

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

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Election violence triggers revealed

It is now upto the state to act swiftly on the content of this report to save the country from violence

By FAITH MUIRURI

EVEN as efforts to reconcile communities in conflict prone areas gain momentum across the country, a new report has identified possible triggers to ethnic violence ahead of the elections.

The report cites the delineation of constituency boundaries among factors likely to trigger flare-ups and erode gains made in restoring peace in hot spot areas.

The criminal cases against the four Kenyans at the International Criminal Court (ICC) also feature prominently among factors likely to heighten tension ahead of the elections.

“This should provide more justification for monitoring the situation, especially with respect to possible treatment of communities perceived as victims of post election violence,” adds the report

The baseline report by the Constitution and Reform

Education Consortium (CRECO) on conflict mapping and profiles of 47 counties in Kenya, points out that 80 percent of the counties rank within the moderate to high risk of conflict areas.

Counties more prone to violence include Marsabit, Isiolo, Mandera Wajir, Narok, Garissa, Tana River, Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, Nairobi, Trans Nzoia, Migori, Nyamira, Bomet, Kiambu, Uasin Gishu, Turkana, West Pokot, Laikipia, Nakuru, Kisumu, Bungoma and Kirinyaga.

According to the report, cases of ethnic intolerance, border conflicts, political party zoning, competition over land and other resources, proliferation of small arms, weak security and poverty still rank high among factors that divide communities in clash prone areas.

The report underscores the need to monitor areas worst hit by Post Election Violence during the pre-election period, largely due to the unsettled or unresolved deep seated grievances.

The lobby group calls on the government through



Mr. Ahmed Isaack Hassan, IEBC Chairman.

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UNDP releases funds for civic education ahead of general elections

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA



UNDP Deputy Country Director Alfredo Texeira (left) shares a cup of tea with Upper Central Regional Commissioner Ann Ng'etich during the opening of a four day training of trainers' workshop for civic educators at Green Hills Hotel in Nyeri recently. Photo/ Joseph Mukubwa

UNITED Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will fund community groups to the tune of Kshs 100 million to help jump-start the civic education programme ahead of the general elections.

The UNDP Deputy Country director, Programmes Alfredo Teixeira said recently that the grant will help support the 50 organizations in civic education exercise for six months.

Out of the funds, Central region will get Kshs 20 million with 12 groups benefiting.

Speaking during the official opening of a four day training of trainers workshop for civic educators at Green Hills hotel in Nyeri, the director urged the organizations to ensure that the message of peace, of solidarity among Kenyans, of people based development and of non partisan interrogation of the issues is taken to the communities. Teixeira who was accompanied by Upper Central Regional Commissioner Ann Ng'etich said that the groups should deliver non partisan and non ethnicized civic education.

“You must assist the people and communities to understand the constitution and how it can be used to protect human rights, to

defend the rights of marginalized and weak groups, to discuss, interrogate and develop non violent exchange of ideas that will aid the development of Kenya,” he added.

The director added, “As ambassadors, we do not expect you to take sides when delivering civic education. The UNDP and other development partners supporting Amkeni Wakenya has developed several principles to guide you in your engagement with voters.” He said that Kenyans must choose to make their country better and they must take responsibility for the realization of peaceful elections.

Regional PC Ng'etich said the Government is ready to support the groups during the civic education and also help in mobilizing residents in attending the meetings.

“It is our utmost hope and belief that the residents of this region will make informed choices at the general elections and they will also get useful civic skills and knowledge that will enable them fully embrace the nation,” she added.

The theme for Amkeni Wakenya's civic education programme for the forthcoming general election will be: Free, Fair peaceful elections: My responsibility.

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Election violence triggers revealed

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the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) to support warring groups to develop dispute resolution mechanisms ahead of the elections.

The lobby group further challenges the Parliamentary Budget Committee and the Commission on Revenue Allocation to ensure both the National and the County budgets are aligned to address past and present cases of exclusion and marginalization as outlined in the Constitution.

