tax reforms at the United Nations (UN), including a framework to tax the super-rich and curb IFFs. The G20, under Brazil's presidency, has supported efforts to increase transparency in tax systems and tackle issues related to the taxation of the wealthy.

Addressing Climate Change: The Disparity in Global Efforts

Climate financing and the fair distribution of resources to combat climate change were also significant topics at the meetings.

While African countries contribute only about 3% of global carbon emissions, they are expected to bear a disproportionate share of the burden in terms of emissions reductions. Additionally, African countries have limited access to carbon markets, which are essential for economic growth and green transition. SEATINI-Uganda called for greater participation of African nations in global climate finance mechanisms and emphasized the need for fairer trade agreements, especially in the carbon markets.

Pope Francis' Call for Debt Relief

Ahead of the 2025 Jubilee, Pope Francis has urged global finance leaders to support international mechanisms for

debt relief, particularly for countries in the Global South. This call for debt forgiveness and restructuring was a key discussion point, as the current global financial system continues to deprive millions of people, especially in developing nations, of the resources needed for sustainable development.

SEATINI-Uganda's Advocacy at the IMF and World Bank Meetings

During the IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings, SEATINI-Uganda's participation was centered around advocating for policies that ensure fair economic opportunities for developing countries. Ms. Nalunga raised critical points on responsible borrowing and lending, calling for clearer and more transparent negotiation terms to avoid "odious" debt. She also highlighted the need for countries to invest in infrastructure and economic growth to break free from the debt trap.

SEATINI-Uganda also advocated for the establishment of an international tax framework to address the inequalities in the global financial system. This framework would help create a fairer system of taxation, ensuring that multinational corporations and the super-rich contribute their fair share to the economies of developing countries.

Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

As the world navigates an increasingly complex global financial landscape, SEATINI-Uganda continues to advocate for policies that prioritize the needs of the Global South, focusing on debt relief, fair taxation, climate financing, and economic empowerment. The discussions at the 2024 IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings underscore the urgency of addressing the structural challenges that continue to hinder the development of low-income countries. With the international community facing challenges such as rising debt levels, climate change, and increasing inequality, SEATINI-Uganda is com-

mitted to pushing for a more equitable and inclusive global economic system. Through continued engagement and advocacy, SEATINI-Uganda seeks to influence policies that will contribute to the long-term sustainable development of Uganda and other nations in the Global South.

As the global debate continues, SEATINI-Uganda remains committed to advocating for systemic change, ensuring that the voices of the most vulnerable populations are represented at the highest levels of international decision-making.

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We all agree that the global system, encompassing both the financial and trade frameworks, has failed, leading to deeper inequalities, impoverishment, and escalating indebtedness in the Global South. However, where consensus falters, is in the approach to addressing these challenges. When we look at proposed solutions involving long-term resources, we see an increase in official development assistance (ODA), but a shift towards more loans and less grants. Most climate financing mechanisms, for example, are debt-creating.

There is a pressing need to reform the global financial architecture, but this must go hand in hand with reforming the global trading system. It is essential to align the financial system with structural transformation in our countries, aiming to boost productivity, industrialization, and trade in value-added products. This is at the heart of structural economic transformation, which is vital for countries to mobilize domestic resources and sustainably exit the debt trap.” – Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI) Uganda



Journalists and Facilitators pose for a group photo at the conclusion of the training

Enhancing Journalists' Capacity to Combat Illicit Financial Flows and Support Domestic Revenue Mobilization in Uganda

The fight against illicit financial flows (IFFs) is increasingly critical for the economic development of African countries. As highlighted by the AU/ECA High-Level Panel on IFFs, chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, during the 24th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa in 2015, IFFs are depriving the continent of vital resources necessary for development. According to Global Financial Integrity (GFI), illicit outflows from Africa have been growing annually at a rate of 20.2%, undermining economic stability, investment, and public service delivery.

The digital economy and technological advancements have further complicated the battle against IFFs, introducing sophisticated methods for cross-border financial transactions that obscure financial trails, manipulate trade values, and exploit legal loopholes. These developments make financial crimes harder to detect and more difficult to combat.

Given the scale and complexity of IFFs, experts agree that addressing the issue requires a multi-stakeholder approach. This includes the active participation of non-state actors such as civil society organizations, media, academia, and think tanks, all of which bring valuable

perspectives and expertise to the table in uncovering financial crimes and advocating for systemic reforms.

The media, in particular, plays a pivotal role in exposing financial malfeasance, as demonstrated by investigations such as the Panama Papers, which uncovered global financial wrongdoing and spurred widespread reforms. However, not all illicit financial activities make headlines. This underscores the importance of building the capacity of journalists to effectively report on these complex issues, which directly impact Uganda's economic development.

Building on the foundational training provided in July 2024, SEATINI Uganda, in collaboration with the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) and Ox-fam Uganda, conducted a follow-up capacity-building workshop from October 21–23, 2024. This second module aimed to deepen journalists' understanding of how IFFs undermine Uganda's economic growth, governance, and development aspirations.

Mark Mutumba, Program Officer for International Tax Policy and Governance at SEATINI Uganda, led a session on Trade-Based Money Laundering (TBML), explaining how illicit financial

flows are hidden within international trade transactions. TBML involves manipulating trade values to disguise illicit funds, which are then integrated into the legitimate financial system. Mr. Mutumba emphasized that Uganda's vulnerability to IFFs via trade is particularly high, at 64%, compared to Kenya (58%) and Tanzania (57%). He highlighted the issue of trade mis-invoicing, where parties falsify the value or quantity of goods to facilitate illegal trade. The problem is compounded by insufficient enforcement mechanisms, with only 27 of Uganda's 170 border entry points currently staffed, allowing for significant leakage of goods and revenue.

