



Strengthening Africa in World Trade

Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SEATINI UGANDA

Dear Comrades and Friends,

Happy New Year and warm greetings from the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI).

As we reflect on the final quarter of 2024, we are pleased to share several significant achievements and engagements that have shaped SEATINI Uganda's ongoing efforts toward sustainable development, climate justice, and responsible investment.

A major milestone for SEATINI Uganda was our official admission as an Observer Organization to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process in December 2024. This recognition underscores our expanding role in advocating for climate justice and policy reform at the global level. We also participated in COP 29 in Azerbaijan, where we contributed to discussions on climate change, sustainable development, and investment frameworks. A key highlight of our participation was co-organizing a side event focused on exploring multilateral approaches to just energy transitions and industrialization in the Global South.

In alignment with our commitment to advocating for the development and enactment of pro-development investment policies, SEATINI Uganda, in collaboration with Both ENDS, SOMO, Action Aid, and other civil society organizations, successfully organized the 2024 Civil Society Forum. The forum focused on aligning investment policy

frameworks with climate action and sustainable development goals. It brought together diverse stakeholders to discuss critical issues such as the intersection of investment, climate resilience, and human rights. The discussions emphasized the urgent need for reforms to existing investment policies, including International Investment Agreements and Bilateral Investment Treaties. The forum culminated in the Entebbe Declaration, which calls for the reclamation of investment frameworks that prioritize people and the planet.

Regionally, SEATINI Uganda actively contributed to the 7th East African Community (EAC) Secretary General's Forum. We also organized the EAC-SADC Regional Dialogue on Addressing Illicit Financial Flows and Strengthening Domestic Resource Mobilization in East Africa. This dialogue highlighted the importance of robust policy frameworks to address illicit financial flows and enhance domestic resource mobilization, while also calling for increased attention to food and nutrition security in the region.

Looking ahead, SEATINI Uganda remains committed to advocating for trade, fiscal, and investment policies that promote sustainable development, equity, and the welfare of marginalized communities. We will continue to push for policies that protect the environment, ensure social justice, and foster long-term economic resilience.

Sincerely,



Jane Nalunga
Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda



Aligning Investment Policy Frameworks with Climate and Sustainable Development Goals: Insights from the 2024 Civil Society Forum



Participants pose for a group photo during the 2024 Civil society Forum on Aligning Investment Policy Frameworks to Climate and Sustainable Development Goals



Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda speaking during the Civil society Forum



Dr. Rob Davies, Former Minister of Trade and Industry for South Africa speaking during the 2024 Civil Society Forum

Investment remains a cornerstone of economic transformation and sustainable growth. Around the globe, nations strive to attract both domestic and foreign investments by establishing regulatory environments that promise economic stability and growth. However, prevailing policies often fail to address the critical intersection between investment frameworks, climate goals, and sustainable development priorities. Persistent challenges such as climate change impacts, human rights violations, and the inadequacy of financing for sustainable projects have exposed strong gaps in current frameworks.

From the 26th to 29th November 2024, the Civil Society Forum (CSO Forum 2024) convened in Entebbe, Uganda, under the theme "Aligning Investment Policy Frameworks to Climate and Sustainable Development Goals." This significant event, organized by SEATINI-Uganda, SOMO, Both ENDS, and the Transnational Institute (TNI), brought together a diverse array of stake-

holders, including civil society organizations, researchers, and policymakers from across Africa and Europe. The forum aimed to address the recurring challenges posed by bilateral and multilateral investment treaties, many of which stem from colonial and post-colonial negotiations that often-favored unequal economic partnerships.

The discussions at the forum revolved around how many existing international investment agreements (IIAs) continue to prioritize investor rights over the long-term development goals of host countries. Such agreements often demand market-oriented policies in investor-destination countries while offering limited protection for environmental and social equity. For example, many IIAs, rooted in old-generation frameworks, lack elements of equity, sustainability, and ecological sensitivity, as these agreements were designed before climate change and sustainability became central global concerns.

Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda, highlighted the interconnected crises of climate change, economic instability, and debt burdens, which exacerbate vulnerabilities in developing countries. She criticized the over-reliance on private sector-led solutions that often prioritize markets over the needs of communities and the environment. Ms. Nalunga emphasized the importance of balanced investment policies that address both rights and obligations, calling for collaborative efforts to combat exploitative treaties.

Dr. Rob Davies, Former Minister of Trade and Industry, South Africa, underscored the deep flaws in the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) system, tracing its origins to colonialism and extractivism. He illustrated how ISDS provisions frequently undermine the policy space of states, environmental protections, and human rights. He praised South Africa's proactive termination of the Bilateral Investment treaties, which he described as a necessary step towards re-

claiming sovereignty and enabling sustainable development.

Mr. Fernando Hernandez Espino from Both ENDS, cited the failure of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) to fulfill their promises of fostering development. Drawing on examples like the Netherlands' experience with ExxonMobil's ISDS case, he showed how current frameworks undermine national sovereignty and environmental goals. Mr. Espino called for bold and collective action to establish investment frameworks prioritizing climate goals, gender justice, and community well-being.

Ms. Esther Kisembo, ActionAid Uganda, emphasized the critical need for integrating community voices and grassroots perspectives into trade and investment policymaking. She argued that investment policies often overlook the rights of marginalized groups and communities, which exacerbates inequalities and hinders inclusive growth. Ms. Kisembo advocated for em-

powering these groups to ensure their needs are prioritized in national and international decision-making processes.

Mr. Bart-Jaap Verbeek, Senior Researcher, SOMO, highlighted ongoing reform efforts in the investment treaty regime. He cited examples like South Africa's proactive termination of treaties and the European Union's move to eliminate intra-EU BITs. He emphasized the need for inclusive and transparent reform processes, particularly in addressing ISDS mechanisms that disproportionately harm developing nations.

The Civil Society Forum 2024 highlighted

the urgency of reforming global investment frameworks to reflect the pressing realities of climate change and sustainability. As the world grapples with escalating climate and social equity challenges, aligning investment policies with sustainability goals is more critical than ever. Policymakers, civil society, and other stakeholders must work collaboratively to drive meaningful changes, prioritizing frameworks that balance investor rights with the needs of communities and the environment. By doing so, the global community can pave the way for inclusive economic growth, environmental protection, and social justice.

Breaking Barriers: SEATINI Uganda's Contribution at the 7th EAC Secretary General's Forum

SEATINI Programs and Communications Manager, Mr. Herbert Kafeero speaking during the side session held as part of the 7th Annual EAC SG's Forum

SEATINI Uganda, represented by Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager, actively engaged in the 7th East African Community (EAC) Secretary General's Forum. This forum brought together civil society, regional policymakers, trade experts, and regional stakeholders to address key challenges impeding the integration of East African economies. Among the most pressing issues discussed is the persistent challenge of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), which continue to hinder the potential of intra-regional trade.

In a session titled "Breaking Barriers: Accelerating Intra-Regional Trade," SEATINI Uganda joined other thought leaders to examine these obstacles and advocate for actionable solutions to drive deeper economic integration within the EAC.

One of the pivotal moments in the session came from Mr. Paul Akiwumi, Director at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Mr. Akiwumi highlighted the successes of the COMESA region, where a robust Dispute Settlement Mechanism has proven effective in addressing NTBs. He encouraged the EAC to adopt a similar approach, emphasizing that economic integration cannot be achieved without a solid institutional framework and efficient dispute resolution processes.

He also stressed the urgency of addressing NTBs, especially in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). With AfCFTA set to unlock new trade opportunities across the continent, now is the time for the EAC to act decisively. The session underscored that the region must move beyond discussions and implement systemic changes to address trade barriers.

During the session, the following major barriers to intra-regional trade were identified:

Customs Delays and Complex Procedures
Divergent standards and certification processes across EAC member states continue to cause delays, inefficiencies, and increased transaction costs. These procedural inconsistencies hinder the smooth flow of goods and services within the region.