Other recommendations include putting in place necessary infrastructure to closely monitor the counties prone to election related conflicts.

The report also calls for the establishment of a national peace platform similar to the one that existed prior to the 2010 referendum under the banner of Uwiano (cohesion).

"The platform should promote advocacy efforts by the CSOs to sensitize the public on national issues that have implications on conflict factors at the local level," explains.

Further, the CSOs should monitor compliance to the international, regional and local human rights and governance standards.

The report at the same time calls for concerted efforts to ensure that all political and democratic rights and governance processes during the upcoming elections are respected, protected and promoted.

It lays emphasis on the need for CSOs to participate effectively in



CRECO and ELOG members at the launch of report on areas prone to election violence. Photo/Henry Owino

existing District Peace Committees and advocate for the transition of these structures into County peace committees with a clear and strengthened statutory mandate of coordinating peace matters.

The report further proposes that CSOs safeguard the rights of women, children, youth, elderly and other marginalised groups by ensuring representation and participation of these groups in the upcoming elections.

CSOs must also ensure that IEBC, the police force, judiciary and other institutions within the criminal justice system are adequately funded to deliver their mandate.

The report recommends that communities need to acknowledge that the country does not belong to any particular ethnic group or a combination of any.

"After having bequeathed ourselves and our future generations a new constitution, it is very important that all communities respect all human rights for all persons, respect the values of the constitution, promote principles of governance and also defend and protect it," affirms the report.

Kenyans must also condemn violence and put to task politicians who preach violence and learn to solve political and social differences

amicably.

They must also start banishing impunity at local levels, especially at County levels. All communities belong to all counties as no county was established exclusively for any particular community. Kenyans must learn to accommodate minorities within counties where they are the majority.

The report ranks Counties in terms of the threat of conflict as shown in the table herein.

It is now up to the state agencies to move with speed to put structures and measures in place to ensure that the threat of conflict in the counties is closely monitored and diffused if we are to avoid a repeat of the events of 2007/8 pre and post-election violence.

High Conflict Risks	Moderate Conflict Risks	Low Conflict Risks
Marsabit	Kitui	Embu
Isiolo	Makueni	Machakos
Mandera	Nyeri	Vihiga
Wajir	Taita Taveta	Siaya
Narok	Homabay	
Garissa	Tharaka Nithi	
Tana River	Busia	
Mombasa	Elgeyo Marakwet	
Kwale	Samburu	
Kilifi	Meru	
Nairobi	Kisii	
Trans Nzoia	Kajiado	
Nyamira	Murang'a	
Migori	Lamu	
Bomet	Kericho	
Kiambu	Nandi	
Uasin Gishu	Nyandarua	
Turkana	Baringo	
West Pokot	Kakamega	
Laikipia		
Nakuru		
Kisumu		
Bungoma		
Kirinyaga		

Mutungu backs Machakos Law Courts plan

By PETER MUTUKU

THE office of the Chief Justice Dr. Willy Mutunga has pledged to fully support the transformation project initiated by the Machakos Law Courts dubbed Maanzoni declaration in a bid to enhance service delivery to court users.

The Chief Registrar Ms. Gladys Shollei stated that the transformation plan rolled out by the Machakos station was in line with the mandate of the office of the Chief Justice which is working towards reforms in the judiciary to ensure better service delivery and efficient judicial system.

"When the Chief Justice was appointed, he assured the public that he will transform the Judiciary and realign its operations to the values outlined in the constitution and expectations of Kenyans.

"I want to say that today is the proudest day in my life since my appointment as Chief Registrar because I can actually see that transformation is actually happening in the Judiciary," Shollei remarked.

Shollei added that the Judiciary will devolve financial management and human resource for adequate transformation of the Judicial system in the country.

"As a pilot court for transformation and as a model court that will set pace for other courts in the country,

it is within the transformation programme of the Judiciary espoused in the constitution. We have no option no choice but to support it and fund it. My office will ensure support the transformation of Machakos station and all stations in the country," she assured.