Theresa Nannozi, Training Consultant, discussed the shifting dynamics of Uganda's exports. While coffee was historically the country's largest export, gold has now taken the lead. Nannozi noted that the mineral sector is particularly vulnerable to illicit trading due to weak legal frameworks and the lack of policy coherence. She stressed the need for robust investigations and collaborations both within Uganda and with its trading partners to address the issue of illicit financial flows.

Solomon Rukundo, Tax Specialist at Uganda's Ministry of Finance, Planning,



Solomon Rukundo, Tax Specialist, Ministry of Finance, during his presentation on tax expenditure governance.



Mark Mutumba, Program Officer for International Tax Policy and Governance, SEATINI Uganda, during his session on trade-based money laundering.



Dr. George William Lugalambi, Executive Director, African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME) during his closing remarks at the training for selected journalists from Uganda on illicit financial flows and domestic revenue mobilisation.



Journalists during a group discussion



Ms. Sophie Nampewo, Finance Development Coordinator, Oxfam Uganda, delivers closing remarks



Mr. Ismail Musa Ladu, Senior Business Journalist at Daily Monitor facilitating a session

and Economic Development, delivered a session on Uganda's Tax Expenditure Framework. He discussed how tax exemptions and incentives are used to attract investment, but also pointed out concerns regarding their effectiveness.

Mr. Rukundo encouraged journalists to use publicly available tax expenditure data to advocate for reforms that could improve the efficiency of the country's tax system. He also called for a more transparent and functional tax administration system to build investor confidence and reduce revenue leakages.

Hilda Tumuhe, Program Officer for Debt and Aid at SEATINI Uganda, highlighted the growing challenge of Uganda's public debt, particularly in relation to IFFs. She explained that illicit financial flows, including tax evasion and corruption, drain resources that could otherwise be used to service the country's debt. She called for strengthening the country's tax systems to curb IFFs and reduce the burden of public debt.

Ismail Musa Ladu, a journalist at Daily Monitor, emphasized the critical role journalists play in uncovering the truth behind major industries' tax contribu-

tions. He urged journalists to apply the skills learned during the training to investigate and report on IFFs, thereby promoting greater transparency and accountability in both government and the private sector.

Sophie Ndagire, Women's Economic Justice Program Lead at SEATINI Uganda, drew attention to the intersection between IFFs, public debt, and domestic resource mobilization (DRM), particularly from a gender perspective. She highlighted how IFFs exacerbate gender inequality, preventing governments from investing in gender-responsive policies that could advance the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5), which focuses on gender equality.

At the conclusion of the training, Sophie Nampewo, Coordinator of Oxfam Uganda's Financing for Development Program, underscored the critical role of journalists in shaping Uganda's economic and governance landscape. She stressed the need for continued collaboration between journalists and public finance practitioners to promote evidence-based journalism that holds both government and corporations accountable.

Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, echoed these sentiments, emphasizing how journalists can drive fiscal transparency and accountability to support Uganda's long-term economic development.

Dr. George William Lugalambi, Executive Director of the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME), highlighted the significant influence journalists have on public opinion and policy. He reiterated the importance of incorporating gender perspectives into future training sessions and committed to collaborating with SEATINI Uganda to build on the success of the training modules.

As Uganda continues to confront the challenges of illicit financial flows, domestic revenue mobilization, and sustainable development, journalists remain key actors in advocating for greater financial transparency and holding both public and private sector actors accountable. By strengthening their capacity to uncover and report on IFFs, journalists can play a crucial role in securing Uganda's economic future.



Second from the left is Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, Program Officer, Trade Justice, SEATINI Uganda, during a panel discussion at the Renewable Energy Conference & EXPO 2024

Empowering Africa's Renewable Energy Entrepreneurs: SEATINI Uganda's Insights at REC24 and EXPO 2024

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD), through the National Renewable Energy Platform (NREP), in collaboration with various development partners, successfully organized the "Renewable Energy Conference and Expo 2024 (REC24 & EXPO)" from October 31st to November 2nd, 2024. The Conference featured a range of thematic sessions addressing critical issues in the renewable energy sector.

At the Conference, SEATINI Uganda's Trade Policy Analyst, Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, participated in a side session titled "Financing Women and Youth Energy Entrepreneurs and Innovators." Her contribution provided a comprehensive analysis of the impact of trade policies in Uganda and the broader East African region on women and youth entrepreneurs, particularly those facing barriers to accessing financing in the renewable energy sector.

A key question raised during the session was: What specific reforms are neces-

sary to make trade policies more inclusive? Ms. Mbabazi highlighted the need for gender-responsive and youth-focused policy frameworks. Trade policies in Africa, particularly in East Africa, often overlook the specific needs of women and youth, particularly in sectors like clean energy. This oversight has created a trade environment where women and youth face additional barriers in accessing both local and international markets.

To address this imbalance, Ms. Mbabazi argued for the integration of trade justice mechanisms that ensure equitable access for women and youth innovators in the clean energy sector. This includes rethinking Africa's positioning within the global trade landscape, where African countries often remain commodity exporters, rather than value-added producers.

Ms. Mbabazi called for trade policies that support structural transformation, allowing Africa to move beyond its historical reliance on resource extraction

and towards value creation in the renewable energy sector.

In her contribution, Ms. Mbabazi also underscored the importance of locally driven energy solutions for Africa's energy transition. Africa has resources, knowledge, and the potential to innovate and produce renewable energy technologies such as solar panels and batteries. By focusing on local production, Africa can build a just and inclusive energy transition that is rooted in the continent's specific needs and development priorities. However, this transition is complicated by the continued reliance on traditional energy sources such as firewood and charcoal, which still power the lives of millions of Africans trapped in energy poverty.