Hidden Costs of NTBs
While often difficult to quantify, the hidden costs of NTBs include delays, inefficiencies, and escalated transaction costs. These barriers disproportionately affect Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which struggle to compete in both the regional and global markets due to these persistent trade hurdles.

Protectionist Regulatory Measures
Some EAC member states still use NTBs as tools of protectionism, restricting the free flow of goods and undermining regional economic integration. These measures limit the ability of businesses to scale and compete effectively across the region.

Integration:
The session served as a powerful reminder that the removal of NTBs is not merely about dismantling obstacles; it is about establishing a robust foundation for sustained, inclusive economic growth in East Africa. By addressing these barriers head-on, the EAC can achieve deeper integration, boost intra-regional trade, and improve its global competitiveness.

Supporting MSMEs:
Governments must create a conducive environment for MSMEs to meet both regional and international standards. This will enhance their competitiveness within the region and increase their ability to participate in global value chains.

Capacity Building:
A comprehensive capacity-building agenda is needed to equip customs officials, traders, and policymakers with the necessary skills to facilitate trade more effectively and ensure the enforcement of trade agreements.

Establishing a Regional Licensing Regime:
Establishing a common licensing framework across the EAC would streamline procedures, reduce trade barriers, and enable smoother movement of goods especially for agricultural and industrial products.

Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of EAC Affairs – Uganda, provided important insights into recent amendments to the EAC Customs Union, notably the creation of a Trade Remedies Committee. However, she pointed out that several EAC member states have yet to ratify these amendments, which limits the committee's ability to effectively resolve trade disputes. She also highlighted political self-interest among some EAC leaders as a significant barrier to consensus on trade matters. Nonetheless, she expressed hope that the eventual formation of a political confederation or federation within the EAC could address these challenges by fostering a more unified economy and enhancing regional security.

Strengthening Monitoring and Reporting Systems:
A transparent and effective system is needed to track and resolve NTBs. Leveraging digital technologies will enable quicker responses from both national governments and the EAC Secretariat, ensuring that trade barriers are dealt with more efficiently.

Reviewing the EAC Treaty:
The ongoing review of the EAC Treaty should prioritize strengthening the Dispute Settlement Mechanism. This review must also consider incorporating punitive measures to deter member states from misusing NTBs and undermining regional integration.

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SEATINI's Programs and Communications Manager, Herbert Kafeero sharing a light moment with Uganda's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of EAC Affairs, Rt. Hon. Alitwala Rebecca Kadaga

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SEATINI Uganda remains committed to advocating for the removal of trade barriers and the creation of a fair, open, and inclusive regional trade environment. We look forward to continuing these critical discussions and contributing to the development of policies that will unlock the full potential of the East African Community.



Participants pose for a group photo during the Regional dialogue on the Impact of Illicit Financial Flows on Domestic Resource Mobilization in the East African Community.



Professor Mwambutsya Ndebese, Chairperson of SEATINI Uganda's Board of Directors, during his opening remarks at the regional dialogue on the Impact of Illicit Financial Flows on Domestic Resource Mobilization in the East African Community.

Addressing Illicit Financial Flows and Strengthening Domestic Resource Mobilization in East Africa



Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator, FFD at SEATINI Uganda, giving welcoming remarks at the regional dialogue on the Impact of Illicit Financial Flows on Domestic Resource Mobilization in the East African Community.



Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda giving closing remarks at the Regional dialogue on the Impact of Illicit Financial Flows on Domestic Resource Mobilization in the East African Community.



L-R Nelly Businge, Partnerships Manager at Tax Justice Network Africa, John Oduk, Policy Assistant at AFRODAD, Mr. James Kinyua, Project manager, Transparency International Kenya during a panel discussion at the regional dialogue on the Impact of Illicit Financial Flows on Domestic Resource Mobilization in the East African Community.

The East African Community (EAC), comprising Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda, continues to face significant fiscal challenges. Despite regional frameworks such as the EAC Common Market Protocol and tax harmonization efforts, illicit financial flows (IFFs), unsustainable debt, and weak domestic resource mobilization (DRM) remain key impediments to economic growth and sustainable development in the region.

In response to these challenges, SEATINI Uganda, in partnership with Diakonia Africa, convened a three-day Regional Dialogue in Uganda from 10th to 12th December 2024, under the theme: "The Impact of Illicit Financial Flows on Domestic Resource Mobilization in the East African Community."

The dialogue brought together policymakers, civil society organizations (CSOs), and economic experts to formulate actionable strategies aimed at combating IFFs, enhancing DRM, and improving debt management practices.

agement practices.

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development (FFD) at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized the critical role of civil society in curbing IFFs, strengthening domestic revenue generation, and reducing reliance on dwindling Official Development Assistance (ODA). He stressed the importance of closing regulatory loopholes that facilitate tax evasion and avoidance, which deprives governments of vital resources needed for development.

Mr. Mwambutsya Ndebese, Chairperson of SEATINI Uganda's Board of Directors, highlighted East Africa's low tax-to-GDP ratios, which average between 13% and 17%, significantly lower than over 30% in developed nations. He advocated for a focus on tax justice, enhanced state capacity, and the promotion of public values to ensure that revenue mobilization efforts align with the region's sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Ms. Nelly Businge, Partnerships and Institutional Learning Manager at Tax Justice Network Africa, provided a regional financing perspective, underscoring Africa's annual financing gap of \$1.3 trillion needed to meet the SDGs. She pointed out that IFFs cost the continent \$88.6 billion annually, exacerbating the rising debt burden and hindering progress toward achieving sustainable development.

Mr. John Oduk, Policy Assistant at AFRODAD, addressed the debt sustainability challenges facing East Africa, with debt-to-GDP ratios exceeding 50% in several EAC countries. He attributed this crisis to excessive borrowing, currency depreciation, and inflation, which divert resources away from critical investments in health, education, and infrastructure.

Ms. Joy Gessa, Principal Economist at Uganda's Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MoFPED), emphasized the urgency of sustainable debt management.

She noted Uganda's debt-to-GDP ratio stands at 46.9%, placing it at moderate risk, while Kenya's debt-to-GDP ratio of 65.7% places it at high risk. Gessa stressed that deficits, rather than genuine development needs, drive borrowing. She also highlighted Uganda's innovative strategies, such as diaspora bonds, crowdfunding, and remittance initiatives, to diversify financing options. Moreover, public investment management reforms, which require feasibility studies before borrowing, ensure that debt is used efficiently to avoid wasteful commitments.

Mr. Nyenje Makumbi, Manager for Tax Expenditure and Policy Analysis at the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA), identified the extractive sector as a potential driver for enhancing DRM. Uganda has raised UGX 3.5 trillion from the sector over the past four years. However, Makumbi called for closer monitoring across the entire value chain to maximize benefits, ensuring that tax incentives align with revenue goals.

Ms. Gloria Mugambe, Secretariat Head of Uganda EITI, stressed the importance of transparency in tackling IFFs. She called for robust beneficial ownership reporting, contract transparency, and accurate export data. Mugambe also emphasized the need to integrate artisanal and small-scale mining into formal systems to prevent revenue loss.

Mr. Kenneth Natukunda, Director of Analysis and Monitoring at the Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA), connected IFFs to financial crimes such as money laundering and trade mis-invoicing. He pointed out that Uganda's National Risk Assessment has identified medium-high risks for money laundering, particularly within banking, real estate, and forex bureaus.

Ms. Sheila Laker, Officer in URA's Tax Crimes Investigation Department, discussed advancements such as electronic fiscal devices (IFRIS) and non-intrusive customs technologies to curb smuggling and improve VAT compliance. However, Laker also

acknowledged persistent challenges such as weak enforcement, limited capacity, and poor integration of tax systems that hinder progress.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, highlighted the interconnectedness of debt, climate change, and IFFs. He likened regional economies to "leaking buckets," where resources are lost due to governance and tax system loopholes. Kafeero called for responsible borrowing, prudent debt management, and the adoption of policies that prioritize citizens' welfare, particularly through improved social services in health and education.

