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The CDF Fiasco

MPs from poorest constituencies fail to take full advantage of the funds

By MUSA RADOLI

A SIGNIFICANT proportion of the 72 constituencies that have not applied for the second tranche of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in the current financial year are characterized by abject poverty.

Data available at the Kenya Bureau of Statistics reveal that most of the constituencies listed in the pack with millions of shillings still unclaimed in their accounts rank among the poorest in the country.

According to the Director of Statistics at the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, A.K.M Kilele, Rift Valley which has the largest number of affected constituencies ranks highly within the poverty bracket at the nationally level.

With an exception of only nine constituencies in the vast province, the rest lead in the pack of poor constituencies in the country.

Subukia, which is among constituencies that have not claimed 50 per cent of their allocation during the last financial year, is underdeveloped with the poverty index standing at a high of 34 percent.

"Almost 1 in every 5 persons from Eastern province lives below the poverty line. The poverty incidence in Eastern province ranges from 34 per cent in Ntonyiri constituency to 76 per cent in Kitui South Constituency. The 36 constituencies in Eastern Province contribute over 18 per cent to total national poverty," he says.

In Nyanza province, poverty incidence ranges from 43 per cent in Migori to 80 per cent in Kuria Constituency. Eighteen of the 32 Constituencies have a poverty headcount index that is above the provincial mean of 65 per cent. Poverty incidence in the poorest Constituency, Kuria, is almost two times as large compared to that found in the least poor Constituency (Migori).

In Central Province, the poverty incidence ranges from 16 per cent in Kabete constituency to 43 per cent in Nyeri town constituency which is ranked as the poorest

Yet these are the provinces which have spent relatively little from their respective CDF kitties.

Planning Minister Wycliffe Oparanya says that the worst hit provinces were Rift Valley which is also home to the poorest constituency

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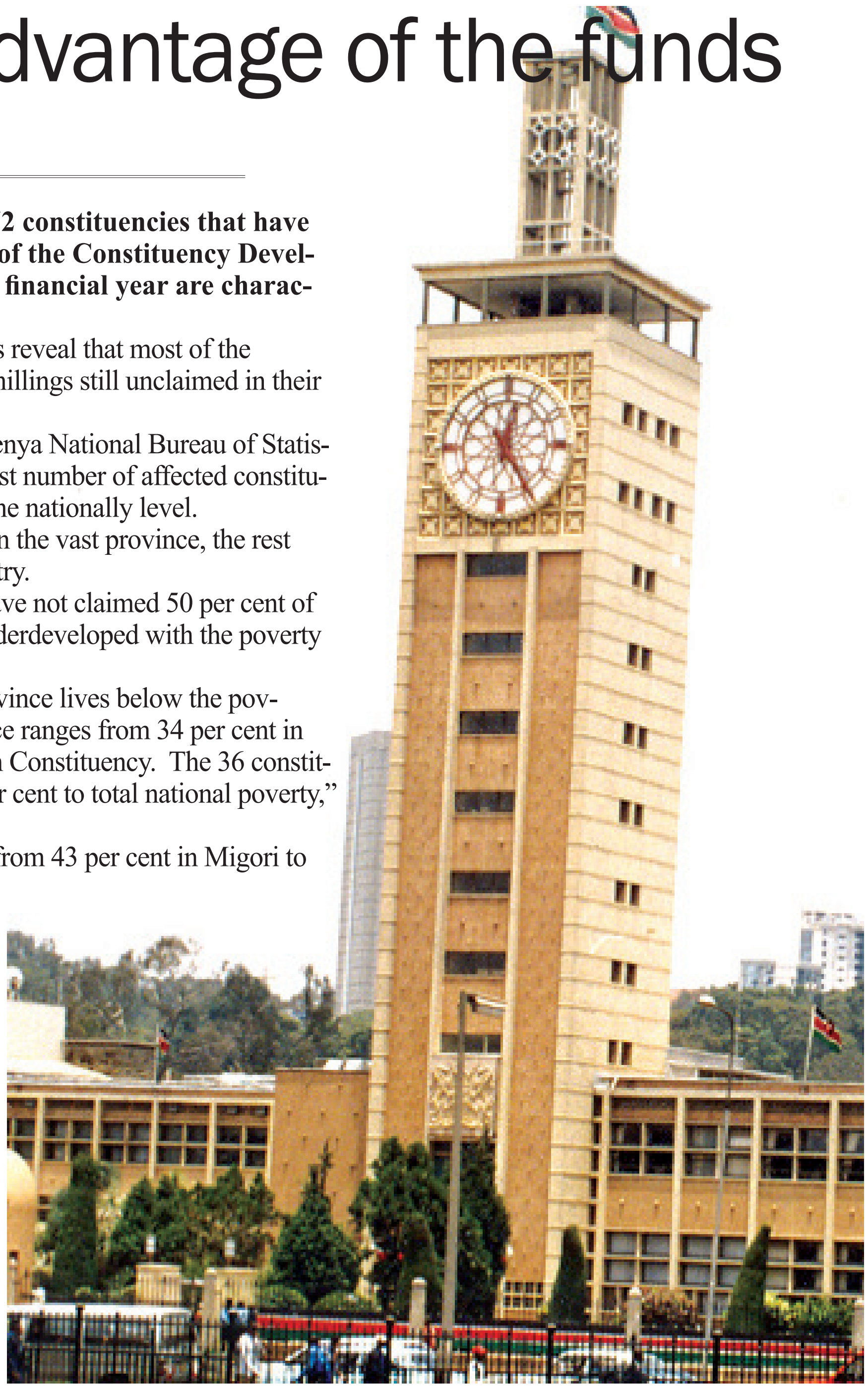

Parliament Buildings: About 72 constituencies are yet to claim their CDF share.

Kenya faces exclusion from fund

Report shows billions of shillings may have been misappropriated

By FAITH MUIRURI

CAUGHT in the grip of weak financial management systems and official greed, Health ministry is faced with a storm that could lead to unprecedented loss in billions of shillings disbursed through the Global Fund.

Already the government has lost Kshs 47 billion because of lack of proper accountability mechanisms to ensure efficient use of the funds.

And although investigations into the alleged misappropriation of the Fund have been intensified, donors who include Germany and Sweden have suspended their contributions to the Global Fund until all cases of corruption are uncovered and perpetrators punished.

A study commissioned by Transparency International, reveals that the latest application to the Global Fund was rejected on technicalities.

The Kenya Health Sector Integrity Study Report, 2011 states that the Global Fund which is a key contributor to the HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB kitty in the country, has not sent any money to oversee the implementation of Round Nine of the programme because Ministry of Health lacks clear structures on how the money will be utilized, managed and accounted for.

The report appears to echo the findings of a procedural audit done in August that uncovered massive fraudulent dealings.

The study points to the many pending cases of misappropriation of funds and other resources that have not been accounted for.

"One of the reasons for such cases is the poor monitoring and evaluation system and lack of reports on the ongoing activities," says the report.

The implications of the scam are dire for Kenya as the country could be locked out of the kitty if it is established that the money was embezzled.

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The CDF Fiasco

From page 1

in the country – Turkana Central.

19 constituencies in Rift Valley had failed to submit their applications, followed by central province with 18 constituencies, Nyanza 11 and Eastern province with 8.

Mr. Oparanya says the amount translates to 50 per cent of their allocations for the last financial year during which Kshs.7 billion was disbursed out of the total Kshs. 14.5 billion allocated during the said fiscal year.

The CDF board is categorical that constituencies with a balance of more than in their accounts will not receive more funds.

Although some of the MPs accuse the CDF management board of withholding money meant for some constituencies, it has emerged that only a few constituencies that are unable to account for funds previously allocated to them have been affected.

An official of the board who declined to be named says that the board has lawful authority to withhold funds from any constituency if the managers of the fund fail to account for the money already disbursed to them.

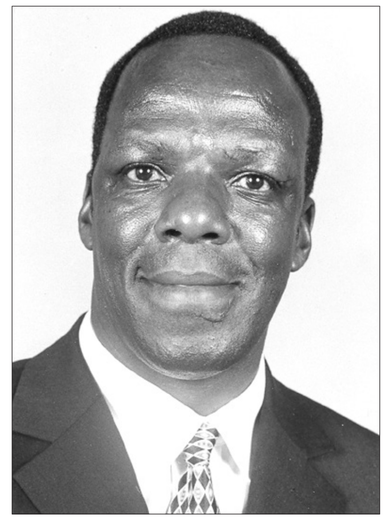
"Though we are still experiencing a severe shortage of auditors, we are very firm in ensuring that previously allocated monies are accounted for before any constituency can qualify for fresh allocations," he said.

Some of these constituencies are already being investigated by the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission over alleged misappropriation of millions of shillings meant for projects that are either incomplete, abandoned or simply 'ghost' projects that are non-existent.

A recent Social Audit Report by the Institute of Social Accountability (TISA) which monitors use of devolved funds in the country found that almost 50 per cent of all CDF monies are redirected to purposes for which they were not intended.

Some of the worst cases reported in Nairobi province alone were identified in Lan'gata, Westlands, Kasarani, Embakasi where most projects had stalled or failed to take off.

"One of the best examples is the construction of Mau Mau Police Post in Westlands constituency where more than Kshs. 3 million was disbursed, actually paid to the contractor, but the whole project was abandoned even before the project could take off," says Ms. Wanjiru Gikonyo the TISA National Coordinator.



Mr. Oparanaya

Kenya faces exclusion from fund

From page 1

This policy was adopted to reduce the risk of countries misusing the money. Already refund notices have been sent to Cameroon, Togo and Zambia.

"Parties responsible for theft will face sanction, including possible debarment from further activities involving Global Fund grants, referrals to national authorities for prosecution and requirement to fully refund the misappropriated funds," warns the fund in a statement.

But as the saga rages on, it is emerging that Kenya is almost one year behind schedule in implementing and reporting on Global Fund grants.

The report reveals that some activities are more than three years behind schedule.

The report indicates that Global fund's country governance structure is unclear. "The Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) that helps in compiling country applications for the Global Fund is not yet recognized in the current legal framework and has limited oversight capacity," it says.

Members of the CCM, for instance the senior government officials have several other commitments and may lack sufficient time to study and understand their roles and responsibilities clearly.

The report stipulates that the technical performance of members is low as per the required commitment and tasks to be performed based on the CCM manual which members rarely make reference to.

The report also states that CCM has experienced many challenges including power struggles and personality clashes among members and interference by the Global Fund.

The report notes that Global Fund does not have a country level manager for the fund and previously CCM and the Financial Management Agency (FMA) have been used for oversight and this has suffered a great loss.

"The impact of the watchdog units such as the Parliamentary Health Committee in overseeing health resources and issues in the country is hardly felt".

In Round two Kenya lost a whole year and in Round Four funds transfers from treasury to Health Ministry took a long time due to a change in the mode of transfer from cheque payment system to wire transfer.

The procurement and supply chain of medical inputs, materials and supplies for GF projects are not transparent as currently the Kenya Medical Supplies Agency (KEMSA) is experiencing challenges.

The study established from key stakeholders that the transition from the GF round based planning approach to National Strategic Planning Approach (NSA) has not been well designed.

"The process was hurriedly done and stakeholders were not given enough time to understand and adopt the changes. Only a few people were flown to GF-Geneva to be trained on NSA but they never had any impact on key stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The big challenge noted with the new approach is that it excludes community participation in the process.

The report notes that the main objective of Global Fund was to bridge existing gaps in funding for health care and thus the country needs to reorganize GF programmes and strategies to meet the required standards

The report lays emphasis on the need to set up an evaluation mechanism that will cover governance, participation, leadership, systems and structures.

Also CCM members need to be aware of their roles and responsibilities particularly the oversight roles.

"This can be done through a series of team retreats and empowering of the CCM members by clarifying their roles and responsibilities," underscores the report.

Over the last seven years, the Global Fund has awarded Kenya ten grants worth Kshs 20,555,722,800 for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and malaria.

Table 21: Global Fund grants to Kenya

Round #	Principal Recipient	Grant Assistance Disease	Total Funds Approved/ Disbursed (USD)	Grant Starting Date
R 1	Kenya Network of Women With Aids (KENWA)	HIV/AIDS	220,875	01.04.2003
	Sanaa Art Promotions	HIV/AIDS	2,650,813	01.04.2003
R 2	Ministry of Finance, Government of Kenya	HIV/AIDS	36,721,807	01.12.2003
	Ministry of Finance, Government of Kenya	Tuberculosis	3,299,522	01.11.2003
	Ministry of Finance, Government of Kenya	Malaria	4,640,447	01.10.2003
R 4	Ministry of Finance, Government of Kenya	Malaria	162,173,085	01.02.2006
R 5	Ministry of Finance, Government of Kenya	Tuberculosis	13,499,900	01.09.2006
R 6	Ministry of Finance, Government of Kenya	Tuberculosis	4,206,357	01.04.2008
R 7	Ministry of Finance, Government of Kenya	HIV/AIDS	30,655,749	01.06.2009
	CARE International	HIV/AIDS	16,007,749	01.06.2009
R 9	Agreement Not Yet Signed	-	-	
TOTAL APPROVED/DISBURSED FUNDS			274,076,304	

Headteachers decry poor performance in Western

By JOEL JUMA

AS the storm sparked by the new quota system for this year's Form one selection rages on, education stakeholders in Kakamega County now blame delays in the release of free education funds to poor performance in public schools.

Headteachers drawn from various primary schools say delays in the disbursement of Free Primary Education (FPE) fund was partly to blame for poor performance in national examinations.

Mumias Complex Primary School, which used to grab top slots in the country has recorded a decline in performance over the years.

The school managed a mean score of 368 in last year's Kenya Certificate of Primary Examinations (KCPE) compared to 380 of the previous year.

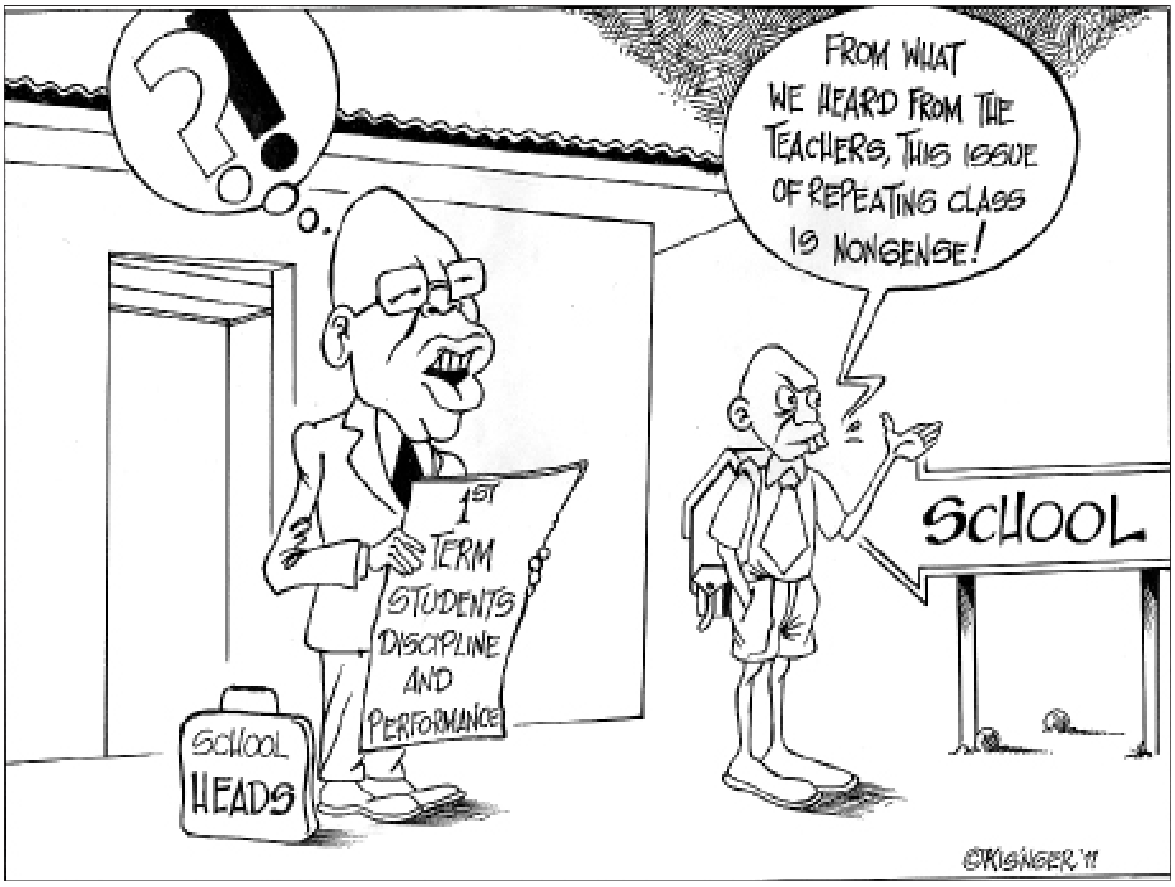
The head teacher, Joseph Sagalla said parents lessened their support in the management of school affairs after the introduction of FPE.

Sagalla said his school used to have a mean score of 380 and above but the trend has changed due to the promotion of weak pupils to the next classes after the Government banned repetition.

"We are forced to register weak candidates and this has been reducing our mean score," said Sagalla.

The Kenya Primary School Head-teachers Association Western branch secretary David Ikunza said facilities in public schools are overstretched after the introduction of FPE.

Ikunza said non-completion of the syllabus and congestion of pupils in classes hinders effective learning.



"There are no libraries to promote the culture of reading in public schools compared to private ones," he added.

Assistant minister Manyala Keya said there was need for the Government to employ more teachers in public schools.

He noted that public schools require more teachers for the pupils to be assessed effectively.

Speaking in Kakamega town, the Gender and Children Affairs assistant minister said all children should be given equal opportunities in education.

"Boys are forced to struggle because most partners are focusing on girls. This will not balance performance of the candidates as it was the case during our days," said Keya,who is the Lurambi MP.

Keya said the Ministry of Education should reshuffle head teachers by demoting non-performers.

He added that heads that have failed to perform should be replaced to pave way for better administrators.

The chairman of Kenya Primary Schools Association for the Physically Handicapped Arthur Injenga said underfunding for the disabled children is also to blame for the low grades.

Injenga explained that pupils with physical disabilities were operating without the required facilities such as brails, wheel chairs and books.

"Special schools require more attention as training teachers without giving them tools is not enough," said Injenga.

He added that most private schools have shunned pupils with disability due to inability to purchase the required facilities.

KEPSA calls for better standards in public schools

By PETER MUTUKU

THE Kenya Private Schools Alliance (KEPSA) has asked the Ministry of Education to address problems that have led to public schools trailing their primary counterparts over the years.

The association Chairman, Mr John Kabui, says although public schools had the most qualified and most experienced teachers, they continue to post poor results because of low syllabus coverage.

Mr Kabui said a requirement that teachers acquire higher education in order to earn promotions had been experienced in most public schools where the teachers abandon pupils in pursuit of higher education.

"As a result, the schools post poor results because teachers do not cover their syllabuses properly," he said.

Mr Kabui said poorer results by public schools were a disadvantage to children from poor families, adding that the trend did not auger well for a country that aimed at having an equitable society.

He said although private and public schools set similar success goals at the start of each year, private institutions ended up on top because of better organization and advanced syllabus coverage.

He urged the Teachers Service Commission to come up with better teacher training programmes to ensure teachers do not leave to pursue higher education at the expense of their pupils.

Teaching of sciences goes high-tech

By MALACHI MOTANO

THE government has initiated a programme to integrate ICT in the teaching of Science and Mathematics.

According to the Minister for Education Prof. Sam Ongeri, "We have established the centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology for Africa. This programme is gradually being rolled out to cover other subjects."

The President also confirms that, "The government has initiated a programme to integrate ICT in the teaching of science and mathematics. We have established the centre for Mathematics, science and technology for Africa,"

He is also indicating that the government is currently establishing a National ICT Innovation and Integration Center to enhance the country's ICT uptake.

"This will empower education institutions to adopt and utilize technology in knowledge acquisition and sharing," reveals the President.

President Kibaki says that the use of ICT in education and training will overcome the challenges of time and location leading to flexible and life-long learning.

The Head of state adds that the Government has played its part in terms of creating an enabling environment for the ICT sector to thrive as a key driver of the economy.

"We are also committed to the achievement of 'Education for All' goals and the aspirations of Vision 2030. Integration of ICT in Education will go a long way in making this a reality by enhancing quality, equty and access to educational and training opportunities," he stated.

The President explains that the National ICT Policy recognizes the major role that ICT plays in poverty eradication through effective use of technologies.

The Policy aims at stimulating investment in the ICT sector while at the same time encouraging the spirit of innovation through research and development.

Prof. Ongeri says, for ICT in education to succeed, all related sectors must collaborate and work towards providing the required infrastructure and manpower necessary.

He explained that in Kenya, the Ministry of Energy has given priority to the provision of electricity to all learning institutions through the rural electrification program.

He said that the Ministry of Information and Communications is leading the government's initiative of laying fibre optic cables around the country for improved data and information sharing.

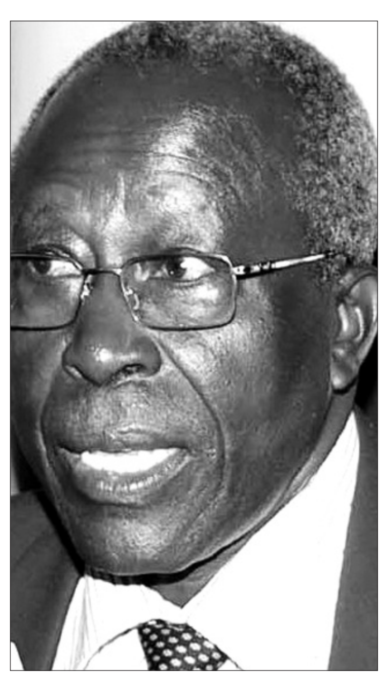
Education stakeholders believe that e-learning will ensure that Kenya is at par with other countries in Information Communication and Technology.

"ICT is providing us with tools that were unimaginable just a few years ago. For instance the advent of the internet has led to easier sharing of information among our people. The virtual class where teachers from any part of the world can teach students in the most far-flung parts of the globe is now possible."

"Students now access their examination results through a simple SMS sent via a mobile phone. Educators and students now have at their disposal tools that are making E-learning a reality."

The Ministry of education is now challenging both teachers and students to use ICT tools at their disposal to empower themselves and contribute towards laying a solid foundation for economic and technological growth.

The Government has embraced the idea of alternative teaching through use of technology.



Prof. Ongeri

Private sector urged to support e-learning

COMMENT

By MALACHI MOTANO

SEVERAL initiatives to computerise public schools by government and the private sector are paving the way to electronic learning in Kenya.

This is expected to change how students access learning materials and also to boost the quality of education especially in remote areas where there are no libraries.

Current statistics from the Ministry of Education indicates that less than 2 per cent of public primary schools have access to basic computer studies and only 800 out of the 4,000 public secondary schools have computers.

However, through the Public Private Partnership programs the Ministry of Education has increased this number in the last three years.

Some of these initiatives included the digitisation of school syllabus by the Kenya Institute of Education; computer donations and networking by telecommunication regulator, Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK), and a partnership programme by the Clinton Global Initiative, Cisco, Intel, Microsoft and USAid aimed at improving education in

"We (KIE) have launched the first phase of a curriculum digitisation project that now enables both public secondary and primary schools to offer e-learning," Lydia Nzomo

The Minister for Education, Prof Sam Ongeri on his part says the move will harness access to technology driven practices and reduce disparities in curriculum delivery.

"Curriculum review efforts can now be geared towards modernization, including intensification of the integration of ICTs to cover all sub-sectors" said Prof Ongeri. "A number of people have been coming with foreign e-learning content for us to adopt but we have rejected all this so that we can develop our own."

Eng. James Rege who is the chairman of the Parliamentary Select Commission(PSC) on Energy says, "To address some of the challenges facing implementation of e-learning such as lack of electricity supply to most public schools and low ICT knowledge among the teachers, the government through the ministry of energy has prioritised provision of electricity to learning institutions through the rural electrification program and the use of solar power."

KIE has also developed an online course for orientation of primary teachers on the curriculum interpretation and implementation

The Clinton Global initiative was launched last year in September in collaboration with Kenya's Ministry of Education, the Accelerating 21st Century Education (ACE) project and aims at improving the quality of primary and secondary education through the effective use of ICT.

The various bodies are developing a best-in-class model for deploying ICT in education. Reflecting a combined commitment valued at more than $9 million, ACE will create "one-to-one e-learning" classrooms in 60 focus schools across Kenya. One-to-one e-learning, a model in which every student has access to a computer, helps foster an environment where young people can develop skills such as problem solving and critical thinking.

ACE will distribute more than 6,000 networked computers for student and teacher use and train approximately 7,000 teachers to effectively integrate ICT in the classroom

In addition, Cisco, Intel and Microsoft will work together to establish a School Technology Innovation Centre (STIC) in Nairobi — a model that has been promoted in other countries through the Microsoft Partners in Learning programme. The centre will be dedicated to research on innovative emerging technology solutions and serve as a repository and showcase for best-known methods of teaching, learning and educational technology

"ACE ties in with our mission to increase access to education, improve the quality of education and raise school enrolment rates for children from marginalised areas of East Africa," said USAid Kenya Mission Director Erna Kerst. "We hope this collaboration will encourage more Kenyan children to complete school, improve teacher training practices and enhance professional development for teachers and school administrators with support from USAid.

Ongeri warns schools over fee hikes

By HENRY OWINO

THE Ministry of Education is warning school heads against unnecessary increment of fees, as this undermined government's efforts to provide affordable Education for All (EFA).

According to Education Minister Prof Sam Ongeri, the government introduced free tuition in public secondary schools in 2008 to not only manage adverse effects arising from the post election violence but also enhance access to education

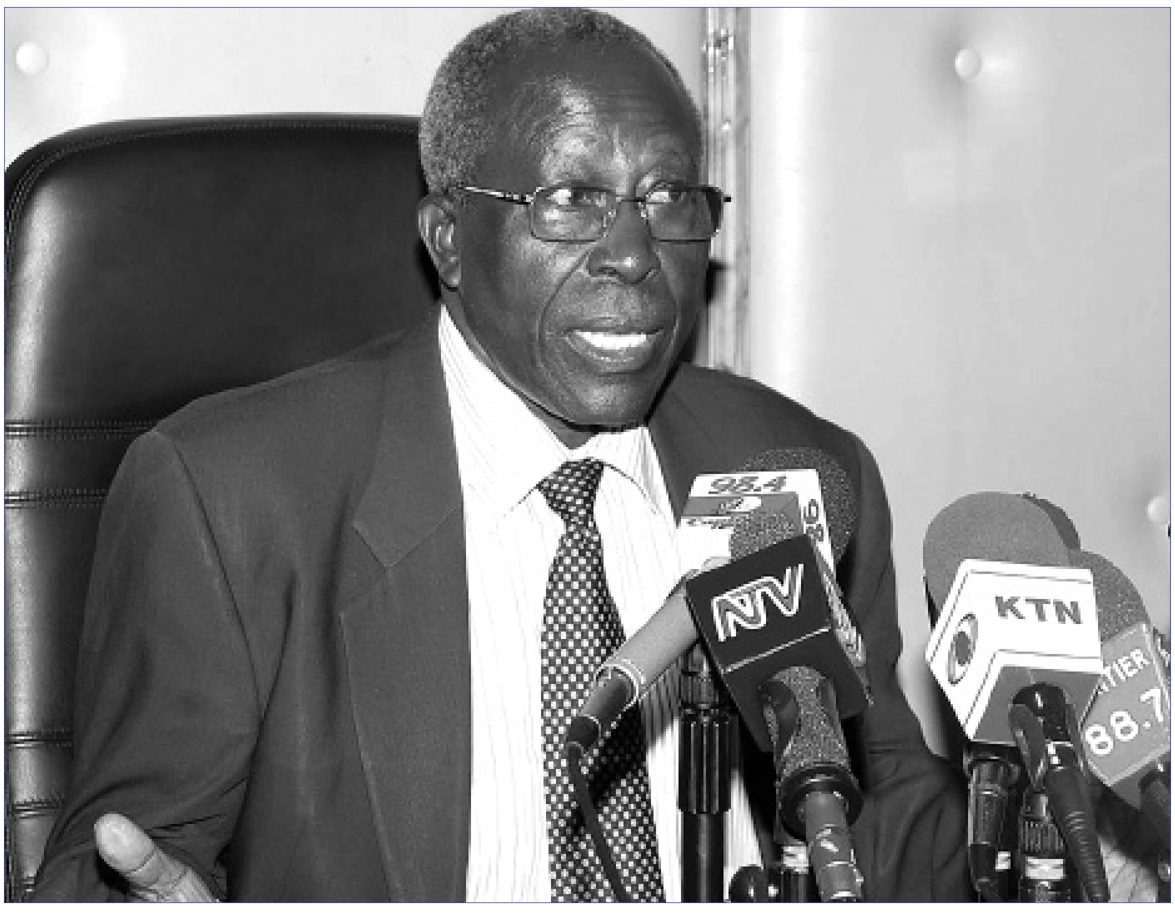
The education minister regrets that despite all the noble efforts by the ministry, schools have continued to increase fees ostensibly to cushion themselves against s effects of inflation.