A key challenge, therefore, is how to facilitate a gradual and sustainable energy transition. This requires targeted policies that both support the shift to renewable energy while ensuring that those reliant on traditional energy sources are not left behind.



Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, Program Officer, Trade Justice, SEATINI Uganda, during the session at the Renewable Energy Conference & EXPO 2024



Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi, Program Officer, Trade Justice, SEATINI Uganda, during a panel discussion at the Renewable Energy Conference & EXPO 2024

Ms. Mbabazi called for policies that ensure a just transition, balancing the need for rapid progress in renewable energy adoption with the realities of energy access for marginalized communities. Unlocking Financing for Women- and Youth-Led Initiatives.

During her presentation, Ms. Mbabazi also addressed the critical issue of

financing, noting that while the Global North remains a primary source of capital for renewable energy projects, it is essential that these funds align with Africa's local interests. To drive Africa's long-term energy independence, she advocated for policies that provide fiscal incentives for women- and youth-led initiatives, especially in the renewable energy sector. These policies should prioritize affordable financing and credit access for smaller enterprises, enabling them to scale and contribute meaningfully to Africa's energy transition.

Currently, Africa stands at the threshold of a major energy transition, there is immense potential to unlock new entrepreneurial opportunities, particularly for women and youth. Closing the gender and youth gaps in energy entrepreneurship could significantly accelerate the region's economic growth and development. However, achieving this re-

quires urgent action to address the existing barriers from structural and policy challenges to financial constraints and technical complexities.

The session emphasized the need for policy reforms and targeted support to create an enabling environment that empowers women and youth to take the lead in the renewable energy sector. Cultivating a gender-responsive, youth-inclusive ecosystem is not only essential for fostering entrepreneurship but also for driving a more inclusive and equitable energy transition in Africa.

As the world shifts towards a cleaner energy future, SEATINI Uganda will continue to advocate for policies that promote sustainable development, gender equality, and foster meaningful youth participation in Africa's renewable energy sector.



Cross sectional view of some Members of Parliament and Parliamentary Staff during the engagement with the SEATINI team

SEATINI Uganda Introduces Petition on Uganda's Compliance with EUDR to Parliament

On October 1st, SEATINI Uganda formally presented a petition to the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries, urging the Ugandan Parliament to take urgent action in response to the European Union's Deforestation-Free Products Regulation (EUDR). The petition aimed to compel the government to implement the necessary measures to ensure compliance with the EU regulation, which will be mandatory for accessing European markets.

The petition was referred to the Committee by the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa, who tasked the committee with reviewing the issues raised and producing a comprehensive report. This report will help Parliament better understand the EUDR and its implications for Uganda's agricultural sector.

The petition follows a National Multi-Stakeholder Meeting that brought together Civil Society Orga-

nizations and institutions working on issues such as farmers' rights, trade justice, human rights, and climate justice. The meeting addressed the potential impacts of the European Union's directives on Uganda's agricultural and coffee sectors. The stakeholders resolved to formally petition Parliament, urging the government to take immediate action to comply with the EUDR.

The EUDR has been introduced by the European Union to limit the impact of the EU market on global deforestation, forest degradation, and biodiversity loss. The regulation aims to promote deforestation-free supply chains, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect human and indigenous rights. Specifically, the EUDR seeks to minimize the EU's consumption of products linked to deforestation and forest degradation.

During his presentation to the Committee, Mr. Kafeero Herbert, SEATINI Uganda's Programs and Communications



SEATINI Uganda's Programs and Communications Manager, Herbert Kafeero making a presentation to the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture

Manager, highlighted the urgent need for Parliament to approve supplementary budget funding for the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF) to enable compliance with the EUDR. He



Immediate Right, Hon. Linda Agnes Auma, the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture speaking during SEATINI's interface with the Committee

also stressed the importance of implementing the National Coffee Act of 2021 and incorporating relevant provisions from the European Union directives into the Draft National Coffee Regulations. "We urge Parliament to move a motion to debate the implications of EU directives on Uganda's coffee sector, its value chain actors, and to assess Uganda's progress and preparedness towards EUDR compliance," Mr. Kafeero emphasized. Several Members of Parliament (MPs) raised concerns about the feasibility of

meeting the approaching EUDR compliance deadline. They suggested that the Ugandan government should engage diplomatically with the European Union to request an extension, allowing more time for the country to meet the required standards and avoid losing access to this important market. Additionally, MPs highlighted the need for more time to educate their constituencies on the practical implications of the EUDR, particularly how it will affect livelihoods. They emphasized that proper awareness campaigns would be critical to ensuring smoother compliance processes. The MPs also indicated that they have formally written to the Speaker of Parliament, requesting an invitation for the EU to engage in further discussions with Parliament on the matter. They emphasized the need for cross-ministerial collaboration, involving both the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries, to ensure a coordinated response to the EUDR. SEATINI Uganda, in partnership with key

stakeholders such as the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) has been undertaking various interventions to support Uganda's compliance with the EUDR. Our advocacy efforts have contributed to the European Union's recent proposal to extend the compliance deadline by 12 months. This extension provides Uganda with a critical opportunity to implement the necessary measures and protect its market access to the EU. As we continue our engagement with key stakeholders at both the national and international levels, SEATINI remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting Uganda's agricultural and coffee sectors in meeting the European Union Deforestation-Free Products Regulation (EUDR). Through ongoing advocacy and collaboration, we aim to ensure that Uganda not only complies with these critical regulations but also safeguards livelihoods and promotes sustainable agricultural practices for the long-term benefit of all stakeholders.