The dialogue underscored the urgency of addressing the multifaceted challenges of IFFs, DRM, and debt sustainability in East Africa, with a call to action for regional cooperation and comprehensive policy reforms to promote financial integrity and sustainable development.

Addressing Illicit Financial Flows and Debt: A Call for Action to Strengthen Domestic Resource Mobilization in EAC and SADC Sub Regions



L-R Mr. John Oduk, Policy Assistant, African Forum and Network on Debt and Development, Ms. Lurit Yugusuk, Outreach Officer, Institute of Public Finance (IPF), Kenya, Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator, Financing for Development, SEATINI Uganda, Mr. Zvikomborero Sibanda, Senior Economist, Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), Ms. Irene Otieno, East African Tax and Governance Network (EATGN), during their presentation at the Regional press conference.

The East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) are at a crossroads as Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) and unsustainable debt continue to erode economic sovereignty and stall development. Africa loses USD 50–80 billion annually to IFFs, driven by tax evasion, trade mis-invoicing, and capital flight. Simultaneously, mounting debt burdens, exacerbated by fiscal mismanagement and external shocks, redirect scarce resources away from healthcare, education, and infrastructure toward debt servicing.

At a press conference hosted as part of the Regional Dialogue on IFFs and Debt, SEATINI-Uganda, in collaboration with partners, called for immediate action to curb these challenges and strengthen Domestic Resource Mobilization (DRM) systems.

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator, Financing for Development at SEATINI

Uganda, stressed the urgency of addressing IFFs, highlighting their crippling effects on revenue collection and public service delivery. He underscored the need for comprehensive regulatory frameworks and stronger tax systems to close loopholes that facilitate resource outflows. “Tackling IFFs is crucial for achieving sustainable development goals and reclaiming resources needed for investments in people’s well-being,” Kittengo emphasized.

Ms. Joy Gessa, Principal Economist, Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MoFPED), Uganda, focused on debt management strategies, noting Uganda’s 46.9% Debt-to-GDP ratio and Kenya’s high-risk status at 65.7%. She underscored the importance of rationalizing expenditures, improving tax compliance through systems like IFRIS, and exploring alternative financing methods such as diaspora bonds to reduce dependence on

external borrowing.

Ms. Irene Otieno, East African Tax and Governance Network (EATGN), highlighted the long-term impact of rising debt on youth, who will shoulder repayment for decades. She advocated for political will to address IFFs and emphasized the need to establish sovereign wealth funds to ensure revenues from critical minerals benefit future generations. “We must quantify IFFs at the national level to make the fight against them urgent and actionable,” she added.

Mr. Zvikomborero Sibanda, Senior Economist, Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD), presented Zimbabwe’s dire situation, where 60% of GDP is tied to debt, with 77% in arrears. He decried regressive taxes such as levies on sugar and electronic transactions that burden the poor while foreign investors benefit from unsustainable tax incentives. “The fiscal space



L-R, John Oduk, Policy Assistant at AFRODAD, Ms. Lurit Yugusuk, Outreach Officer, Institute of Public Finance-Kenya, Aloysious Kittengo, Tax Policy Analyst, SEATINI, Mr. Zvikomborero Sibanda, Senior Economist, Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt & Development and Ms. Irene Otieno, from the East African Tax and Governance Network standing in solidarity during the Press Conference on the Urgent need to tackle IFFs and Strengthen Debt Management for Effective DRM in the EAC and SADC sub regions.



Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator, Financing for Development, SEATINI Uganda, during his presentation at the regional press conference

is collapsing, limiting our ability to invest in critical services like healthcare and social protection,” Sibanda noted.

Mr. John Oduk, Policy Assistant, African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), called for reforms to the

global financial architecture that perpetuates Africa’s debt challenges. He stressed the need for creditor accountability and equitable governance frameworks to ensure African nations benefit from their resources, especially in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

Ms. Lurit Yugusuk, Outreach Officer, Institute of Public Finance (IPF), Kenya, called for a rights-based approach to fiscal policy, ensuring human rights are prioritized. She underscored the need for inclusive participation, particularly of women and marginalized groups, in DRM processes. “Debt servicing is stripping away resources needed for essential services, deepening vulnerabilities among the most affected populations,” she concluded.

The urgency to tackle IFFs and unsustainable debt cannot be overstated. Stronger regional collaboration, enhanced tax systems, and transparent debt management practices are critical to safeguarding Africa’s financial stability. By prioritizing equitable and inclusive DRM systems, the EAC and SADC regions can secure the resources needed for sustainable development, ensuring no citizen is left behind. SEATINI-Uganda remains committed to driving this agenda forward, advocating for policies that uphold fiscal justice and economic sovereignty.



This photo shows participants posing for a group photo during the multistakeholder policy dialogue on the State of Food and Nutrition Security and Safety in Uganda

Stakeholders Call for Robust Policies on Food and Nutrition Security and Safety

On December 13, 2024, SEATINI Uganda convened a policy dialogue focused on formulating actionable recommendations for the review of Uganda's Food and Nutrition Policy and its accompanying Bill. A primary objective of the dialogue was to raise awareness among stakeholders about the current state of food and nutrition security in Uganda. Key participants, including Members of Parliament, technocrats and representatives from National Planning Authority, Uganda Human Rights Commission, Civil Society Organizations, and academia, emphasized the importance of a unified, collaborative approach in addressing food and nutrition security and safety.

The Government of Uganda has made notable progress in ensuring food and nutrition security through its legal and policy frameworks. Key initiatives include the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, under Objective XXII, the Food and Drugs Act of 1959, and the Food and Nutrition Policy of 2003. However, despite these efforts, Ugan-

da's food and nutrition landscape remains vulnerable, necessitating further action. Ongoing initiatives include the review of the Food and Nutrition Policy (2003) and the introduction of the private members' Bill on Food and Nutrition (2023).

In addition, the Cabinet has approved the establishment of the Food, Animal, and Plant Health Authority to streamline efforts across four key areas: plant health, animal health, agricultural chemicals, and food safety.

In his welcome remarks, Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager at SEATINI Uganda, emphasized the urgent need to update the Food and Nutrition Policy (2003) to address emerging challenges such as climate change, population growth, and evolving global food systems. He stressed that the review process must be inclusive, transparent, and aligned with national frameworks like Uganda Vision 2040, as well as global objectives, including the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs).

Mr. Kafeero further highlighted the precarious state of the global food system, citing alarming statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization, which reported that 713 million people are undernourished worldwide, and 2.8 billion individuals lack access to nutritious food. He called for immediate and coordinated action at both global and national levels to address this crisis.

Mr. Mwambustya Ndebesa, Board Chair of SEATINI Uganda, also addressed the dialogue, emphasizing the significance of food as a key tradable commodity, impacted by its availability, accessibility, and affordability. He reaffirmed SEATINI Uganda's commitment to raising awareness, conducting research, and advocating for policies that promote fair trade and enhance food security.

Mr. Ndebesa further stated, "The right to food is fundamental, yet it remains underrepresented in Uganda's legal



Mr. Alex Bambona, Assistant Commissioner and Head of the Food and Nutrition Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries speaking during the policy dialogue.



Mr. Richard Okot Okello, Assistant Commissioner, External Trade, Ministry of Trade speaking during the meeting



Mr. Grace Bwenge, Senior Planner Agriculture, National Planning Authority (NPA) speaking during the policy dialogue

and policy frameworks. It is crucial to determine whether food can be considered a justiciable right, thus empowering citizens to hold the government accountable."

Mr. Richard Okot, Assistant Commissioner at the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives, underscored the critical role that local governments play in ensuring the quality of food products through ordinances and enforcement mechanisms. He stressed the importance of a structured approach to food production, processing, transportation, and marketing to maintain standards and enhance food safety.