He said granted schools need to provide food and other essentials to learners, but they should not pass the burden of raising fee to the already overburdened parents.

"Like all other economic entities, school managers should be sensitive to the economic fluctuations that make life unbearable for Kenyans and avoid actions that counter government's initiative for the vulnerable groups in the society, such as providing free secondary education," Prof Ongeri said.

Prof. Ongeri said that school authorities need to demonstrate that they appreciate government's efforts of ensuring that deserving children are not pushed out of schools by high cost of education. He added that learners should be supported to access quality education especially during hard economic times.

He reiterated that recently education permanent secretary in a circular, directed to all public schools in the country to adhere to the fees guidelines and to avoid other unnecessary charges which tend to burden parents and defeat government's vision of affordable secondary education to all Kenyans.



Prof. Ongeri during a press conference. Photo/File

Prof Ongeri likened head teachers attempts to increase fee to slapping the government on the face in its efforts to achieve access and higher retention levels at secondary schools after their primary school level.

"Already the ministry is reviewing its recurrent expenditure to accommodate teachers pay hike, thus pushing the education bill even higher up. This is good reason for school managers to appreciate the burden faced by the Kenyan tax payers, the Minister commented.

He pointed out that it would not be prudent therefore for school heads to manipulate Boards of Governors (BOG) to endorse unwarranted increment in school fees.

Professor Ongeri acknowledged that Kenya has made gains in education over the last seven years in a bid to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the EFA goals by 2015. He reminded the parents and teachers that the government has also provided access to basic education, hence the need for all stakeholders, especially school managers to ensure that these gains are sustained.

Recently at a prize giving ceremony in Buruburu Girls in Nairobi, the minister indicated that, the ministry of education has disbursed over Kshs48 billion through the Free Secondary Education programme since its inception in 2008 and is fully committed to an education system that guarantees the right of every learner to quality and relevant education.

The minister outlined programmes such as the integration of secondary education as part of basic education, development of free Day -Secondary Education, provision of bursaries to the poor and infrastructure grants to needy schools as measures geared towards reducing cost to parents.

Kisiwani lags behind in education

By BEKADZO TONDO

AS the government's sponsored Free Primary Education (FPE) continues to register impressive enrolment figures, there is very little to show for it in Kisiwani area in Malindi

The area predominantly occupied by squatters lacks schools and children of school going age hardly access education as residents have no right to build any social amenity in the area including schools.

The few who are lucky to attend school have to walk for more than 14 kilometers to get to the nearest schools.

Schools serving the area include Sabaki and Mmangani primary schools which are far off the desolate area.

However, the situation is likely to change following a resolve by Agricultural Development Corporation at Sabaki to allocate the community five acres of its vast portion of land to pave way for the construction of a primary school in the area.

The allocation comes after the community petitioned ADC to allocate them land to enable them put up the school.

In a letter addressed to the Managing Director and signed by the village elder Mr Kahindi Kaingi Kadenge, the residents requested for 24 acres of land to put up a primary school.

However ADC donated only five acres in a letter dated December 22, 2010 and signed by Beatrice Kosgei on behalf of the managing director. The letter explained that ADC farms are gazetted as special farms and could not be sub divided nor allocated to individuals.

However the management said as part of its corporate social responsibility, the corporation had volunteered to donate five acres of land for the community school. The management went further to say that the school will be registered as public school under the ADC.

Apart from donating the land, the management of ADC has also volunteered to construct two modern classrooms to jumpstart the school project.

Mrs. Kalonzo wants amorous teachers sacked

By KAVYU-KURA

Mrs. Pauline Kalonzo speaking to primary school pupils. *Photo/Kavyu-Kura*

VICE President's wife Pauline Kalonzo wants the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to sack teachers who abuse students instead of transferring them.

Mrs. Kalonzo noted that transferring errant teachers to other schools was not solving the problem but aggravated the situation by encouraging them to continue with the repugnant practice.

She called on students to resist what teachers dub as specialized tuition and raise alarm whenever teachers touch them inappropriately, further adding that students should avoid going to their teachers' houses.

The Vice President's wife was speaking recently during the Second Child Safety Conference at Multimedia University College of Kenya, Mbagathi, Nairobi.

The three day conference whose theme is "Child Safety: A Strategy for a Better Future" was organized by Childline Kenya. It brought together teachers from all parts of the country.

Mrs. Kalonzo urged Kenyans to be on the lookout in order to check cases of child abuse that increase by the day. He said child abusers should promptly be reported to the authorities.

She regretted that children were being abused daily even by very close relatives who are entrusted with their safety.

"Today even religious leaders are involved in the abuse of children," she noted.

She said there was need for parents and guardians to discuss with children the dangers of engaging with strangers.

Mrs. Kalonzo urged children not to interact with people they did not know through the internet, adding that some children ended up linking up with people of questionable character on the internet.

TSC Chairman, Mr. Ibrahim Hussein said in the last 10 years children continued to be victims of abuse at home, in schools and other community set-ups.

He noted that it was regrettable that sometimes the very places which are meant to be safe abodes for children turn out to be very risky for them.

The Chairman added that it has been established that 90 per cent of the perpetrators of child abuse are people known and trusted by the children who include teachers, parents, religious leaders and other relatives.

Mr. Hussein urged Kenyans not to have mercy on those who abuse children and warned that parents who are bribed by the abusers to keep under lid cases of abuse will be prosecuted once caught.

The Chairman said in the last four years TSC has dealt with 477 cases of sexual abuse, which translate to about 120 per year, with most offenders being dismissed and their teaching licenses cancelled.

He assured that TSC will ensure the rights of young children are protected against violation by teachers. He noted that the Sexual Offences Act is very clear on people who abuse children.

The Childline Executive Director, Ms Irene Nyamu thanked the government, donors and other well wishers for making concerted efforts to fight child abuse in the country.

Alarm as Siaya boys abandon classes for Boda boda

By MALACHI MOTANO

PARENTS in Siaya County want the government to intervene and save hundreds of youngsters who have abandoned school to join the lucrative bicycle and motorcycle business popularly known as *'Bodaboda'*.

In Rarieda, many young boys and girls as early as class four; especially those who feel inadequate in class and are not able to cope up with good performance usually take it as the immediate alternative, drop out school and join the business.

Although the proliferation of Bodaboda in these rural areas has made the movement of human beings and goods easy and fast mostly because these areas do not have an efficient road network, it is killing the country's future professionals.

According to the minister for Education Prof Sam Ongeri, many young boys are engaging in the business during the holidays, but after getting used to money, they prefer to stay on than going back to 'tax brains' in schools which according to them do not pay at the end of the day.

Despite free education and other efforts by the government, the sector continues to witness a worrying high percentage of out of school which currently stands at 1.2 million. This trend according to the professor poses a challenge to the country which is struggling to achieve Millennium Development Goals and vision 2030

"Unless the quality of education is improved today, then a generation of illiterates is bound to emerge in the near future posing a threat to our economic development," notes the Ministry sessional paper presented recently.

However, school heads cite abject poverty and the need to supplement the meager family incomes, hope for making quick money for personal use, lack of role model from where they come, as well as rampant lack of employment among their elderly educated brothers and sisters remain the driving force into the Bodaboda business

'Boda Boda' motorbikes

Roselyn Onyuka, former PDE Nyanza says, "Schools in areas where the business thrives usually have low number of pupils in most of the upper classes. As soon as boys are lured into the business, they develop muscles due to extraneous work associated with the trade; they consider themselves as adults and start seducing school girls. This even becomes a bigger problem and a threat to the education of young girls. These rural girls lack knowledge of protecting themselves from the aggressors and easily become a prey. Just like boys, the girls also drop out of schools. It is said that the young girls are lured with promises of goodies like free ride, money and even presents

The former PDE regrets that it is astonishing that those who run the Bodaboda business are mainly unscrupulous teachers and local businessmen, who reap from cheap and unskilled labour. Most of the boys they employ are their immediate former pupils, but they don't even bother to find out what happened to them.

"As we talk of the youth of tomorrow, a section of the society is busy destroying the youth due to greed and 'Me myself and I' syndrome."

Campaign keeps Mwingi girls in school

By KAVYU-KURA

A CAMPAIGN to manage the high dropout rates among female students in Mwingi East district has yielded positive results.

Area district commissioner Martin Mwaro says the campaign, launched mid last year against a backdrop of increased dropout cases among girls due to pregnancies and early marriages, has posted impressive results.

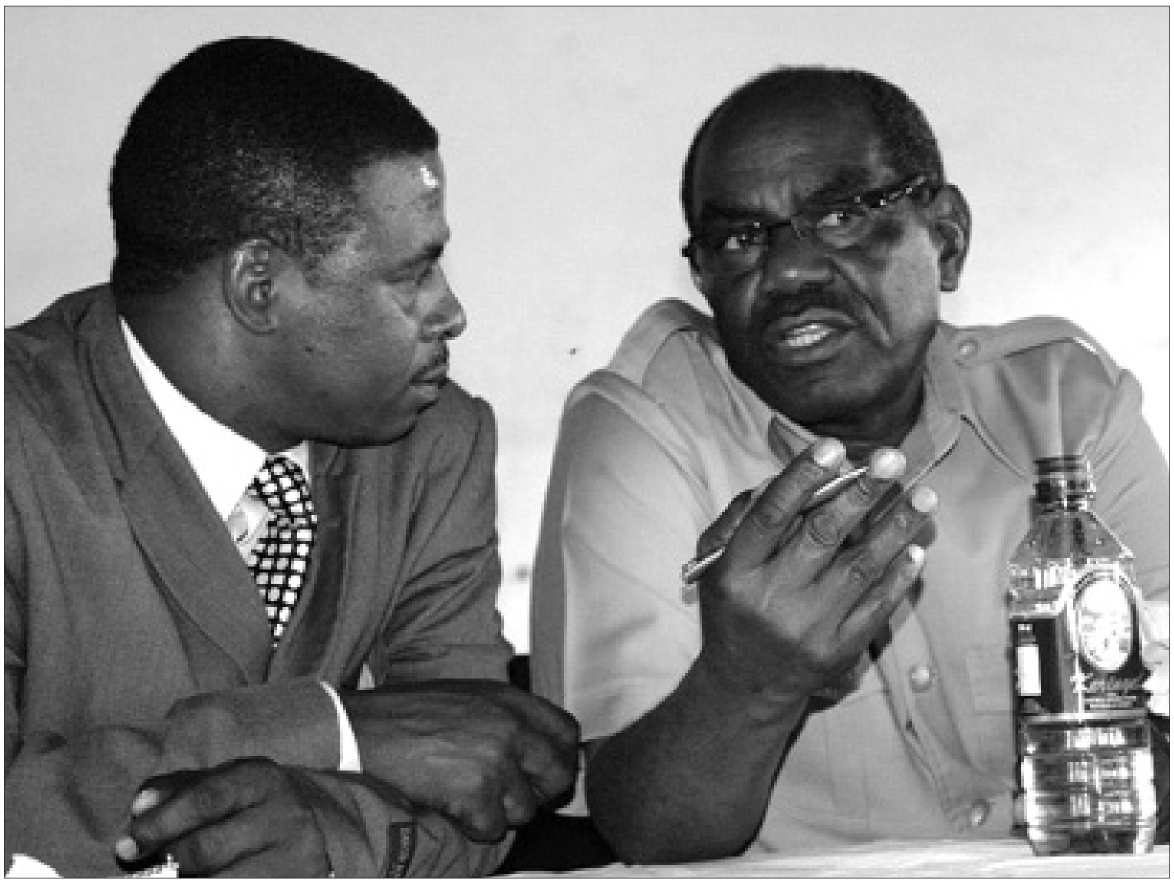
Seven pregnant girls sat last year's Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) Examination in the district which serves Assistant Minister David Musila's Mwingi South constituency. Mr. Mwaro told The Link recently that the campaign to save the girl child was mooted by the District Education Board (DEB) whose members were moved by the high rate of girls dropping out due to early marriages and pregnancies.

"Between June and July last year we started this campaign to basically retain the girl child in school. We had established that the dropout rate particularly among the girls in primary schools was worrying," said the DC.

He said consequently a plan was put in place in which school head teachers shared information with Chiefs on girls who missed school in unexplained circumstances and thus a follow up was made with the parents or guardians. Mr. Mwaro said that in many cases it was discovered that absenteeism was caused by pregnancies or premature marriages.

He said through the mechanism, culprits have been prosecuted with some cases still pending in courts.

The DC's sentiments were shared by a senior education officer from the area, John Maluki, who added that the retrogressive Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) practice and widespread cases of rape contributed to the high school drop out among girls.



DC Martin Mwaro (left) and MP David Musila during a function. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Maluki who is the Area Education Officer (AEO) in-charge of Mui division disclosed that since last year when the campaign was launched, his department had handled 21 cases of girls pregnancies and early marriages.

Speaking on behalf of the District Education officer, Maluki said that already 15 of the cases had been referred to court while six others were under investigations and would be concluded in no time.

He noted that the cases involved girls from 20 primary schools in Mwingi East District. He named the primary schools notorious for cases of early marriages and pregnancies as Kateiko, Kyangu, Kamulewa, Munyuni and Nzanzu.

He noted that through collaborations with the Children department, and non-governmental organizations like Can Do, pregnant girls have been encouraged to remain in school until they give birth and go back to school after weaning their children.

Maluki noted that due to drastic action taken against men who cause girls to drop out, cases of early pregnancies and marriage have drastically reduced."

Mudavadi school forced to re-admit girl

By JOEL JUMA

THE Ministry of Education has ordered a secondary school in Vihiga District to readmit a female student who had been expelled due to poor performance. The principal of Mudavadi Girls High School Madzuu Lornah Obiri was directed to allow the student to proceed to the next class.

Western Provincial Director of Education Kenneth Misoi said the government cannot allow the school to jeorpardise the girl's education.

In November last year, the school had advised the student to seek for an alternative institution.

However the PDE overruled the decision in a letter to the school that was copied to the Education Permanent Secretary James Ole Kiyapi and Education Secretary George Godia.

Misoi revealed that principals of certain provincial schools are forcing students to repeat classes in order to post good grades in national examinations. Speaking during a meeting with District Education Officers drawn from the province, Misoi noted that the heads were being monitored. He said disciplinary action will be taken against those found guilty.

Kakamega East District Education Officer Luke Chebet confirmed that Mukumu Girls, Moi Girls Vokoli and Mudavadi Girl were identified as being notorious for the practice.

Kenya Secondary Schools Head Teachers Association western branch executive committee member Hezekiah Akang'o said they will not protect principals promoting repetition.

Akang'o, who is the principal of Khwisero Secondary School said members should allow weak students to proceed to the next classes.

"We cannot force a student to repeat and yet Government policy has spelt out the guidelines clearly," said Akang'o. Misoi said transfer of principals will be undertaken to reduce mismanagement in schools.

Elsewhere, over 100 girls at Mukumu and Moi Girls secondary schools in Kakamega and Vihiga Counties respectively have threatened to drop out of school if they are forced to repeat classes.

At Mukumu, police clashed with parents during a street demonstration. They argued that the Government had outlawed the practice. One parent, whose daughter had been forced to repeat, was arrested by the anti riot police during the skirmishes.

The parent, Geoffrey Chivoli, in the company of others, said they were shocked to learn that their children were required to repeat. At Moi Girls Vokoli, over 40 girls were allegedly sent home after they refused to repeat.

A teacher at the school said he had

Prof. Ole Kiyapi: Education PS

cleared over 10 girls after their parents refused to have their children repeat.

The school principal Basi Khabongo said parents of the girls are required to accompany them back to school for guiding and counselling. "We want to assist them improve their grades," said Khabongo.

Chivoli accused the management at Mukumu of not writing to inform them over the decision prior to the closure of schools last term.

Chivoli wondered why the school never informed him that his daughter would not be allowed to proceed to Form Four this year. "It is late for me to look for another school. I have already paid the fees and the school cannot turn away my daughter," said Chivoli. The school principal Eby Kavai locked herself in the office and did not address the irritated parents.

The Kakamega East District Education Officer Luke Chebet who arrived at the school pleaded with the parents to remain calm.

"We are addressing the matter and the students will be allowed to proceed to the next class," said Chebet.

Chebet said it is disheartening that learning had taken off on a sour note in the school. He urged parents to guide their children so that they can perform well. The parents argued that the move by the school to force students who scored C minus and below in the end year examinations to repeat was illegal.

They said their children joined the school with good grades from primary schools and that teachers should address the underperformance.

Western Provincial Director of Education Kenneth Misoi confirmed that cases of children being forced to repeat were rampant in the area.

"It is against Government policy and we shall take action against the culprits," said Misoi. Misoi also warned head teachers against giving false information regarding the enrolment rates in their school.

He said the Government allocates funds based on the number of students adding that accuracy is very critical.

Fraudsters invade Murang'a

By MORRIS GITHENYA

FRAUDSTERS claiming to offer a ten year's education sponsorship to needy students have invaded Murang'a town.

The conmen have been demanding between Kshs4,000 and Kshs8,000 per child in a bid to have them listed as beneficiaries of the sponsorship programme in private schools

Investigations reveal that already seven private schools from Central, Eastern and Rift Valley regions are demanding millions of shillings from parents whose children have been dumped into their schools without any advance payments. At St. Joans Academy, the Principal Ms Jennifer Muraya said they are demanding to be paid in excess of Kshs 10 million for the children who were booked between May and July this year.

" A lady came and introduced herself as Emma Mwangi. She claimed that she was currently running and NGO that offers scholarship to needy children. She later brought 250 children whom the administration has been struggling to feed as there were no payments made for their upkeep in the school," said Ms Muraya.

"The management has been forced to send away the pupils after it emerged that the fees amounting to Kshs 7 million could not be cleared," said Muraya. Ms Wairimu Mwangi of Kiahiti village in Kigumo said she was introduced to a woman who could help secure education for her children for ten years in private school.

"At first I never suspected anything and parted with Kshs8,000 after which my two children were admitted at St Joan Academy. A few months later, I received a call from the school asking me to attend a meeting. I was advised to withdraw the children after the NGO declined to support the children it had listed for assistance," said the mother of two.

Another parent, Wambui Kamande a mother of two also explained how she parted with Kshs 4,000 initially before being asked to give an additional Kshs10,000 to enable her children benefit fully from the education programme. "My two children now have no option but to go back to the public school where I had withdrawn them as I cannot afford the fee charged in private schools," said Wambui.

Increase bursary funds — Kenneth

By MORRIS GITHENYA

The government has been urged to increase the annual allocation to the constituency bursary kitty to enable needy students complete their education.

Planning and National Development Assistant Minister Mr. Peter Kenneth said the current allocation to the Constituency Bursary kitty was not enough to cater for the large number of needy students seeking support and majority have been left out.

Kenneth who is also the Gatanga MP said that currently the constituency had set aside Kshs6 million which will go towards supporting candidates who excelled in last year's Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE).

Bursary Committee Chairman Joseph G. Thiga said students enrolled in tertiary institutions and universities have been allocated Kshs1.5m.

Coast education officials grapple with poor performance

By BEKADZO TONDO

SCORES of head teachers in both secondary and primary schools in Coast Province have been transferred or demoted in a major reshuffle to address the poor standards of education in the area.

Education officers in the affected districts say most of the head teachers who have been affected by the massive transfers include those whose schools have been performing poorly in national examinations.

The district education bosses further revealed that heads who have failed to account for free education funds in both Primary and Secondary schools have been affected in the transfers.

The officers from Kilifi, Ganze, and Taita and Taveta Districts also revealed that heads who had overstayed in one station were also affected in the transfers.

The Taita District Education Officer Mr Samuel Nyantika confirms that a number of school heads have been transferred to other schools in the same capacity while some deputies have been promoted.

Mr Nyantika also revealed that some heads especially those in primary schools had been interdicted or demoted for failing to produce their schools books of accounts for auditing.

"We have had to interdict or demote school heads who have failed to account for the free primary education funds," says Mr Nyantika.

His Taveta counterpart Mr George Owuoche says most of those transferred were non performers who had overstayed in one station.

He said the ministry will continue to monitor them from their new stations and if they fail to improve, they will automatically be demoted.

In Ganze District, the area education officer Mr Charles Nyakundi said transfers were a normal routine and not meant to punish anybody.

In Bahari a senior education officer Mr. Julius Chonga expressed dismay at the poor performance registered by most public schools in last year's KCPE.

MPs urged to release bursary funds promptly

By JOEL JUMA

PARENTS and head-teachers in Kakamega County have petitioned MPs to hasten the processing of bursary funds to ensure that needy children do not drop out of school for lack of fees. The stakeholders said that delays in releasing bursary money to the applicants have in the past seen many children being sent home for fees.

The Kenya Secondary Schools Headteachers Association said that it was difficult to retain some students in the learning institutions because they have not paid fees.

"Some of the needy students are depending on the bursary and the constituency committees need to hasten the release of the cash," said the association's Western branch Executive Committee member Mr. Hezekiah Akang'o.

Mr. Akang'o said that over 500 applications were lying at Khwisero Constituency unprocessed whereas more than 600 others were lying in Butere.

Mr. Akang'o who is the association's Coordinator for Butere, Mumias, Matungu and Khwisero explained that some of the students might drop out if the money is not released on time.

He said that some students need to pay fees for them to be registered for the national examinations. An assistant minister Manyala Keya and Mumias MP Ben Washiali admitted that there were delays in the disbursement of the bursary funds. Keya and Washiali explained that the delays witnessed in the processing of the bursary have been caused by failure by the Government to disburse funds to the Constituencies.

Keya said that over 8,000 students in his Lurambi constituency have applied for financial assistance. "We have no money. The Government has not wired anything for us to process the forms," said Keya.

Keya said that he was waiting for the Planning minister Wycliffe Oparanya to release the Constituency Fund (CDF) allocations for the forms to be processed.

"We exhausted all we had in our account and we are waiting for this year's disbursement before we approve any funding for projects in the constituency," said Keya.

Keya explained that the Kshs83 million allocated to his Lurambi constituency was too little adding that the money should be increased to over Kshs200 million for an impact to be recorded in the area. Washiali said that students in colleges were the worst affected following delays by Treasury to release the money. He explained that some projects have stalled due to lack of money.

A parent Mr. Joseph Mayeye said that he was unable to pay fees for his three children in secondary school. He said that the bursary forms submitted to Butere Constituency CDF office have not been processed.

Students entertain guests at a public function. *Photo/Kavyu-Kura*

Online registration for exams Okayed

By BOB OMBATI

CANDIDATES for standard eight and O-level examinations will register for their exams on-line.

Kisii Central District Examination Officer, Jason Achika said that the E-registration began in January 2, this year and ends in March 31, 2011, while late registration commences on April 1 to May 15, 2011.

The Officer told The Link in his office that form four candidates will pay Kshs2000 for late registration whereas standard eight candidates will pay a penalty of Kshs1000, adding that the E-registration will close automatically once the specified time lapses.

He reminded headteachers whose schools Certificates of registration had expired to renew them to hasten the registration for national examinations, stressing that the system is guaranteed since all particulars of the candidates are computerized.

The DEO also clarified that the Kshs10 million channeled to Nyatieko Mixed Secondary school through the Economic Stimulus programme (ESP) to make it a centre of excellence was safe contrary to claims by some community members that it had been embezzled.

The officer, who coordinates the ESP projects within the education sector in the area said the management of the school used the funds to expand a Parents Teachers Association (PTA) Administration block and classrooms storey building which stalled, adding the project was on course.

He was reacting to complaints by community members led by Kennedy Chanai and Daniel Kirioba that the original plan for the storey building had been changed into an ordinary building without informing stakeholders in a bid to allegedly embezzle the funds.

Achika admitted that the PTA project's original plan had been changed, arguing that it was done to enjoin the classes and the administration block to complete the stalled project.

Board members, the Economic Stimulus Committee (ESC) and the school principal, Thaddeus Matoke, said Achika had been trained in the management of the funds, noting that all payments to suppliers and contractors were done through cheques, sealing loopholes for corruption.

The officer assured the residents that the funds were being utilized well, adding that once the project was completed, it will be audited to ascertain whether the funds were properly used. Further, he said that any remaining funds will be used to renovate other school buildings.

KNUT annoyed by transfer of teachers

By JOEL JUMA

A ROW has erupted between the Ministry of Education and the Kenya National Union of Teachers (Knut) over the transfer of its members in Kakamega County.

Cabinet Minister Soita Shitanda and assistant minister Manyala Keya who appear to have been sucked into the row have cautioned teachers against dragging them into the matter.

Shitanda and Keya said they will not interfere with the process adding that the ministry should discharge its duties without fear.

Knut is protesting over the transfer of head teachers who include the Kakamenga Central branch Chairman Robert Opwora from Bondeni Primary School in Kakamega municipality to Ingotse Primary School in Lurambi.

The union's National Executive Council member Wycliffe Omucheyi said the ministry should revoke some of the changes to avert protests.

The ministry has reshuffled over 20 head-teachers in both primary and secondary schools in Kakamega County. Others have been dropped due to poor performance and financial mismanagement.

"We are headed for elections and displacing some of the union officials from their stations may interfere with campaigns," said Omucheyi, who is also the Emuhaya branch Executive Secretary.

However, Shitanda (Housing) and Keya (Gender and Children Affairs) said the transfers were meant to improve performance.

The two backed the ministry's decision to reshuffle school heads.

Kakamega Central District Education Officer Mabale Indiatsi told off the union saying that the transfers will not be revoked.

"They should report to their stations and start work instead of rushing to politicians and church leaders to seek assistance," said Indiatsi.

Indiatsi explained that the changes were done after the approval of various stakeholders who included members of the District Education Boards.

Kakamega Central DC Chege Mwangi confirmed that the DEB approved the changes adding that they will not be reversed.

"Let the union officials report to the new station and hand over like the other teachers affected by the transfers," said Mwangi

Western Provincial Director of Education Kenneth Misoi ordered the affected head-teachers to report to their new stations immediately.

Misoi added that the ministry was contemplating taking action against principals who are forcing students to repeat classes.

He said a team of officers were going round collecting information over the matter. The team has already visited Moi Girls Vokoli in Sabatia and Mukumu Girls in Kakamega.

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

Africa must make food production top priority

THE ousting of Tunisia's president last month, and unrest in other nations such as Egypt, Algeria and Sudan, has many causes — but rising food prices have been one of the underlying themes.

At one level, the problem of food scarcity can be told simply. There are seven billion of us on Earth, of whom probably two billion are underfed. Two billion more people are due to join the planet by 2050. Food security is not just a huge problem — some now argue it is the central problem facing humanity.

Hunger has a daunting array of causes. These include the scarcity of water and other agricultural inputs; soil erosion and the spread of salinity; and the tightening grip of climate change. Kenya must wake up to these threats if it is feed its people

But one important part of what shapes the story of food and hunger is agricultural research — or the lack of it. The Green Revolution that began in the 1960s, which produced high-yield varieties of wheat allowing India, for example, to become a net exporter of grain, was a high point in the history of such research.

International reports on food security have been appearing in abundance over the past two months.

They provide broad view of what causes food scarcity, identifying the factors that make up a complex political, social, economic and scientific web.