Machakos Law Courts resident judge Justice MSA Makhandia said a nonperformance and a weak judicial system has had devastating effects in the country and cited 2007/08 post elections violence.

"Weak Judiciary leads to higher poverty rates, lower private economic activities, higher crime rates and generalised lawlessness and impunity which may even threaten the very survival of our country," Makhandia said. Makhandia added that to ensure better services to wananchi, Machakos courts transformation will be documented in the courts daily practices in registry, chambers, courtrooms and offices.

"It is collective vision by all of us who work at this station. Maanzoni declaration is the localized transformation plan of our station. It is our contract with the people of the larger Machakos region and among ourselves to treat each other with respect," he said.

He added, "We want to proudly stand and say that our court station has truly become the custodian of

justice in our country. A beacon of fairness, efficiency and effectiveness in public service and value of transformation we want to see in our country," Makhandia stated.

Some of the major action plans include embracing a customer friendly atmosphere whereby a customer care desk has been set up to help assist court users.

The court is also set to adopt e-filing system and have an open door system where it will hold court open days to sensitize the public on how to go about court issues.

The Maanzoni declaration was formulated last month after a team of 10 officers from the Machakos Law Courts retreated at the Maanzoni Hotel along Mombasa-Nairobi Highway and came up with the plan.

There are short term, medium term and long term plans on how to transform the court and a budget regarding the same has already been forwarded to the office of the Chief Justice for approval.

Chief of staff in the office of the



Chief Registrar Ms. Gladys Boss Shollei and Machakos Law Courts resident Judge Justice MSA Makhandia during the launch of Machakos Law Courts transformation project dubbed Maanzoni declaration on Monday at the Machakos Law Courts grounds. Photo/Peter Mutuku

Chief Justice Mr. Duncan Okello assured that the courts will get full support from the headquarters.

Okello said nobody should doubt the transformation process taking place in the Judiciary because implementation is underway.

He added, "Sustainable change

of Judiciary will only come from below. We are the change we seek and therefore we should not hesitate in playing the role of transforming the Judicial system." He urged the public to be actively involved with the transformation process of the Judiciary for better services.

Give us universities, North Eastern teachers tell state

By MALACHI MOTANO

THE government has been urged to establish university constituent colleges in Garissa and the entire Northern hub to enable Primary school teachers further their education.

According to Hassan Ibrahim, the head teacher of Al-Faruq primary school and also the national treasurer for the association of primary school head teachers association (KEPSHA), there are no constituent colleges for national universities in North Eastern region to enable teachers in the region to improve on their professional skills.

“Currently, the number of students joining Garissa teachers training college and NEP technical training college is negligible. As a result, the Ugandan private universities have attracted more NEP students apparently due to the lower education bill and unadjustable wide ranging academic timetable”.

The search for degrees and the upgrading of the academic papers by primary school teachers is being enhanced by teachers service commission (TSC) with the chief executive Gabriel Lengoiboni encouraging teachers to invest on professional growth.

In an interview with The Link, the TSC chief executive said, “To this end, I urge all teachers to undertake further studies to improve their academic levels and skills, to ensure that they remain relevant and competitive.

Despite having no official university constituent colleges in the region, it is estimated that three quarters of the over

2000 primary school tutors (in the region) are gunning or have degrees.

This according to Hassan Ibrahim is an indication that teachers in the region are determined to further their education with Garissa town being transformed into education hub, hosting regional campuses like the Kampala International University and local learning centres for Nairobi, Kenyatta and Egerton univer-

sities.

Many teachers in the area have enrolled for parallel degree or diploma courses at the different centres

Fatuma Abass is a director at Pastoralist girl’s initiative (PGI). “Although Garissa town is a hub to local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for example education for marginalized communities in Kenya(EMACK), pastoral-

ist girls initiative CARE and UNESCO, it is also a home theatre for workshops, conferences and seminars to support their local home tutors so as to remain relevant and competitive”.