Hon. Flavia Rwabuhoro Kabahenda, Woman Member of Parliament for Kyegegwa District, provided updates on the Food and Nutrition Bill. She ex-

plained that the Bill, drafted by Parliament's legal team, seeks to establish a legal framework for implementing Uganda's Food and Nutrition Policy through a rights-based approach. Hon. Kabahenda noted that several national and regional consultations had been held with stakeholders, including ministries, civil society organizations, and nutritionists from various referral hospitals, to gather input on the Bill.

Mr. Alex Bombona, Assistant Commissioner and Head of the Food and Nutrition Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries, emphasized that the revised policy aims to enhance agricultural production, improve food safety, promote healthy dietary practices, and ensure access to resili-

ent food markets for all citizens. He also noted that consultations thus far have underscored the need for updated policies to improve agricultural productivity, diversify nutrient-dense foods, and enhance food safety and quality across the entire value chain.

At the conclusion of the dialogue, participants acknowledged the critical role of each stakeholder in advancing food security and safety in Uganda. It was agreed that governments must prioritize food security through robust policy development, strategic planning, and resource allocation, while civil society must continue to raise awareness, advocate for citizens' rights, and monitor policy implementation.



Participants engaged in group discussions during the capacity building session for property owners on local revenue mobilization.

Empowering Property Owners to influence Property Tax for Improved Service Delivery

Uganda's constitution emphasizes decentralization and citizen participation in governance as essential pillars of democracy. This is also enshrined in other regulatory frameworks, for instance, the Local Government Act (Chapter 243) among others. The Local Government Act Section 80 empowers the Local governments to levy, charge, and collect taxes and fees: Rates, Rent, Registration and licensing fees, and Fees and taxes specified in the Fifth Schedule of the Act. Property Tax being one of the major sources of revenue for Local government anchored to the fiscal decentralization, especially for the urban authorities, it requires effective management, however, little priority has been given by the authorities starting from property valuation to utilization of property tax.

Despite the provisions in the Local Government (Rating) Act of 2005, specifically

under section 37 (1) to (4) outlining the social contract between the tax administrator and the property owners with a rebate, challenges in effective management of this source of revenue persist. Due to those challenges, local government have been requesting SEATINI-Uganda and partners to continuously extend capacity building session for both the technical, political leaders and property owners to understand and appreciate their tax obligation. Following the capacity building sessions, it was realized that several property owners were unaware of their rights and obligations as provided for under Section 37 of the Local Government (Rating) Act, 2005, particularly, their entitlement to influence the utilization of 75% collected from property tax. Furthermore, the lack of engagement and sensitization efforts by the authorities

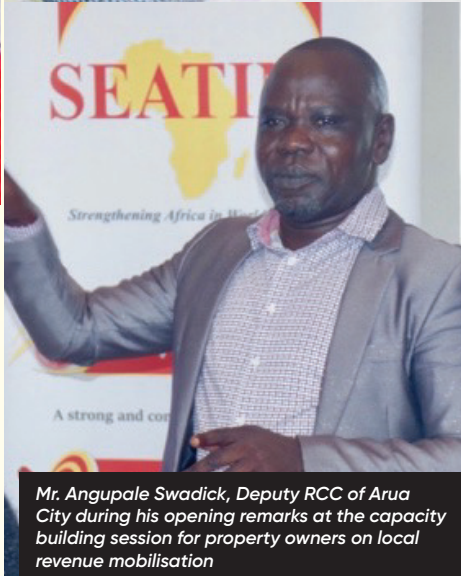
was highlighted as of the factors contributing to low tax compliance, apathy among property owners, and poor accountability.

In a bid to contribute to strengthen local revenue mobilization, utilization allocation and utilization, on 12th November 2024, SEATINI-Uganda, in partnership with the Agency for Community Empowerment (AFCE) and Oxfam in Uganda, organized a targeted capacity-building session for the property owners from Nebbi Municipal Council, Zombo and Arua City Central Division. These sessions aim to bridge the knowledge gaps, foster accountability, and empower property owners to actively participate in local revenue mobilization, especially property tax for improved service delivery.

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Programme Coordinator Financing for development at SEATINI Uganda, reaffirmed the critical role of property owners in local revenue mobilization. He highlighted that the power to decide how property tax is used is fundamental for democracy governance. His statement set the tone for the capacity building: "where he indicated at Local governments should engage property owners for effective revenue utilization, and at the end of the engagement, an issue paper will be



Ms. Ruth Namirembe, an advocate and tax expert, facilitating capacity building session for property owners on local revenue mobilization: property tax revenue and influence for improved service delivery.



Mr. Angupale Swadick, Deputy RCC of Arua City during his opening remarks at the capacity building session for property owners on local revenue mobilisation

developed and shared with the technocrats for actionable solutions."

In his opening remarks, Mr. Angupale Swadick, Deputy RCC of Arua City, commended the transformative impact of SEATINI Uganda's training programs. He shared success stories of improved revenue collection in Arua City, attributing the increase to enhanced collaboration between leaders and taxpayers. He noted: "The local revenue collected surpassed central government transfers, proving the potential of empowered citizens. However, it is vital for taxpayers to ensure their contributions translate into visible community benefits like better roads and garbage collection."

Ms. Ruth Namirembe, an advocate, took through the attendees the different property tax and the regulatory



Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator at SEATINI Uganda, during his presentation at the capacity building session for property owners on local revenue mobilisation

frameworks governing levying property tax in Uganda including, inter alia the Local Government (Rating) Act of 2005 and the Income Tax Act for Rental Income Tax. She emphasized: "Property owners must be present and proactive during property valuation processes to ensure fairness and transparency. Misunderstandings or lack of awareness often lead to inflated taxes or missed opportunities to appeal."

During the session, participants were engaged in group discussions to identify challenges related to property tax administration and utilization within their jurisdictions, highlighting issues such as the absence of property owners during valuations leading to inaccurate assessments, lack of transparency in valuation data, selective and inconsistent valuations, short display periods for results that limit opportunities for

contestation, inadequate sensitization on taxation processes, tenant rent defaults disproportionately burdening property owners, and the need to review tax percentages and valuation timelines to reflect economic realities.

To address these concerns, participants proposed practical solutions, including ensuring property owners' presence during valuations to enhance accountability, increasing transparency by openly sharing valuation data, extending the display period for valuation results and enhancing publicity through community leaders and radio, conducting extensive sensitization campaigns to educate citizens on their tax obligations and rights, and introducing mechanisms to mediate tenant rent defaults through local government intervention.

SEATINI-Uganda and its partners are committed to extend capacity-building efforts. Future sessions will aim at implementing the solutions proposed during discussions while further empowering property owners to participate in the development of their association. The issues generated by the property owners will be compiled for presentation to technocrats to ensure that their voices translate into actionable changes.

The journey toward effective local revenue mobilization and improved service delivery continues, with SEATINI-Uganda championing inclusivity, transparency, and accountability.

Retooling, Mentoring, and Coaching for Tax Justice Campaigners from Tororo and Buliisa Districts

SEATINI Uganda, in partnership with Oxfam in Uganda, Kakindo Integrated Women Development Agency (KAWIDA), and Usukuru United Women Network, convened a retooling exercise under the Norad-funded project titled “The Fair Recovery – Strengthened Civil Society and Media for Fiscal Justice for Tororo Municipality and Buliisa Districts.” This engagement was intended to build on the ongoing efforts to empower Tax Justice Campaigners (TJCs) to be able to undertake tax justice civic awareness campaigns within their communities and to ensure fair and just local revenue mobilization, utilization, and accountability.

A recent monitoring visit conducted by Oxfam and project partners highlighted a critical need for coaching and mentorship for the tax justice campaigners to bring them to speed on the current issues on taxation and how best to undertake the campaign. It is imperative to note that, while some TJCs had previously benefited from capacity-building sessions targeting local government leaders, others had not. This uneven access underscored the need for refresher training to equip all campaigners with skills and knowledge needed to navigate the evolving taxation landscape. Additionally, it was noted that learning from peers across districts could further strengthen their campaigns.