Youth Power in Action: Tackling Illicit Financial Flows

SSEATINI Uganda is a proud member of the Stop the Bleeding Campaign (STB), a movement geared towards combating the outflow of financial resources from Africa to tax havens and secrecy jurisdictions. Under this campaign, SEATINI has been actively engaging youths, students, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders to address the scourge of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs). These flows drain African nations of critical resources needed for development, exacerbating poverty and inequality.

IFFs are complex, but their consequences are profound. Africa is losing \$88.6 billion annually due to illegal financial outflows, a significant setback for development financing. These flows contribute to unsustainable debt, underfunding of critical public services, and the erosion of human rights. For instance, funds meant for schools, hospitals, and infrastructure are siphoned off, affecting the livelihoods of millions across the continent.

The Stop the Bleeding Campaign has been actively engaging young people, especially students, professionals, and those in the informal economy, to mobilize and challenge the structures that allow illicit financial flows to persist. These flows rob African countries of resources needed for vital public services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, underscored the critical role of youth in addressing IFFs, stating

"Illicit financial flows drain Africa of \$88.6 billion annually. It's time for young people to rise and fight this economic theft. Let's advocate for pro-development policies that serve our interests!"

Mr. Kafeero further emphasized that illicit financial flows are not abstract statistics, but real factors that directly affect the everyday lives of people across the continent. By depriving Africa of vi-

tal resources for hospitals, schools, and infrastructure, IFFs undermine the social and economic foundation of many African nations. He called on young people to lead the charge in holding policy-makers accountable for allowing these resources to be lost, urging them to ask tough questions and demand better.

In the context of rising public debt, Mr. Kafeero noted that it is the youth who will bear the long-term consequences of unchecked IFFs. He urged young Africans to advocate for policies that prioritize public welfare over narrow interests, citing the harmful effects of policies like the 12% excise duty on internet data:

"Pro-development policies should benefit the people, not work against them. Policies like the 12% excise duty on internet data are detrimental to citizens. It's time to speak up and demand change!"

Mr. Mukasiri Sibanda, Coordinator of the Stop the Bleeding Consortium, drew attention to the growing public debt crisis in Africa and its direct connection to illicit financial flows. He pointed out that debt represents a future tax liability, noting:

"Debt is a deferred tax liability. What we borrow today becomes the taxes we pay tomorrow. Let's ensure responsible borrowing for the benefit of future generations."

Sibanda emphasized the urgency of addressing both public debt and illicit financial flows, which together threaten Africa's development prospects. He called on young people to consider the long-term implications of debt and IFFs on their future, urging a collective commitment to responsible fiscal management:

"High public debt means higher taxes for future generations. Debt is the future value of tax consumed today. Are we prepared for the long-term costs?"

The youth-focused event was not only an opportunity to raise awareness

about the dangers of illicit financial flows, but also a platform to build a movement of young people committed to challenging corporate power, reclaiming the role of the state in development, and inspiring their peers to take action.

Illicit financial flows and the public debt crisis are two of the most pressing challenges facing Africa today. However, the youth of Africa stand at the forefront of efforts to address these issues.

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Illicit financial flows and the public debt crisis are two of the most pressing challenges facing Africa today. However, the youth of Africa stand at the forefront of efforts to address these issues.

SEATINI Uganda and the Stop the Bleeding Campaign remain committed to creating spaces for youth, particularly within higher institutions of learning, to engage with critical issues. Their goal is to empower young people to advocate for transparency, accountability, and economic justice.



Mr. Mukasiri Sibanda, the Coordinator of the Stop the Bleeding Consortium during his session at the Youth dialogue.



Youths and Facilitators pose for a group photo after the Youth dialogue.



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



Some of the Youths listening attentively during the dialogue.



The women who undertake sorting in the drying stands of Avono Microstation

Moving Shared Ambitions Forward: Improving Coffee Value Chains in Uganda

SSEATINI, in collaboration with Oxfam Uganda and the Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children Welfare (UCOBAC), conducted a comprehensive joint monitoring exercise for all Fair for ALL (F4A) project partners and consortium members in Uganda. The F4A initiative, implemented by three key consortium members including Oxfam Uganda, supported by Oxfam Netherlands; UCOBAC, in partnership with the Huairou Commission; and SEATINI, with support from Third World Network (TWN)—aims to enhance local value chains and improve the livelihoods of smallholder coffee farmers. While each organization has been operating independently, the monitoring exercise provided a valuable platform for fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and alignment of efforts across the project's stakeholders.

The joint monitoring exercise, conducted from October 21 to 28, 2024, took place in Nebbi and Zombo districts, where the consortium partners assessed ongoing activities and identified best practices. Local partners also joined the exercise, including the Uganda Agribusiness Alliance (UAA), the Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF), the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CS-BAG), and the Agency for Community Empowerment (AFCE). This collaborative effort provided an opportunity for

partners to reflect on the progress of the F4A project, share experiences, and build stronger synergies to enhance future cooperation and complementarity. SEATINI was represented by the MEAL Officer, Program Officer, and two community monitors, who engaged closely with local stakeholders to gather insights and document best practices and challenges. The monitoring began at the Gonyobendo micro-station in Erussi Sub-county, Nebbi District, where the partners observed a community-driven approach to improving the coffee value chain. The micro-station, equipped with a modern solar drying facility, outdoor drying stands, two pulping machines, a storage facility, and horticultural gardens, serves over 300 registered farmers. Gonyobendo operates as both a collection and processing hub for specialty coffee beans, which are exported to markets in the EU and UK, with plans to expand to Japan, Israel, and Poland. Additionally, efforts are underway to obtain organic certification to meet international standards and enhance the coffee's market value. A key highlight of the visit was the active involvement of women and youth in coffee processing, underscoring their critical contributions to the value chain. Women played a significant role in both the harvesting and processing phases, applying their skills and knowledge to ensure high-quality coffee. The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) meth-

odology, employed by the project, reinforced gender inclusivity by addressing social and economic inequalities. Notably, women who sold premium coffee to the micro-station were linked with buyers offering slightly higher prices than those received by their male counterparts. This gender-sensitive approach not only enhanced women's incomes but also empowered them with greater financial autonomy, demonstrating the tangible benefits of inclusive economic models.