Abass says that for very long north eastern province had very few graduate teachers, but the tide is slowly changing today, with scores of primary school tutors pursuing degree or diploma course.



Hassan Ibrahim the head teacher of Al-Faruq primary school during the interviews Photo/Malachi Motano

Report unveils challenges facing education

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

INVOLVEMENT of parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the management of schools is the key to addressing challenges facing learning institutions. More open and active school management is better and can prevent breakdown in relationships, which cause projects to stall. Reports reveal that some head teachers do not share school records with their deputies and often make decisions independent of school management committees. In Bungoma, information displayed in notice boards is inconsistent with the paper records kept by schools.

Kaitui Primary School in Kericho reported losing many girls to pregnancy from migrant cane – cutters and has pleaded unsuccessfully with parents to help protect their children. While in Mogotio District, it was found that parents were unwilling to refer early pregnancies to the authorities for action.

At Mitigani Primary School in Makeni, parents’ hostility towards the school was prompting many children to drop out of school. Such breakdowns of trust between parents and teachers often lead to poor performance.

In Galole District, there was discontent with education by the community due to perceived inadequate coverage of the syllabus. On the other hand, there was laxity among teachers because they felt the community was not appreciating their efforts. Such actions have a direct impact on the achievement of pupils. In Chirchiro Primary School, Kisii Central, a breakdown in parent – teacher relations saw a three year drop in the KCPE mean score from 188 in 2008 to 159 in 2010. This were the findings by Social Intelligence Reporting (SIR), which seek to address two needs of better data for decision makers and renewed community spirit for self led development. The logic behind SIR, is that local mobilisation will hold the effectiveness of authorities to account and accord dignity to the voice of the poor. It calls for empowerment of both stakeholders in development to deliver better value for children, women and men of Kenya. SIR enables district development officers (DDOs), to get answers to a set of questions by getting them out from behind their desks and down to social sectors. District officers are to be trained to use the set of questions as an entry point to better understand problems at the local level, create action plans to address them, and resolve many issues as possible at the community level.

The data collected and insight gained is to be fed into district, provincial and National observatories” to allow development committees to take timely action. The intention of SIR is to involve a series of local actions to fix the issues as affectively and sustainably as possible.

The SIR report was generated from 24 districts in round one, covering 136 primary schools, 87 health facilities and 56 water facilities. Minister of state for Planning, National development and Vision 2030, Wycliffe Oparanya said of the report as “it is a mirror that the government uses to reflect on the extent of its development efforts for future improvement and better provision of services”. The reporting initiative will help government workers at the local level to be local problem solvers and provide policy makers with timely picture of what is happening on the ground, he added.

The minister emphasized that SIR, will help in highlighting innovations and gaps in community development and, enable those charged with service provision, and development partners to learn from and build on both the successes and failures. He stressed that fostering citizen participation in social sector investments through SIR, leads to sustainable growth and achievement of greater equity in the development out come.

Poor syllabus coverage to blame for dismal results in Kisii

By BOB OMBATI

POOR syllabus coverage in Nyamira and Kisii counties led to dismal performance in last year’s Kenya Certificate of Primary Education Examination (KCPE), a quality assurance report says.

The report, compiled last year by the Education ministry says poor curriculum coverage by Head teachers and their deputies had contributed to the poor results.

Releasing the findings during the counties education stakeholders meeting at Nyanchwa TTC, Nyanza Quality Assurance officer, Nicholas Oyuchio said it was found that low transition rates especially in Standard 7 and 8 enhanced high school drop outs for the girl-child. Oyuchio said enrolment of boys and girls in both counties was at par, but as the pupils progressed up the ladder, girls continued to diminish, creating the disparity.

The Officer noted buying commercial papers to test the pupils con-

tributed to poor performance, stressing those setting the exams were not experts but only interested in making money. He urged teachers to set examinations based on the covered syllabus instead of buying test papers from shops with questionable standards.

Oyuchio said the report showed majority of deputy heads had not been inducted on their roles and thus challenged the Kenya Primary Schools Heads Association (KEPSHA) to ensure that those teachers are inducted to offer quality services.