They also convey the sheer scale of the problem, demonstrating that food scarcity will eventually affect us all, even those of us whose bellies are full. Because hunger leads to civil unrest and migration, and because farming, as it is currently practised, is destroying key resources and emits too much greenhouse gas.

In the sphere of research, many omissions have contributed to hunger. New knowledge is essential. Yet for most countries, research into agriculture and fisheries is a low priority, and studies have now correlated the previous two-decade apathy with today's slowdown in productivity gains.

To achieve the required levels of research investment more incentives must be provided for research into public goods that benefit the poor.

But achieving this degree of political will is hard, if only because hunger has the biggest impact on those who are in the weakest position to influence policy.

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COMMENTARY

Extra-judicial killings by police rampant in Kenya

COMMENT

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

THE Usalama Reforms Forum is alarmed by the increasing spate of violence involving uniformed officers and civilians. Recent shocking actions involving assault of police officers by civilians and extra-judicial killings by the police are particularly concerning.

The execution of three people by police officers last week has shown the world what Kenyans know is still happening all too often in their country – that impunity still reigns particularly among the law enforcement agencies. It has shown that the arrival of the new Constitution and the moves made so far toward police reform are not nearly enough to put a stop to extra-judicial killings and the system that allows police to act outside the law. It has shown that, even since the call from the UN's Philip Alston and the Ransley Commission in 2009 for moves to bring an end to these kinds of actions by security forces in Kenya, not much has changed on the ground. Certainly not enough to make sure that police do not behave like this, and that if they do, certainly not enough to make sure that there are swift and definite processes and consequences.

The results are all evident. When police officers are increasingly conducting their affairs outside of the law, demand bribes and block the public's quest for fair administrative action, restiveness and violent reaction by citizens towards the police become the norm rather than the exception.

The Usalama Reform Forum condemns all acts of unlawful violence and extrajudicial killings by police officers in this country the same way it condemns violence by citizens directed at officers on duty.

Usalama supports the actions of the police service and the government in ensuring that the officers in question in this incident were immediately identified and suspended from duty. This is however not sufficient. Usalama demands that an immediate and open inquiry be launched and these officers be immediately arrested pending further investigations.

Usalama will be watching this case and urges the government to follow through on its promises to properly and promptly investigate this slaying and prosecute those responsible.

Further, Usalama calls on the government to immediately and urgently work with the Police Reform Implementation Commission and Parliament to ensure that the Independent Policing Oversight Authority is brought into being.

These latest killings bring into sharp focus the dire need for a mechanism in Kenya that is responsible for investigating such incidents. Such an Authority is needed to ensure that an incident like this is immediately reported and investigated by a statutory body independent of government, the police and any other interest groups. These kinds of situations demand transparency and a process that Kenyans can be certain of.

The legislation for an Independent Policing Oversight Authority is in draft form. Stakeholders including the police, human rights organisations, government and civil society have been consulted and their inputs given. Now is the time, more than ever, for the government, Parliament and the Committee to work together to pass the legislation and establish the Authority.

Usalama calls on those responsible to make this the absolute priority of the police reform process, and to recognise that the only way to bring an end to this barbaric practice and to start building trust with the community is to create and support a robust, fully-independent and powerful Police Oversight Authority.

Meanwhile, Usalama urges the public desist from preventing, obstructing, assaulting or attacking any officer carrying out their lawful duties under whatever circumstances

On its own motion, and in the intervening period before the IPOA is established, Usalama Forum has launched a "Policing Accountability Monitor" to track how police and members of the public are being held accountable for the violence they subject Kenyans to.

Notes: Usalama reforms forum is a coalition of national, regional and international civil society organization focusing on security sector reforms in Kenya. Members of the usalama Forum include, among others, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, WorldVision, Eastern Africa Institute of Security Studies, Research Triangle Africa, PeaceNet-Kenya, Socio-Economic Rights Foundation and the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum amongst a host of other agencies.

Since inception in 2008, Usalama Forum has partnered with key reform agencies in Kenya to set the agenda for reforms and make substantive drafting input into the Independent Policing Oversight Authority Bill is now making a technical input into the National Police Service Bill.

Education ministry to closely monitor use of funds

By BOB OMBATI

EDUCATION Minister Prof. Sam Ongeri has challenged managers of public funds channeled to schools to guard against corruption and ensure that funds at their disposal are properly used.

Prof. Ongeri says that his ministry will dispatch auditors periodically and abruptly to schools suspected to have embezzled funds.

The Ministry of Education, said Prof. Ongeri will hold accountable those who misappropriate the funds, revealing that the government has released Kshs10 billion towards the Free education Programme.

Prof. Ongeri said that as a minister, he was keen to ensuring that public funds disbursed to schools

were properly utilized, adding that he will ensure that every penny is well utilized to benefit school children.

Speaking at Masimba hall in his constituency, the minister called for concerted efforts among school heads, deputies and school management committee members to improve the dwindling education standards in the area.

Disciplinary action, warned the minister will be taken against Deputy head teachers who undermine their heads, as practice hampered effective service delivery in the institutions.

"Most leadership wrangles experienced in most schools are being fueled by Deputy head teachers who are out to undermine their heads, leading to low education standards and performance in national exams," said the Minister.

Prof. Ongeri and former Education PS Prof. Mutahi when he launched Free Primary Education. Photo/File

The Nyaribari Masaba lawmaker directed District Education officers nationally to investigate the conduct of the Deputies and punish those found causing havoc and unrest in schools.

Prof. Ongeri lashed at parents who storm into institutions of learning to eject head teachers or lock them out whenever schools posted poor results in national exams, saying such actions were retrogressive as the ministry had a mechanism of handling school heads whose schools perform poorly perennially.

Parents, noted the minister had no role demanding who should be heading their schools, stressing the move created bad blood between the teachers and parents, affecting the school's education standards.

The minister advised the parents to channel their grievances to education officers whenever they were unsatisfied with the managers of their schools and assured them of his unwavering support so long as their cases were genuine.

The area DEO, John Musangu linked the low education standards in the region to lack of commitment among stakeholders and urged them to stop blame games and instead focus on improving the standards to enhance performance in national exams.

Body gives hope to needy students

By JOEL JUMA

OVER 500 students from five constituencies in Kakamega County are set to benefit from Kshs10 million in bursary awarded by a local non-governmental organisation. Support Activity in Poverty Eradication and Health Programme (Saipeh) indicated that it will pay school fees for needy students following delays by the Government to release bursary funds.

Saipeh Executive Director Justin Mutobera said majority of students earmarked for the bursary had scored 350 marks and above in last years Kenya Certificate of Primary Examinations. "We got over 900 applications but we will be sponsoring about 500," said Mutobera.

He said the organisation will give priority to orphaned students and girls from poor families. Beneficiaries will be drawn from Mumias, Matungu, Lurambi, Butere and Khwisero constituencies. Mutobera said the bursary fund was increased from the initial Kshs7 million to Kshs10 million due to increased number of requests.

Delays by the Government to disburse Constituency Development Funds (CDF) had affected the processing of application forms from the needy and bright children.

Assistant minister Manyala Keya and MPs David Were, Ben Washiali and Evans Akula have indicated that they are unable to process the applications because they don not know how much money will be allocated to their constituencies.

Mr. Keya explained that the Minister for Planning Wycliffe Oparanya is yet to advise Treasury to disburse part of the Kshs14 million meant for development projects in the constituencies. Keya said the situation has made bursary committees not to process the over 800 applications that are pending in his Lurambi CDF office. "We started receiving the applications in November but we cannot do anything because our kitty has been exhausted," said the Gender and Children Affairs assistant minister.

Kisii DEO cautions against interfering with teachers

By BOB OMBATI

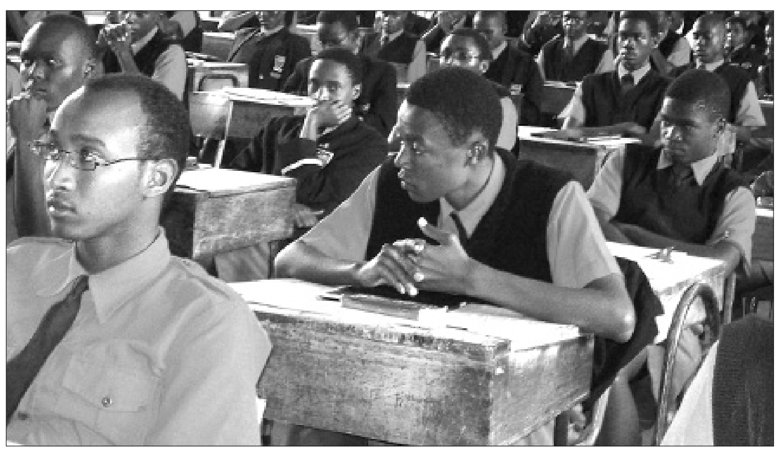
KISII central District Education officer, Joshua Kisuya has warned sponsors against interfering with learning institutions in their jurisdiction.

The DEO says that he will not allow sponsors to flock his office to instigate the transfer of innocent teachers over alleged misconduct.

Mr. Kisuya says that the transfer, promotion or demotion of teachers is the prerogative of the ministry and therefore sponsors must desist from pushing for the punishment of innocent teachers unless there is sufficient evidence to prove that they are lazy, incompetent, have embezzled public funds or failed to improve their school's performance.

The DEO spoke as Salvation Army church officials demanded the transfer of the head teacher, Jogoo Primary school Evans Obiri over claims that he was hampering pastoral programmes at the school.

According to the DEO, a row has



Students in class: Transfer of teachers over alleged misconduct interferes with learning institutions.

been simmering between the sponsor and the school management over a resolve to fence off the school to separate it from the church.

The DEO said that the church which is the sponsor of the school was also incensed after the head teacher rejected Kshs20,000 from the church as their contribution towards the construction of eighteen pit latrines within the school compound.

The teacher had declined to take the contribution because the sponsor had initially offered to give Kshs350,000 to put up eighteen pit latrines for the pupils in the school compound . However the sponsor backed out from the deal and presented a cheque of Kshs20,000 through its representative, Jeremy Mukutu .

The head teacher defended his action, saying the money was inadequate to construct the toilets and the school had no budget for such a project.

The DEO resolved the dispute and ordered the church to put up the toilets immediately to stop inconveniencing pupils who were forced to use toilets in the church compound.

However, addressing stakeholders, Salvation Army (SA) Secretary for Programmes, Lieutenant Colonel Herman Mbakaya said the church will built the toilets and hand them over to the school, adding that it was currently sourcing for funds from donors for the project. He further said land will be demarcated and the school, formerly known as Nyakemini DEB given its title deed to facilitate development.

School allows students to elect their leaders

By BOB OMBATI

IN a bid to curb unrests, Buyonge Mixed Day Secondary school in Kisii County has allowed students to directly elect their representatives.

The school's Principal, Evans Magembe says that the strategy seeks to give the students a leeway to elect their leaders.

"In this way, they feel free to air their grievances and help the management to resolve internal problems before they erupt into strikes which leave a trail of destruction, besides paralyzing learning. Magebe notes that in the past, students viewed their leaders with suspicion and would resort violence anytime they felt that their grievances were not adequately addressed by the management.

Under the initiative, teachers only give the students guidelines to ensure only good leaders are elected.

The elected representatives then act as linkages between the students and the management to resolve conflicts. "Students now respect, are free and hold their elected leaders accountable thus reducing strikes in schools," said Magembe, adding that each class elected its leaders while the chairpersons for the student council were elected by all students.

He revealed that the school also has a breakfast progamme to keep orphans and students from impoverished families at school and to reduce truancy due to hunger.

The Principal said the school has 100 orphans in dire need of help out of a student population of 340, saying the school provides them with breakfast and lunch to accord them a chance to enjoy the fruits of free Secondary Education.

Welcome to amazing Trans-Nzoia County

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

A section of Kitale town in Trans-Nzoia County.

TRANS-NZOIA County is cosmopolitan with the 900,000 inhabitants representing all the country's 42 ethnic communities.

The county with vast farmlands is endowed with maize crops, sunflower, wheat and coffee.

Although most of its farmers are considered fairly prosperous, local residents fret over fluctuating producer prices – particularly this year when prices hit rock bottom.

Kitale Catholic Peace and Justice Commission director Leonard Barasa says political tensions have cooled down even though 30,000 displaced people from the tribal clashes of the 1990s and 2007 general election are still unsettled.

Mr. Barasa says there is some unease over the large tracts of land that influential people own in the face of poverty in some quarters.

The county, made up of three districts – Trans-Nzoia West, Trans-Nzoia East and Kwanza – also grapples with cattle rustling frequently, particularly when their neighbours from Pokot and the Suam border point in Uganda make incursions into the region. Previously, members from a rebel group in Mt. Elgon, the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF), also terrorized residents.

When he was alive, former Kwanza MP George Kapten estimated that 2,000 people had been killed in Kwanza district and over 20,000 livestock driven away by cattle rustlers.

Narc-Kenya branch secretary, Ferdinand Wafula says well-connected individuals in the Moi regime were irregularly allocated large farms in the Chepchoina Milimani Complex and Zea Mwisho ADC Farm at expense of the vast majority of residents.

Wafula believes that the allocation was discriminatory and wants those who will be elected in the newly-created political positions to address this issue. He says the misuse of CDF funds in three constituencies – Saboti, Cherangani and Kwanza – should be investigated together with those who own land previously belonging to the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and KEPHIS.

County residents will be counting on Lands Minister Mr. James Orengo to revoke titles of illegally acquired public land, including urban utility plots allocated to businessmen in Kitale Municipality.

Former Saboti MP Davis Nakitare, who has a passion for eco-tourism and conservation, hopes the new county leaders will set aside funds to develop the infrastructure that will allow easier access to the Saiwa Game Reserves and Mt. Elgon National Park.

Mr. Nakitare decried the poor road network and says agricultural yields can be higher in Saboti and Kwanza constituencies if roads are rehabilitated.

With the adoption of the Interim Independent Boundaries Review Commission's proposal by Parliament, five constituencies will be carved out of Saboti, Kwanza and Cherangani.

Forestry and Wildlife Minister Mr. Noah Wekesa and former Permanent Secretary Patrick Khaemba have declared their interests to run for the Governorship, while former Cherangani MP, Kipruto Kirwa wants to be Senator.

Mombasa County gears for growth

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

MOMBASA is bound to undergo monumental transformation once county governance structures are operationalised.

With the expansion of the port of Mombasa to enable it accommodate bigger vessels, the flow of cargo to the gateway of East and Central Africa is bound to triple. And with the expected Southern Sudan independence and her subsequent East African Community membership, revenue from the port will translate into more wealth for this county, which also reaps highly from tourism.

Mombasa County has four constituencies: Mvita, Kisauni, Changamwe and Likoni. It is a host to major landmarks including Bamburi Portland cement factory, Kenya Ports Authority, Kenya Pipeline Company, Kenya Oil Refineries and a host of other privately owned manufacturing plants, which pay billions of shillings to the exchequer in form of taxes.

There is also the multi-billion tourist industry which hosts hundreds of tourists annually.

Mombasa Town Clerk, Mr. Tubman Otieno, commenting on the new governance structure said that inept county managers may ruin the structures if they are not put in check. "Managing this structures, which will be allocated billions of shillings, will not be a walk in the park. Therefore Mombasa residents should be very careful lest they put the leadership of this potentially rich entity in the hands of people whose sole interest is to line their own pockets," said the clerk.

Mr. Otieno said, however, that the success of county system of governance will solely depend on the goodwill of the central government, adding that Mombasa County should be given what it has been denied for ages by the central government. For instance, the town clerk cited a decision by the Mombasa Municipal Council

years back to levy a certain percentage of money from all goods entering the port of Mombasa, but the resolve was thwarted by local government headquarters.

He said if this decision was operationalised, it would have translated into billions of shillings, which would have been spent on enhancing service delivery for residents of the coastal city.

"In a nut shell, the devolved government structures need all the goodwill and support from Nairobi if we expect them to succeed. Any quarter was bound to spell doom for a rich entry like Mombasa," said Mr. Otieno.

He added, Mombasa should be empowered to levy all tourists visiting the coastal city and manage all tourist sites directly, just like Narok county council which was granted this autonomy decades ago. He said although the municipal council was granted permission by the ministry of local government to levy tourist hotels for every bed occupied, the Kshs3 collected from each hotel per bed daily is peanuts and should be revised upwards before the county governments take over.

He said the new county government which will take over the running of Mombasa from the municipal council will be met with a myriad of challenges, including dilapidated public schools, dispensaries, social halls and the Mombasa municipal stadia, which badly needs refurbishing.

The success of the county structure to manage Mombasa will depend on the caliber of managers given the mandate to run the affairs of this important city, which he refers to as a sleeping giant.

Coast branch Maendeleo ya Wanawake chairlady Mrs. Sureya Roble Hersi said there was need to interrogate the track record of all aspiring candidates for the post of county governor, deputy and county representatives and senators slots. This, she said, was in order to avoid handing over the leadership of the rich county to a 'bunch of political wheeler dealers and business buccaneers'.

"The town needs professional, visionary, honest and people with a proven leadership track record so

Mr. Otieno: Town Clerk

that they can confront the thorny issues like how to tap revenue from the port for the benefits of Mombasa residents and exploit the fishing industry which remains under utilized for decades due to lack of a clear policy and operational manual," she said.

She said fresh blood and minds were needed to bring change in the leadership of the coastal city.

Mrs. Hersi said that all contestants for leadership positions should be vetted thoroughly, in order to break clean from the past and turn Mombasa into a powerful county.

Kenyans stiffer penalties for drug traffickers

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

ANTI-DRUG campaigners at the Coast want stiffer penalties imposed on traffickers and distributors. The campaigners lament that the current law is too lenient on the perpetrators of the drug scourge.

Led by an anti-drug campaigner Mr. Famau Mohamed Famau, the activists who include hoteliers and the clergy, described the drug menace in the tourist resort city of Malindi as a 'cancer' which is threatening an entire generation of youth.

Mr. Famau said Malindi town alone buries at least 30 young men and women every year whose deaths are drug-related or are caused by HIV/Aids and other diseases. He cited pioneer learning institutions, which have produced learners of international repute in the past but are now dominating the national charts of poor performance in the KCPE due to drug and substance abuse among young learners.

The hardest hit areas in Malindi are Shella, Maweni and the Mbuyu wa Kusema where boys and girls have been reduced into zombies by hard drugs."They have gone a notch higher to share blood to get those who cannot afford a dose of these hard substances to get intoxicated as well," laments Mr. Famau.

Religious leader Ustadh Bwanali Ali urged the Government to change the law and give stiff penalties to those found on the wrong side of the law. Mr. Ustadh Ali also called on the Government to seal all the suspected entry points for hard drugs and investigate foreigners who are also suspected of smuggling tones of hard substances into the country.

The cleric also wants the Government to name all suspected drug barons. A local hotelier, Mr. Titus Kangangi, asked the Government to investigate all the villas and cottages in the area to weed out suspected drug havens.

"We cannot continue talking about the same thing forever since this illicit trade negatively affects tourism and the economy and the Government should roll up its sleeves and support the recent US stance to impose travel on suspected drug barons," Mr. Kangangi said.

The hotelier called for investigations into villas operating without official licenses under the guise of being private residences. He also appealed to the Government to declare the drug menace a national tragedy.

Alcohol traders should act responsibly

BAR operators continue to express misgivings over the new Alcohol Act, saying it is adversely affecting their business. Their argument is that with restricted hours of business, they are selling less. A likely first casualty will be employees.

From a purely business perspective, this concern is valid. However, as Mr. John Mututho, the MP who sponsored the motion, observed, Kenyans must look at the bigger picture and particularly what Kenyans stand to gain from the new laws. The so called Mututho rules will regulate the preparation, distribution and consumption of alcohol.

It is common knowledge that alcohol and substance abuse in general have reached alarming levels and which is why instead of appealing to the government to relax the rules, all should strive to ensure the Act successfully implemented. This is only way to rescue those currently being ruined by alcohol abuse.

It is true alcohol has social, cultural and economic benefits, but abuse of the same is harmful to health and thecause of numerous social ills.

Kenya cannot hope to be a thriving, working nation when saddled by unregulated and unfettered alcohol?

Thousands of young men have been turned into zombies due to consumption ofdrinks laced with harmful substances.

The pain, anguish and desperation ofwomen whose men have abandoned their responsibilities as husbands and fathers are testimony to the devastating effects of alcohol. To such families, the new rules bring hope that their men can be rescued from the deadly habit. Bars dealing in "safe" alcoholic beverages may argue that they have nothing to do with consumption of dangerous drinks.

However, they too cannot escape culpability when they continue to sell alcohol to individuals already dead drunk.

The new laws are tailored to regulate drinking and encourage bar operators to exercise responsibility by not selling alcohol to the under age and those already drunk.

Profit is the essence and lifeline of any business venture but profit without responsibility and a sense of morality is bollow.

A nation must embrace values that humanise and make citizens better people. The truth is that alcohol abuse adversely affects productivity and judgment of even the strongest and wisest among us.

George Odunga,
via e-mail.

Intensify bid to strike oil

THE Government should intensify is efforts in prospecting for oil to boost the energy requirements to power Vision 2030, the country's blueprint to achieve the middle income level status.

The discovery of oil will boost country's pace to industrialisation. I pray that we once strike our own oil,we will manage the resource prudently for the benefits of all.

John Migosi,
via e-mail.

It's time to act on the emerging grain cartels in face of hunger

I wrote to *Saturday Nation* recently about the danger of crying wolf, where I complained about the publishing of exaggerated articles about 'drought' that quote certain NGOs trying to raise the normal dry season hardships to disaster proportions.

I have to compliment you for the excellent article, grain cartels set to cash in on hunger facing Kenya by Samuel Rumba and Muchiri Karanja that appeared in *Saturday Nation* (January 22) together with *Perfect conditions for another maize scam* by Charles Wanguhu that appeared on the same page.

The third story, *Tales of despair aimed at landing deals* was a brilliant expose: Ihave seen similar performances staged before.

Cynthia Salvadori,
Via e-mail

* * *

The Malawi President Bingu wa Mutharika, upon assuming power, addressed the old hunger question in Malawi. He put the agriculture docket under his office. This action turned Malawi into the regional bread basket, even exporting food to Kenya.

Reports of hunger in Kenya are scary. People are starving in northern Kenya,yet maize is rotting in stores as farmers in the Rift Valley have withheld their produce due to unattractive prices.

The hunger menace is due to the government's failure to prepare even after the meteorological department warned about the looming drought.The decision to give relief handouts to families is a cosmetic action. For how long will the starving Kenyans live on relief handouts? The delegation of permanent secretaries to the hardest hit regions ahould come up with a permanent remedy for hunger.It is absurd that IDPs are still wallowing in tents, yet the government can foot the bills for the shuttle diplomacy to woo African states for deferment of ICC.

Abel Wekesa,
Via e-mail

A local trader sells maize at market.

Review whether 8-4-4 system is still relevant

THE taskforce set up to review the country's 8-4-4 system of education has its work cut out. For some time now, dons at various public universities have expressed concern over weaknesesses in the system.

They complain of first year students who did well in the KCSE examinations, but struggle in university because they spent most of their primary and secondary school years learning by rote, what many refer to as being "drilled", rather than acquiring knowledge in a practical way.

As a result, many are unable to carry out proper research or write quality term papers in their areas of study.

Reforms of the system are therefore long overdue, but should include a total review of the curriculum in public universities, and how to address the shortage of qualified lecturers there.

Public universities are no longer setting the pace for private campuses, and the dearth of serious research in these public institutions keeps them out of the uppermost global ranking of similar institutions of higher learning. One of the proposals is a complete overhaul of the system.

As a country, it is important to recognise that the requirements of the job and business market are more dynamic, and the education sector must change to meet these needs.

Ignoring this will make it even harder to fight the ogre of rising unemployment that leaves hundreds of youths, many with degrees, languishing in idleness.

What kind of manpower will the country need 20 years from now? What painful changes will have to be made to get there?

What kind of curriculum should middle-level colleges offer to equip students with the skills to be self-employed?

The 8-4-4 system overbundens pupils with subject clusters that prove of little value and is not in tune with the country's current and future manpower needs as outlined in Vision 2030, Kenya's social and economic development blueprint.

Concerned Kenyan,
Via e-mail

The editor welcomes letters and comments on a variety of issues. The letters should be brief, topical and issue based. The editor reserves the right to edit for brevity or clarity.

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Provision of water to Mwingi town wanting

By KAVYU-KURA

THE provision of clean piped water to residents of Mwingi town has over the years remained erratic despite the existence of the multi-million Kiambere -Mwingi pipeline.

Many are the times when residents have had to content with using and drinking contaminated water from the nearby Tyaa seasonal river following frequent pipeline bursts or mechanical breakdowns at the intake.

The about 40,000 people in Mwingi Central and Kyuso districts who depend on water from the pipeline go for days without water at times leading to protests and uproar from local leaders.

Leaders in Mwingi recently launched a scathing attack at the Kiambere-Mwingi Water and Sanitation Company (KMWASCO) of sleeping on the job and failing to deliver clean water to residents. KMWASCO that operates under the scandal ridden TANATHI Water Board is vested with managing the pipeline.

The Chairman of the Mwingi Town Business Community Jones Munyithya and Town Council chairman Felix Nzung'u recently expressed disgust at the regular disruptions of water supply leading to acute shortages.

Speaking separately to The Link, the leaders lamented that the predicament was exposing residents to waterborne diseases as majority were drinking contaminated water from unclear sources.

Munyithya who was speaking at the Mwingi Resort Club following a recent water shortage that had gripped the town for five days, said the water sold to the residents by vendors came from suspicious sources, including sewerage lines.

"We fear for an outbreak of Typhoid because people have been forced to use contaminated water for drinking and other domestic use following an acute water shortage for almost a week now," said Munyithya.

He said it was apparent that the KMWASCO management had failed in its mandate to supply water to Mwingi residents.

Cllr. Nzung'u said frequent water shortages had become an issue of concern to Mwingi residents.

"Besides resorting to drinking contaminated water from the nearby Tyaa seasonal river, the residents are also forced to pay heavily for the dirty water which cost Kshs50 for a 20 liter Jerrican," said the Town Council boss.

Dickens Tawo (bending) of KMWASCO inspecting a problematic water pipeline. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

"If these people are unable to run the project effectively, they should come open so that local leaders can look for an alternative. Mwingi people are now tired of water shortages every other week," said Cllr. Nzung'u.

During times of scarcity, the town's water peddlers take advantage of the desperate situation to make a kill by selling a 20 litter jerrican of the dirty water collected from Tyaa seasonal river at between Kshs40 and Kshs50. In normal times, the water vendors sell a 20 litter jerrican at Kshs10 but this goes up five fold as peddlers cash in on the shortage.

It has not been clear why the management of KMWASCO has not been efficient enough to provide water to its customers although some unconfirmed sources have attributed the water shortages to the firm's failure to pay its electricity bills on time leading to the disconnection of power supply at the intake.

But the KMWASCO Managing director Paul Kinuba told The Link that his firm was doing its best to provide water to consumers.

Kinuba however conceded that even in normal situation, the demand for water from consumers by far surpasses the daily supply of 136 cubic meters of water. He said more people were now using water from the Kiambere-Mwingi water supply pipeline thus overstretching the available supply.

However, KMWASCO MD said he hoped that his firm will be able to sufficiently supply water to consumers once the Italian government funded phase two of the Kiambere –Mwingi water pipeline is completed.

The Italian government has offered to fund phase two of the Kiambere-Mwingi Water Supply project to the tune of Kshs1.4 billion. The feat was achieved through the efforts of the Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka whose Mwingi North constituency will greatly benefit from the project.

However, a section of the neighbouring Mwingi South constituency represented by Defense assistant minister David Musila will also benefit. Despite the good news about the implementation of the phase two of the Kiambere Mwingi water supply projects, the KMWASCO appears to be dogged with serious fiscal difficulties that militate against its efficiency.

As we went to press towards mid January, we had learnt that KMWASCO whose main account was operated by the parent TANATHI Water Board has not paid the staff their December salaries.

Sources privy to the ongoing at the KMWASCO said that the firm was apparently cash strapped as the managers did not have the authority to access funds paid by local metered water consumers who paid their bills to an account run by TANATHI.