The retooling engagement, therefore, was designed to address those gaps, providing TJCs from Tororo and Buliisa district with the tools to deepen their impact on local revenue mobilization,

utilization and accountability.

The Tax Justice Campaigner retooling engagement was officiated by Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda, who emphasized the critical role of Tax Justice Campaigners in raising awareness on taxation and fiscal justice, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. He acknowledged the campaigners’ dedication over the years and highlighted pressing fiscal challenges, such as high debt servicing costs, declining external aid, and corruption, which underscore the importance of their work. Mr. Kafeero stressed the need for reflection on past achievements and challenges, and strategic planning for the future of the tax justice awareness work and campaigns. He reiterated the importance of sustainable revenue mobilisation, transparent allocation of tax revenue, and accountability for improved service delivery and foster trust between local governments and communities.

The tax justice campaigners benefited from the experience sharing from one of the old, experienced tax justice campaigners Mr. Arugu Julius. Julius is one of SEATINI-Uganda Financing for Development programme Tax Justice Campaigner, and a coordinator from Soroti City/District. Bring him to share with new Tax Justice Campaigners from Tororo and Buliisa district intended to show that they were not the first and some have pushed their work beyond the expectation like him. He shared practical insights on community



Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development at SEATINI Uganda, during his presentation at the retooling, mentoring and coaching for tax justice campaigners from Tororo and Buliisa districts on local revenue mobilisation, utilisation and accountability.

engagement, describing how his team worked with local leaders, churches, and community committees fostered discussions on taxation within those spaces. By integrating these groups into their activities, the campaigner successfully raised awareness about the importance of local revenue mobilisation and accountability and has been recognized and sometimes given space on radio to talk about fiscal policy. Mr. Julius also emphasized the role of regular community meetings and budget conferences, which allowed campaigners to advocate for community needs and priorities to be included in the budget processes.

To bring the technical interpretation of the laws governing Local Government Local Revenue Mobilisation, Ms. Ruth Namirembe, a Lawyer and specialist taxation delivered a technical session explaining the key concepts and legal



Tax Justice Campaigners and SEATINI team pose for a group photo after a successful retooling; mentoring and coaching for tax justice campaigners from Tororo and Buliisa districts on local revenue mobilisation, utilisation and accountability



Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda, during his opening remarks during retooling; mentoring and coaching for tax justice campaigners from Tororo and Buliisa districts on local revenue mobilisation, utilisation and accountability.



Tax Justice Campaigners during a group discussion during the retooling; mentoring and coaching for sessions held in Ggaba Bbunga on 30th December 2024 on local revenue mobilisation, utilisation and accountability.

frameworks governing local revenue. She discussed the role of local governments in levying and collecting taxes with a focus on property rates, local service taxes, and the importance of balanced budgets. Ms. Namirembe also highlighted how campaigners can use this knowledge to promote transparency and ensure that revenue is allocated equitably and utilized effectively for service delivery and improved people’s livelihoods.

Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Program Coordinator for Financing for Development at SEATINI Uganda, focused on the advo-

cacy aspect of tax justice campaigns. He stressed the importance of addressing root causes of some fiscal policy issues and how to engage key stakeholders by the Tax Justice Campaigner while doing the advocacy/tax justice civic awareness campaigns in developing practical solutions for the problems and their root causes at hand. Mr. Kittengo urged the campaigners to leverage on the existing policies, laws and regulatory frameworks such as the Local Government Act and Local Government (rating) Act to demand transparency and accountability.

The retooling session also provided a platform for the tax justice campaigners to reflect on their experiences, the challenges, opportunities and lessons learned, and agreed on how to address the challenges they are facing in undertaking tax justice civic awareness campaigns within the communities. The campaigners recommitted to their mission of promoting fiscal justice at the grassroots, addressing the challenges identified, and capitalizing on opportunities for impactful advocacy and improved service delivery.

SEATINI Uganda Advocates for Responsible Business & Human Rights Practices at the 6th Annual Symposium on Business & Human Rights in Uganda

The 6th Annual Symposium on Business & Human Rights in Uganda, organized by Resource Rights Africa, brought together stakeholders from across sectors to discuss emerging frameworks for responsible business conduct. Since its inception in 2018, this annual symposium has served as a vital platform for advancing awareness and implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). SEATINI Uganda, as a key partner, was honored to contribute to the discussions, with three of our team members chairing impactful sessions aimed at strengthening human rights and sustainability standards in Uganda's business sector.

The annual business and human rights symposiums have consistently contributed to policy advancements in Uganda, notably the adoption of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights in 2021. This plan aligns with the UNGPs and emphasizes the need for corporations to respect human rights across their operations and supply chains. At the regional level, the African Union's frameworks, including the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement, aim to address corporate-related human rights abuses, showing that Africa is committed to advancing these standards.

With the European Union being Ugan-

da's second-largest trading partner, recent EU legislative initiatives, including the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) and the EU Deforestation Regulation, demand that companies comply with rigorous due diligence standards. These regulations require businesses, especially in agriculture sectors like coffee and cocoa, to ensure their supply chains are free from deforestation and human rights abuses. Against this backdrop, this year's symposium theme, "Emerging Voluntary and Mandatory Frameworks: Strengthening Responsible Business Conduct in Uganda," provided an opportunity for stakeholders to align Uganda's policies with global human rights and sustainability standards.

As active participants, SEATINI Uganda's team led key sessions during the symposium, delving into the practical implications of these frameworks for Ugandan businesses:

Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence & Uganda's Access to EU Markets

Our Executive Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga, led an impactful session on the importance of sustainable practices for accessing EU markets. This discussion emphasized how the EU's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) aligns with Uganda's Nation-

al Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, urging Ugandan companies to prioritize human rights and environmental standards across their supply chains.

The panel highlighted that compliance with these EU standards is crucial for Ugandan exporters to maintain market access, supported by a €200M EU investment in sustainable trade. To drive real change, businesses must protect marginalized groups and address state-backed corporate impunity. In Uganda, building effective accountability means understanding local contexts and the complex ties between state interests and corporate practices.

Implementing the Smart Mix in Uganda

Ms. Chantelle Nansaano, our Program Associate, led this session focused on the "smart mix" of voluntary and binding measures to promote responsible business conduct. The session explored frameworks that balance voluntary initiatives with binding regulations, ensuring businesses are held accountable for their impacts on human rights.

The panel emphasized the critical role of a "smart mix" of voluntary and binding measures to support Uganda's growth, prioritizing human rights and environmental protection. Strong

First from the left is Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Program and Communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda, chairing a session on "Coffee and Cocoa," at the 6th Annual Symposium on Business & Human Rights in Uganda

Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda, Chairing a session on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence & Its Implications for Uganda's Access to EU Markets," at the 6th Annual Symposium on Business & Human Rights in Uganda

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, Programs and Communications Manager, SEATINI Uganda, chairing a session on "Coffee and Cocoa," at the 6th Annual Symposium on Business & Human Rights in Uganda

L-R is Ms. Jane Nalunga, Executive Director, SEATINI Uganda, Mr. John Mwebe, program Coordinator, international Accountability project in the Africa Region, Ms. Comard Lourianne, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Uganda, pose for a group photo after a successful session on "Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence & Its Implications for Uganda's Access to EU Markets," at the 6th Annual Symposium on Business & Human Rights in Uganda

government intervention and capacity building are essential for helping businesses. During the discussion more light was shed on import and export restrictions, financial regulations and integration of various intervention methods to meet new regulatory standards and balance the scale between small and big businesses. For the smart mix of measures to be attained, each stakeholder must critically understand their role. Effective corporate accountability in Uganda requires balancing voluntary actions with binding enforcement and

fostering collaboration among government, businesses, and civil society. This approach aligns with Uganda's business and human rights objectives, advancing sustainable and responsible growth.