Uwezo Kenya coordinator, Dr John Mugo told over 3,000 heads and school management committees, that 33 percent of teachers in Nyanza do not follow a timetable in teaching compared to 29 percent in central province.

Mugo said that failure by the teachers to follow the timetable has greatly impacted on performance in national examinations, fueling conflicts among stakeholders.

He noted research conducted in

Nyamira and Kisii counties revealed that teachers don’t follow a timetable in teaching, thus hampering the orderly and timely completion of the syllabus.

The Coordinator noted that 16 and 13 percent of teachers in Nyamira and Kisii counties respectively don’t attend school a day, a scenario he said contributed greatly to the poor performance.

He told teachers to shift focus on standard mean scores to learning saying that SMS is a product of learning.

Perennial drunk teachers noted Mugo were assigned to teach standard 1-4 saying that this greatly interfered with the good foundation of the children since the teachers used mother tongue to communicate. The officer asked parents to be part of the learning process like other regions saying partnership was key to good performance.

He urged them to employ their teachers and stop relying fully on those of the government, stressing Central Province parents had em-

ployed 35 percent of teachers out of their pockets while those of Western province had contracted to 16 percent.

Parents must be supportive in matters of education. They should be ready to contribute something in employing teachers as they wait for the government to do so because it is through such initiative that performance can be improved, he said.

Kisii county KEPSHA chairman, Samson Mokwanga and his Nyamira county counterpart, Robert Misiani told politicians to support schools right from the onset to help create a conducive learning environment instead of blaming teachers whenever they performed dismally in national examinations.

Mokwanga said the association had invited area leaders for the meeting but non turned up or send an apology showing that they were indifferent to education matters in the area and were only good at bashing teachers whose schools performance dropped.

EAC countries urged to fund energy-saving stoves

COUNTRIES within the East African region have been urged to fund local artisans engaged in the manufacturing of clean cooking stoves to help conserve the environment and address challenges posed by harsh climatic conditions.

The EAC member states namely Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi with South Sudan expected to join soon, need to open up market for little known artisan industry that manufactures the modern cooking stoves. This industry just needs some financial support from the respective governments' states to manufacture extra modern stoves. This would promote more use of improved cooking stoves, which requires a fraction of the wood compared with traditional stoves.

"Numerous projects failed to achieve their goals because they used inappropriate technologies such as solar stoves or distributed appliances for free without government financial support. Women want modern user-friendly cooking technology, so increasing the formation of local and regional markets for modern cooking stoves are vital.

A functioning East Africa Common Market can ensure the supply of modern stoves without the need for development aid. This should be done urgently not just for health reasons, but also to reduce the enormous level of wood consumption in the region," says Anna Ingwe, head of the GIZ stove programme in Nairobi.

The EAC governments through East Africa Legislative Assembly (EALA) must also be seen committed in supporting this artisan industry in their endeavour to promote East Africa Integration. In the five states forming East Africa, wood is becoming scarce. To gain an impression of the fuel crisis, you just have to walk to any forests of these five countries forming East Africa Community. The landscape may look beautifully green but the woods have vanished.

The creation of EAC Customs Un-

COMMENT

By HENRY OWINO

ion as the first stage of its regional integration process, it should now follow by full implementation. This would enable consolidation for a single trading bloc with uniform policies, resulting in a larger economy market.

For instance, in Kenya, artisan industry employs more than 70% of the total youth population either directly or indirectly thus income generating activity. Apart from that, artisan industry will offer alternative opportunities to graduates from middle level colleges. They would be in a position to start their own enterprises thereby reducing the mismatch between supply and demand of labour in the country.

Although many youth look at artisan industry as the last option of employment, this is where the country is headed to as a drive of revolution to industrialization. As envisaged in Kenya's Vision 2030, youth should see new emerging trends in labour markets. Majority who are still seeking employment need to start venturing into this industry with skills gained in school instead of tarmacking for years.