It is understood that attempts by KMWSCO directors to seek a bank overdraft to pay workers salaries was shot down by a director who is also a clergyman who dismissed the move as imprudent.

But even as the firm struggled with the issue of paying staff salaries, another saga erupted, with consumers in Mwingi town protesting over contaminated and pungent smelling water that was flowing from their taps.

Nearly 500 water consumers in the upper Mwingi town, who feared for their lives, had to content with foul smelling water emitted by their taps. The foul smelling water had not only affected supply to individual consumers but also learning institutions like the nearby Victors' Academy and Neema Academy with hundreds of pupils.

The affected residents said they were surprised that the KMWASCO supplied piped water was contaminated with impurities like sewerage and human waste while it was expected to be pure and clean.

"About two weeks ago the water dripping from our tap started producing very pungent smell that is associated with sewerage. However, we immediately stopped using the water from the tap," said Mwende Mulandi, a worried consumer.

Ruth Mulandi who is the Mwingi District Chairperson of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake said she wondered why KMWASCO has taken too long to address the problem while the issue was a matter of life or death because the consumers' lives were at stake.

But the then acting KMWASCO Manager, Dickens Tawo, inspected the contaminated water pipeline in an effort to identify the point through which the sewerage could have come into contact with the pipe to cause contamination. KMWASCO was struggling to sort out the problem by the time we went to press.

However, Tawo had told the press during his inspection tour that KMWSCO had inherited a rotten water distribution pipeline which was poorly done leading to the possibility of sewerage seepage. He said his firm will have to eventually overhaul the whole pipeline system.

Uhuru blamed for poor roads in Western Province

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

A ROW is brewing between the ministry of finance and politicians in Western Province over the poor condition of roads in the region.

Politicians claim that the deputy prime minister Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, who is also the minister for finance, is responsible for the poor state of roads in the area.

Kanduyi Member of Parliament (MP) Mr. Alfred Khang'ati alleges that treasury has for a long time denied MPs from Western province money meant for roads rehabilitation and maintenance.

"Finance ministry has for a long time now refused to disburse roads funds. We are now therefore demanding an explanation from the minister concerned," says Khang'ati.

Mr. Khang'ati discloses that already MPs from Western province have booked an appointment with the finance minister with a view to finding out why constituencies in the region have not received roads funds for long.

The MP's remarks come at a time when the region's residents are on a collision course with their legislators over poor infrastructure.

In every public forum even in private talks the residents have been decrying the poor condition of roads saying law makers from the region are sleeping on the job.

Virtually all roads in the region remain impassable any time it rains and the situation may worsen this year if nothing is done to address the issue.

On several occasions some MPs from the region have been quoted as saying that the roads will be rehabilitated when the rains subside.

By the time of going to the press no work was going on as promised by some of the law makers from the region despite the prolonged period of dry spell.

Consequently, the residents question the sincerity of some of the legislators saying they (MP's) may be falsely accusing the finance ministry just to cover up their poor record in development.

The high number of road accidents in the area is also being blamed on the poor condition of roads.

Webuye town mayor says that most accidents in the region occur as drivers try to avoid potholes.

The mayor, councilor John Ngome claims that during the last week of December 2010, more than 20 people died in the region through road accidents.

And even as the MPs blame the treasury and rains for the poor condition of roads in the region residents equally blame the MPs.

The residents allege that some MPs lobby to have cow-boy contractors who are connected to them politically to be awarded contracts.

This they claim has resulted in shoddy work on the roads in the region.

Mwingi residents call for controlled sand harvesting

By KAVYU-KURA

ABOUT 6000, residents of Kivou location in Mwingi Central district are up in arms over the devastating effects of uncontrolled sand harvesting in the area.

Thousands of residents of Ndalani village led by Kivou civic leader Patricia Kisio Kimanzi recently appealed to the government to stop unchecked sand harvesting along Kivou seasonal river as the activity had resulted to serious water scarcity and environmental degradation.

They told The Link that they were fast losing patience and called on the relevant government arm to intervene before they take law into their own hands to protect the vital resource from further depletion.

The residents complained that due to incessant sand scooping by partakers in the multimillion enterprises who apparently have no regard for the welfare of the locals, the Kivou river bed that has for years been their reliable source of water has been left bare and dry.

Cllr. Kisio told The Link that due to massive sand harvesting along the Kivou seasonal river, the river bed has been left without enough sand and therefore the water level has dropped drastically causing wells to dry up as well.

"Before the sand harvesters invaded the area a couple of years ago, the villagers used to make one foot shallow wells and get water. But now all that is history because they are now forced to sink wells that go as deep as six feet to get water," lamented cllr. Kisio.

She said she feared that unless the government acted with speed through NEMA to arrest the worrying situation, the devastation would become unbearable while the area would soon turn into a useless desert devoid of water.

And 76-year-old Muthui Kimwele who spoke to The Link on behalf of the affected villagers said that over 6,000 people faced serious water shortages as their only source of the vital commodity has been totally ruined by unscrupulous sand harvesters.

He said the residents would soon be forced to trek for up to 10 kilometers in search of water. He added that their livestock would also bear the brunt as they too will have to walk long distances to get water.

A visit to the area revealed serious environmental degradation due to unchecked sand harvesting. The Kivou river bed has in some places been left bare without sand while the adjacent areas suffer excessive damage due to soil erosion.

Inside the river bed we found two lorries collecting sand which they off loaded a kilometer away where heavy commercial truck wait to load the cargo to its final destination of Thika or Nairobi.

A resident, Kithome Mbithu, said that those involved in the sand harvesting business were minting millions at the expense of the environment and the welfare of the locals.

"Brokers collude with lorry owners who purchase a lorry load of sand for a paltry Kshs2,000 while they sell the same at Kshs80,000 in Thika town and Nairobi," he claimed.

He claimed that about 20 Lorries daily ferry sand from Kivou adding that Kyanundu area had completely been depleted and now they have relocated to Ndalani area where the residents have vowed to eject them.

The NEMA representative in Mwingi was unavailable for comment as she was said to be on leave by the time we went to press. However the residents accused NEMA of burying its heads in the sand as serious environmental depletion continues with abandon.

A heavy commercial Lorry we found loading sand at the Kivou river yesterday. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Busia contractors faulted for doing shoddy work

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Busia district project monitoring and evaluation committee members have expressed concern over the shoddy work done by contractors awarded tenders through devolved funding.

The evaluation committee led by the Busia District Officer John Maingi said that most contractors were not qualified and therefore majority has failed to complete the projects satisfactorily and within the stipulated time frame.

The committee singled out a Motorbike shed at Mundika trading centre funded to the tune of Kshs210, 000 through the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) as part of the projects marred by controversy.

Another project that has raised eyebrows was the Nambale Constituency Industrial Development Centre, which is located a few metres from Matayos trading centre.

The project was allocated a total of Kshs2.3million through CDF. The contractor was paid an initial fee of Kshs2million but up to date there is nothing much to show of the project that was expected to have been completed by September 2010.

Other projects monitored included Bulanda dispensary which was allocated a total of Kshs3million by the Busia municipal council, Bulanda primary school which was allocated Kshs3.5million under the Economic Stimulus Project (ESP) to aid in the construction of five modern classrooms, VIP toilets, purchase of a 600litre plastic water tank.

The team also toured an Early Childhood Development centre at Mayenje primary school within Busia municipality funded by a local authority to the tune of Kshs500,000 and demanded that the contractor replaces an old iron sheet used while roofing the ECD classroom.

Most projects especially the CDF projects within Nambale constituency, the team noted are inoperational despite colossal amounts of money pumped into the same.

MPs call for fairness in use of IDP funds

By JOEL JUMA

TWO MPs from Kakamega County have called for fairness in the disbursement of the Kshs7 billion set aside for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Legislators Manyala Keya (Lurambi) and Justus Kizito (Shinyalu) said all IDPs should benefit from the allocation.

They said Finance Minister Uhuru Kenyatta should ensure there is no discrimination in the disbursement.

"We have many IDPs in Kakamega County and other parts of the country who should be given some assistance despite having left the camps," said Kizito.

Kizito told Uhuru and the Minister for Special Programmes Esther Murugi to collect fresh data of IDPs for fair distribution of the money.

Kizito explained that families which, fled from Nairobi and parts of Rift Valley to find settlement in Western, should be traced and given assistance.

Keya, who is an assistant minister at the Ministry of Gender, said many families are living as squatters after the 2008 post-election violence.

The legislators were speaking at Bondeni Primary School in Kakamega town during the handing

over of a Kshs36 million project funded by the Ministry of Housing.

The function was also addressed by Housing minister Soita Shitanda and the Kakamega County Council Chairman John Shimaka.

The school is one of those clustered under the Slums Upgrading programme in the country. The Government has put up a storey building to ensure there are adequate classrooms for the pupils.

Keya also hinted that World Bank is set to release funds for the rehabilitation of the Kisumu-Kakamega-Kitale road. He said that the Ministry of Roads has already advertised the tender.

Keya explained that the cost of doing business is going up due to the poor road network in the region. "We are experiencing fare increment time and again due to poor roads," said Keya.

The Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Director Fred Chitechi said the state of roads in the region was wanting.

He said the business community in the matatu industry are incurring huge losses caused by bad roads.

Debt threatens future of Webuye Council

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

WEBUYE Municipal Council is faced with imminent closure following a freeze of over Kshs 30 million by the government and other external donors pending the clearance of outstanding statutory debts.

The council with an annual budget of Kshs107million is in a dilemma after they missed out on their LATF allocation for the current financial year while the Pan African Paper mills declined to make their annual contribution.

The LATF allocation was supposed to be Kshs.29million and the Pan African Paper Mills was to give another Kshs.1.7million.

About 80 employees of the council have downed their tools to demand Kshs5 million in salary arrears which have accumulated over the last three months.

"We have collected about Kshs7 million since September last year, but the council has declined to pay us our dues," says Margret Wekesa of the Kenya Local Government Workers Union.

The official questions frequent trips by the council mayor John Ngome, which she said were not beneficial to the local authority.

But the treasurer, Richard Ngoni blames the scenario to missing LATF allocation, adding that the huge salary increase to workers pay had worsened their case.

"By losing LATF means as a council our cash flow is constrained," explains Ngoni.

Further, he noted that the council's salary expenditure had shot up to Kshs49million from Kshs29 million when the council can only be able to generate Kshs30million.

He refuted claims that the council had collected Kshs5million between September and December as false saying Kshs2.9million came from the Kenya Roads Levy, which has strict instructions about its usage.

Currently, he said the council was mostly relying on Kshs40,000 generated from the market and bus park levies.

In September last year, the council clerk Richard Kotindo had forewarned that the council may not survive if measures are not put in place to cut costs.

"There is a lot of opposition, when we try to cut costs and look at possible sources of income to strengthen our capital base" said Kotindo then.

Civic leaders opposed to the position taken by the clerk are lobbying for his removal and accused him of not working closely with them.

However workers support the clerk and blame the treasurer for misleading the councilors to retain their perks.

MANAGER'S COLUMN

By
HANNA CARLSSON

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

A monthly supplement funded by the European Union and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

Grassroots peace efforts bearing fruit

MANAGER'S COLUMN

By **JANE MURUTU**

IT is yet another new year that we pray for better and greater tidings in peace! This year, 2011, promises to be a year of great expectations across communities in Kenya due to the heavy national reform agenda that needs to be undertaken before we go for the next general elections.

For those organizations and individuals working at the community level, we can only inspire hope and build on from where we left last year with greater vigour. We can only get better for the future of this country depends on our collective and individual effort.

We have lined up several activities that aim at consolidating the work we have undertaken with communities over the years and we hope that this will be a joint journey of hope and concerted effort.

In February for instance, we will be having provincial dialogue meetings on 11th for Rift Valley, 17th for Western and 18th for Nyanza region. Participants will be drawn from partners CSOs in each region, government representatives, members of parliament, representatives of the judiciary, police force, political parties and opinion makers.

In the same breadth we shall hold the popular divisional leaders meeting that are very interactive and issue based.

Currently in the country we have much talk on whether the Ocampo six should face the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Hague or the local tribunal. In light of the ensuing debate you will find an article in this issue elaborating on a form of justice that is described as Restorative justice. Sometimes called "reparative justice", this is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of victims and offenders, instead of satisfying abstract legal principles or punishing the offender.

Victims take an active role in the process, while offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, "to repair the harm they've done by apologizing, returning stolen money, or community service. It is based on a theory of justice that considers crime and wrongdoing to be an offense against an individual or community rather than the state. Restorative justice that fosters dialogue between victim and offender show the highest rates of victim satisfaction and offender accountability.

The national reform agenda must resonate with what we are undertaking at the local levels. Let us jointly avoid whipping up tribal and ethnic sentiments that continue to divide us. Let us commit to providing local solutions to the problems holding our communities back from living peacefully and in an integrated cosmos. Your contribution is what will take us to where we want.

The writer is the co-manager of the Partnership for Peace Project. For comments or suggestions write to:
partnershipforpeace@gmail.com

Why we should reject tribalism in 2012

By **HANNA CLIFFORD**

DESPITE the presidential and parliamentary elections being well over a year away, the media is already saturated with the political wranglings of those hoping to have sway over how you cast your vote.

It is quickly getting rather tiresome, and the temptation is to both read and write about anything other than 2012. So why have I chosen to not to do so? It is partly a case of "if you can't beat them, join them", but also it is in recognition of the fact that this premature electioneering gives the voter a great opportunity to make a balanced decision at election time.

It would not be too much of an unfair generalisation to say that Kenyan politics is characterised by tribal alliances and divisions. It seems that, despite the chaos following the last election, many politicians have not learnt the dangers of linking political campaigns to tribal identities. Or perhaps they have learnt, but after careful calculation of political expediency have decided to take that well-worn path anyway. Thus it is solely down to the voter – as is often the case in democracies with weak leadership – to put tribal politics in its place.

Instead of simply casting a vote for whoever proclaims to be the speaker and protector of your tribe, it is important that the citizens of Kenya think carefully about which candidate will best represent them on issues of substance. Of course, when we vote we are being asked to consider which politician or party we believe has our own individual interests at heart. This is not as selfish as it first

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Mathira receives peace delegates from RV

BY **JOSEPH MUKUBWA**

IT was song and dance as a delegation of over 60 people from Rift Valley region visited Mathira East district to preach peace recently.

The delegation traveled for over 300kms to Nduma-ini village which is at the foot of Mt Kenya region to preach a message of peace, love and unity to the Kikuyu community.

The delegation first paid a courtesy call to Central Provincial deputy commissioner Mrs Ann Ng'etich in Nyeri town where they were warmly received before traveling to Mathira.

Most of them had come from Eldoret North constituency while others had come from Kiambu County for the exchange programme.

During the colourful occasion, gourds carrying Morsik milk were exchanged with bananas and arrow roots.

They shared the meal and danced together as they sang their favourite traditional songs.

The delegation had paid a visit to granny Mrs Lucy Wandia who was celebrating her 108 years since she was born.

Wandia has also been the longest serving Kanu party member as she joined the party since 1948 up to date. She has been a staunch supporter of the party for over 60 years.

A delegation from Rift Valley region pays a visit to grandmother Mrs. Lucy Wandia, 108 (holding microphone) at Nduma-ini village in Mathira East district. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

"We came here as peace ambassadors to spread the message of peace love and unity as the Kanu slogan shows. It is time we stick together as ever and even intermarry," said Rose Kisama from Uasin Gichu County.

The Secretary of Inter parties Peace Committee in Central Province Mr John Njuguna who was present said he is ready to back women in the society in their message of preaching peace.

He also urged the youth to start tournaments between the two communities.

Wandia's grandson Mr Paul Kanyi said that he will organize a delegation from Mathira to also visit those areas of Moi's Bridge, Uasin Gishu and Baringo.

A leader from Kiambu County who is also an elected councilor in Sweden Mr Daniel Mwaura said peace is paramount in any country before and after general elections.

Wandia while cutting a cake to celebrate her 108th birthday urged Vice president Kalonzo Musyoka, Deputy Prime Minister Hon Uhuru Kenyatta and Eldoret North MP Mr William Ruto to unite ahead of the 2012 General Elections.

She also appealed unto the three political bigwigs to visit her jointly.

A Kanu party member Mrs Zipporah Muthoni noted that women and children are the ones who suffer most incase of violence and so women should be in the forefront in preaching peace.

The youth from the region were urged to keep away from illicit brews.

Use ICTs to promote peace in Africa —Akossi

BY **PETER MUTUKU**

THE robust growth of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector should be harnessed to promote peace in Africa.

The African Telecommunications Union (ATU) Secretary General Akossi Akossi said ICT could become a key ingredient in the promotion of peace in the country and region.

Speaking during the 33rd African Telecommunications Day, the Secretary General said the continent has been on the spot for using ICT especially through mobile phone text messaging and emails to fuel ethnic tensions whenever African countries go for general elections.

"However, ICT could be used in a similar way to foster peace which is paramount for the growth and development of our country," he said.

This year's theme was ICT services for the promotion of peace and security in Africa.

He also said that Africa is an ICT emerging market, adding that it was an opportunity for investors to tap the potential.

"I challenge the industry players to come up with innovative ways in making use of ICT," he said.

Speaking at the function, Information and Communication Assistant Minister Dhadho Godhana said that the country had made big strides in the sector which is a key driver in the realization of Vision 2030, the blue print set to catapult the country to a middle level income economy.

He lauded the African Telecommunication Union for helping the government in the formulation of policies which have boosted the sector's growth in the country and East African Community region.

"ATU provides a forum for stakeholders involved in ICT to formulate effective policies and strategies aimed at improving access to information infrastructure and services," he said.

He added with the convergence of ICT, traditional Telecommunications Regulators have now evolved into ICT regulators.

The process has seen national regulators in the continent take up new roles especially in the management of critical internet resources and cyber security. The growth in the ICT sector has witnessed the landing of three international fibre optic cables namely TEAMS, Eassy and Seacom undersea cables.

The government has laid the National Backbone fibre infrastructure that seeks to connect the entire country with the undersea cables.

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Internationale Zusammenarbeit
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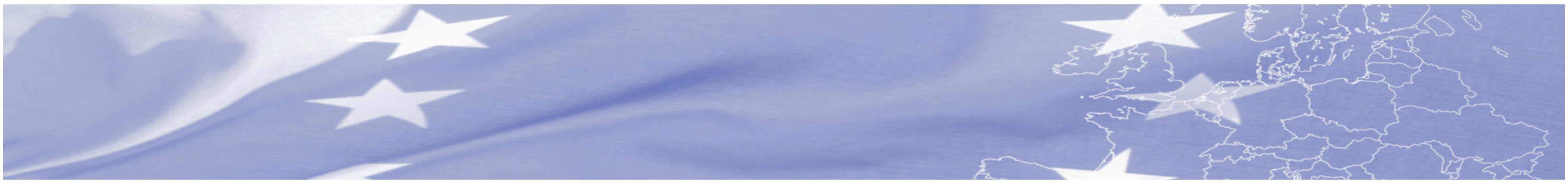

Why we should reject tribalism in 2012

From Page 15

may sound. What is in one's interest may be a variety of things extending beyond ourselves: opportunities for our children, the care of our parents, happiness of our friends, success of our colleagues and, quite naturally, the prosperity and security of our tribal relatives. When tribal identities are so aligned to a person's interest, as is the case now, it is little wonder that playing the 'tribe card' is so politically effective, and thus why myopic politicians will always fall back on it.

Voting for reasons other than tribal alliances is not akin to rejecting the importance of one's identity. Simply because a politician declares their intention to bring a certain tribe great benefits, this is not a valid reason for giving them your vote. Even if the candidate does as they promised once in power – which is a big 'if' – it is not the case that in a modern unified country one tribe can proper while others languish. By living in one country we rely on those around us to support one another, irrespective of tribal affiliations.

In other words, even if you are looking to vote in a way that enhances the lives of those in your tribe, you should vote for candidates who are working for the prosperity of Kenya as a whole. This is the safest way to ensure your interests, and those of your tribes-people, are given priority in the next government. So take this long run-up to the election as an opportunity to learn which people are working for your interests and make an informed choice.

The writer is an Intern at KAS Kisumu office.

A victim of post-election violence cry foul after her property is burnt.

Stand up against injustice for the sake of peace

By **KIBUKU MUGAMBI**

YESTERDAY I watched the movie on Rwanda genocide called Sometimes in April and I couldn't help questioning the extremes that people can go to achieve their dreams in a negative way. What struck me the most was the fact that when women were raped and children died in Rwanda, there was a glorious silence in the rest of the world!

We went on with our business' pointing fingers at each other, giving every reason why the world couldn't intervene; for three months up to 800,000 Tutsis were killed by Hutu militia using clubs and machetes, with as many as 10,000 killed each day. So far over 50 people have been charged for their direct involvement and more and more are lined up to face justice.

But no one has been charged for their failure to avert the genocide when they could! The survivors of the genocide have painful tales to tell, either of their neighbors' involvement in the atrocities or their deafening silence when all was happening.

The same scenario was repeated in Kenya in 2007. We carried a cat by the tail and we experienced something we hope would never repeat. We dipped both feet in the waters of hate politics and violence to check the depth and we sank greatly.

Now we need to take a step each day to bring justice and reconciliation. People have united before to cause havoc, hold mass demonstration (read destruction) but this year we should stand out by standing up.

We should stand out by not losing sight of good or evil, because we can either be bystanders and watch the nation fall or be the pillars that further strengthen the nation.

"In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Police officers keeping peace during post-election violence in 2008.

We might not be affected by the outcome whatsoever, but we should realize that we are not only responsible for what we say, but also what we don't say. Our history judges us every day, when we look around we see what we did as a nation; we also see what ourselves we might have attempted to do.

By understanding how and why we failed we can see clearly what we let happen as a nation.

I will finish by pointing out that we had a chance to form a local tribunal to prosecute the masterminds of the post-election violence, but we let the chance go, those who were opposing the formation before and have now shifted the goalposts remind of the man who murdered both his parents, and then when the sentence was about to be pronounced pleaded for mercy on the grounds that he was an orphan.

The writer is an Accountant with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Kisumu office

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PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

Restorative justice for peacebuilding

BY **JANE MURUTU**

RESTORATIVE justice is defined by Wikipedia as a broad term which encompasses a growing social movement to institutionalize peaceful approaches to harm, problem-solving and violations of legal and human rights.

These range from international peacemaking tribunals, such as the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to innovations within the criminal and juvenile justice systems, schools, social services and communities.

Rather than privileging the law, professionals and the state, restorative resolutions engage those who are harmed, wrongdoers and their affected communities in search of solutions that promote repair, reconciliation and the rebuilding of relationships.

Restorative justice seeks to build partnerships to reestablish mutual responsibility for constructive responses to wrongdoing within our communities. Ideally restorative approaches seek a balanced approach to the needs of the victim, wrongdoer and community through processes that preserve the safety and dignity of all.

Restorative justice is very different from either the adversarial legal process or that of civil litigation. As Braithwaite J. in his book on restorative justice and responsive reflection said "Court-annexed ADR (alternative dispute resolution) and restorative justice could not be philosophically further apart", because the former seeks to address only legally relevant issues and to protect both party's rights, whereas restorative justice seeks to "expanding the issues beyond those that are legally relevant, especially into underlying relationships.

Similarly, citing Greif, Liebmann an author of little book of restorative justice wrote:

"A way of looking at restorative justice is to think of it as a balance between a number of different tensions:

- a balance between the therapeutic and the retributive models of justice
- a balance between the rights of offenders and the needs of victims
- a balance between the need to rehabilitate offenders and the duty to protect the public."

Traditional criminal justice seeks answers to three questions:

1. What laws have been broken?,
2. Who did it?, and
3. What do they deserve?

Restorative Justice instead asks a different set of questions:

1. Who has been harmed?,
2. What are their needs?,
3. Whose obligations are these?

Victims of post-election violence in 2007 are still living in tents.

Can this approach bring healing to victims and reinstate usurped relations? Yes, because it is concerned with healing all the human needs. For example, if the people responsible for destroying other people's property during the post election violence would own up and confess to the victims of their actions.

Notably, the needs of the internally displaced or intergrated IDPS would be ranging from shelter, to a moderate livelihood. Then compensation would be sought by victims, the government and the community would initiate dialogue and eventually have this people resettled back to their former homes amicably or were they to be resettled elsewhere their needs would seem to have been met equitably.

If we were to look for a formidable solution in our quest for healing and reconciliatory justice, this approach would be an ideal option.

As we seek justice, we also need to remember the words of Mahatma Gandhi "an eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind" We must seek balance, compassion and even greater degrees of tolerance.

In future, I will be discussing about retributive justice but whichever way Kenyans choose to go, always remember that Peace is the answer to all.

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State cuts number of divisions

By KAVYU-KURA

THE government has scrapped the bulk of administrative divisions leaving each district in the country with two units regardless of size and population.

According to Mwingi DC Peter Kinuthia, the many divisions created recently had become inconsistent with government's planning and were thus merged leaving each district with two administrative divisions.

The DC said that the government's drastic decision meant that a number of administrative locations have had to be merged to fit into the two administrative divisions that remain in each district in the country.

Kinuthia made the revelations when he presided over a leaders meeting in Mwingi Central district to decide how the 14 locations that were previously accommodated in six divisions would fit in the new administrative set up.

"I called you here because I realized that to place the 14 locations in the new administrative set up was an uphill task because of the haphazard positioning of Mwingi Central District," the DC told the leaders at his board room.

He said the geographical position of the district was a big challenge and made it difficult to place the 14 locations equitably in the available few divisions and thus the reason he sought the opinion of local leaders who included councilors, businessmen and professionals.

DC Peter Kinuthia addresses the meeting at his boardroom in Mwingi. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

The DC told the leaders to strive and come up with a decision that would be acceptable among the general population by ensuring fairness and considering the vastness of the area so that some parts were not disadvantaged.

"I called you here to come up with a consensus on this difficult matter because I want to see fairness and justice being done to all people in Mwingi Central district and that all the 14 locations are slotted in appropriately," said Kinuthia.

Lang'ata residents to sue devolve fund managers

By LINK WRITER

RESIDENTS of Lang'ata Constituency intend to move to court to recover millions of shillings lost through the Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF) and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF).

Over 500 constituents said the committees charged with management of LATF and the CDF among other devolved funds have squandered huge allocations that could have otherwise gone into providing basic education and health services for some of Langata's poorest people.

"Many committees and LASDAP officials in Langata have squandered or stolen public money that could have gone toward providing vital health and education services," said George Ambunya an opinion leader from Langata.

At a meeting held at the Kibera D.O's grounds, the constituents of Langata said the government's failure to tackle local-level corruption violates its obligation to provide basic health and education services to its citizens.

Calling for the disbandment of the Lang'ata CDFC and the revision of LASDAP guidelines, Mrs. Mary Omondi a women's leader claimed that "Budgets have been expanded dramatically in recent years, but mismanagement and theft has left basic health and education services in a terrible state of decay."

Speaker after speaker from the eight wards in Lang'ata constituency called on the government to enact without delay key reforms to make public officers charged with management of the funds more transparent and accountable to the public. The reforms should institutionalise citizen engagement and participation; improve channels of communication and ensure action is taken against those who have misappropriated funds. It is vital that government at all levels publish and disseminate detailed and accurate information about its use of public resources.

A bitter resident said, "There is a lot of tribalism in the operations of funds and even amongst beneficiaries of the projects or funds, yet Lang'ata is a cosmopolitan constituency. We need a balance in all committees and in beneficiaries."

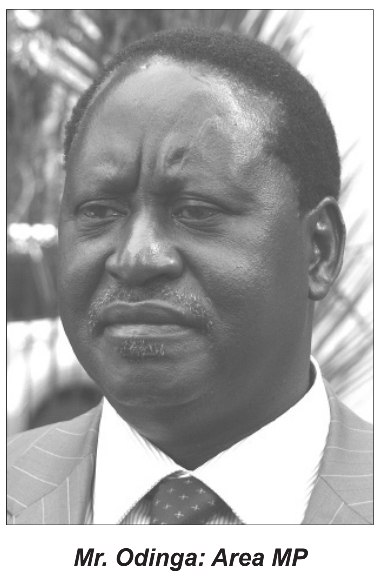
Nairobi Mayor George Aladwa who graced the meeting wondered why local leaders gave the meeting a wide berth yet it is the voters of Lang'ata who had catapulted them to the positions and offices they hold. He supported the residents' views that area leaders were unnecessarily politicising development and advised them to let their record at the local level speak for itself.