The Impact of EUDR on Coffee and Cocoa Sectors

Mr. Herbert Kafeero, our Program and Communications Manager, chaired an insightful session on the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and its implications for Uganda's coffee and

cocoa sectors. This session addressed the challenges and opportunities these sectors face in complying with EUDR standards, including responsible sourcing and environmental due diligence. Herbert's insights underscored the need for Ugandan farmers to be informed about these regulations to ensure they can meet compliance requirements and maintain access to the European market.

The panel discussed the challenges facing Uganda's coffee and cocoa farmers under the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). Many small farmers lack awareness of EUDR requirements, risking non-compliance and limited EU market access. To address this, partnerships with smallholder farmers to document compliant practices and collaboration with large producers to advocate child protection are crucial. Additionally, to meet food demands, farmers often resort to unsustainable methods, risking soil degradation and biodiversity loss. Tackling foreign market dominance and ensuring fair compensation for small-scale farmers is vital for promoting human rights and sustainable livelihoods.

By participating in the 6th Annual Symposium on Business & Human Rights, we have not only contributed to critical discussions but also reaffirmed our commitment to aligning Uganda's business practices with global standards. The insights shared at this symposium will guide our efforts as we continue advocating for a sustainable, equitable, and responsible business environment in Uganda.



Mr. Lubega Jonathan, Program Associate for Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation at SEATINI Uganda, during a panel discussion at the "Keep Your Land, Keep Your Seed" press conference

The Quest to protect land and seed rights: Civil Society Push back against loss of land, and seed.

SEATINI Uganda, in collaboration with the Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU) and other civil society organizations launched the transformative "Keep Your Land, Keep Your Seed" campaign. This initiative is designed to protect the rights of rural small-scale farmers by supporting their efforts to retain land and preserve indigenous seed varieties. The campaign addresses critical issues of loss of land, declining productivity, and the decreasing availability and loss of indigenous seeds and food varieties. Through protecting land and seed rights, small scale farmers will be guaranteed sustainable livelihood for the present and future generation.

The "Keep Your Land, Keep Your Seed" campaign was birthed from a reflection on 20 years of LEMU's work in defending customary land tenure and is aimed

at addressing the critical issues of land loss, landlessness, unproductivity of land, (mis)use of land, and the decline in indigenous seed and food varieties in rural Uganda. The campaign advocates for the retention of land and indigenous seed/food varieties by mainly rural small-scale farmers and small-scale land owners to bolster their resilience against famine, food shortage, extreme poverty, and other climate induced forms of socio-economic crisis, which are exacerbated by the dominance of commercial approaches to land access (land sales) and the dominance of improved seed varieties and commercial crops which are tradable in the market.

The "Keep Your Land, Keep Your Seed" campaign re-awakens and highlights the essential role of land and indigenous seeds in building community resilience against climate-related and

economic crises while maintain food security and nutrition. Seed companies are pushing the narrative to commercialize the seed system especially among the least developed countries. The government priorities are also directed towards commercial agriculture and agro-industrialization resulting into the land grabbing. At the center of these practices, rural small-scale farmers rendered vulnerable without redress.

Speaking at a launch of the campaign press conference, Mr. Lubega Jonathan, Program Officer for Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation at SEATINI Uganda, reiterated the campaign's objectives and called upon the government to support small-scale farmers' rights to land and seed. He emphasized the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge and practices within Uganda's agricultural extension



Mr. Lubega Jonathan, Program Officer for Agricultural Trade for Rural Transformation at SEATINI Uganda, during a panel discussion at the "Keep Your Land, Keep Your Seed" press conference

sion services. "Integrating indigenous knowledge into our extension services aligns farming practices with Uganda's unique cultural and environmental contexts, ultimately promoting food security, community health, and resilience," Mr. Lubega stated.

"Our campaign calls for policy shifts to prioritize the production and consumption of nutritious, locally adapted foods," he explained. "In today's market-driven economy, healthier, sustainable food options are often overshadowed by

products due to aggressive marketing and advertisement of unhealthy food. We need legislative changes to ensure Uganda's food systems promote consumption and production of sustainable practices." Mr. Lubega emphasized.

"Land should not be treated merely as a market commodity," Mr. Lubega argued. "By educating officials on the socio-cultural value of land, the government can promote community-centered land use practices rather than

profit-orientated approaches. Therefore, laws and policies should be developed and implemented recognizing land as a resource fundamental to livelihoods and cultural identity."

Mr. Lubega also called upon the government to take interest in the global trade and policy dynamics especially those related to agriculture and intellectual property rights. "We urge the government to actively engage in international negotiations in order to the front policies and shape the narrative that protect Uganda's indigenous practices from the constraints of foreign direct investments in agriculture and intellectual property regimes, which often undermine local customs and farming knowledge."

The "Keep Your Land, Keep Your Seed" campaign is a crucial step toward securing the rights of small-scale farmers and preserving Uganda's agricultural heritage. By promoting the retention of land and indigenous seed varieties, SEATINI Uganda and its partners are working to empower rural communities, helping them build resilience against both climate-related and economic pressures. This initiative supports not only sustainable farming practices but also the continued prosperity and self-sufficiency of Uganda's rural communities.



SEATINI Uganda at COP29: Advocating for a Just Energy Transition and Green Industrialization

The Conference of the Parties (COP) serves as the governing body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international treaty focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enabling climate change adaptation. At its core, the UNFCCC holds developed countries accountable for their disproportionate historical and ongoing contributions to global emissions.

Since its inception in 1995, the COP has played a pivotal role in shaping global climate action. Significant milestones include the Kyoto Protocol (COP3, 1997), which imposed binding emission reduc-

tion targets on developed countries, and the Paris Agreement (COP21, 2015), which set voluntary national commitments with the goal of limiting global warming to well below 2°C. COP29, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 11 to 22, 2024, was a critical platform for discussions on climate justice and equitable development. On November 18, SEATINI Uganda, in collaboration with other civil society organizations such as Both ENDS, FARN, Dialogue Earth, INESC, and Latindadd, hosted a side event titled "Exploring Multilateral Approaches to Just Energy Transition and Industrialization in the

Global South." The event highlighted the importance of an African-centered approach to green industrialization, emphasizing local knowledge, community involvement, and regional collaboration as essential components of sustainable development. Africa, despite contributing the least to global greenhouse gas emissions, remains one of the most vulnerable to climate change. African nations face severe droughts, flooding, extreme weather patterns, and rising sea levels, all of which exacerbate the development challenges they face. At the same time, these countries must balance the

need to industrialize with the imperative to reduce emissions. Many African countries still operate with high carbon intensity in their industrial sectors. For industrialization to be sustainable, it must be coupled with innovation, technological advancement, and knowledge transfer to improve value chains. Unfortunately, extensive trade liberalization and restrictive intellectual property (IP) laws often hinder these efforts. Developed countries, by subsidizing their own industries and imposing restrictive IP rules, create an uneven playing field that pushes African industries into de-industrialization. These trade dynamics lock African countries, including Uganda, into a cycle of dependency on primary commodity exports. The absence of policy flexibility further complicates matters. Developing countries face significant challenges in shaping industrial policies that support local value chain development. In response, global trade rules must be reformed to facilitate more equitable outcomes, particularly in green industries. Agreements related to trade, IP, and climate change must be coherent and aligned to support sustainable development. Additionally, as trade agreements related to critical minerals increase globally, it is crucial that these agreements reflect the structural transformation priorities of resource-rich African countries. However, there are inherent risks in overcommitting to green industrial opportunities without considering market uncertainties. For instance, markets for green products such as hydrogen and ammonia remain speculative, reliant on the success of decarbonization efforts in Europe and the competitiveness of its industries. In Africa, regional markets for green products are still underdeveloped and depend heavily on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to drive trade, investment, and industrialization. The AfCFTA presents an opportunity to reshape Africa's economic model—from one based on raw material exports to one that focuses on developing domestic capacities for value-added processing. This shift is already evident in the growing share