Unemployment robs people dignity and meaning. As the saying goes, an idle mind is devil's workshop, so leading to unintended consequences like alcoholism, early marriage, crime and social instability. Unemployed youth is easy to recruit into political thugs and in extreme cases, terror gangs. Unemployment also keeps labour idle that is a great drain to the economy to any country thereby government should take the artisan industry seriously to absorb pool of jobless youth.

East Africa Integration should move fast in opening up of the borders for the traders in the artisan industry to access the common market. It will en-

hance free trade of products and movements without spending numerous days visiting multiple government agencies in various locations to obtain regulatory information permits trade licenses and clearance certificates to complete import and export process. These processes have really hampered many business-people in enlarging their trade to neighbouring regions, discouraging interested and potential youth.

Governments of EAC in collaboration with Trademark East Africa are said to be working hard to counter these inefficiencies in trade facilitation. Setting up national Electronic Single Windows with revenue and port authorities, cross-border trade certification agencies and the private sector is good idea.

The Single Window Information for Trade (SWIFT) trade facilitation if implemented will allow cross-border traders to access, and apply for regulatory documents at single location.

This way many youth would be motivated in the private sector trade reducing the unemployment rate and solve the mismatch between skills demand and supply in social sciences and science and technology. It also helps avert mindset of people that jobs are only in public sector.

This is where the middle level colleges proposed in the Kenya new education system would play a great role supported by current constitution to reform operations in economy. It is high time such colleges are integrated in East Africa Community with focus of having a common one for the five countries.

The more artisans produce modern stoves, the greater it benefits women and children in terms of better working environment, less exposure to smoke and therefore improved health conditions. Other benefits includes; use of less firewood which means more money is saved to be used to buy necessities such as food, school materials, medicine, clothes and soap. Also time saved in collecting fuel wood might be used

for farming, income generating activities, housework, socializing or more rarely, for leisure.

A visit to an artisan industry in Nairobi, Kenya to find out if they know of East African Integration and support offered by TradeMark East Africa to small, medium and large entrepreneurs revealed that majority are unaware.

Boniface Kario, manager of Kartech Engineering Limited, an artisan industry in Nairobi, Kenya makes modern stoves. He said he used to make metallic furniture for households, schools, church, hotels and other business premises at Karatina in Central Province but moved to City when demand increased.

Boniface realized that in Nairobi, most people were using fire-wood to make meals especially in big institutions like school, consuming lots of fuel wood. So, he thought of making modern stove that would use little wood and smoke free. First he approached a private boarding school and made request with sample at reduced price which was accepted as efficient, smoke free and later given tender to made more. Since then Boniface has never looked back instead opened another branch in Mombasa to serve other institutions in the region.

Today Boniface's artisan industry supplies modern stoves to all East Africa Community member states with main customers from Sudan and Rwanda. In Kenya customers are hospitals, schools, restaurants and colleges/ universities. He said the feedback have been positive with most institutions reporting fuel and monetary savings of 60-70% and more efficient than traditional cook stoves.

"Our bestselling modern stove is the 50 litre capacities saving approximately 17 tonnes Carbon dioxide per year. Total smoke emission is also reduced to 1,900 tonnes carbon dioxide per year. We hope to help Kartech Artisan industry grow and focus is to supply the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa

that uses fuel-wood as major source of cooking energy," Boniface said.

The Kartech Artisan Industry Manager explained that a typical boarding school of 200 students would require approximately 8.5 tones of firewood fuel per term, costing about \$ 2000 to cook breakfast, lunch and dinner on an energy efficient stove. He explained this would represent a cut down of about \$ 4,600 per term which would have otherwise been consumed by a traditional open fire.

He said sales depend on the season like in schools when population of students' increases, demand rises, so same factors depends on restaurants and colleges. The cheapest stove for domestic use costs between Ksh 5000 to Ksh 8000 depending on family size but for big institutions, size depends on population and stove capacity range from 10 litres to 600 litres. Boniface assured that such size of course in turn have potential to cook/heat for 5,395 beneficiaries.