The residents made several recommendations for improvement of devolved funds in Langata that collected about 150 signatures that will be presented to area MP who is the Prime Minister Raila Odinga; Mr. Philip Kisia, Town Clerk Nairobi City Council and Mrs. Agnes Odhiambo the CEO CDF Management Board.

In their memorandum, Langata constituents said they have lost confidence in the Langata CDFC and demanded the immediate dissolution of the CDFC and reconstitution of a new one citing suspected financial mismanagement; inaccessibility by residents, failure to give regular updates or share information on the progress of projects to constituents and locational development committees.

They also sought clarification on bursary allocation procedures and beneficiaries. They claimed that presently the CDF bursary is distributed through area councilors. This has resulted in nepotism and most beneficiaries are relatives or political allies of the councilors.

Constituents further claimed there is high tribalism in CDF and LATF project committees and called upon the area MP and the Town Clerk to intervene urgently to ensure the two funds benefit all residents.



Mr. Odinga: Area MP

They called for institutionalization of social auditing in CDF and LATF. "We request the MP and the Town Clerk to recognize the right of the public to undertake social audits and avail all project information such as bills of quantity and work plans as the new constitution of Kenya gives citizens both the right to manage their own affairs (Art 174C and D) and the right to information (Article 35).

Row over creation of new constituencies continues

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

COMPLAINTS about the creation of eighty (80) new constituencies by the Independent Interim Boundaries Review Commission (IIBRC) are far from over yet.

Already there is a simmering disquiet among residents of Webuye and Lurambi constituencies in Bungoma and Kakamega counties respectively over the set boundaries. Webuye and Lurambi constituencies are among the nine constituencies in Western Province that were split into two by the IIBRC.

Other constituencies that benefited include Lugari, Kimilili, Sirisia, Amagoro, Nambale, Mumias and Emuhaya.

In Webuye constituency two groups are locked in a tussle over the boundaries that created the new Bokoli constituency.

The area MP Mr. Alfred Sambu and former area MP Mr. Joash Wamang'oli are divided over the picked boundaries.

Mr. Wamang'oli is contemplating moving to court to contest the picked boundaries said to have been fronted by Mr. Sambu arguing that they (boundaries) do not reflect the wishes of majority of Webuye people. Local residents and other political leaders have also joined the debate either to support or oppose the boundaries picked.

Two parliamentary aspirants in the newly created Bokoli constituency Mr. Dan Wanyama and Mr. Donald Bulimo observe that moving to court may invalidate the split and deny the vast constituencies of resources disbursed based on representation.

The duo says that though the boundaries picked are not fair, the matter should settle in the interest of peace and development in the area.

Mr. Wamang'oli and group had wanted the constituency with a population of 230,253 people to be split based on existing divisional administrative units. The constituency has two divisions; Webuye division with 152, 654 people and Ndivisi division with 77,599 people. Consequently, the Wamang'oli group had wanted Webuye division to form Webuye constituency and Ndivisi division to form Ndivisi constituency without altering the present administrative boundaries. But area MP whose proposal carried the day took Ndivisi division, Webuye town and parts of Sitikho Location to form Webuye constituency and the remaining parts to form Bokoli Constituency.

And in the neighbouring Lurambi constituency, the constituents accuse the IIRBC of failing to address the plight of minority groups in the expansive constituency.

The residents argue that the constituency with a population of 297, 394 people deserved two more constituencies but not one as created by the IIBRC. They also accuse their area MP Mr. Manyala Keya of failing to articulate the interests of various ethnic groups in the constituency when it comes to political representation.

Even politicians from other constituencies in Kakamega County including planning Minister Wycliffe Oparanya have blamed the MP for failing to ensure that the area is adequately represented politically. But, Mr. Keya, has asked his colleagues in parliament to keep off the affairs of Lurambi constituency saying as an elected MP he is capable of addressing every issue in the area without external assistance.

Mwingi youth shying away from loans

By KAVYU-KURA

MILLIONS of shillings disbursed through the Youth Enterprise Development Fund Kitty in Mwingi District remain idle as beneficiaries have failed to apply for loans. The Mwingi District youth officer, Catherine Kukumbo, says that although Kshs13 million has been allocated to Mwingi since the programme began in 2007, only Kshs7 million has been disbursed to youth groups.

The youth officer says that many youths in the area shied away from asking for loans "for fear that they would be auctioned if they failed to repay." Kukumbo, however, pointed out that even for the youth groups that had benefited from the loan money, there was a high rate of defaulting as only Kshs1.8 million had been paid back.

The youth officer however called on enterprising youth groups to come forward and seek loans in order to benefit from the money and improve their economic well being. She further disclosed that 54 youth groups from the larger Mwingi area that includes Kyuso would get loans amounting to Kshs50,000 each during the current fiscal year while 26 youths would variously get Kshs25,000 and 50,000 individually.

The youth officer said the names of the beneficiaries most of whom sought money to start poultry, meat goat, butchery and slaughter house projects had already been recommended to the National Youth Enterprise Development Fund for the release of funds.

"Most of the youth who applied for the loans want to set up Poultry and Meat Goats projects because the animals thrive very well under the dry and harsh climatic conditions in the area," said Ms. Kukumbo. She however said that it had been established that most of the local youth groups were managed by elderly people who made it impossible for the groups to qualify for the Youth Enterprise Development Fund loan.

"Because the youths are being held hostage by elderly people who are no longer within the youth age bracket and who make decisions on their behalf, they ended up missing the chance to benefit from the money on members' age ground," she said. Kukumbo said it was only fair, if groups were managed by youth whose age would not militate against their qualifying for the loans "for being too old."

Leaders want Pan Paper reopened

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

Webuye Pan Paper Mill industry

IT is becoming increasingly clear that the government is not fully committed to reviving the collapsed Webuye Pan Paper Mills in Bungoma County.

The factory which is indebted to the tune of Kshs8.billion was shut down two years ago.

Operations at the factory were halted shortly after the Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) disconnected power supply.

KPLC's move to disconnect electricity supply from the factory was necessitated by the company's failure to pay bills totaling to millions of shillings.

Since the closure of the giant paper mills, the government has been making assurances that the factory will soon be re-opened.

However, the promises have since turned pseudo as there are no tangible efforts by the Government to revive the factory soon.

Residents of Bungoma and Kakamega counties and even regional political leaders now accuse the two principals of falsely raising their hopes over the re-opening of the factory.

Legislators Bonny Khalwale (Ikolomani), Wakoli Bifwoli (Bumula) and Alfred Khang'ati (Kanduyi) are asking the Government to tell the people of Western Province whether pan paper will be re-opened or not.

"The Government must be very categorical about the fate of pan paper mills," says Mr. Khang'ati who is also an assistant minister in the office of the Prime Minister.

Speaking separately, the three MPs alleged that the Government was using pan paper mills as a campaign tool in the area and cautioned the powers that be against taking area residents for granted.

They say that as local leaders, they have been betrayed by the Government's false promises about the re-opening of the factory. During the recent referendum campaigns President Mwai Kibaki and PM Raila Odinga gave strong indications that the Government would revive the factory soon.

The two principals have however, not made good their promises seven months down the line.

Failure by the two principals to compel the treasury to pump cash into the factory to facilitate its re-opening has since made local leaders skeptical about the Government's commitment to revive the factory.

The closure of the factory has not only affected the lives of 1,500 direct employees and 30,000 indirect employees but also the growth of Webuye town.

Business in Webuye town and its adjacent shopping centres have gone down tremendously.

State set to build leadership schools

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government intends to set up a national school that will train public servants on leadership and other skills in order to enhance professionalism.

The head of Public Service Francis Muthaura says that the school's mandate would be to fast track development of identified key competencies and to ensure professionalism and inculcate a culture of continuous learning across the public service.

"The school will offer collaborative leadership programmes for top leadership both in public and private sectors and establish linkages with relevant international leadership training institutions and professional bodies," Muthaura said.

He at the same time said that civil servants aiming to assume policy making positions in government will now be required to undertake specified courses in strategic leadership to qualify for promotion to those levels.

He said this will ensure that public service leadership provides a compelling and coherent view of modern public service efficiency.

Muthaura who is also chairman of the association asked members to adopt more effective and efficient systems and practices in public administration and management in Kenya in line with the association's professional aspirations and obligations.

"To make useful contributions, the Kenya Association of Public Administration and Management (KAPAM) must live to its aspiration to continuously promote professionalism of public administration and management by adopting more effective and efficient management systems and practices in the Kenya Public Service," he said.

Mr Muthaura urged the public service to embrace Information and Communication Technology (ICT), saying technology has the potential to revolutionise public services and to enhance transparency and efficiency in service delivery through adoption and implementation of electronic based service delivery and to make e- participation in public service a reality.

"We must exploit the power of ICT in our fight against corruption," he said.

The PS in the Ministry of State for Public Service Titus Ndambuki underscored the importance of the association, saying it aimed at networking, sharing of knowledge and experiences in a rapidly changing public service work environment.

Water Minister Charity Ngilu commissions the Evoleni community water project in Kibwezi district. *Photo/File*

Ngilu blames woes on political enemies

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

THE embattled Water and Irrigation minister Charity Ngilu blames her political protagonists for the woes facing her.

Ngilu reiterates that as Water and Irrigation minister, she has no regrets about providing water to Ukambani.

"Water distribution is the priority of my ministry and Ukambani being dry needs the commodity more than any other area in the country," she says.

The minister claims that those behind the corruption allegations against her wanted to taint her reputation because of the influence she commands among the voters.

"This is the work of my political detractors who think that I may be a stumbling block to them come 2012 general elections", Ngilu says.

She notes with pride that since she became water and irrigation minister there has been no severe famine in Ukambani because of her unrivalled efforts to provide water in the area.

Ngilu was speaking recently in Bungoma town during the closing ceremony of women leadership, entrepreneurship and transformative workshop where she was the chief guest.

The water minister told the participants of the workshop that only women leadership will change this country.

She urged the women to vie for various political seats during 2012 general elections adding that women who are already in political leadership will support women candidates at all costs.

Ngilu is also on the spot over alleged flawed procurement procedures and price inflation at her ministry. Whether the water minister will step aside, over the corruption allegations against her, remains to be seen.

Thika residents call in KACC over graft

By MORRIS GITHENYA

THE Kenya Anti Corruption Commission (KACC) has been called upon to investigate underhand dealings at the Thika Municipal Council in Kiambu County.

A cross section of leaders in the area, led by former mayor, Mr Johnson Muriuki, alleges that resources at the council were being misappropriated by councilors with impunity.

Muriuki says decisions at the local government were being made without consulting stakeholders as required by law.

"For about a year, we have not been invited to attend regular meetings convened through the Local Authority Service Delivery Action Plan (LASDAP). The council only convenes special meetings where no minutes are read or kept and therefore in such forums, there are no opportunities left to discuss or enquire about anything," said Muriuki.

The leaders say the council has been issuing tenders to undeserving contractors while developers were being coerced to bribe to have their plans approved by the council.

"Such actions have not only served to deprive the local authority of genuine investors but also revenue," adds Muriuki.

The leaders also alleged that some officials in the council had spent over Kshs4 million to travel to Dixon City in the US without following the set procedures to approve the spending.

"We also wonder where the money to publish this year's calendar came from as the council has never published a calendar before. Besides, this year's budget did not have provisions for such a project," said Mr Stephen Marubu, a councilor at the Municipality.

They also decried the wanton destruction of trees along the Thika-Nairobi Road, saying that the trees were not donated to public institutions as claimed by the town clerk but were instead sold to local timber merchants.

However, the town clerk, Mr F Mbiuki denied all the allegations saying they were politically instigated. He said the trip to the US was approved by the government adding that there was documentary evidence to authenticate all the council's dealings.

"We have minutes for all meetings that have been held by the council," he said.

Of the calendar project, he said it was included in the stationery vote head. He said he had not received any complaints that his officers were soliciting for bribes before approving plans for developers.

Meanwhile, the Council has disassociated itself from members of staff accused of felling trees on riparian land along Thika River.

Town Clerk, Mr F Mbiuki said the council had not authorized the cutting of indigenous trees on the river's banks.

He said any individual involved in the illegal activity, however senior in the council, should be brought to book just like similar offenders.

"The Council did not authorize any felling of trees and those found guilty should face full force of law," he said.

The Central Provincial Director of Environment, Mr Wachira Bore, says about 30 trees, some aged over 100 years have been destroyed along the river.

Sugar millers told to pay farmers promptly

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

SUGARCANE millers owe farmers Kshs1.76 billion in arrears, the Kenya Sugarcane Growers Association (KESGA) has said. KESGA national secretary Samuel Anyango, says Chemelil owes farmers about Kshs.192,000,000, Muhoroni owes about Kshs.125,000,000, Mumias Kshs.899,000,000, Nzoia about Kshs.99,000,000 and Sony Kshs.219,000,000.

He said the privately owned West Kenya Sugar Company owes farmers Kshs24,500,000, while Sony and Kibos companies owe farmers 24,800,000 and Kshs.183,460,000 respectively.

KESGA chairman Faustino Othieno, expressed concern that privatization of the sugar companies was being done in a manner that will prevent cane growers from investing in the sugar mills in accordance with the Sugar Act 2001.

Mr. Othieno expressed apprehension that privatization might find cane farmers unprepared to purchase the 30 per cent stake, adding the association has petitioned the Government over the matter. He said cane farmers needed to know the value and number of the shares to be off-loaded to them so that affordable contributions can be made over an agreed time frame.

It is also important that cane growers are represented in the sugar mills privatization committee so that their concerns and interests are articulated and addressed. He says the over Kshs.1.7 billion arrears farmers are owed have been tabulated by Kenya Sugar Board (KSB) from July 2009 to September 2010, when millers underpaid cane growers by misapplying the pricing formula.

According to Mr.Othieno, the prevailing shortage of sugar in the world market has enabled Kenya to maintain high consumer prices, adding that there was hardly any cheap sugar coming from the Comesa countries.

However, Mr. Othieno regretted that cane farmers have not benefited from the high prices because of sugar millers who, he said are hiding behind "far-fetched reasons that they cannot substantiate to rob us of this opportunity". He said that nine years after the Sugar Act became operational on April 1, 2002, sugarcane growers remained at the mercy of millers who manipulate cane costs to the advantage of cane cutters, transporters, land preparation contractors, suppliers of fertilizers, financiers and to themselves," he said. Mr. Othieno said this rip off happened because section 29 of the Sugar Act has not been implemented and blamed the Kenya Sugar Board (KSB) who has the mandate to enforce the law but is not doing so.

He advised KESGA and other stakeholders in the sugar industry to cooperate if they wished to challenge the unfair practices of the millers. Mr. Othieno who was addressing an extra-ordinary general meeting called to deliberate and approve the proposed amendment which seeks to streamline the association by removing ambiguities in the areas of participation and elections by all stakeholders. He said emphasis has been placed on sugarcane growing areas rather than milling zones in the establishment of branches.

The chairman said that in streamlining the constitution an important objective has been that the activities of the association be owned by grassroot cane grower whose interest deserves priority. Millers have been accused of paying their top managers hefty salaries and allowances while the farmer is sidelined with majority now contemplating uprooting cane due to numerous financial woes.

However, KESGA official in Nyando, Sam Ong'ou who is also the Nyando County Council chairman said Kibos millers were now treating farmers better unlike in the past. Mr. Ong'ou and Ahero Town Council chairman, Mr. Joel Oron praised KSAIL for providing competition by constructing a weighbridge at Awasi, which prompted Muhoroni and Chemelil companies to review their paying policies. KSAIL boss Mr. Raju Patel told the two firms to stop monopolistic practices which he blamed for the huge arrears.

Mr. Raju is said to have contracted transport companies with huge trailers to ferry cane harvested from as far as South Nyanza, Mumias and Nzoia areas forcing local residents and some stakeholders to organise into groups to track down and arrest cane poachers.

"Our farmers are now able to pay the school fees for their children, hospital bills and take care of other domestic needs unlike in the past when they went for as long as five years before being paid by local public owned sugar companies," Mr.Ong'ou said.

Sugar Mill industry in Western Kenya.

Groups to educate Busia residents on their rights

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Institute of Human Rights and Civic Values (IHR/CV) in collaboration with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) have launched civic education in Busia County to sensitize the local community on their rights as enshrined in the new constitution.

Addressing stakeholders during a one day workshop dubbed "Civic Strengthening for Reforms" held at the Busia Agricultural Training Centre recently, the organization's Busia branch coordinator Odongo Nyangweso called for concerted efforts to sensitize residents on their rights as outlined in the bill of rights.

The branch coordinator says that it is unfortunate that bureaucracy continues to deny Kenyans access to basic necessities including education, employment, loan and property ownership among others.

During the workshop, the residents said that majority of parents in the area have been unable to enroll their children in public learning institutions due to levies charged on new students and inhibitive conditions. Other areas which residents feel need reforms include government departments and the Busia district hospital which they claimed was marred by corruption.

"The hospital is understaffed and there is over-congestion at the children's ward where at least four children are forced to share one bed hence increasing the chances of contracting other ailments. Corruption at the drug store has led to acute shortage of drugs at the health facility," they said, adding that the government should save the pathetic situation by providing more beds to ease congestion.

A Health Promotion Officer from Kakamega provincial hospital who is also an agent of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) Mr. George Odunga on his part said the anti-corruption commission had trained some officers in health facilities widely regarded as corruption hotspots. The health officer said that civil servants especially the medics should be role models in the fight against corruption adding that corruption at the health centres had always caused the untimely deaths of patients

Odunga appealed to the government to deploy more health personnel to Malava and Mumias hospitals which are currently understaffed.

The medical officer at the same time said the anti corruption commission will deploy monitors at every level to detect any corrupt activity and report the same to the commission for action. "The main causes of corruption are culture, low remuneration, weak law enforcement structures and weak civil society organization and media among others," he said, adding that there was need for the government to revise medics remuneration to help curb the vice.

Mwapula residents cry foul over allocation of CDF

By BEKADZO TONDO

RESIDENTS of Mwapula area in Jaribuni division of Ganze constituency have cried foul over the unequal distribution of resources through Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and other devolved funds.

Angry residents say that although they overwhelmingly support respective politicians during the electioneering period, they hardly benefit from resources earmarked for development in the area.

Led by the treasurer of Mwambamima community based organization Mrs. Rachael Mangi, they claim that development projects were skewed in favour of other divisions namely Vitengeni, Ganze and Bamba.

"Time has come for us to fight for our democratic rights. We must now stand firm and demand our share in the constituency," she declared.

The residents are incensed by a recent move to reallocate funds meant for the construction of a health centre in Mwepula to Magogoni area.

"How was it possible to deny funds to a project that had been approved by the Ministry of Health and funded jointly Kilifi county council and area CDF," questions Mrs Mangi.

Speaking at Mwapula primary school during the installation of solar power panels donated by Mr. Peter Shee, residents complained that there are no health facilities in the area and most affected are pregnant mothers who have been forced to deliver at home without skilled health personnel.

They said the road network connecting the area to the nearby urban center is in deplorable condition.

A local leader Mr. Maitha Masha noted with concern that Jaribuni division had continued to stagnate despite huge allocations channeled to the area through CDF and LATF.

Mr. Masha said most needy students have dropped out of school due to lack of school fess though there were bursaries from CDF, LATF and the ministry of education.

Gusii Water Company hatch plans for expansion

By BOB OMBATI

GUSII Water and Sanitation Company (GWASCO) has launched an ambitious programme that seeks to expand its consumer base to cater for neighbouring counties.

GWASCO Managing Director John Mogoba says the capacity of the company's treatment plant at Kegati far outstrips local demand and therefore the surplus water could be supplied to neighbouring areas to generate revenue for the company.

Mogoba says the company wants to connect consumers in the newly created Gusii district with clean and treated water before extending to other counties.

The Director however observes that the initiative may be curtailed by the fact that majority of Gusii residents especially those in the rural areas have little regard for piped water as they relied heavily on harvested rain water and unprotected springs.

But the company is discouraging the uptake of untreated water citing risks in contracting water borne diseases which are expensive to treat.

Magoha says that most springs have been contaminated by effluent emanating from poor drainage systems and burst sewers.

"Those who consume water from springs near pit latrines are more vulnerable to water borne diseases since the water has been contaminated by waste from the latrines," says Mogoba.

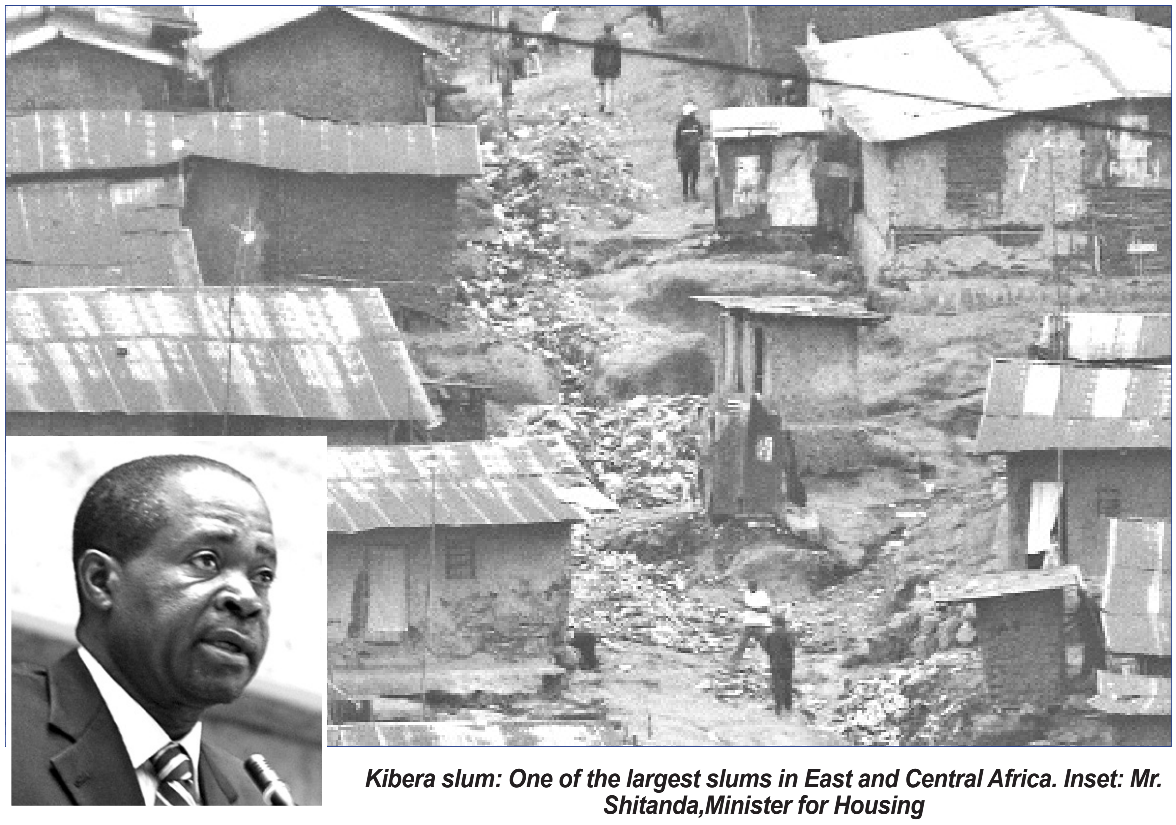
The MD at the same time revealed that consumers owe the company Kshs10 million in unpaid bills.

He nevertheless says that the company is negotiating with them to settle the debts for effective delivery of its services.

The officer says that the company had computerized its operations to seal loopholes previously exploited by unscrupulous employees who colluded with consumers to defraud the company.

Shitanda's plan for slum upgrading

By JOSEPH OJWANG'



Kibera slum: One of the largest slums in East and Central Africa. Inset: Mr. Shitanda,Minister for Housing

THE Ministry of Housing requires a whooping Kshs885 billion to upgrade all slums in the country.

Minister Soita Shitanda says the current annual allocation of Kshs1 billion by the government, towards slum upgrading projects is a drop in the ocean.

Shitanda says the funds set aside for slum upgrading projects cannot cope up with the mushrooming of the informal settlements in the country.

"The current allocation towards the slums upgrading programme is insignificant and may take us up to over 800 years to finish the task in the country assuming that we are working with the same slum population," he asserts.

He says finishing the slums in line with the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015 remains a mirage with the meager contribution towards the programme.

"The country is capable of getting rid of slums if we get Kshs885 billion, but our annual budget on slums at the moment will get us nowhere," said the minister.

He attributes the rise of informal settlements to the growing population and rural urban migration which he said was at its peak as people seek for employment.

However, the minister said that his ministry has continued to put such funds into good use that will gradually reverse the trend and improve the state of housing in the country.

He said that his ministry is faced with some teething problems in the implementation of the slum upgrading projects across the country.

Speaking in Kisumu when he toured the Slum Upgrading Projects in the town, Shitanda said that some contractors whose work had been canceled by the ministry had sought reprieve from the Public Procurement Oversight Authority.

He said it has been difficult to replace some contractors due to their poor workmanship among other issues following the enactment of the authority.

Shitanda said it can take up to two years for the authority to determine such cases and allow the ministry to source for another contractor to continue with the work thus causing delay in completion of the projects.

The minister also appealed to private developers to assist the government in bridging the housing shortage in the country.

"We want private developers also to put up more houses in our towns to at least increase the number of housing units in our country," he said.

Shitanda at the same time challenged municipal and town councils to rein in slum areas and buy the land and put up decent but low cost houses.

He said the council should find ways of compensating those who own land in the slum areas.

Meanwhile, the minster has announced that government has secured a grant worth Kshs1.5 billion from the Chinese Development Bank to increase housing units in the country.

Shitanda announced that the funds will be used to put up 800 residential units in Kisumu and hostels for female students at Masinde Muliro University in Kakamega.

Shitanda says that the hostels are expected to house 3,000 female students.

He says the university has a population of 11,000 students and accommodation has been a challenge at the institution.

The minister says that currently National Housing Corporation officers are in Western Kenya laying ground for the project that will address the housing shortage being experienced in the region.

Shitanda notes that the housing officers are liaising with the municipal council before they can embark on the projects.

He announced that they are ready and waiting for the release of the funds from the financier to enable them carry out the project.

Regional common markets underway

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE chairperson of the East Africa Community (EAC) Council of ministers, Ms. Hafsa Mossi, says that plans are at advanced stage to review national laws of partner states in a bid to operationalise the EAC Common Market Protocol.

She spoke as members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) questioned the "sluggish pace at which the harmonization process was taking despite being expected to support the operation of the Common Market which was launched in July last year.

Led by Ms. Jacqueline Muhongayire of Rwanda, EALA members asked the chairperson of the Council of Ministers to update them on the status of the approximation and harmonization of laws to conform to the EAC Common Market Protocol. This is pursuant to Article 47 of the same Protocol that obliges partner States to approximate their national laws and harmonise policies and systems for the purposes of implementing the Protocol.

The MPs said the EAC Common Market would only succeed in a regime of approximated and harmonized policies, laws and systems, ponting out that the pace of the harmonization processes in areas such as education, internal taxes and cross border systems, among others, was less than adequate.

Hon. Mossi, who is the chairperson of the EAC Council and Minister in the Office of the President responsible for EAC Affairs of the Republic of Burundi, informed the Assembly that the review processes of domestic laws by partner states to accommodate the Protocol is on course despite several challenges which are normal in such a process.

She acknowledged that because of unforeseen logistical problems, progress in all the partner States had not been as fast as anticipated but Kenya had made remarkable progress with the Task Force on Review of Domestic Laws submitting its report to the Attorney General for further action.

Nairobi County launches development initiative

By OWINO OCHIENG'

THE Nairobi City County Development Initiative (NCCDI) has been launched officially to educate masses on the new constitutional dispensation.

Prof. Yash Pal Ghai who was the chief guest at the launch said most provisions in the new constitutional dispensation will become effective after the forth coming general elections.

