



ACTION ALLIANCE (ACTALL)

Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity

Date of implementation: 10th – 14th Dec 2018

Introduction

Following several discussions on how the people of Apaa and Kijayo, Hoima District can work together to overcome the challenges of land grabbing and eviction, an exchange visit between these two communities was last month organised by Action Alliance and NOVODA in which a total of 12 representatives from Kijayo camp were able to travel to Apaa for a three days' solidarity visit.



Given the massive cases of land disputes that are characterised by unjust evictions, killing of innocent lives across the country, solidarity Uganda has considered different strategies through which different communities can come together to scale up their efforts in fighting land grabbers anywhere in the country. Besides this exchange visit, a loose coalition was also born and named the National Land Defence League (NLDL). It is an umbrella coalition that exists to resist land grabs and land grabbers- businesses, politicians, and military men from home and abroad who steal land from Ugandan people. It also brings together rural Ugandan women to fight against unjust land evictions and grabbing. This visit was to consolidate National struggle against land grabbing and to mobilize the affected communities toward NLDL as a mechanism for a unifying struggle.

ACTION ALLIANCE (ACTALL)

Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity



Objectives of the Visit:

- The overall objective of this visit was to encourage and nature shared learning and struggle.

The specific objectives were

- To create common understanding, relationships forged in the fun and hardships of shared experience, knowledge and sound practices.
- To create commitments to new approaches (NLDL), and friendships as foundation for future networking.
- To build solidarity among different groups challenging land grabbers
- To share information about NLDL and devise means for the recruitment of communities in the coalition
- To devise means of making NLDL relevant to different land struggles.

ACTION ALLIANCE (ACTALL)

Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity

Key Actions undertaken during this activity:

A total of 12 people (8 women & 4 men) arrived in Gulu in the evening of 10th of December.

A brief meeting was held in Gulu in the morning of 11th December and immediately the Bunyoro team left Gulu for Apaa, Amuru District.

In the evening of 11th December, the visiting team was received at Punodyang village, Apaa by the local leaders (both local council leaders and clan chiefs). There was a brief meeting that evening which was purposely meant to welcome the visitors and to set Agenda for the following day.



In the morning of 12th Dec, the Bunyoro team was joined by members of Apaa community. An estimated three hundred people from the 8 sub villages of Apaa turned up at Punodyang trading centre to receive the Bunyoro team. A formal meeting was later held where testimonies on land grabbing from the two communities were shared.

The people Apaa narrated to their colleagues from Bunyoro different strategies that the Government tried employing to take their land away from them. They were also able to share with the Bunyoro team reasons why they have remained successful and resilient in the struggle to save their land.



ACTION ALLIANCE (ACTALL)

Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity



The Bunyoro team equally shared their painful testimony to the Apaa team, how they were evicted, beaten and even killed. The Bunyoro women tearfully shared how they were beaten and thrown out of their houses. They also shared about their efforts to regain their land.



Since millet (*Karo*) is the official symbol for *National Land Defence League*, these two communities would not part without sharing a *Karo* meal. Both communities converged around an outdoor fire place, mingled *Karo* and later shared a meal to mark their solidarity and to demonstrate their commitment to collectively work together to fight land grabbers in the country.



ACTION ALLIANCE (ACTALL)

Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity



The 2nd day was crowned with a visit to different homes within Apaa parish.

On 13th Dec, the Bunyoro team joined the Apaa team in one of the community member's garden to harvest sim-sim as a sign of unity and to also demonstrate to the world how important land is to them. Taking away their land means cutting off their livelihood.





ACTION ALLIANCE (ACTALL)

Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity

Before the visitors could depart, there was something else that had to be done. The two communities stood in solidarity and jointly burnt sugar crystals to show their frustration towards the land grabbers in Bunyoro region- Hoima sugar Limited which is owned by Indians. This was also to denounce investors and other land grabbers who have successfully made their lives miserable. The theme of this particular action was ***“Acholi and Bunyoro unite against oil and Sugar.”***



Resolutions:

The Apaa community resolved to always send some of some community members to Kijayo camp for confidence building and to coordinate action should the court (Masindi High court) delay to rule on Kijayo land case.

They also resolved to hold regular meeting after every three weeks. Conveners of this meeting which will normally be held over phone were identified from both sides.

There was also a resolution to popularised and recruit more members into the National Land Defence League.

ACTION ALLIANCE (ACTALL)

Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity



Recommendation:

- There should be a follow up to ensure that some team from Apaa also visits their comrades in Kijayo Camp-Hoima soon.
- An arrangement should be made to facilitate the meetings between these two communities. Since their meetings will be over phone, some provision of airtime should be made for the identified coordinators of both side (There is clear evidence that the Kijayo team can barely afford airtime on their own).
- The Bunyoro team is still lacking in as far as capacity building in civil resistance and non-violence conflict resolution is concerned. They therefore need massive training for them to be able to stand up for what belongs to them without fear. They need to be encouraged that their Voice matters and it's their weapon.



The two communities danced and celebrated their solidarity and unity.



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Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity



Acholi-Bunyoro Solidarity, the struggle continues.