Zipporah has been a cook at the school five years and she said the stoves are very efficient, less time is spent cutting the firewood, few firewood are used, food clean without ----. She said health wise, the kitchen staff are always clean, not exposed to harmful emissions, the heat is used to the maximum none goes to waste.

"These modern stoves make our work easier because ones the firewood is lit, one can do other things aside like knitting. There is little smoke emission, so we don't smell smoke, our eyes are never watery or red, and we do not have drink milk. Even when I am pregnant there is no worry of heat affecting my foetus while cooking. I like using this stove," Zipporah said while smiling.

The ball is now set in the EAC's coat to support these artisan industries to expand and grow in the region by integrating common trade policies with Ministries of Trade, Industrialization, East Africa Co-operation and any other relevant ministries.

Councilor mentioned in plot grab probe

By KAVYU-KURA

A LONG serving civic leader in Kitui County is among councilors being questioned in connection with the demolition of a council office and grabbing of the plot in Mutomo market.

Sources have intimated that the civic leader has been summoned to appear before the county council works and markets committee to explain his alleged role in the sale of the council property to a Kajiado businessman.

The Committee headed by Cllr. Amos Kumi will also grill other civic leaders in a bid to establish the circumstances surrounding the disposal of the plot in question. The committee will then recommend action on those culpable in the scam.

The Kajiado businessman is said to have implicated the civic leader in the irregular acquisition of council property through falsified documents.

In March, council clerk Douglas Obiria stopped construction work at the site after the private developer demolished the council office in the land grabbing episode.

Obiria told *The Link* that investigations into the grabbing of the council plot were ongoing. He said it was too early to give details of the probe promising the media that more information will be availed soon.

"This is a seating councilor and we



A woman pass by the grabbed Kitui County Council revenue office at Mutomo market. A civic leader is being questioned in connection with the scam. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

have to find a way to death with him. The county chairman and I will soon give you the full details on the matter," Obiria said on phone.

Falsified council documents are believed to have been used to facilitate the

illegal acquisition of the three roomed office in Mutomo market, despite the local government minister Musalia Mudavadi's embargo on transactions in council land and property.

Mudavadi recently issued a cir-

cular to all local authorities stopping disposal and transactions on council properties until after the next general elections when county governments will be in place.

Already the private developer

who had acquired the plot has been restrained by County Council of Kitui from proceeding with the construction until the matter is resolved.

We have established that County clerk, Obiria, stepped in to reclaim the public plot following public protests after a council revenue office was demolished to pave way for construction of a storey building.

Obiria wrote to acting Mutomo District Commissioner Michael Lesimam asking him to ensure that no activity proceeds at the site as investigators seek to establish how the council plot illegally changed ownership.

Council chairman John Mang'uye said that preliminary investigations had established that the grabbing was an inside job and that the council had restrained construction works being undertaken by the private developer.

"This is a major scandal and we want to establish who gave out the plot and who exactly demolished the council office that stood on it. We also will seek compensation for any loss or damage the council has incurred once we get hold of the culprits," said Mang'uye.

"We've decided to involve the police because the entire transaction is criminal and irregular. The county clerk has also issued notice blocking construction works on the grabbed plot" he said.

War on Aids on despite gains, says Mirugi

By HENRY OWINO

ACCESS to HIV and AIDS treatment in Sub-Saharan Africa remains a big challenge and the situation may worsen following drastic cuts by the Global Fund. Experts on HIV and AIDS held a two day workshop in Nairobi to share ideas on the new research findings, best practices and lessons learnt on HIV and AIDS programmes from different parts of the world.

The objective of the workshop was to draw a roadmap towards enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, financing and social sustainability in HIV and AIDS programmes for Africans. African governments have spent substantive amounts of money in funding HIV/AIDS programmes which has resulted into behavioral change. Despite this heavy investment, a lot more still needs to be done and that is why the workshop brought together over ten

nations to chart the way forward.