In line with EU sustainability directives, AFCE reported its collaboration with the Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA) to register over 3,000 coffee farmers through geospatial data collection via Kobo Collect. The ongoing farmer registration and sensitization efforts focus on preventing deforestation associated with coffee cultivation, aligning with sustainable agricultural practices required by EU markets. However, farmers have expressed concerns about the potential implications of these new directives, signaling a need for further dialogue and sensitization.

During a community engagement session, Hon. Orom Collins Jalacida, Chairperson of Erussi Sub-county, praised the F4A partners for their contributions to local development. He highlighted the positive impact on local revenue, facilitated by SEATINI's efforts in eq-



The Modern Solar drying facility at Gonyobendo



Mr. Paul Kyeyune checking out the coffee beans



The LC III Chairperson of Erussi Sub-County Hon. Collins Orom giving his remarks



The Coffee Hurling Machine donated to Gonyobendo Microstation

uitable local revenue mobilization. He noted, "Before SEATINI introduced the F4A project, we collected between UGX 50 to 60 million in revenue. Now, we're seeing an increase to UGX 80-90 million, with projections to reach UGX 100 million in the next financial year." Hon. Jalacida also expressed gratitude to the Tax Justice Campaigners (TJCs) for their advocacy, which led to infrastructure improvements, including the installation of culverts, enhancing road access to markets for coffee farmers.

At the Avono micro-station in Paidha Sub-county, Zombo District, the partners observed another model for sustainable coffee production, focused on organic coffee. Unlike Gonyobendo, Avono micro-station produces organic coffee, dried with husks intact, and is equipped with drying stands, storage facilities, and horticultural gardens. Serving over 240 farmers, Avono has become a key center for improving livelihoods in Paidha. However, there is a need for neighboring communities to adopt similar sustainable practices to enhance agricultural productivity and preserve natural resources. Partners emphasized the importance of expanding outreach and training pro-

grams to surrounding areas to promote these practices more broadly. Avono's success in organic coffee production not only meets international market standards but also helps farmers command premium prices, supporting both environmental sustainability and economic resilience.

Several challenges were identified during the monitoring exercise, including the potential for land disputes surrounding micro-stations if the current land donors pass away, and possible leadership challenges if micro-stations are not fully formalized. AFCE noted ongoing efforts to formalize the micro-stations and streamline leadership structures. Despite these challeng-

es, partners acknowledged that micro-stations play a critical role in ensuring the sustainability and longevity of the F4A project beyond its lifespan.

Overall, the joint monitoring exercise provided a crucial opportunity for F4A partners and members to better understand each other's work, strengthen synergies, and identify ways to improve collaboration, particularly at the grassroots level. The final phase of the joint monitoring exercise will take place in the districts of Mbale and Bugiri, further advancing shared goals of improving the coffee value chain and promoting inclusive economic development in Uganda.



Partners from different organizations post for a group photo during the 7th Annual Citizen Convention.

How Can Women and Youth Lead the Push for Equitable Energy Transitions in Extractive Sectors?

The 7th Annual Citizen's Convention on Extractives, convened by Global Rights Alert and its partners, took place under the theme "Towards a Cross-Generational & Just Energy Transition for Africa." The convention placed women and youth at the center of discussions on Africa's energy transition, recognizing that these groups are among the most affected by shifts in the extractive industries. The event underscored the need for an inclusive and equitable approach to transitioning towards sustainable energy resources.

As part of the broader agenda, the convention explored pathways for community-driven development and effective resource management, emphasizing environmental stewardship and intergenerational equity. It provided a platform for policymakers, sector players, and community representatives to discuss cross-generational strategies that promote both economic resilience and social equity in Uganda's evolving energy landscape. The broad coalition of actors at the convention reflected a shared commitment to fostering an inclusive approach to the energy

transition, one that aligns community interests with sustainable development goals.

SEATINI Uganda was represented by Mr. Mark Mutumba, an International Tax Policy Analyst, who highlighted the critical role of civil society in advancing an Afro-centric energy transition and promoting efficient management of the extractives sector. Mr. Mutumba commended the Ugandan government for embracing a multi-stakeholder approach to energy transition discussions and policy development, calling it an essential step towards realizing the country's sustainable energy goals as outlined in the national Energy Transition Plan.

In his remarks, Mr. Mutumba emphasized the importance of collaboration between government and civil society in conducting targeted research that supports the just energy transition and climate financing initiatives. He stressed that such collaborations are crucial for formulating policies and designing measures that respond to the economic and social realities of local commu-

nities.

Regarding the decommissioning of extractive projects, Mr. Mutumba called for a comprehensive review of existing policies and legal frameworks governing decommissioning and the management of decommissioning funds. While such frameworks exist, he pointed out that they often provide differential treatment and fail to address the environmental degradation caused by informal small and artisanal miners. This, he noted, exposes local communities to climate change-related risks.