Prof. Ghai said people are still at the center of the old and new constitution but once this current government term's expires, new government will come in to work with new constitution.

Prof. Ghai added that Kenyans should not worry on how parliamentarians behave as this will end soon after 2012 general elections.

"Kenyans will realize what they longed for soon after a new government comes in place but the push for the implementation of the new constitution must be early," he explained.

He urged the Nairobi County residents to vote carefully and usher in a leadership that mirrors the change espoused in the new constitution. Prof. Ghai highlighted how the Executive, National Assembly and County Governments will work in the new constitution.

According to the constitution, the Executive will have one president and one deputy president elected by Kenyans. One Attorney-General nominated by the president vetted by parliament.

The National Assembly shall have Upper House (Parliament) and Lower House (Senate). The Upper House will have 290 Members of Parliament elected by constituency members and will sit in the national assembly. Their major job is to formulate laws and policies, check the executive and judiciary, approve appointments and lobby for resource allocations amongst other duties.

There will be 12 MPs nominated by political parties according to strength in parliament to sit in national parliament. The Speaker of the parliament will be elected internally by members of parliament. In addition to the national assembly, there will be 47 women representatives elected by county members and they will liaise with MPs and senators from county to lobby for inclusion of women interests.

Aerial view of Nairobi County

The Lower House will have 47 elected Senators to represent county at national level and they will be elected by the county members. The senators will lobby for resources, check the executive, check parliament and whip MPs from county amongst others.

The senate will include 16 women representatives nominated by political parties based on their strength. Two youth senate representatives and two disabled people senate representatives although the two departments are not clear on how they are chosen. The Speaker will be elected by members of the senate to coordinate debate in senate.

The 47 County Governments have two portfolio; The County Executive and The County Assembly and will sit at the county government headquarters.

The County Executive will have one Governor and one Deputy Governor elected by voter from the county. He/She will unite the county, administer the county as the Chief Executive Officer {CEO}, manage county resources and functions, and network nationally and globally.

The Governor will nominate a third or max 10 county executive committee members and vetted by county assembly.

The County Assembly will be in three categories and number to be determined by the new boundaries yet to be created. There will be Elected Representatives by ward members, Special Seat for one candidate who will ensure gender balance though not clear how and finally Special Seats for two candidates nominated to ensure marginalized groups are represented for example; the youth, the disabled etc. but this is yet to be prescribed by parliament.

The County Assembly will represent constituents, formulate laws and policies, check county executive, approve resources distribution and lobby resources allocation. The Speaker will be elected internally by members of county assembly to coordinate debate in county assembly.

The General Secretary of Nairobi City County Development Initiative Ms Rachel Kamweru said they will continue educating the public on their constitutional rights and roll out the programmes to every constituency in Nairobi County.

Kisumu hawkers to be relocated

By OJWANG OGOCH and SAMUEL OTIENO

KISUMU Municipal Council plans to relocate hundreds of hawkers from the streets to a designated area at the Railways land.

The council town engineer Adrian Ouma says the council plans to construct 700 stalls that will see the streets eased of congestion. Ouma says two toilets, two hotels and access roads will also be built at the new site. "This is going to be a modern market where we will house all the hawkers who have been transacting their businesses on the streets," he said.

Speaking during a dialogue meeting convened by the council and attended by all the hawkers operating along the two major streets in Kisumu, Ouma says that the council is geared towards realigning the town ahead of Vision 2030. "The council is geared towards realigning the town towards Vision 2030, to help make the city a true millennium city" says Ouma. He says that hawkers who will be affected with the relocation are those operating along Oginga Odinga Street and Jomo Kenyatta Highway.

He revealed that the council has set aside Kshs2 million to construct stalls at the site and later to allow individual or groups to construct stalls following the design. Ouma says hawkers who construct their own stalls will be given a six months grace period during which they will not pay any tax.

The hawkers' representative Paul Gumba appealed for the speedy implementation of relocation process noting the process is long over due.

Gumba says that hawkers have in the past lost their wares in the hands of council askaris and the relocation will herald a new turning point in their business lives. The relocation of hawkers comes shortly after the council successfully convinced Matatu operators to use routes outside the central business district beginning next month.

Kisumu Town East Constituency MP Hon. Shakeel Shabir also lauded the efforts of the council to relocate the hawkers. He noted that dialogue that was used by the council to convince hawkers is the best way to go for the council to succeed in planning the town.

"I am indeed happy that dialogue is taking place between the council and hawkers. In this era we need not to witness running battles between the council and hawkers while implementing polices and bylaws," said the MP.

Popular Kisumu car washing bay set for relocation

By JOSEPH OJWANG

THE Ministry of environment and natural resources has disbursed Kshs10 million to oversee the relocation of a car washing site from the shores of Lake Victoria and construction of a modern car wash away from the lake.

Kisumu Municipal Council director of environment Thomas Sweta said that they have already acquired a piece of land next to Kisumu polytechnic where the modern car wash will be established.

Sweta said that the modern car wash will have toilets, drainage and washing bay among other structures and is expected to accommodate over 100 youths who are currently washing vehicles inside the lake.

Sweta said that they had held discussions with the youths and their relocation will not be confrontational noting that they want them to own the process from the inception.

"We have talked to them and they are aware that soon they will leave the lake and have their businesses transferred elsewhere," said Sweta. He said the lake had continued to chock due to pollution, among them being car washing.

Speaking in Kisumu during a sensitization meeting on how to deal with water hyacinth, Sweta announced that after the relocation of the car wash, the council with the help of National Environmental Management Authority will crack the whip on those who will be found to flouting the environmental rules.

He said they will arrest car washers and even detain vehicles being washed inside the lake immediately the plan to relocate car washing is compete.

Right now, we don't want to use force to stop the car washing but we are working closely with the car washers to have them relocated, however after that exercise, we will be very vigilant at the lake to arrest those who go against our laws," he told The Link in Kisumu.

Development Officer Margaret Ouma who is a committee member in the implementation of the modern car wash said that this was the only way the government could deal with the issue of car washing at the lake. Ouma said they made it conditional for the youths operating at the lake to be registered as youth groups to enable them work with ease.

"We managed to identify six youth groups that brings a total of over slightly 100 who will operate from the modern car wash once it is constructed," she said.

The pollution at the lake has been blamed for the ever re-emergence of the water hyacinth that has now blocked the Winam Gulf for the last three days. The re-emergence of the notorious weed has blocked activities like car washing and boat ride with the youth seeing the sense of relocating their business elsewhere.

A secretary at the ministry of environment and natural resources Dr. Alice Kaudia who attended the meeting noted that the issue of water hyacinth should be approached collectively to have it wiped out completely. Kaudia said that even though the weed has some economic benefit, it must be removed to give the lake its former life.

She said that the invasion of the lake by water hyacinth has adversely affected socio-economic activities in the region. "Since this weed came to this lake, it has resulted in transportation problems, difficulties in fishing, spread of water borne diseases amongst others," she said.

Kaudia called for concerted efforts to pull out the lake from its current status which is not conducive for both human and mammals wellbeing. The lake is choking out of pollution and this weed has made matters worse.

Let us come together and remove this weed out of our beautiful lake," she said.

She said that efforts have been lined up by the government including relocating the car wash to sustain the lake's resources.

Kaudia said that the youth should also be included in manual removal of water hyacinth, tree planting, solid waste management as measures aimed at mitigating the negative effects of the weed.

Victoria water board on ambitious mission

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Lake Victoria North Water Services Board (LVNWSB) in collaboration with the Busia water department has embarked on an ambitious project aimed at ensuring the provision of adequate clean water to the community.

The project entails the construction of two water treatment plants in the region and the installation of four more new water tanks within Busia municipality. The project also includes the construction of sewer lines in order to reduce the rampant cases of waterborne diseases like cholera and typhoid.

In an interview with The Link at his office recently, the Busia District Water Supply Manager Mr. Bush Orondo said 80percent of the work has been done and the impact is impressive as the supply has been increased to cover Alupe, Burumba and Air strip areas. On completion of the remaining work, the production of water is expected to go up to a total of 7,000 cubic units per day.

The water supply manager at the same time said that the department has gone an extra mile to construct a total of 26 water kiosks in the region which are currently selling clean water at Kshs2 per 20 litre Jerican.

"In order to own a water kiosk, one is required to pay a deposit of Kshs. 3000 which is relatively cheap and I am now appealing to the local community to invest in this project," Orondo said, adding that out of the 26 water kiosks, three have been funded through the Nzoia Phase II project whereas seven of them have been funded by the Trust Fund.

However, the manager lamented that frequent pipe bursts, high operational costs in terms of electricity bills, water theft as a result of illegal connections, frequent power outages, lack of large consumers such as factories, universities and major hotel industries as some of the impediments that continue to affect the project.

He said that the situation has been compounded by the mushrooming of boreholes with Busia town alone having over 100 of them.

Orondo further said that the Ministry plans to shut down some of the boreholes most of which have been constructed closer to the pit latrines adding that the situation has contributed a great deal to cases of waterborne infections.

At the same time, a spot check carried out by The Link at the rural areas revealed that majority of the water kiosks have been without water for the last three months allegedly as a result of frequent pipe bursts.

One of the beneficiaries of the water kiosks, a resident of Rest Estate within Busia municipality who gave her names as Ms Christine Omoth expressed concern saying that since the installation of the water kiosk by the department of water in September last year there has been frequent water shortages for two consecutive months hence incurring a big loss in terms of electricity bill.

Since the installation of this water kiosk in September by the department of water, there has been frequent water shortages for two consecutive months," said Catherine, adding that the situation has caused her to incur big losses in terms electricity and water bills.

New steel plant to be built in Taita-Taveta

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

Steel Mill plant in operation.

TAITA-TAVETA County is bracing itself for brighter days as the construction of a Kshs36 billion steel processing plant gets underway.

The project which is still at the preparatory stage, is to be implemented in phases.

It is projected that the first phase will be completed within a year.

The multi million investment is a major score for the county as it is expected to revolutionalise the mining sub-sector in the region that is endowed with diverse minerals deposits, including iron ore, which will provide the bulk of raw materials to the proposed factory.

"The factory will produce 250,000 tonnes of a wide range of steel products when fully operational," says Narendra Raval, the chairman of Devki Group of Companies that owns Devki Steel Mills.

The investor says the plant will be built off Nairobi-Mombasa highway in three phases on a 300-acre piece of land near Voi town.

The investor says the factory will rely entirely on locally available raw materials, mainly iron ore from the adjacent Kishushe Group ranch.

Mr. Raval says the region had huge iron ore deposits capable of sustaining the factory requirements for a considerable period of time.

"Our decision to undertake the investment is a culmination of a seven-year geological survey, which ranked Taita as the second region with the highest potential for iron ore mining and processing in the country," says Mr. Raval.

Other areas with potential for the mineral include Kakamega and Kitui.

He expressed hope that the investment will uplift the economic status of the community whose poverty index still remains high.

When completed, the factory will create more than 23,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities.

The investor says 90 per cent of the workers will comprise local residents, while the company would support education, health and water projects, including improving road facilities under its corporate social responsibility programme as a token of appreciation to the host community.

Addressing a special meeting of Taita-Taveta County, which approved the project in Wundanyi town recently, Mr. Raval said the company was in the process of financing plans to embark on the construction work and relevant stakeholders had been involved for smooth implementation and running of the project.

"The raw material is available in large quantities and all the company requires now is support from the local community and leaders for the investment to run sustainably," he said.

He at the same time decried the habit of politicizing projects, saying it does not augur well for the country's development.

"Administrative hitches and negative politics is a major challenge that delays implementation of projects but this will not deter us from going ahead as we have the goodwill and full support of the Government," said Mr. Raval.

"This project will help greatly in poverty alleviation efforts in the county. The company is successfully running similar projects in Ruiru, Athi River and Mombasa," he said.

Twenty one councilors, led by County Council chairman Laban Tolle, and County clerk Allan Mabuka, said the new investment was in line with the economic flagship projects as envisaged in Vision 2030.

"The new project is the first of its kind in the county. It will push the county to the next level of development. It is a major step towards realizing wealth and employment creation and should be supported by all," says Mr. Mabuka.

The leaders challenged the steel company to ensure environmental concerns were addressed before the commencement of the project.

Mr. Raval assured locals that necessary measures would be taken to ensure the project was eco-friendly by adopting proper environment management plans.

Body seeks to manage enterprise fund

By PETER MUTUKU

THE Kenya Industrial Estates is among financial intermediaries seeking treasury's approval to disburse the Kshs3.8billion earmarked in this year's budget to provide credit to Small Medium Enterprises in the country.

Assistant Minister for Industrialization Mr. Ndiritu Muriithi says if approved KIE will use the funding to boost the capacity of the enterprises and spur growth in the sector.

The funding is expected to create over 10,000 direct jobs within the first year and 20,000 jobs in the second year.

Currently, KIE has 3,960 loan applicants pending from across the country who require a total of Kshs986,797,602.

Mr. Muriithi said the government was committed to revamping and rapidly scaling up its ability to transform small industries to medium and large companies to make them globally competitive.

He said the government was committed to linking up small industries with available markets and appropriate technology and above all the requisite capital to enable them realize their business plans, adding that it was necessary to facilitate the organization.

KIE is a government development finance institution under the Ministry mandated to promote industrialization through indigenous enterprise development. It has done this by providing industrial sheds, subsidized credit and improvement of entrepreneurial skills by providing business development services and facilitating graduation of small and medium enterprises to large industries.

Among KIE's success stories are over 100 industries that began in its sheds and matured into large industries.

The fund is expected to benefit the MSME sector and contribute towards the realization of the Vision 2030 medium term goals.

Among these include increased value addition and product diversification in the entire multi sectoral production chain; establishment of MSME incubators that will be centres of excellence for MSME development and dispersion of industries to the rural areas.

Mr. Muriithi

Youth fund praised for helping young people

By PETER MUTUKU

THE Youth Enterprise Development Fund has disbursed Kshs384 million to over 8,000 youth groups across the country since its inception four years.

The funds were distributed through constituency loan product and other financial intermediaries. The fund was established through a legal notice under the State Corporations Act 2007 as "Youth Enterprise Development Fund" and launched in the same year by President Mwai Kibaki with a starting disbursement of Kshs1 billion.

The initiative was founded to address the rising youth unemployment as well as provide young entrepreneurs with capital for start up and growth. It became a state corporation later in the same year. The fund has managed to achieve many of its objectives of supporting youth oriented enterprises to develop linkages with large enterprises and lend to enterprises by the youth.

Apart from direct economic empowerment through loans and donations, the fund has contributed to the financial independence through education because empowering the youth with adequate skills helps them identify and tap into business opportunities. Over 150,000 youth have received training in entrepreneurship and business management.

Although some provinces such as North Eastern have recorded low uptake of the money, the fund is looking for alternative channels of availing its products to youth in the areas.

The Fund has also been mandated to help young people secure employment opportunities abroad. Over 2,000 youth have landed jobs particularly in the Middle East through the initiative.

New device to curb coffee theft in Tetu

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

AFTER numerous raids of coffee factories in Tetu, a security system designed to curb theft of coffee has been launched in the district.

The security system is designed to enhance Coffee Community Policing to mitigate thefts of coffee at farm, factory and dry mill levels in a wake of improved coffee prices in the world market.

The device known as Remote Surveillance Alarm System was launched at Gititu Coffee Factory recently and is aimed at helping farmers to tame thieves who have been stealing thousands of bags of parchment coffee.

This is the first coffee factory ever to use such a device.

The device will help save coffee theft and save lives of watchmen guarding the coffee areas.

An Agricultural Economist Mr Peter Mwathi who has invented the device said the system which is mobile phone controlled has detectors that pick virtual signals generated by the virtual fence and converts them into electrical signals then sends them to the decoder.

"The decoder then takes electrical signals and uses them to search and send continuous alarms to programmed mobile subscribers who may include the factory manager and selected farmers around the factory to intercept the intruders supposedly thieves," said Mwathi.

Watchmen can also operate the system even if they are kilometers away.

The device has a backup system which is capable of running the system for up to three days of power blackout.

He said there should be a virtual perimeter fence that uses Class III A laser beams in place of barbed wires.

"Each of the beams is programmed to produce a signal whenever an intruder passes through it, differentiating between man and nocturnal beasts. The fence will be fixed around or in protected zones such as drying beds, stores, offices and machines," he said.

The community will be trained on how to use and respond to the remote surveillance alarms for effectiveness and to minimize undue manipulations; the system's control system will automatically switch on at 6.30pm in the evening and off at 6.30am in the morning so as to allow for day time activities.

Gathaithi Coffee factory chairman Mr Karing'u Wanyeki said the device has come at the right time as Tetu farmers have been losing coffee worth thousands of shillings.

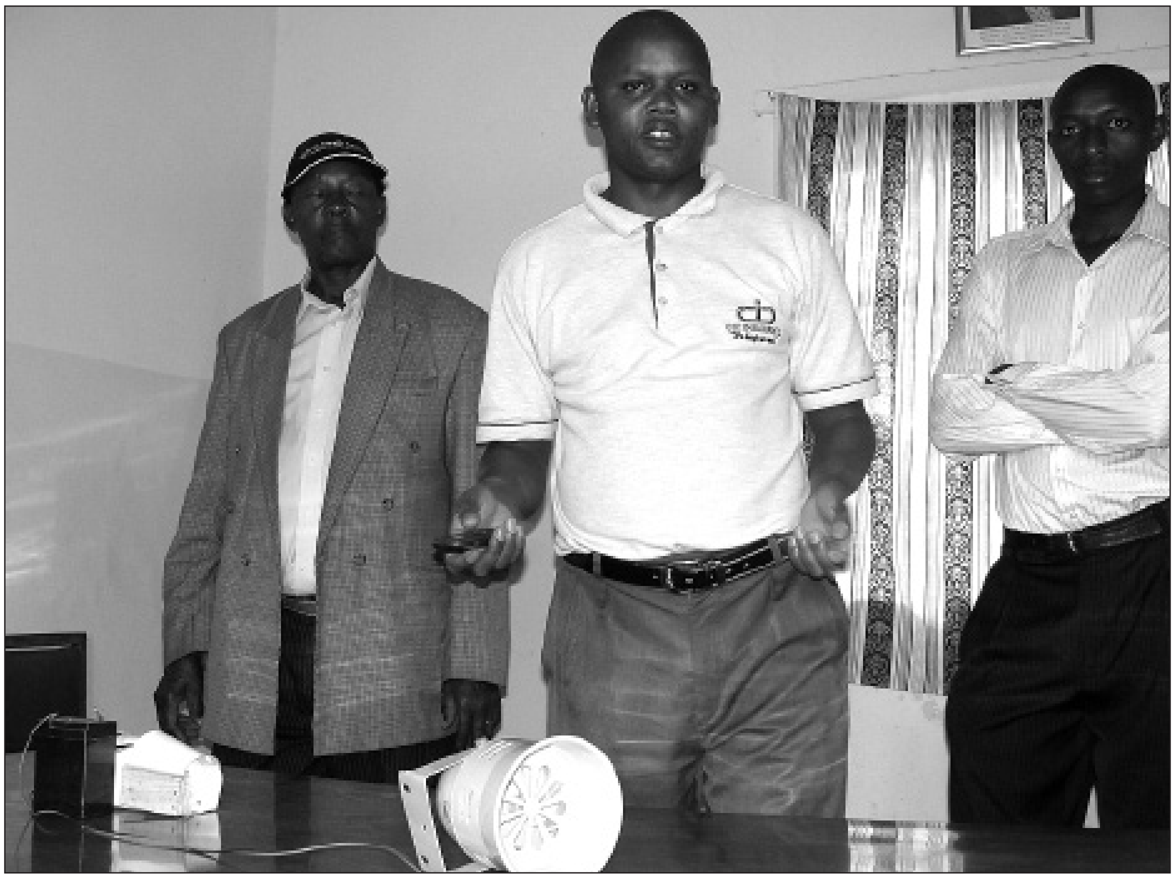
Several watchmen have reportedly been killed in the country and farmers lost many bags of ready coffee.

At the black market, a bag of parchment coffee goes for Kshs 20,000.

Gititu Coffee Factory chairman Mr Francis Wambugu said the system is more efficient than police work.

"It is also easier to operate and tracking of thieves will now be easier," said the chairman.

Mwathi said this was an e-policing programme which should also be emulated by the Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) to curb regular transformer vandalism just by a touch of button.



Mr Peter Mwathi (centre) explains how the Remote Surveillance Alarm system works using a mobile phone at Gititu Coffee Factory in Tetu district. *Photo/Joseph Mukubwa*

NACC to fund Aids fight in western

By JOEL JUMA

NATIONAL Aids Control Council (NACC) is set to disburse over Kshs81 million to community based groups in the four Counties of Western province to scale up the fight against HIV/Aids activities.

Over 200 proposals are earmarked for funding by the council following their approval by Constituency Aids committees last month.

Each of the 24 constituencies in the Counties of Kakamega, Busia, Vihiga and Bungoma is set to get Kshs350,000 to assist in the fight against the scourge courtesy of the World bank through NACC.

NACC Western Provincial field officer Reuben Musundi said that districts that were created prior to the release of the money by World Bank will also get an additional Kshs14.6 million. Nineteen districts that have Technical Committees on the AIDs programmes will be funded as per the proposal they approved," said Musundi.

He said that most of the funding focuses on population at risk, support to the people living with HIV and couple counseling and testing.

Proposals that focused on community health units and communication strategies have also been given attention in the funding.

Musundi explained that the project dubbed Total War Against HIV/Aids has been scaled up as district proposals will now receive Kshs700,000.

He said that the money would be disbursed from the beginning of March this year. "Constituencies have completed their work and the remaining exercise is to prepare the cheques," said Musundi.

Mr. Musundi also warned that the money would be monitored to ensure that there is no diversion. He said that the Government would employ all stakeholders in the supervision.

He, however, explained that Nacc will only disburse money to the groups that have bank accounts.

Mr. Musundi was speaking in Kakamega during an inspection of the groups carrying out HIV programmes.

The Support Activity in Poverty Eradication and Health Programme Executive Director Mr. Justine Mutobera said that the number of orphaned children was going up in Kakamega County due to the spread of the scourge.

Mr. Mutobera whose organization is financing education of over 3,000 children in various schools in the province said that applications for children in need of bursary funds has gone up by 100 percent.

"This year I have received over 8,000 applications and therefore efforts must be stepped up to reduce the spread of the scourge," said Mr. Mutobera during a meeting with stakeholders.

He spoke as the Kenya Youth Empowerment Network Coordinator Mr. Elphas Were cautioned the youths against engaging in unsafe sex.

Mr. Were added that the Government should distribute adequate condoms to social places in the region to prevent the spread of the scourge.

Nzoia trebles water capacity

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

AN extensive rehabilitation programme by the Nzoia Water and Sanitation Services Company (NZOWASCO) has finally bore fruit.

The Managing Director Patrick Munialo says that the company's production capacity has shot up to 20,000 cubic metres from 13,000 cubic meters per day using gravity system.

Munialo says that the company is now focusing on recruiting more customers to help improve on the connectivity of their network.

Munialo reveals that currently the customer's base stands at 12,000 against the required 20,000 to fully exploit the expanded daily production capacity. Capturing consumers within the service area he notes remains a big problem because of the large population who are not within their connection lines.

The current distribution network he says is dilapidated while illegal connections are the order of the day.

Kitale town with a population of 118,000 has 71,214 households under the system and the company targets to connect another 8,000 households.

Munialo notes that the new consumers will be served through the establishment of water kiosks to be constructed with support from the Water Service Trust Fund.

In Webuye, production from treatment works stands at 7,000 cubic metres per day serving only 16,110 customers out of an estimated population of 68,000.

However connection will be extended to 4,000 people in deserving and poverty ravaged areas through the Urban Project Concept.

In Kimilili, plans are underway to increase the connections to supplement the existing production capacity of 3,100 cubic metres per day, currently serving a population of 20,000 out of the estimated population of 108,000.

In Bungoma, the production capacity has been doubled to 7,000 cubic metres per day and another 600 cubic metres from boreholes.

Revenue collection at the moment stands at Kshs140million up from Kshs120million last year and they are hopeful of doing better.

Nzowasco started its operations in February 2005 as a cluster company owned by the municipal councils of Kitale, Kimilili, Webuye and Bungoma.

According to their strategic plan, the company projects to increase its customer base in the next 15 years.

Leaders want Kilifi industries revived

By BEKADZO TONDO

LEADERS in Kilifi County want the government to revive the collapsed industries in the area to help empower the residents economically.

Speaking in Kilifi town during a meeting, the leaders said the collapse of the giant Kilifi cashew nut factory, Mariakani Milk scheme and cotton ginneries in Malindi had pushed the local economy to the ground and denied locals jobs.

Mr. Wellington Ruwa who spoke on behalf of other leaders said poor management led to the collapse of the three industries and expressed optimism that if reopened, locals would take charge to ensure that the county does not lag behind in development..

Another speaker, Mr. Ken Chonga urged the government to empower Coast Development Authority and Kenya Coconut Board financially to boost their capacity and make them effective in their work.

Mr. Chonga said Coast Province has plenty of natural resources which have not been tapped fully and said the government has an obligation to fund the two boards to jumpstart their work.

He said currently the two boards were grounded and could not undertake any meaningful work since they are financially handicapped.

"While people from the province appreciate the government's efforts in revamping the CDA and Kenya Coconut board, they feel that it is prudent that they are supported financially to make them vibrate in their work," said Chonga.

Mr. Chonga at the same time said before the revival of the collapsed factories, the government must offer loans to farmers to enable them buy farm inputs to boost their farm produce

He noted with great concern that many cashew nut farmers had to cut down their trees and plant food crops such as maize due to lack of market for their produce. He said dairy farmers need also to be educated on modern dairy farming techniques to increase their milk production and boost the capacity of the Mariakani milk scheme if reopened.

Nyeri residents gets profit from sale of seedlings

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

OVER 100 community groups in Nyeri County have received Kshs8.2 million from the sale of tree seedlings.

The indigenous tree seedlings were sold to Green Belt Movement since last year and planted at the Aberdare Forest.

And recently, the groups started receiving cheques with 171 groups from Tetu, Nyeri Town and Othaya districts receiving Kshs4.1 million.

The other groups will be paid in the next two months their Kshs4.1 million according to the Green Belt Movement acting executive director Mr Karanja Njoroge. One tree seedling was bought at Kshs5.

Njoroge and the movement assistant treasurer Mrs Lillian Njehu presented the cheques to the groups at Consolata Catholic cathedral hall in Nyeri town during their recent meeting.

"These groups have for the last three years planted 2.4 million trees in forest areas, farmlands, schools, riverbanks and other public lands. It is for these trees that we are here to give a token for trees issued, planted and surviving," said the executive director.

One million trees were planted at Gakanga area in Zaina forest.

This year, the GBM have reported the highest planting of 2.7 million tree seedlings in the country's forest compared to other years.

The group members also practice organic farming to increase food for their families, improve the soil and preserve traditional crop varieties.

They also practice rain water harvesting, soil conservation, bee keeping for biodiversity and income generation.

"The direct beneficiaries of the programme are youth groups, schools, women groups, people living with HIV/Aids and self help groups among others," said the assistant treasurer.

The tree planting projects have been supported by the Kenya Forest Service, Kenya Armed Forces, USAID, Comic Relief and Provincial administration among others.

Since year 2002, about 5.2 million trees have been planted by the Green Belt Movement in the Kenyan forests.

Most of them have been planted around Aberdare, Mt Kenya and Mau forests.

The group wants to plant 3 million trees at Eburu forest in year 2011.

"We are targeting to increase the forest cover from 1.7 per cent to 3 per cent in year 2011 since it is the International year for forests. We appeal to every Kenyan to plant 10 trees each," said the director.

He however decried the continued wanton destruction and illegal logging in parts of Mt Kenya and urged the Government to protect its forests.

Green Belt Movement acting Executive director Mr. Karanja Njoroge (right) presents a cheque to one of the community groups in Nyeri County, Nyeri town recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Busia County to benefit from World Bank project

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Busia County is set to benefit from a five-year poverty reduction project jointly being undertaken by the government and the World Bank.

The Kenya Agricultural Productivity and Agribusiness Project (KAPAP) which covers 20 other Districts will cost Kshs6.5 billion and has been earmarked for completion by 2015.