of intra-Africa trade in manufactured goods. The AfCFTA stands as a transformative initiative capable of unlocking Africa's economic potential by creating a single market for goods and services. This can facilitate the transfer of green technologies and sustainable practices across the continent. For example, Kenya, which has made strides in renewable energy, particularly solar, can share its expertise and technologies with neighboring countries. By fostering intra-Africa trade, the AfCFTA can help catalyze green industrialization, enabling Africa to transition out of poverty while addressing its pressing environmental challenges. Mr. Jonathan Lubega, Program Officer for Agricultural Trade and Rural Transformation at SEATINI Uganda, stressed the importance of favorable trade and investment policies to drive the energy transition. These policies are critical for supporting sustainable value chains and enhancing Africa's competitive edge in global markets. He underscored that comprehensive policy reforms are needed to ensure that green industrialization benefits all sectors of society, particularly the most marginalized. Increased investment in renewable energy is essential for creating jobs and supporting local industries. South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) has successfully attracted foreign investment in renewable energy projects, serving as a model for other African nations. SEATINI Uganda calls for more such initiatives that prioritize local content and capacity building, ensuring that communities benefit from renewable energy investments. The trade relationship between Africa and the European Union (EU) has often been skewed in favor of raw material exports, undermining local industrial development. Exporting unprocessed minerals limits the potential for local value addition and hinders the growth of green industries. SEATINI Uganda advocates for trade agreements that prioritize value-added industries, enabling African countries to diversify their economies, create jobs, and reduce

their reliance on commodity exports. Investment and trade policies should reflect and integrate local knowledge systems and sustainable practices. These Afrocentric perspectives ensure that green industrialization is not only about importing technologies but also about leveraging indigenous knowledge to create solutions tailored to local contexts. Such an approach will enhance Africa's ability to achieve a just and inclusive energy transition, grounded in the realities and needs of local communities. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated at COP29, "This is a COP to deliver justice in the face of climate catastrophe, to help move us closer to securing a decent world for all humanity. The need is urgent. The rewards are great. And time is short." At COP29, Global North pledged \$300 billion annually for climate financing. While this represents a step in the right direction, it remains significantly below the funding required to address the scale of the climate crisis. Many African nations, including Uganda, face severe challenges in transforming their economies and adapting to climate impacts. The financial commitments made at COP29 fall short of what is needed to support the climate actions required to help developing countries transition to sustainable economies. SEATINI Uganda remains committed to advocating for greater financial support and more effective climate action mechanisms to address the urgent needs of Africa and other developing nations. SEATINI Uganda's participation in COP29 reinforced its commitment to advocating for an african-centric energy transition and equitable and sustainable development in Africa. By promoting a just energy transition and green industrialization, SEATINI continues to push for policies that empower African countries to overcome the challenges posed by climate change, while building resilient, sustainable economies. The need for comprehensive action is clear, and SEATINI will continue to champion the transformation of Africa's trade and industrialization strategies to support a green, inclusive future.



This photo shows SEATINI staff and Members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) posing for a group photo after a Strategic Engagement on the sidelines of the plenary sessions at Uganda's Parliament in November 2024.

SEATINI Engages EALA to Strengthen Regional Integration in the EAC

As the East African Community (EAC) works towards sustainable economic growth, regional integration has emerged as a critical strategy to address shared challenges. By pooling resources and fostering collaboration, EAC member states are focusing on synergies that promote trade, economic stability, and resilience. The region's integration efforts span economic, political, and social dimensions, with key initiatives like the Common Market, Customs Union, infrastructure development, and cross-border energy cooperation taking center stage. At the same time, the EAC is preparing for a future Monetary Union, which aims to establish a single currency, further deepening economic integration.

On November 4, 2024, SEATINI (Southern and Eastern Africa Trade, Information and Negotiations Institute) held a high-level engagement with the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) Committee on Communication, Invest-

ment, and Trade. This engagement was convened to address critical trade, investment, and fiscal policy challenges that hinder regional integration within the EAC. The meeting coincided with EALA's plenary sittings in Uganda's Parliament, marking an important moment for collaboration and dialogue.

Key Challenges and SEATINI's Recommendations

1. Trade and Investment Agreements with Third Parties:

Trade agreements between individual EAC member states and third parties—such as the Kenya-EU agreement and the Kenya-US Strategic Trade and Investment Partnership (STIP)—pose significant risks to the region's integration agenda. These bilateral deals could undermine the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), underscoring the need for coordinated regional negotiations. SEATINI called for a more unified regional approach to external trade

agreements to safeguard the EAC's collective interests.

2. EAC Model Investment Treaty:

The non-binding nature of the EAC Model Investment Treaty has slowed efforts to harmonize national policies across the region. SEATINI recommended that the treaty be domesticated, with a view to presenting the EAC as a single, cohesive investment destination for global investors.

3. Review of the EAC Treaty:

As the trade and socio-economic landscape evolves, SEATINI emphasized the importance of reviewing the EAC Treaty. This review would ensure that its provisions align with the current realities and future aspirations of the community, enabling more effective regional cooperation.

4. Africa Mining Vision:

The slow domestication of the Africa Mining Vision has hindered the EAC's

energy transition and climate change mitigation efforts. SEATINI called for faster adoption of the Mining Vision at the domestic level and the creation of regional policies focused on mineral beneficiation to support sustainable energy transitions.

5. Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):

Non-Tariff Barriers continue to obstruct intra-regional trade, preventing the full realization of the Customs Union and free movement of goods and services.

SEATINI recommended accelerating the establishment of Trade Remedies Committees to address trade disputes and safeguard regional economic interests.

6. Pharmaceutical and Vaccine Manufacturing:

To align with the African Union's Vision 2063 and the Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM), SEATINI advocated for the development of regional value chains for vaccine production. Strengthening knowledge transfer, harmonizing health policies, and fostering a supportive policy environment for vaccine manufacturing are vital to meeting the region's health needs and supporting broader continental goals.

7. Gender Mainstreaming in Regional Policies:

The inclusion of gender considerations in regional policy development is essential for achieving socio-econom-

ized the importance of structured, thematic engagements between EALA committees and key stakeholders. They underscored the significant role Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) play in enriching policy development with diverse perspectives and called for the formalization of CSO participation through expedited Memoranda of Understanding with EALA.

EALA members also stressed the need to prioritize the development of regional vaccine manufacturing value chains and to involve CSOs in evaluating the state of vaccine production in the region. Concerns were also raised about the structure of the East African Court of Justice (EACJ), with members suggesting the introduction of permanent judges to improve the efficiency of trade dispute resolution.

Additionally, EALA members called for the creation of robust structures to support investment in the region, including the establishment of an EAC Investment Bank, drawing inspiration from successful models such as the Asian Development Bank. Simplifying information dissemination to ensure local community engagement, especially among women and marginalized groups, was also highlighted as a priority.

A Unified Commitment to Regional Integration

The meeting was presided over by Hon. James Magode Ikuya, Uganda's Minister of State for EAC Affairs. He reaffirmed Uganda's commitment to advancing the regional integration agenda and acknowledged the challenges faced by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and other barriers to intra-regional trade. Hon. Ikuya emphasized the importance of continued collaboration, resilience, and engagement with all stakeholders to overcome these obstacles. By leveraging the region's strengths and fostering cooperation, the EAC can pave the way for a more prosperous and unified future. Through this engagement, SEATINI and EALA reinforced their shared commitment to enhancing regional integration, underscoring the importance of effective policy development, cooperation, and the involvement of all stakeholders in realizing the EAC's potential.