SEATINI Uganda remains committed to fostering collaborations with like-minded CSOs, governments, and other sector players in advocating for an Afro-centric energy transition that drives national economic growth, upholds the right to development, and addresses the realities faced by local communities. Through these partnerships, SEATINI aims to elevate sectors such as extractive industries to contribute meaningfully to National, regional and continental

Why the Rationalization of the Tax Appeals Tribunal Would Be Detrimental to Uganda's Tax Regime

**By Mark Mutumba, Program Officer,
International Tax Policy and
Governance, SEATINI Uganda**

On 22nd February 2021, the Ugandan Cabinet adopted the policy for the Rationalization of Government Agencies and Public Expenditure (RAPEX). The initiative aims to streamline operations, eliminate overlapping mandates, and reduce administrative costs. RAPEX is projected to save the government approximately UGX 998.12 billion annually through more efficient resource management across government functions.

However, as the rationalization process progresses, concerns have emerged among various stakeholders regarding the proposed merger of key specialized agencies. On 24th October 2024, Parliament of Uganda rejected the National Tribunals Bill, which sought to consolidate the Tax Appeals Tribunal (TAT), the Electricity Disputes Tribunal, and four other tribunals under different statutes into a single overarching tribunal to handle diverse types of disputes (as outlined in clauses 16 and 42 of the rejected bill).

Parliament's rejection was based on several grounds, including the bill's conflict with Article 152(3) of the Ugandan Constitution, which mandates the establishment of tax tribunals specifically to resolve tax disputes. The bill's attempt to merge multiple tribunals into a single body would effectively require an amendment to the Constitution, violating the formal amendment procedure outlined in Article 259. Additionally, Parliament criticized the lack of consultation with key stakeholders, such as the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), and raised concerns about operational clarity. The proposed bill extended the mandate of the TAT to non-tax disputes, which Parliament argued could dilute the tribunal's focus on tax-related matters.

Beyond the constitutional challenges,



the rationalization of the Tax Appeals Tribunal (TAT) presents significant risks for Uganda's tax justice system. TAT plays a critical role in maintaining the integrity and fairness of the tax regime by providing a specialized forum for resolving tax disputes. Merging it with other tribunals that handle a broad range of cases could undermine the effectiveness of tax dispute resolution. A merged tribunal would likely have a diluted focus on tax matters, leading to delays in resolving tax disputes as the tribunal's attention would be divided among a broader spectrum of cases.

Effective tax dispute resolution is fundamental to creating a predictable and fair business environment. Given the current inefficiencies within both the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) and TAT, merging the TAT with other tribunals could exacerbate existing problems, eroding public confidence in the tax system. A tax regime perceived as unstable or inefficient could deter both domestic and foreign investment, as businesses rely on clear, efficient, and fair processes for tax dispute resolution. As of May 2024, the TAT faces a backlog of over 250 cases, with approximately UGX 700 billion in disputed tax revenue. This congestion already leads to delayed judgments for taxpayers. Merging the tribunal with other bodies could introduce additional layers of bureaucracy, further complicating case resolution. The larger, more complex tri-

bunal would need to manage a broader range of disputes, potentially leading to bottlenecks and delayed decisions on tax cases. Prioritizing tax disputes in such a system could become increasingly difficult, which would further erode confidence in the tribunal's ability to deliver timely and fair decisions.

Delays in tax dispute resolution have significant financial implications. In the case of *URA vs Airtel* (CA 32 of 2020), the Supreme Court clarified that disputed tax assessments continue to accrue interest during delays in resolution. Such delays not only increase the financial burden on taxpayers but also lock substantial amounts of revenue in unresolved disputes, depriving the government of timely tax receipts.

Although the bill has been halted at its second reading for future consideration, the future of the TAT remains uncertain as the rationalization process continues. Rationalizing the TAT could undermine its specialized expertise, legal independence, and the overall effectiveness of Uganda's tax system. This change could have long-term consequences for tax justice in Uganda, potentially diminishing taxpayer rights and access to a fair and efficient tax administration.

In light of these considerations, the government should conduct a thorough cost-benefit analysis before proceeding with the rationalization of the TAT. This analysis would help ensure that any decision made is based on a full understanding of the potential risks and benefits, protecting the integrity of Uganda's tax justice system and its adherence to international best practices. Simply prioritizing administrative cost-cutting over the need for a fair and efficient tax system could ultimately undermine the public's trust in Uganda's tax policies and its capacity to attract investment.



Ms. Chantelle Nansaano (second from the left), Program Associate for Investment for Sustainable Development, SEATINI Uganda, joins other panelists for a group photo at the 2024 Africa Business and Human Rights Forum in Nairobi.

SEATINI Uganda Advocates for People-Centered Investment at Third African Business and Human Rights Forum 2024

As globalization continues to drive economic transformation worldwide, trade and investment are increasingly recognized as key engines of growth. However, these benefits often come at significant costs, particularly in terms of human rights, environmental sustainability, and social equity issues that are especially pronounced in developing countries. In a bid to effectively influence and shape the discourse around these issues, SEATINI Uganda actively participated in the Third African Business and Human Rights Forum, held in Nairobi from 8th up to 10th October 2024.

Represented by Ms. Chantelle Nansaano, Program Associate for Investment for Sustainable Development, SEATINI used the platform to advocate for pro development investment policies and practices at all levels.

Ms. Nansaano emphasized SEATINI Uganda's extensively work towards re-

forming the economic policies including those governing trade, tax, and investment so that they advance Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights.

SEATINI is dedicated to ensuring that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) translates into tangible benefits for local communities, rather than exacerbating social inequalities or environmental harm. In many cases, FDI projects have been linked to human rights violations, forced displacements, and ecological degradation. SEATINI calls for a revision of Uganda's Investment Code Act, 2019 to close the legal gaps that foreign investors sometimes exploit. By recalibrating trade and investment laws, SEATINI aims to safeguard citizens and the environment while fostering more equitable and sustainable economic development.