According to John Manyengo who is the Regional Service Unit (RSU) coordinator in Kakamega, the project seeks to increase agricultural productivity and income among smallholder farmers in the project areas to help alleviate poverty, enhance food security and create employment opportunities.

"The aim is to empower farmers in managing, accounting and monitoring their own resources efficiently," he explains. Under the project, he says farmers will be required to form community interest groups (CIGs) which will serve as platforms for articulating their issues including lobbying, adding that democracy will be encouraged at all levels.

The Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) director in Kakamega, Dr F.N. Muyekho says that measures have been put in place to streamline the implementation process to ensure that farmers fully benefit from the programme.

Dr Muyekho said agriculture sector is the mainstay of Kenya national economy and provides the basis for the development of other sectors, with 26 per cent contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and a further 27 per cent through linkages with agro-based and associated industries.

He said that agricultural sector employs 80percent of the total labour force, generates 60 per cent of foreign exchange earnings and provides 75percent of industrial raw materials, adding that 80percent of Kenya population lives in the rural areas where three quarters of them are engaged in agricultural activities.

"For the agricultural sector to continue contributing significantly to the overall economic growth, wealth creation, food security and poverty alleviation, the smallholder must be transformed from subsistence to a commercial and profitable business enterprise," he said.

However, some of the challenges that continue to face the agricultural sector include low productivity, poor access to input and output markets and limited value addition among others.

He said the main critical issues that need to be addressed include empowerment of farmers by strengthening the producer organizations, improving the agricultural extension system, establishment of an efficient agricultural research system, increasing competition in the supply of agricultural inputs and improvement of access to financial services and credit facilities.

JICA to sink boreholes in Kitui County

By BONIFACE MULU

THE Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) assistance programme plans to sink a total of 58 boreholes in the Kitui County.

The Kitui based TANATHI Water Services Board chief executive officer, Engineer Nicholas Kathukya Muthui, says this will be in addition to a huge water dam to be constructed by the Board in Mwingi District within the Kitui County.

"But the problem is that the Mwingi region has no water gravity. We are looking for the gravity in the area in order to construct that dam," he said.

Muthui said that the TANATHI Water Services Board was formed by the government in 2008 and that it has been serving the public effectively and efficiently through the 16 water companies that it manages on behalf of the public.

He said the board has very many community water projects in the 38 districts it covers. "We are out to serve the public and we will continue rendering services to them," the TANATHI Water Services Board official said.

Malindi mangoes to be processed

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Coast Development Authority will put up a mango processing factory in Malindi.

Managing Director James Kahindi said the plant will save farmers from incurring big losses due to rotting of the fruits.

Mr Kahindi said farmers in Malindi and Tana River produce many mangoes, which mostly go to waste for lack of enough processing factories or ready market.

The MD said the factory will buy the mangoes direct from the farmers and offer them better prices.

"The regional development authority has already identified 66 acres of land at Malindi to put up the factory for farmers to supply their produce," he said at Mangundo irrigation farm in Vitengeni where his authority donated two green houses to the farmers to improve their production.

He said the only private mango processing plant at Mtwapa could not adequately handle the high supply of the produce.

Farmers who lack market for the fruits are forced to either let them go to waste or accept very low prices.

He said CDA had at the same time received the collapsed Mariakani milk scheme in Kilifi County, which currently processes about 5,000 litters per day.

Kahindi said the authority is planning to expand the milk factory to enable it process up to 50,000 liters of milk per day.

He said Kshs100 million has been set aside for the expansion, which will include putting up of milk cold rooms in all counties in Coast Province for storage of the milk bought from farmers.

He said refrigerated vehicles will be used to collect milk directly from farmers and store it at the cold rooms before it is taken to the factory for processing.

He urged area residents to start dairy farming as there was ready market for the produce.

Mwingi has resources to end poverty

By KAVYU-KURA

MWINGI area has the potential of attaining higher scales of development that would reduce poverty levels but only if the residents utilized resources prudently, a local educationist said recently.

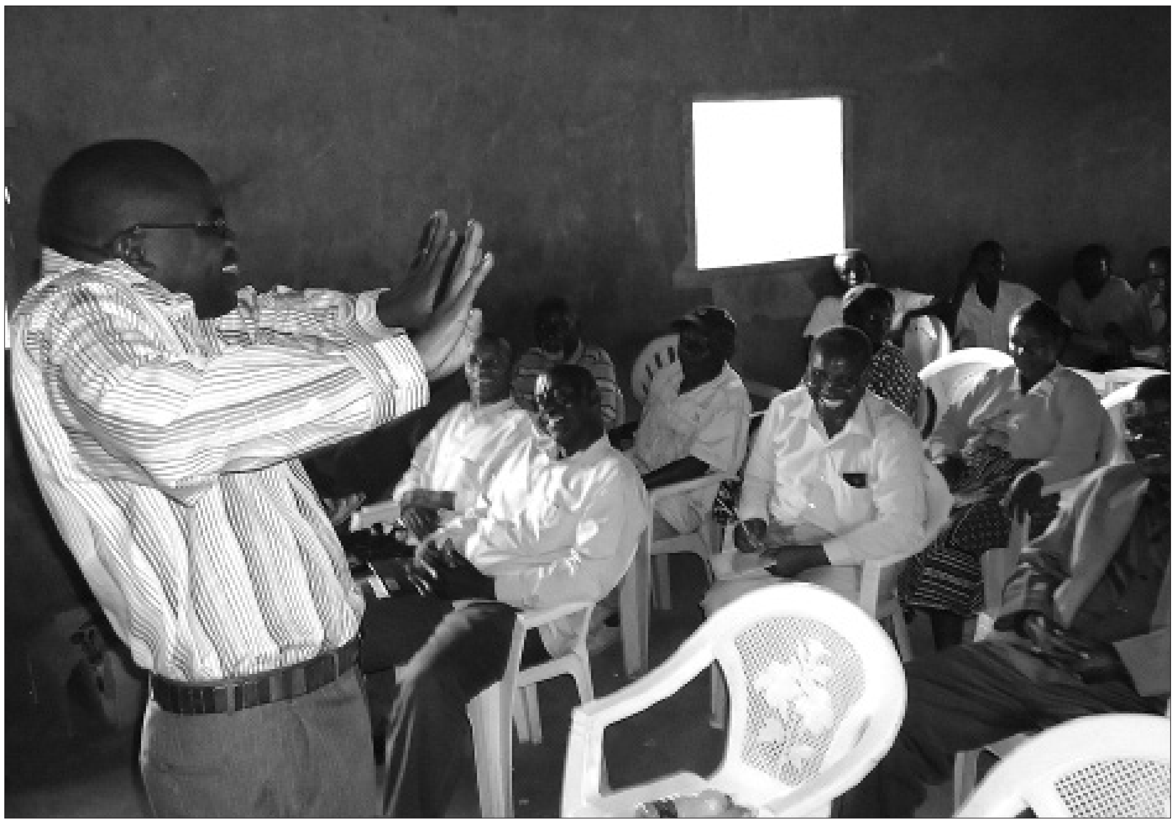
Mr. Julius Muinde Mutukaa, the proprietor of the Mwingi Teachers Training College and the By-Grace Academy noted that the underdevelopment in the area was as a result of the underutilization of locally available human and material resources.

"The constant election of visionless leaders who do not bring along any ideas that can help harness the local resources has helped only in seeing Mwingi continue to lag behind as people languish in poverty," said Mr. Mutukaa.

The high school teacher who resigned to set up private educational institutions and pioneered the setting up of the only tertiary college in Mwingi town, said only visionary leaders would help create wealth and end poverty.

Mr. Mutukaa was a guest speaker during the Kiomo Vision Elite Organisation (VEO) welfare Annual General Meeting at Kairungu primary school in Mwingi Central district. VEO's objective is to achieve socio-economic empowerment of the Kiomo/Kyethani division residents.

"I want to openly tell you that if you do not see reason and elect visionary leaders with big ideas that can help you harness the available resources, poverty and underdevelopment will continue being the hallmark of this area," cautioned Mr. Mutukaa.



Mr. Muinde Mutukaa addressing the forum. *Photo/Kavyu-Kura*

Saying that retrogressive cultures and belief in witchcraft and jinns were counter-productive, the educationist asked the locals to shun them and embrace collective unity in order to develop the area.

Emphasizing on the importance of developing a resourceful manpower as key to development, Mutukaa said the youth should be empowered with gainful education and skills that would enable them become effectively stakeholders in development.

A financial expert, Andrew Masaku who works with the British American Insurance Company, told the locals that the underdevelopment and poverty was self imposed as they had all it took to tackle the two issues head on.

"This area has vast resources that should be harnessed to fight poverty and under development with the locals organizing themselves into income generating groups," said Masaku who is a financial adviser with the BA Insurance.

A building contractor Mr. Martin Nzusi said since the area was dotted with huge rock boulders; it could become the country's source of quality ballast if enterprising groups could take up the venture and generate massive income.

Nzusi further said that the locals could generate substantial income by pooling their farm produce and livestock and selling the same as organized groups to eschew exploitation from unscrupulous middlemen and brokers.

Farmers urged to rear rabbits

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE GOVERNMENT is encouraging farmers to invest in rabbit rearing projects as an economic enterprise.

Deputy Director of Livestock Production (DDLP) Mr Vincent Githinji said that the enterprise is catching fast in Kenya and farmers should take it seriously for their economic benefits and that of the country's development.

The business can also help to boost food production and generate income to farmers.

Speaking recently at Othaya Approved School grounds during the launch of the Nyeri South Rabbit Farmers Association which turned into a Rabbit Show, Githinji urged rabbit farmers to rear quality breeds to increase production and earn higher returns.

Said he, "The government was establishing more rabbit breeding centres, revamping and expanding existing ones across the country to ensure quality breeds for higher yields and optimum returns from their investments,"

Githinji who represented Livestock Development PS Mr Kenneth Lusaka said rabbit farmers should exploit local, regional and international markets that had not been exhausted.

The director added that the government is the process of importing about 200,000 breeding stock to improve the quality of current rabbits in the country.

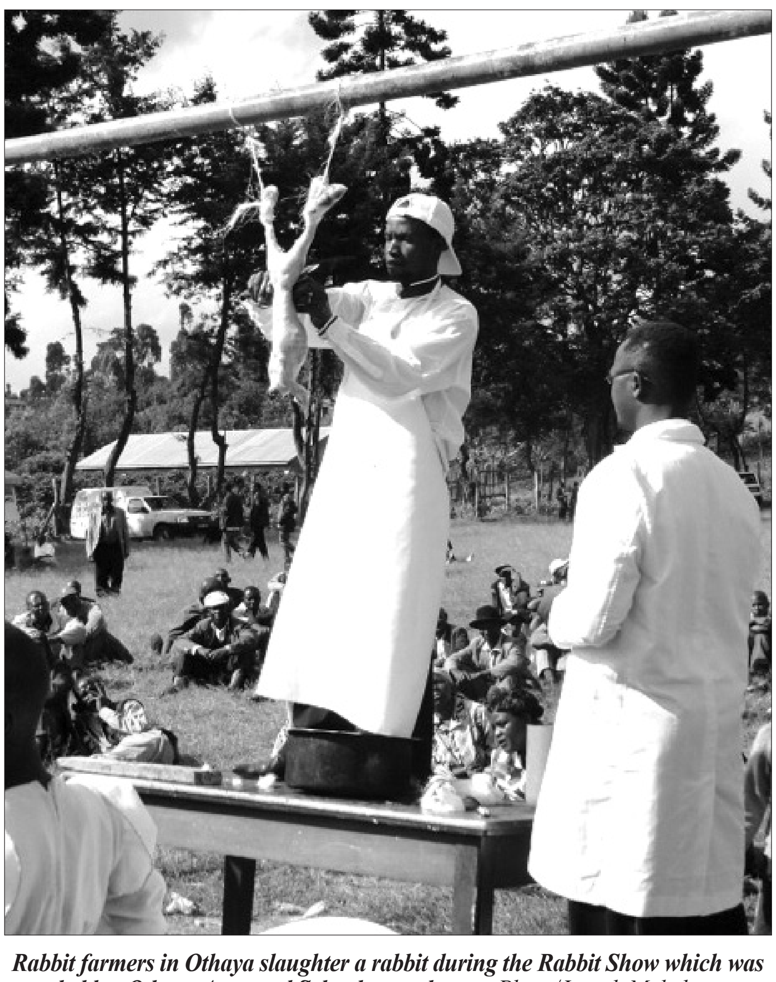
He at the same time said rabbit rearing would uplift farmers living standards and hence reduce poverty, generate employment especially among the youth and enhance the realization of vision 2030.

He observed "a healthy population is a key drive to economic development."

Speaking during the same occasion, Nyeri South deputy livestock production officer Mr John Maina said about 300 rabbits and 1,700 farmers participated in the show.

The association chairman Mr Joseph Kimondo who has been rearing rabbits for the last 15 years encouraged more farmers to start rearing rabbits to boost their economic base.

He said the government has opened three butcheries for rabbit meat, one in Nyeri, Othaya and Kiria-ini towns.



Rabbit farmers in Othaya slaughter a rabbit during the Rabbit Show which was held at Othaya Approved School recently. *Photo/Joseph Mukubwa*

KIRDI unveils low-cost irrigation technology

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) last year launched an innovative and cost-effective solution to the perennial and tragic tale of drought, hunger and famine in the country.

According to KIRDI director, Dr. Charles Moturi, an entrepreneur in collaboration with officers in the Engineering Development and Service centre, has unveiled an affordable low water consumption shower irrigation system that will turn around the lives of farmers and improve the country's food security. Dr. Moturi says the new Shower Irrigation Technology is an overhead low pressure irrigation system that waters crops only at the 'plant-root-zone' area. "This modern technique of irrigation crops only at their root-zone-areas, means farmers will be able to grow more crops per drop," said Dr. Moturi.

Statistics indicate that out of the 540,000 hectares of the country's irrigable lands, only 100,000 hectares, a paltry 20 per cent, has been under irrigation for food production in the last 50 years. This is a very low rate of expansion of irrigated agricultural lands as the country continues to suffer from hunger and famine year after year.

Lack of expansion of irrigated agricultural lands in the country has not been because of the lack of land, but due to use and application of obsolete and outdated technologies of the Bucket, Sprinklers and Furrow methods. The popular Sprinkler and Furrow irrigation methods are high water users which also cost more.

With application and adoption of the new technology, KIRDI estimates an expansion of irrigated agriculture in the arid and semi-arid lands of country at the rate of more than 10,000 hectares annually. This will speed up the attainment of Vision 2030 and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number one on hunger and famine.

Unlike the high pressure sprinkler system, the new shower irrigation system applies and operates under low pressure scientific irrigation principles, which saves on costs. The water is pumped directly from the source using only a small portable five horsepower (5HP) water pump as little pumping pressure is required. This saves the farmer large amounts of money on fixed capital expenditure on installation of costly water pumping equipments, and also saves money on operating daily fuel and pumping costs.

This technology, which is innovated in two options, includes an irrigator trolley and a mobile shower irrigator.

These are two systems that can work together and also separately. It will be used for irrigating horticultural crops such as tomatoes, beans, cabbages, capsicums, sugarcane and maize. It can also irrigate tall plants such as bananas and tall fruit trees such as oranges and mangoes.

Dr. Moturi says the mobile shower irrigator can irrigate 500 banana trees per 10-hour day shift or 30,000 banana trees per week. This is production of approximately 600,000 kilogrammes of bananas, enough to feed 100,000 people for 10 days.

At the rate of irrigating 200 plants per minute, a single Mobile Shower Irrigator irrigates more than 100,000 cabbages in a 10-hour day shift, or 300,000 cabbages per week at the rate of 10,000 litres of water.

Stigma stalling war against Aids

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

TO WIN the fight against the spread of HIV, stigma and disclosure must be addressed.

So strong is the fear of stigma after one tests HIV positive, that most people would rather suffer than disclose their status to anyone.

In Kinango, statistics from the area district hospital show that close to 53,000 people have been tested for the virus since 2008 to date. Of these, 18,000 tested positive. However, only 2,578 enrolled for comprehensive care.

And still not all those who enrolled have continued with treatment. Some have defaulted while others just registered and never came back.

Only 443 are actively receiving care and treatment. The Kinango Public Health and Sanitation Officer, Mr. Bonaya Bissani, attributes this to the reluctance to have their status known to others.

Mrs. Elizabeth Simba has managed to overcome the two hurdles of stigma and disclosure and is open about her status. The mother of three tested positive six years ago. She says that her husband had been sick for a while and a HIV test for the couple turned out positive.

When her husband died, Elizabeth experienced discrimination from her in-laws, who blamed her for their son's death and made her life difficult and miserable. She eventually decided to return to her parents' home with her children.

Elizabeth concurs, saying that many people are unaware of their status and are unwilling or unable to comply with the instructions they are given by health workers in hospitals. "Many people are usually more open with their counselors and may even confess to skipping drugs or the intention to stop going to the comprehensive care clinics," she says.

"The main reason why HIV positive people disobey instructions from health caregivers is fear, the fear of others – friends, family and co-workers – knowing that they are living with the virus."

While working to reduce and manage HIV infections, Elizabeth has realized that people need a lot of counseling to enable them to cope with the many misconceptions about HIV. "Many men still believe that HIV infections "ni ugonjwa wa wanawake", euphemism for a disease that one gets from prostitutes found mainly in urban areas."

"This gives wives the false feeling that since they are not working on the streets, they are safe from HIV. Should she have a side relationship with a local teacher or public officer, she believes she is safe as she is not a prostitute."

The local community holds men in high esteem and as a result, they are unwilling to do anything that casts them as weak. Men thus shun HIV tests as anyone found positive is shunned by friends. Of all the people tested as part of general treatment, men are only 29 per cent.

King'ong'o prison opens counseling office

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE Catholic Church and the notorious King'ong'o GK Prison in Nyeri County have partnered established a guiding and counseling office to enhance the rehabilitation of inmates.

The office was recently officially opened by Nyeri Archdiocese Archbishop Peter Kairo.

"Guiding and Counseling is intended to enable the inmates develop sufficient coping mechanisms while in prison and in their reintegration to the society," said the Archbishop.

The office was established with support from the Catholic Church, donations from several prison officers and by several donors who included Mr Pal Sajben from USA .

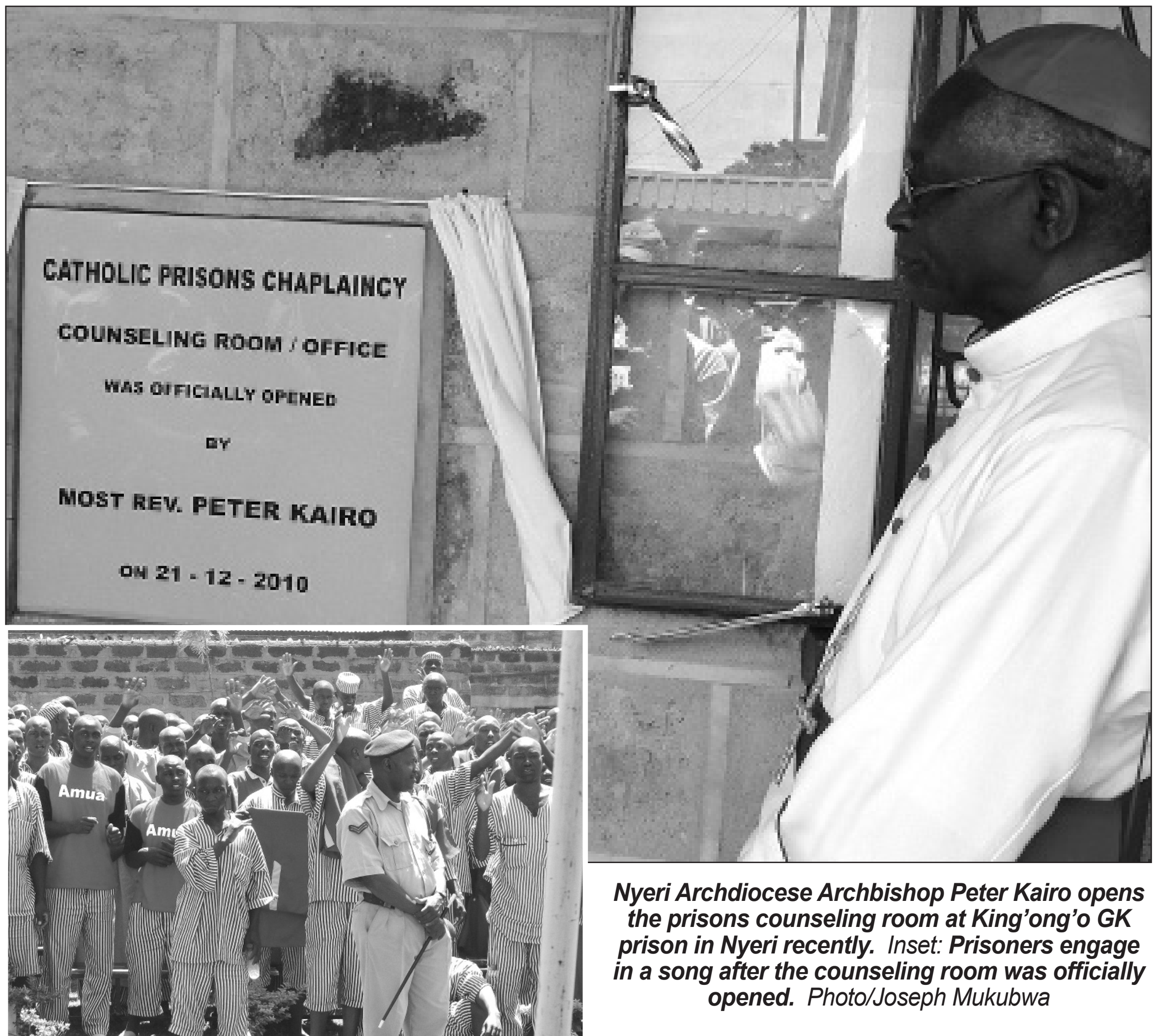
The Kenya Prison Service has no systematic counseling programmes due to lack of facilities and funding.

The Catholic Chief chaplain Fr J.B Macharia said counseling contributes to their rehabilitation and prepares the inmates for reintegration in society.

The chaplain noted that the absence of counseling programmes greatly undermines the rehabilitative objective of prisoners.

"With quality counseling programmes here in prison, the aftercare services involve identification and creation of conditions that will enable a prisoner integrate back into society," added the chaplain.

Others present during the occasion included senior assistant Commissioner of prisons commander Central Province Mr Duncan Ogole and Officer In Charge of King'ong'o prison Mr Patrick Arandoh.



***Nyeri Archdiocese Archbishop Peter Kairo opens the prisons counseling room at King'ong'o GK prison in Nyeri recently.** Inset: **Prisoners engage in a song after the counseling room was officially opened.** Photo/Joseph Mukubwa*

"The chaplain's focus is not on the length of time a prisoner spends in prison but on how time is spent in prison, not on quantity but on quality.

"In this worthy course officers and their families and inmates require spiritual nourishment hence the need for such facility which will help them to know, love and serve God in their daily duties," said the archbishop.

Pacis Insurance Company donated a computer during the occasion which will be used in the counseling room.

Leadership wrangles rock Luo Council of Elders

By JOSEPH OJWANG

A FRESH row has emerged among the Luo Council of Elders with two rival groups claiming legitimacy to the leadership of the council.

A group allied to the incumbent chairman want their rivals linked to the former Chairman barred from running the councils affairs and attending forums.

The row follows a firm resolve by the group led by former Chairman Riaga Ogallo not to leave office citing irregularities in their ouster.

The rival factions clashed in a recent trip to Libya where each group claimed to be the bonafide officials.

The newly installed Chairman Willis Otondi speaking after landing at the Kisumu Airport from Libya where they were invited by the patron of the House of Traditional African elders fired a salvo at a group led by Riaga Ogallo that they should immediately stop conducting business and attending forums on behalf of the council.

He said, the group which was defeated in the election have refused to leave the responsibility to the new council and are attending forums as officials of the council despite being thrown out two months ago.

Otondi told his former boss to respect the wishes of the community that removed him from that position and continue with his life as an elder if he wants respect from the community.

He said the announcement by Riaga that he led over 100 Luo elders to Libya are unfounded saying the national elders forum should stop working informally with the group allied to Riaga.

Mzee Riaga: Former Chairman

Mzee Otondi: New Chairman

"Riaga's recent claims that he led 100 elders to Libya is false and should be despised greatly. Let the old man respect the wishes of the people and retire with respect," said Otondi.

He warned Riaga against using the position of Ker illegally saying his group will seek legal action should he attend any forum as the Ker (president) of the Luo community.

Both groups allied to Riaga and Otondi who have been battling for the position of chairman of the Luo Council of Elders were invited to Libya in the House of Traditional African elders forum.

It is said that Riaga claimed the position prompting anger in the other group a thing that made the two groups not to meet for the entire six days of their visit to the Libyan Capital.

However, Riaga said, he is the legitimate Chairman of the council saying due process was not followed when he was being removed.

He claims the position of Ker according to the council's constitution is unelectable saying he was being sacrificed by politicians who felt he was questioning their development records and contributions towards community empowerment.

Riaga was removed unceremoniously with politicians including Prime Minister Raila Odinga who helped him in that position 5 years ago accusing him of dining and wining with political opponents of the community including MPs from Rift valley.

Riaga and his group have vowed to stay put thereby creating a parallel faction of the Luo Council of Elders.

Nyeri dairy farmers' huge milk earlings

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

DAIRY farmers from Nyeri County have in the last one year received Kshs1 billion as payments for their milk deliveries.

The farmers from Nyeri Town, Kieni, Mathira, Tetu, Othaya and Mukurwe-ini districts received the payments for milk delivered over the last twelve months to the Brookside Dairy Ltd.

Mt Kenya Procurement and Extension Services Manager Mr James Ng'ang'a said recently in Nyeri town that the payments were for the over 30,000 farmers.

Ng'anga' said the company receives about 100,000 litres daily from local farmers and buys one litre at Kshs30 each.

He said this was the highest amount ever paid as there was high production of milk in the area due to favourable climate which led to availability of animal feeds.

However, he said that poor roads, competition and fluctuation of the prices have remained as the major challenges in the dairy sector in Nyeri County.

Amazing story of Alakara Women Group

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

WHEN members of Alakara Women Group in Busia came together in 1998 as a merry-go-round team of friends, little did they know that the outfit would ultimately have a major positive effect on their lives.

The turning point for the group was in 2006 when members received Kshs120,000 grant from the Department of Agriculture through the 'Njaa Marufuku Kenya' programme.

The money was invested in various income-generating projects, which have greatly improved the women's standard of living in a region where poverty levels stand at 68 per cent.

The group's secretary, Ms. Florence Aunya, said members – 10 women and 5 men – have every reason to rejoice since the 'Njaa Marufuku' boost has now made them financially independent and they no longer depend on handouts.

Our group was identified by the Department of Agriculture and members were sponsored by the Kenya Industrial Research Development Institute (KIRDI) for training on cassava processing, value addition to cassava and sweet potatoes at the Busia Agricultural Training Centre," said Ms. Aunya.

Members were further trained on how to process porridge flour from cassava and sweet potatoes and soya beverage.

Before the grant, Alakara (which means joy) members were running a small food kiosk at chepkube trading centre on the Busia-Kisumu highway, which was not generating enough income to provide for their day-to-day financial needs because of the exorbitant cost of food.

"Some of the products members produce include porridge flour, pure cassava flour, pure orange flavoured porridge flour, pure finger millet four and peanut butter," says Ms.Aunya.

Women Group in Busia go through training on how to process porridge flour from cassava, sweet potatoes and soya beverages. *Photo/File*

The sole purpose of forming the community interest group was to improve members' standards of living by enabling them to undertake various income-generating interventions and tackle poverty head on.

Said Ms.Aunya: "The grant has enabled the group members to undertake various income-generating activities of their choice that have in the long run empowered them economically, hence improving on their lifestyle and self-esteem."

Ms.Aunya says most members have also been able to educate their children.