L-R, SEATINI Staff Ms. Hilda Tumuhe, Mr. Aloysious Kittengo, Mr. Herbert Kafeero and Ms. Peninnah Mbabazi during the strategic engagement with EALA Members and Committee Communication, Investment and Trade

WHAT STAKEHOLDERS SAY ABOUT OUR WORK



"SEATINI's trainings have greatly improved local revenue mobilization and empowered both leaders and taxpayers. The impact of these sessions is evident, as local revenue collection in Arua Central Division now surpasses central government transfers, demonstrating the value of engaging and educating citizens." – **Mr. Angupale swadick, Deputy RCC, Arua city.**



"SEATINI's consistent engagement and training have greatly helped us address challenges in local revenue collection. Through their mentorship and practical examples, like learning from successful cases such as Arua City, we've improved our local revenue from 35 million to 70 million and aim to reach 100 million in the next two years. Their support has also strengthened our collaboration with taxpayers, showing them that their contributions lead to tangible service delivery improvements, such as better infrastructure and farming support. This partnership has been transformative for our community." – **Mr. Oram Collins Jalagda, LC3, Erissi sub county, Nebbi district.**



"We appreciate the role that SEATINI is playing and the contribution that the organization is making to our deliberations, to our discussions and to even our capacity building. We agree with you on tackling Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) and the challenges posed by FTAs. We support the idea of negotiating as a bloc with the EU and attracting more FDI into East Africa. We are proposing the setting up of East African Investment Bank, just like the European Investment Bank and we would like your support with that in terms of research, in terms of on how we can take this thing forward. So once again thank you for setting up these meetings and for your contribution to EALA." – **Hon. Shahbal Said Suleiman, Chair of the committee on Communications, Trade and Investment, (EALA)**

"SEATINI's trainings have been very timely and impactful, especially in helping us understand how to start with property tax. These engagements have improved our local revenue base significantly, taught us how to effectively engage with taxpayers, and encouraged us to take action rather than just listen. This is a great starting point, and we look forward to learning even more in the future." – **Mr. Kisa Lawrence Ojok, Secretary Finance, Nebbi District Local Government.**



"SEATINI's training has provided us with the knowledge and tools to improve local revenue collection significantly. Their work has empowered us to engage stakeholders, implement systems like IRAS, and foster teamwork, which has been transformative for our community" – **Mr. Dramani Richard, Mayor, Central division, Arua city.**

OUR WORK IN PICTURES

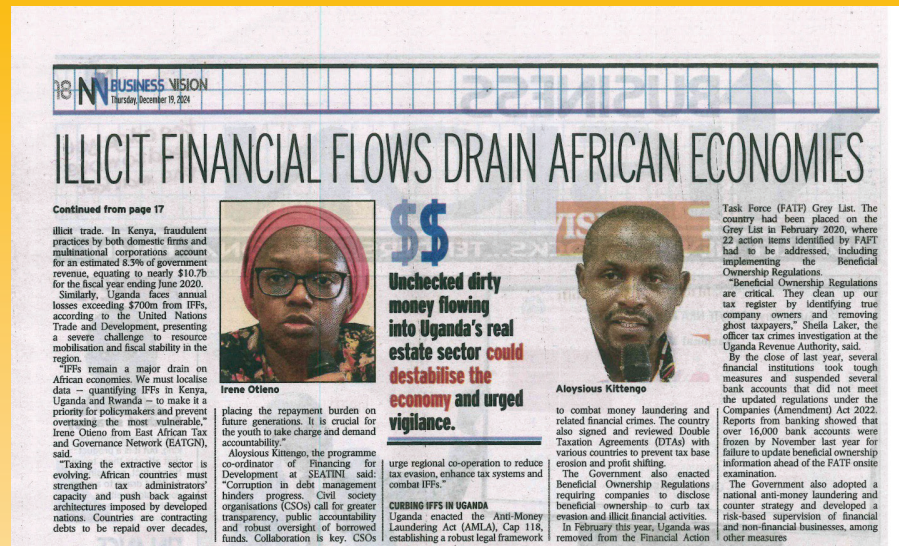


- 1 SEATINI Uganda staff, alongside the Executive Director and Chairperson of the SEATINI Uganda Board of Directors, pose for a group photo following a successful End-of-Year Retreat.
- 2 SEATINI Team led by the Executive Director, Ms. Jane Nalunga pose for a group photo with Buganda Investments and Commercial Undretakings Team led by Mr. Roland Michael Sebuwufu after a strategic engagement
- 3 Standing, Dr. Rob Davies and Ms. Vahini Naidhu, Programme Coordinator of the Trade for Development Programme at the South Center-Geneva sharing a light moment during the Civil Society Forum



SEATINI'S MEDIA OUTREACH

SOME OF OUR LATEST KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS



SOME OF OUR LATEST KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

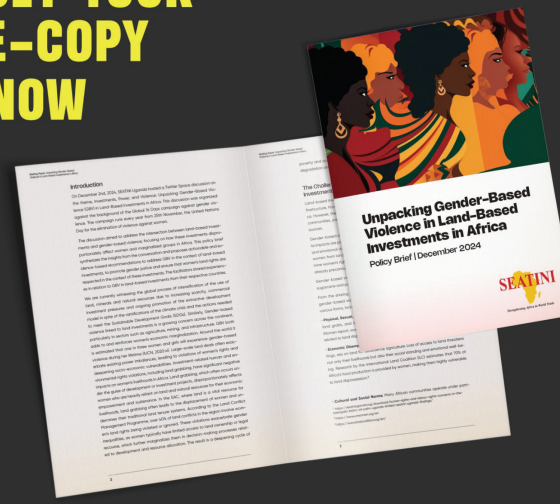
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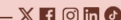
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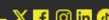
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A PROFILE OF BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATIES IN THE EAC

December 2024

Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs) are agreements between two countries or regional economic communities aimed at promoting and protecting investments. It is assumed that by entering into such agreements, countries can more easily attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), as both nations agree with rules that make it more attractive for businesses in one country to invest in the other. BITs generally include provisions related to the protection of foreign investments, such as Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET), protection from expropriation without compensation, and access to dispute resolution mechanisms like the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). Although there are some economic benefits accruing from the signing BITs, they are outweighed by the negative effects in the host countries. In fact, it is imperative that these BITs are either canceled or renegotiated.

This paper makes a case for the urgent need by developing countries to terminate or renegotiate the BITs by highlighting the problematic provisions and their implications on peoples' livelihoods and the environment. The paper further provides for a detailed presentation of the active BITs in the EAC, including the contracting parties, the status and the dates for termination or renegotiations. This information is important to help governments in the renegotiations /termination process of the BITs.

The History of the BITs in the EAC

Most BITs are several years old, with many signed in the mid-1990s. In fact, some of the East African Community (EAC) partner states signed their first BITs a few years after gaining independence. Germany signed its BIT with Uganda in 1966; with Rwanda in 1967; and with the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1969. Often, these agreements have

not been updated since their inception, which is where we encounter our first problem. States get legally binding commitments that no longer align with modern governance priorities, often lacking a clear sustainable dimension, which makes it difficult for governments to adapt to the urgent need for a green transition (Man, 2019).

Imbalances within the BITs

Most of the existing BITs prioritize investor protection, including clauses like fair and equitable treatment, which can constrain governments' ability to regulate in areas such as public health, environmental protection, and labor standards. The reality is that FDI has great potential to spur development, but the effects are not automatic and require complementary policies and institutions. These treaties are skewed in favor of investors who are provided with extensive rights while having minimal obligations towards people, communities and the environment. As a result, there is an increase in human and environmental rights violations within investment schemes in Uganda and the East Africa region.

In these agreements, ISDS provisions often allow investors to sue states if they believe that the host countries have negatively affected their businesses. This leads to expensive legal processes and potential compensation that can have devastating consequences for economies. This makes it difficult for countries to implement critical policies to foster sustainable development and protect their citizens (workers and communities). The other critical gaps in the current BITs are the lack of provisions for human Rights Impact assessments (HRIAs) and for technology and skills transfer; and provisions for the rights of states to regulate in the public interest.. The negative effects of these agreements have taken precedence, and a solution must be found

For more information please contact

Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute –
(SEATINI) Uganda | P. O Box, 3138, Kampala, Plot 806, Block 213, Bukoto-Kisasi
Road – Kampala | Email: info@seatiniuganda.org | Tel: +256 414 540856 | Website:
www.seatiniuganda.org