A key focus of Ms. Nansaano's address was the vulnerability of Uganda's Small

and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which struggle to compete in an investment landscape that often favors large multinational corporations. While SMEs are a cornerstone of Uganda's economy, they are frequently marginalized by policies that prioritize foreign investment, such as tax holidays and land concessions. SEATINI advocates for a more balanced policy environment that empowers SMEs by promoting fairness, encouraging the adoption of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, and ensuring that responsible business practices are the norm. SEATINI's goal is to ensure that economic growth benefits all sectors of society, not just foreign investors.

Another critical point raised by Ms. Nansaano was the importance of inclusivity and transparency in policymaking. Currently, many regulatory processes are conducted in ways that exclude the communities most affected by investment decisions. SEATINI believes that



This photo shows a cross sectional view of participants at the 2024 Africa Business and Human Rights Forum in Nairobi.



Ms. Chantelle Nansaano (second from the left), Program Associate for Investment for Sustainable Development, SEATINI Uganda, participates in a panel discussion at the 2024 Africa Business and Human Rights Forum in Nairobi.

meaningful progress can only be made when the voices of local communities, particularly women and marginalized groups, are included in policy discussions. Through advocacy for open dialogue, SEATINI seeks to ensure that trade and investment policies are de-

signed to serve the interests of Uganda's citizens, not just foreign investors.

Ms. Nansaano also outlined SEATINI's recent initiative to establish the Investment Core Group, a coalition of stakeholders dedicated to monitoring and

improving investment policies. Initiatives like the "Life Before Profit" campaign reflect SEATINI's rights-based approach to investment. The organization is pushing for policies that prioritize human rights, labor rights, and environmental protection. SEATINI's support for frameworks such as the EAC Model Investment Treaty and the AfCFTA Investment Protocol aligns with its vision for a more equitable trade and investment landscape, where all stakeholders including governments, investors, and communities benefit equally.

In her presentation, Ms. Nansaano underscored SEATINI Uganda's commitment to transforming Africa's investment framework into one that prioritizes human rights, environmental sustainability, and inclusive economic development. SEATINI firmly believes that economic development should empower communities rather than exploit them. By advocating for policies that center people and the planet, SEATINI aims to build a foundation for sustainable growth across Africa.

Strategic Investment in Women-Led Enterprises: A Path to Accelerated Economic Development

By Sophie Ndagire, Program Associate, Women Economic Justice, SEATINI Uganda

Strategic investment in women-led enterprises is a crucial catalyst for achieving gender equality and driving inclusive economic growth. This was underscored during the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), which focused on accelerating the empowerment of women and girls through targeted interventions to combat poverty, strengthen institutions, and ensure gender-sensitive financing. According to the World Bank, women comprise about 90% of the informal sector workforce in Sub-Saharan Africa underscoring their vital role in the region's economy.

In Uganda, 91.2% of women are engaged in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which include market vending, retail trade, salons, mobile money operations, and food service businesses, as reported by the National Labor Force Survey (NLFS) 2021. Women entrepreneurs have been integral in strengthening Uganda's economic resilience, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have helped reduce poverty and ensure economic stability for families yet continue to face greater challenges than their male counterparts in growing and sustaining their businesses.

The barriers faced by women-led MSMEs are manifold: limited access to financing due to a lack of collateral, inadequate digital literacy to harness the power of online markets, insufficient business management skills (e.g., record keeping), and the burden of unpaid domestic care work that limits their time to focus on business development. These factors not only impede business growth but also hinder the broader economic potential of women in Uganda.



While the Ugandan government has made commendable strides in supporting women entrepreneurs through initiatives like the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP), Emyooga, and the Parish Development Model (PDM), these efforts are increasingly constrained by Uganda's rising public debt. For the fiscal year 2024/25, debt servicing is projected to consume 46.2% of Uganda's total budget, a sharp increase from 35.2% in FY 2023/24.

The surge in debt servicing costs is attributed to a 50% rise in interest payments and a 44% increase in domestic refinancing. This growing debt burden severely limits the available resources for funding development programs, including those aimed at supporting women-led MSMEs.

As debt servicing pressures mount, the government has been forced to raise taxes to expand the tax base. Unfortunately, these higher taxes further exacerbate the financial strain on women-led MSMEs. Many women entrepreneurs face multiple tax obligations, such as presumptive taxes lev-

ied by the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), local property taxes, and additional informal charges (e.g., garbage collection fees, sanitation fees). These tax burdens coupled with escalating fuel costs significantly erode the profitability of women's businesses, making it even harder for them to grow and thrive. Climate change is another critical issue impacting women-led MSMEs, particularly those involved in the agricultural sector. Many women market vendors rely on the supply of perishable agricultural products, which are highly vulnerable to environmental fluctuations. The absence of value addition infrastructure, such as cold storage facilities and processing equipment, exacerbates the challenges faced by these entrepreneurs. During droughts, food scarcity pushes prices up, while heavy rains disrupt transportation routes, making it difficult to access markets.

These climate-related disruptions lead to significant price fluctuations and supply chain instability, further eroding the profitability of women traders. Addressing these issues requires strategic investments in both infrastructure and climate-resilient technologies to help



women entrepreneurs better navigate these challenges.