A member, Wilkistah Emodo who is a mother of five, says she used to sell sukuma wiki and the income was never enough for her family's daily needs. Her husband is a casual labourer. "The grant as well as the loan from my group has enabled me to invest in fish business, which has greatly improved my earnings."

Another beneficiary, Ms. Agnes Onyango, a widow and a mother of three, says providing for her family after her husband's death was a nightmare.

Ms. Agnes confirms that since joining Alakara Women Group, things have changed for the better. She invested in an eatery at the Soko Posta open air market.

"Our group has become a role model and most group members in the region are flocking to us in large numbers for training on how to process the products we make," says Ms. Aunya.

The group is giving loans to members and charging them interest at 10 per cent.

"Our products are in very high demand and we sell the same to local shop owners and traders and various open air markets at Kshs50 each," she says.

"Apart from selling the products for profit, it improves the health of the group members' families as well as those who are suffering from HIV/Aids." The group has saved Kshs86,000 with a local bank for buying its own processing machine as well as a motorized chipping machine instead of depending on the one provided to the Busia Agricultural Training Centre by the KIRDI.

However, Ms. Aunya expressed concern over the high cost of raw materials and piracy.

The Busia District Agricultural Officer, Mr. Samson Khachina, said that the Government is committed to empowering local communities financially and making them self-reliant by funding the various community-based organisations in the region.

Kilifi residents face starvation

By BEKADZO TONDO

OVER 50,000 people in Kilifi County are faced with starvation and urgently require relief supplies to counter the effects of long drought.

According to the officer in charge of Arid and Semi Arid lands in Kilifi, Ganze and Kaloleni districts, Mr Bethwel Wafula, the affected families have no food and water due to the prolonged period of drought in the region.

Speaking to The Link from his office in Kilifi, Mr Wafula said the hardest hit areas include Vitengeni, Bamba, Ganze, Jaribuni and parts of Mariakani in Kaloleni district.

The officer said the area registered total crop failure as the short rains expected during the month of September did not take off.

He said seasonal rivers and dams in the area have dried up, causing an acute shortage of water for both domestic use and the livestock.

The officer however said measures have been put in place to mitigate against looming hunger and soon affected families will receive relief food, mostly maize and water to save their lives.

He said his office is working closely with the World Vision to supply relief food in a bid to forestall possible deaths during the dry season.

The coordinator of Food for assets program in the same department Mr Stephen Msimba, said the affected families are being supplied with food under the programme.

Mr Msimba however said that only residents who engage in community work such as digging of water pans and repairs of roads have benefitted.

The officer said his department was planning to construct four water pans to increase water sources in drought prone areas of Dulukiza, Tsangatsini, Mwanamwinga and Vitsapuni in Ganze division.

Mr Wafula further said water harvesting programs have been started in schools and health centers in the drought hit areas in an attempt to sustain children in schools and provide enough water at the health centers.

He said other measures that have been put in place to contain the famine situation include provision of special food diet to improve the health of children under five years and also carry out disease surveillance to avoid high death rates of livestock.

Nalo welcomes MTN to Kenya

By JOSEPH OGOCH

THE entry of South Africa's telecommunication giant into the Kenya data sector will boost the East Africa regional connectivity by providing swift business solution, EAC permanent secretary Mr. David Nalo has announced.

Mr. Nalo said the entry of MTN will help reduce the cost incurred in travel to get services as the network has virtual products that will enable locals access services in the comfort of their offices.

"With the entry of MTN Business in Kenya, we expect smooth movement in communication especially in the data space. I'm aware that technologies like cloud computing and virtualization are today critical in promoting shared services among inter-governmental departments like Immigration," he said.

MTN business has launched into the Kenyan market services such as MTN Server Virtualization and MTN Virtual Storage to try and address this need.

Speaking during MTN Kenya EAC branding in Kisumu, the PS said the East African community member states should exploit the opportunity provided by MTN to promote business amongst them.

He said the East African Protocol provides an opportunity to the member states to join in efforts that will ensure their Information Communication Technology systems collaborate for maximum utilization of the infrastructure to promote communication which is vital in business processes.

"The entry of MTN Business into Kenya, through acquisition of UUNET Kenya should not be perceived as a bottleneck to competition rather, an advantage to the MTN Business Kenya customers who will have an opportunity to access a wider variety of business solutions and applications," Nalo said.

He said competition should not override the utilization of the multi-billion infrastructural investment saying the opportunity brought about by MTN will lead to creation of jobs and enhancing service delivery.

Addressing the same forum, the MTN Kenya business managing director Tom Omariba said key structures and network transitions have been implemented to deliver standardized service and seamless integration for customers within the region.

Mr. Nalo

Farmers urged to add value to their produce

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

FARMERS in Kakamega County have been urged to add value to their farm produce in order to benefit from Kenya Agricultural Productivity and Agribusiness Programme (KAPAP).

The regional service unit coordinator for Kakamega, Mr. John Uhuru Manyengo, said the objective of KAPAP is to increase agricultural productivity and incomes of small scale farmers in the project areas, thus contributing to poverty reduction, food security and employment creation.

He said KAPAP is a multi-sectoral and multi-institutional initiative implemented by the ministries of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries Development and Cooperative and Marketing in conjunction with Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and the Kenya National Federation of Agricultural Producers.

Mr. Manyengo said KAPAP is the second phase of a 12-year programme whose implementation started in 2004.

"KAPAP is jointly supported by the government and the World Bank and will be implemented over a five year period (2010-2015) under the framework of the Agricultural Sector Development Strategy," said Mr. Manyengo.

He said KAPAP aims at consolidating and up scaling the achievements of phase one, which includes the view and formulation of the National Agricultural Sector Extension Policy and formulation of a National Agricultural Research System policy.

"Some of the achievements include agricultural research resulting into release of new crop varieties and other crop and animal technologies and also training of researchers and capacity building of their institutions," he added.

Many miss Form One places in Central

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

ABOUT 18,000 candidates who sat for last year KCPE in Central Kenya will miss Form One places.

Central Provincial Director of Education Mr Patrick Nyagosia said that 17, 874 candidates will miss places this year since they did not meet the required marks.

The candidates who were among the 104,129 candidates who sat for the KCPE in the region were not able to secure places at either national or district secondary schools.

Speaking during a meeting with the head teachers and District Education Officers from the region during the Form One selection exercise, the PDE said that it was unfortunate that the candidates will miss places.

Among those who sat for the last year's examinations were 51, 597 boys and 52, 532 girls.

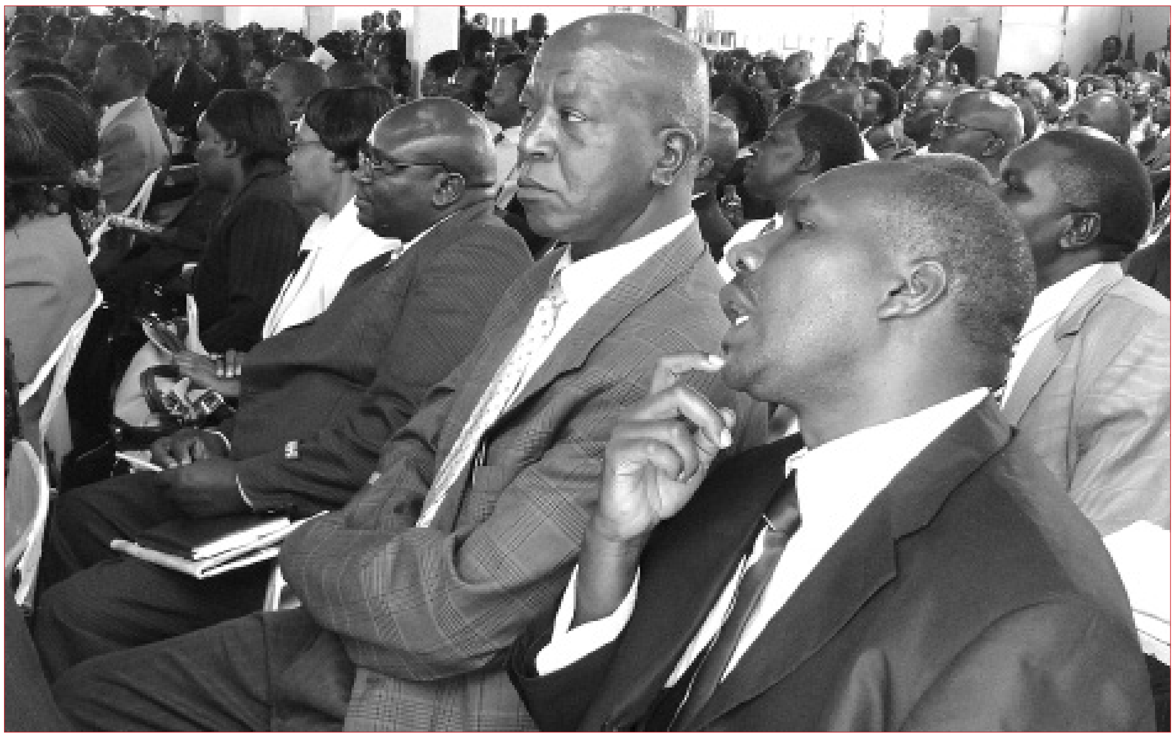
The selection came as the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and Kenya Post Primary Education Teachers (Kuppet) strongly opposed the move by the Government to introduce quota system in the admission to national schools.

KNUT Central Kenya chairman Mr Chege Karatasi said that the policy has many disparities since education stakeholders including teachers, union bodies and parents were not involved in policy formulation.

Karatasi who was accompanied by the Provincial Council secretary Mr John Karanu said that the students should be admitted on merit but not because they are from public or private institutions.

"We urge the Government to provide enough facilities and teachers to public schools to enhance their performance in national exams," said the chairman. Kuppet Nyeri Executive Secretary Mr Muriuki Nyamu said such a move is unfair to parents who have invested every coin in their pocket to educate their children.

"We are calling the president to intervene since the move by the Government is discriminatory as no child is private. Selection should be done on merit.



Some of the Headteachers who attended Form One selections meeting recently at Nyeri Technical Training Institute. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Mukuyu market construction to start

By MORRIS GITHENYA

THE Ministry of Local Government has ordered immediate construction of Mukuyu Market in Kiharu despite differences over its location among civic leaders.

The project funded to the tune of Kshs10 million under the Economic Stimulus Programme will take off even as civic leaders in Murang'a fail to agree on whether the facility will be constructed in Mukuyu or Kayole markets. Clerk to the council Mr. Samuel Njogu confirmed that the project will commence immediately without further delay.

In the past four months, civic leaders have been divided on whether the market should be located at Mukuyu or Kayole citing various reasons.

Murang'a East DC Mr. George Natembeya said political squabbles among the civic leaders have derailed the implementation of the project which was supposed to have been started four months ago.

"In future civic leaders should not be allowed to derail development work as they pushed with their personal interests," said Natembeya.

The administrator said other projects being funded by ESP were on going as planned.

The Council's Town Planning Committee chairman Councilor George Gatiaga said all civic leaders have now settled for Kayole as the most ideal place for a bigger market.

Puzzling death of youths in Mt. Elgon area

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

THE Kenyan police have been accused of extra- judicial killing of unarmed youths whom they alleged were smuggling coffee to Uganda.

So, far two bodies have been recovered from Lwakhakha River, in an incident where at least 68 people remain unaccounted for.

The body of Rodgers Wanjala Wakora was the first to be recovered after the murders that was executed on October 24, last year. The body was recovered three weeks after he went missing. A post mortem report indicated that the cause of death was unknown, yet one arm was missing besides the several cuts on the body.

The second body of George Musee Wafula was recovered a week later, and the post mortem report showed that he had drowned. The body had decomposed beyond recognition.

A host of others remain unaccounted for. Their efforts to get explanations from the authorities have been futile.

Now, the question in the minds of many is whether the affected persons were criminals or just pawns in an elaborate network in the coffee smuggling menace? Coffee Board of Kenya has said that for the past 15 months, they have lost coffee estimated at Kshs.70million, equivalent to more than 10,000 metric tones to criminals.

CBK admits that criminals are being backed by industry players and some farmers who are out to make a kill at the height of impressive international prices.

This fact is corroborated by Muungano Family Empowerment Programme , a civil society group , which is calling on the government to compensate the family of the deceased young men for unlawful death.

The group which has documented the findings of the incident, allege that the police after attacking the youth and scattering them, confiscated their coffee and they proceeded and sold the same in Uganda. "The officers went ahead against their core values of protecting civilians. The rogue officers robbed them of their merchandise and proceeded to sell the same in Uganda in full view of the public", they claim.

Mr. Wilberforce Lumbuku the director of the group maintains that the killings were masterminded by the police who are deeply involved in the smuggling ring.

State release funds to fight disease in Western

By JOEL JUMA

THE government with support from the US government has rolled out a Kshs11.4 billion programme to fight malaria, tuberculosis among other diseases in western Kenya.

The programme being implemented by the ministries of Public Health and Medical Services seeks to reduce mortality rate in the region.

It also seeks to improve nutrition among communities in Western and Nyanza provinces.

Tuberculosis and malaria are rated among diseases that have contributed to the high mortality rates in the two regions.

US Agency for International Development (USAID) Director for Population Health Lynn Adrian and Western PC Samuel Kilele termed the project as timely.

The two said the programme will play a critical role in assisting the Government to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Adrian and Kilele were speaking at a Kakamega hotel during the launch of the programme dubbed Aphia Plus.

Western Provincial Director of Medical Services Godrick Onyango and his Public Health counterpart Quinto Ahindukha also addressed the meeting.

The Aids, Population and Health Integrated Assistance (APHIA 11) project came to an end last year and has now been taken over by Aphia Plus.

The Head of the programme Ambrose Misore said health institutions will be expanded and renovated during the implementation of the project.

"Studies have shown that diseases such as HIV/Aids, malaria and tuberculosis are causing greater suffering and deaths in Western Kenya than any other part of the country," said Dr Misore.

Misore said the funds were released to Kenya as part of the US-AIDs/Kenya comprehensive health investments being funded by US President Barrak Obama's Global Health Initiative.

Dr Onyango explained that child mortality rates were declining in the province adding that the funding will play a key role in fighting some of the common diseases.

He said residential spraying and distribution of mosquito nets will be intensified during the implementation of the programme. Onyango said the province has many health facilities that require expansion. He explained that some hospitals have congested wards, making patients to share beds.

Dr Ahindukha noted that many hospitals lacked machines such as X-rays and radiographic equipment which were essential in the provision of offer better services to patients.

Michuki on coffee farming

By MORRIS GITHENYA

COFFEE farmers in Murang'a County have been challenged to improve the quality of their production to enable them benefit from impressive prices internationally.

Environment Minister Mr. John Michuki says only production of quality coffee will enable farmers in the region benefit from the increased demand of Kenyan coffee in the international market.

The cabinet minister farmers who had abandoned their crop citing previous poor return will not benefit. "A kilogramme of quality cherry is going at Kshs121 an indication of better and attractive prices in future if we are going to invest a lot in the crop," said Michuki.

Michuki spoke as other elected leaders from Murang'a led by Planning and National Development Assistant Minister Peter Kenneth launched a bid to push the government to waive the Kshs1.2 billion loans that farmers had borrowed from financial institutions. The MPs said that many farmers in the region had uprooted their coffee bushes as a huge chunk of their proceeds went into repaying the debt.

The Link
Enhancing governance for all
The Link, February 2011

Local schools to start e-learning

Kshs1.3 billion set aside to buy 300 computers for each constituency

By MALACHI MOTANO

KENYAN rural schools are set to take a giant leap into the future by adopting e-learning.

In the current financial year, treasury allocated Kshs1.3 billion towards the purchase of 300 computers in each constituency and to make digital learning a reality in the rural schools.

According to Finance Minister Uhuru Kenyatta the computers will provide a platform to expand the e-learning initiative and allow for equal access to quality lessons.

The Government will source these computers from public institutions that have computer assembly facilities. This initiative is expected to also benefit students undertaking Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and computer engineering studies.

The Kenya ICT Board has spent Kshs300 Million to promote the development of local digital content and software applications for the learning community. The main purpose of this grant has been to propel the emerging lucrative but underexploited local content industry to growth.

"The grant which targets the local content developers including software developers, film, animation, advertising, publishing, gaming and education professionals and all content creators, will provide the funding required for the development of quality applications relevant to the Kenya public and private schools."

Hon. James Rege and PS Bitange Ndemo (front centre): Apart from being PSC chairman for Energy, Eng. Rege is an ICT expert.

According to Stakeholders, Digital content, a major contributor and driver of economic growth in developed countries, can be broadly categorized as content accessed from electronic devices like personal computers, game consoles, mobile phones and digital TV. The internet offers the most common form of distribution of digital content. Digital content can include anything from internet based marketing, gaming, online education content and services.

With over 3.4 million users of the internet in Kenya, research indicates that the figure outstrips those of several key developed countries. Even so, the latent demand for local content is underlined by the fact that surveys show that lack of local content is the main reason many Kenyans shy away from accessing the internet.

Speaking to The Link in a Nairobi hotel, the CEO, Kenya ICT Board Paul Kukubo, said, "We are pleased that this grant comes at a time when the ICT industry is growing and access to the internet all over the country has vastly improved. The future for content industry is bright. Talent, creativity and skills are key drivers to competitiveness in the content sector and we expect that this grant will enable Kenyans everywhere to develop world class locally relevant content and get this industry to rapidly match the lucrative opportunities for talented content developers in developed nations."

Pupils at St. Maries school In Karachuonyo attend e- learning lesson.

Worldwide, digital content activities are transforming traditional industry structures and business models. Local examples include mobile payment systems like M-Pesa and Pesa Pap and government e-services like online PIN registration. Thus the digital content industry has vast potential as a major contributor to our economy and society through employment creation, capital investment and export earnings, provision of skills and capabilities to traditional as well as new and emerging industry sectors.

Kenyan content developers have already demonstrated their ability to be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial in their creation of content that is relevant to our people. The increase in locally developed software applications, websites, films and animation has been extraordinary over the past few years. However, despite evidence of commercial potential, it is not currently competitive in attracting funds and investment capital. This content grant will give content creators in the country a chance to demonstrate their talent, in both the artistic, social and business environment and propel investor confidence in the sector in the long term.

At the same, the Deputy CEO, Victor Kyalo who also attended the interview says, "It is important that with the landing of the fiber optic cables that we as a country produce local digital content, not just 'access' other peoples content. It is very positive that Kenyans embrace and appreciate ICTs, but more important is that there are more Kenyan made e-Products available in the market.

We want this grant to motivate the local content creators and software developers to originate, create, and adapt quality content that the country needs .We intend this content grant to be a driver for the long term development of content and recognize that private and public sector need to pool resources to meet the capacity challenges this lucrative sector faces."

The Government attaches high priority to addressing skills shortages because of the threat they pose to productivity and economic growth. To address this, the Kenya ICT Board has a number of initiatives purposed to build skills in the ICT sector. Among these are a Centre of Excellence for the BPO sector, an incubation program for software developers and a software certification standard that will give international accreditation and competitiveness to our local developers.

Additionally, the board is creating organic growth within the ICT sector by training entrepreneurs (over 1000 already trained) to run digital villages all over the country. All these coupled with the improved infrastructure, has put Kenya in the forefront of potentially explosive growth in the content and software development sub-sector.

The private sector grant of US$1.5M is open to firms and individuals to develop applications that would be of benefit to the general public or improve the delivery of existing private sector services.

The first round of grant allocation will award a maximum of US$ 50,000 per firm and US$ 10,000 for individuals. The Kenya ICT Board expects to make at least one call for application per year over the next three years.

The content funded by this grant will build capacity within the ICT sector create efficiencies, build social capital, increase utilization of ICTs by local communities and demonstrate to the world, Kenya's talent for creation of digital content.

The Old Persons Su

Kenya's demographic trends are tilted towards an aging society with older persons accounting for about 1.5 million people. This translates to 4.8 percent of the total population. Pension coverage is too low and limited. In this article our staff writer and sub-editor** FAITH MUIRURI **takes a closer look at the population trends scenario and what is being done to care for the old.

ONLY about 3 per cent of the old population has a pension income. Therefore those entering old age in poverty are likely to remain poor as chances of improvement in poverty levels diminish with age.

Statistics indicate that the aged constitute a sizeable population of the poor in the country. They are more predestined to poverty and are often poorer than other age groups. The situation is worse amongst older women who face many barriers and discriminatory treatment during their life time.

It is against this backdrop that the government's older persons cash transfer programme has been expanded to provide a regular and predictable monthly stipend to extremely poor and vulnerable older persons in identified households

The programme started on a pilot basis during the 2006/2007 financial year under the Rapid Results Initiative has been up scaled to cover 33,000 households in 44 districts each with 750 beneficiaries.

Already Kshs 530million has been set aside during this financial year to cater for the improved allocations. Although this is a drop from the Kshs550 million allocated to the fund during the last financial year, the transfer amount to each beneficiary still remains at Kshs1,500 per month to be distributed bi-monthly.

Initially, the implementation of the programme was done on a pilot basis under the Rapid Results Initiative, in Thika, Nyando and Busia during the 2007/2008/2009 financial year. It covered 100 households per district and Kshs 1,000 was paid to each household. It targeted households with older persons, persons with disabilities and those with dilapidating health conditions.

However, with increased funding, the scenario now focuses on creating an enabling environment that safeguards the rights and special needs of older persons.

The Districts to be covered under the expanded programme include:

Nyanza Province
Bondo
Siaya
Kisumu West
Nyando
Kisii Central
Homa Bay
Suba
Gucha
Kuria
Migori

Rift Valley Province
West Pokot
Samburu Central
Turkana North
Baringo
Transmara
Marakwet
Bomet

Eastern Province
Mwala District
Makueni
Tharaka
Moyale
Mwingi
Isiolo
Mbeere

Coast Province
Mombasa
Taita Taveta
Malindi
Tana River
Kilifi
Kwale

Western Province
Mt Elgon
Busia
Kakamega
Teso
Butere

Central Province
Muranga South
Muranga North
Thika
Nyeri Central

North Eastern
Wajir
Mandera
Garissa

Nairobi Province
Langata
Starehe

Elderly persons arrive in Murang'a town to receive their monthly stipend.

Objectives of the programme:
The policy largely echoes efforts by the government to honour its international obligations with regard to issues related to the older persons.

The programme is explicitly anchored on the International Plan of Action on Ageing agreed upon by 126 countries during the Second World Assembly in April 2002 in Madrid which called for changes in attitudes, policies and practices at all levels in all sectors so that the

upport Programme

Older persons await for the disbursement of their monthly stipend in Murang'a.

enormous potential of Ageing in the 21st century may be fulfilled.

It seeks to:

- To strengthen the capacities of older persons and improve their livelihood while alleviating in tegrated poverty through sus tainable social protection mechanisms.
- To provide regular and predictable cash transfer to vulnerable older persons in identified households
- To built capacities of beneficiaries in order to improve their livelihoods.
- Enhance measures to promote equity and fairness in access to employment opportunities and control of productive assets especially land with regard to older persons particularly older women

Targeting criteria

Beneficiaries have been selected based on:

- The Kenya Integrated Household Budget Data Survey 2005/2006
- District selection (HIV/AIDS prevalence and poverty indices)
- Regional balancing (provincial distribution)
- Use of community poverty indicators

Eligibility criteria

The programme has explicitly incorporated:

- Extremely poor households
- Households with a person aged 65 years and above
- Must not be enrolled in any other cash transfer programme
- Must not be receiving any pension

Ranking criteria

- Poverty level of a household
- Number of orphans and vulnerable children in a household
- Number of persons with disabilities in a household
- Age of the oldest member in a household
- Number of chronically ill in a household

Implementation steps

The spirit behind the provisions seem to focus on

- District sensitization
- Community sensitization
- Formation of community committees
- Household identification
- Community validation of the potential beneficiaries
- Enrolment of the beneficiaries
- Signing of agreements
- Issuance of Programme identification cards to beneficiaries
- Training of beneficiaries
- Cash transfer to beneficiaries

Delivery Mechanisms

The District Gender and Social Development Committees not only oversee the implementation process but are also the final decision making authorities in their respective areas.

Since the start of this programme up to the end of last financial year, payment of older persons was done by the District Gender and Social Development officers through the District treasuries.

However, owing to delivery challenges, Postal Corporation of Kenya has been contracted by the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Development to disburse the cash transfer funds to 35 districts.

Why Postal Corporation

- Exposure of the cash and the paying officers to insecurity and fiduciary risks.
- Increased Work load to field officers compromising the quality of service delivery.
- Distance- Some payment points are far.

Lack of transport services

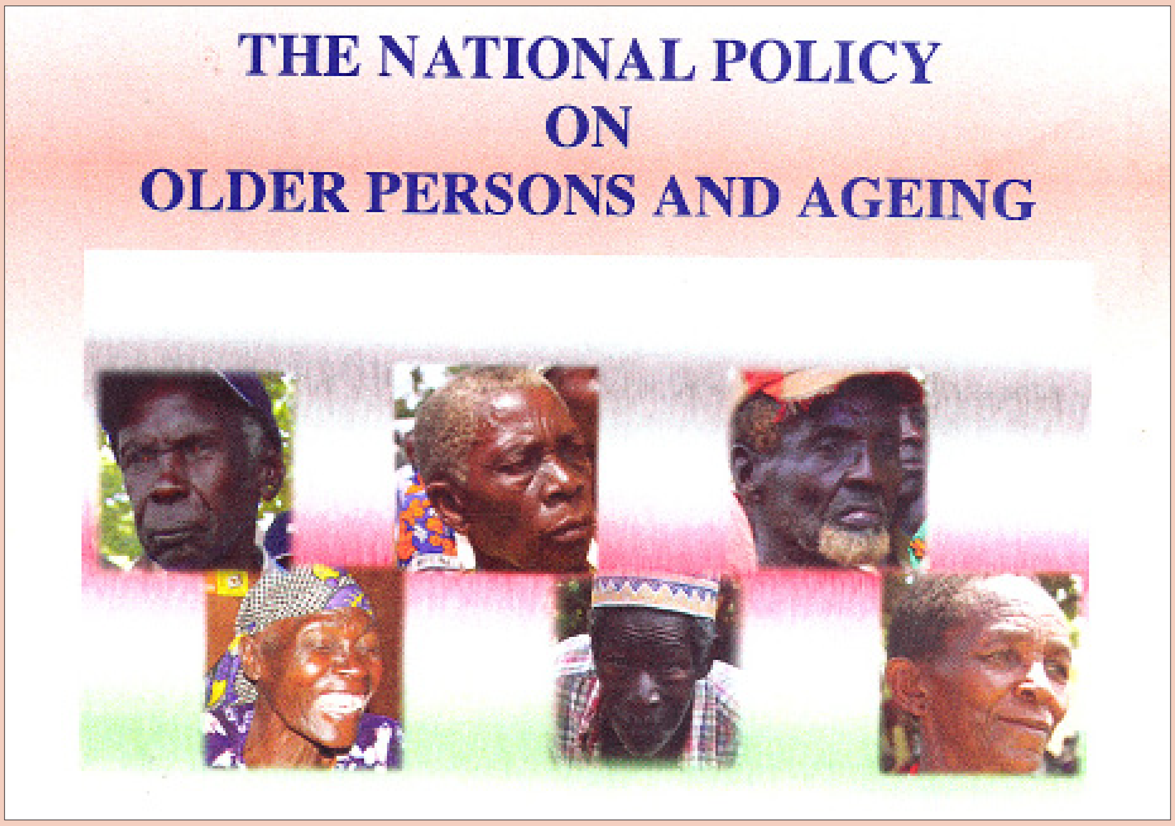
The programme relies on other government departments and or other ministries for vehicles.

The remaining 9 districts lie in arid and semi arid areas. They are not included for Postal Corporation of Kenya deliveries due to the issues of distance and illiteracy. However, other delivery mechanisms shall be explored in order to ease delivery of cash to beneficiaries in such areas.

Exit strategy

The programme provides in very clear terms that:

- When the older person dies, the household continues to receive the cash for the next three months
- Where the condition of the household improves dramatically, the funding is stopped immediately
- When the household willingly withdraws from the programme
- When it is proved that a household has given false information to benefit from the program
- If the beneficiary moves out of the programme district.
- If the beneficiary does not collect his/her cash for three consecutive payments that is for six months



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