Despite these challenges, the potential for women-led MSMEs to transform Uganda's economy is immense. With greater access to markets and improved business practices, women entrepreneurs can drive significant economic growth, reduce inequality, and improve their living standards. However, for women-led MSMEs to capitalize on regional and international trade opportunities such as those offered by the East African Community (EAC) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) coordinated efforts from all stakeholders are needed. This includes ensuring that women entrepreneurs meet the requisite market standards and certifications required for regional and global trade. Capacity-building initiatives are essential to enhance business management skills, particularly in areas such as bookkeeping, record keeping, and tax filing. Empowering women to manage their financial re-

cords effectively will help them comply with tax regulations and ensure that they pay a fair share based on their business capital.

There is therefore an urgent need for the government to prioritize infrastructure development to support women-led MSMEs. Improvements in road networks, storage facilities, and market structures would facilitate better access to markets and reduce transportation costs, which disproportionately affect women entrepreneurs. Moreover, fostering collaborative business models, where women work in groups, could allow them to pool resources, share access to technology, and invest in value addition machinery helping to reduce waste and enhance product value.

Digital literacy training is also essential. In today's digital economy, women entrepreneurs must be equipped with the skills to engage in online marketing, product branding, and e-commerce. These skills are critical not only for

reaching broader markets but also for accessing valuable trade information that can boost competitiveness. With the right training and access to technology, women-led MSMEs can better participate in the global digital economy, opening doors to new business opportunities.

Strategic investment in women-led enterprises is a powerful tool for driving economic transformation and gender equality in Uganda. By addressing the financial, infrastructural, and technological barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, Uganda can unlock the full potential of its women-led MSMEs. This will not only accelerate economic development but also promote social equity, empowering women to play a pivotal role in the country's economic future. With the right support, women-led MSMEs can contribute to a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable economy for Uganda and beyond.

OUR WORK IN PICTURES



SEATINI IN THE MEDIA

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Market Leaders  **Resilience and Sustainable Growth** **Daily Monitor** www.monitor.co.ug



Mumba Kenneth Kalifungwa, Managing Director, ABSA Uganda Mr Santosh Gumte, Managing Director, Kansai Plascon Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Michael Atigiri-Ego, deputy governor, BoU Allen Kagina, Executive Director, Uganda National Roads Authority.

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Keyongo notes that Kansai Plascon's growth relies heavily on quality, product and packaging innovation, and strong relationships with stakeholders.

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The cost of impaired leadership
The absence of strategic leadership leads

8 Supplement | FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2024

Ireland - Uganda  Years of Diplomatic Relations Ireland - Uganda **Daily Monitor** www.monitor.co.ug

Ireland boosting investment and development in Uganda

According to the Irish Ambassador to Uganda, Kevin Colgan, Uganda's strategic demographic and geographical advantages make it a prime target for Irish investment.

BY RICHARD LUYOMBYA

Uganda has long been an attractive destination for international investors, thanks to her rich natural resources, youthful population, and strategic position within the East African Community (EAC).

Ireland, a close partner of Uganda for over 30 years, is actively exploring new ways to strengthen and expand this relationship.

According to the Irish Ambassador to Uganda, Kevin Colgan, Uganda's strategic demographic and geographical advantages make it a prime target for Irish investment.

Ambassador Colgan highlights several factors driving Ireland's interest in Uganda. "Uganda has a growing young, English-speaking population, an abundance of natural resources, and a favorable climate.

Positioned at the heart of the East Africa Community, with access to a market of 300 million people,

Uganda presents immense potential for Irish investors," he said.

The youthful population offers both a skilled labor force and a large consumer base, providing a significant advantage for businesses looking to expand.

Ireland's investment strategy focuses on harnessing these strengths to drive sustainable growth and development.

Ireland has already built solid partnerships in key sectors such as education and health, which serve as a foundation for future investments.

Prioritising education and health
Education and healthcare have long been cent



Officials from the Irish Embassy in Uganda after signing a partnership agreement with SEATINI-Uganda to strengthen sustainable and fair tax and revenue efforts, complementing the collaboration between Uganda Revenue Authority and Irish Tax and Customs. PHOTO/COURTESY

SHS360B
AID THAT IRELAND WILL INVEST IN UGANDA IN THE NEXT 5 YRS

TURN TO PAGE 9

UPCOMING EVENTS

SIDE EVENT



Exploring multilateral approaches to just energy transition and industrialisation in Global South



November, 18th



18:30hs (Bakú, Azerbaiyán)



Area B, side event, room 3, COP29

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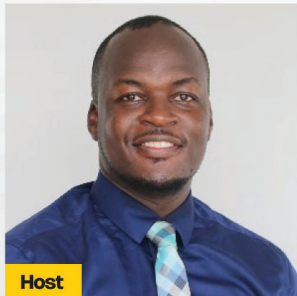


Join our X Space Conversation

TOPIC

Strategic Investment in Women-Led Enterprises:

A Path to Accelerated Economic Development in the East African Community (EAC)



Host

Mr. Daniel Lutaaya
Investigative Journalist/
Managing Director, News 247Ug
@DanielLutaaya



Panelist

Hon. Kurga Kering
Zipporah Jesang
EALA Member, Kenya



Panelist

Hon. Gai Deng
EALA Member, South Sudan



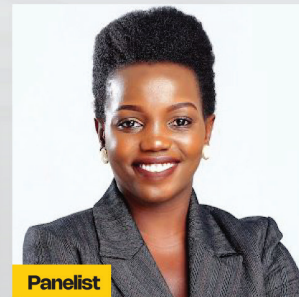
Panelist

Ms. Hilda Tumuhe
Fiscal Policy Analyst, SEATINI Uganda



Panelist

Ms. Dorothy Kimuli
Managing Director, D&M Group
International Limited



Panelist

Ms. Nafuna Grace
Founder, ARISE Women's
Business Initiative

HAPPENING ON:
15th November, 2024 | 6PM-8PM/EAT

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For more information please contact

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