The Minister for Special Programmes in Kenya, Esther Murugi who officially opened the workshop reiterated that Kenya has managed to bring down the prevalence rate from a high of 14.6% to 6.2 per cent for the last 28 years. "As we consolidate the gains we have made over the past 28 years, let me remind my fellow citizens that the war against AIDS is far from over. Indeed, we already have 1.5 million Kenyans living with the virus with 100,000 adults and 20,000 babies joining them every year," Murugi said.

She pointed out that in the coming years, the changing global, social, political, technological and economic contexts will continue to affect both the epidemic and its management.

Murugi said: "Some of these changes are predictable; others will take us by surprise. Tough choices have to be made in order to achieve

a significant reduction in AIDS on the long term. We have to start seeing our response to the epidemic and can be reconceived so as to have more positive and sustainable outcomes, not only in the short term but over the coming decades". The Minister at the same time said that over reliance on donors to fund HIV/AIDS programmes in the country had affected sustainability adding that the government is working on modalities to ensure that funding is locally available.

The Minister added that the stakeholders need to use the workshop to evaluate if resources allocated annually for HIV and AIDS programmes and systems are effective and efficient in delivering services to affected people in the respective countries.

Among the countries represented were Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Swaziland, Namibia, Brazil, Switzerland and France and the UNAIDS (Joint

United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS). "The effects of HIV and AIDS continue to be felt within all sectors of society limiting the achievements of the overall development goals. Reducing HIV and AIDS, therefore, will lead to economic security and stability. In Kenya, the voluntary male medical circumcision (VMMC) has shown reduction of HIV infections by 64%. The acceleration of elimination of mother to child transmission programmes has resulted in considerable reduction in the number of infants born with the virus.

Increased availability of generic drugs has helped to lower the average treatment cost per patient through various innovative approaches for commodity procurement in Kenya. Unfortunately, there is rising number of older people and especially grandmothers being overburdened with providing care to about two million orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

DC challenges teachers to improve education

By BOB OMBATI

A DISTRICT Commissioner from Kisii County wants school heads to take advantage of improved infrastructure and facilities in their institutions to improve education standards and performance in national examinations.

Nyamache DC Stanley Too, says the Government has helped to build decent classrooms and availed learning equipment to schools, through Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and other public funds saying school heads should reciprocate through enhanced education standards and performance.

Too, who spoke at Itibo Eramani Primary School during the commissioning of completed five modern classrooms supported by Bobasi CDF, warned that it would be difficult for the elevated county national schools to get qualified children from the area if they do not attain the grades required for admission.

Too, who was accompanied by his Sameta counterpart, Johnson Mwirigi and CDF chairman, Nicholas Magara challenged parents to support teachers and children improve performance, noting, some parents had abdicated their roles only to blame teachers when their children performed dismally in national exams.

"We want children to pass exams and join county and national schools. Do not be complacent with two or three children joining national schools. Strive to have at least 80 percent of the candidates making it to the top schools," stated Too. The provincial administrator commended the CDF committee and the area member of parliament, Chris Obure for supporting the project and challenged the local community to maintain it to ensure it benefited learners for a long a time.

The DC said the Independent and Electoral Boundaries Commission (IEBC) was conducting civic education nationally and asked area residents to attend to be sensitized on the constitution ahead of the upcoming general poll. "It is important for you to understand the constitution so that you can participate fully in its implementation to enhance good governance, democracy and leadership," said the DC.

He urged area dwellers to acquire Identity and voters cards to elect visionary leaders who will initiate and support development projects to benefit the community, adding they should elect leaders based on their policies and not tribes. Magara said the project had cost Kshs2 million, adding that a similar one had been commissioned by the DC at Itibonge Primary School costing equal amount.

The Fund, said Magara had helped complete majority of the projects inherited from the former area lawmaker, Stephen Manoti, stressing the improved infrastructure in schools had created a conducive learning environment and improved education standards.

He said CDF committee was committed to ensuring that learners were provided with conducive learning environment to help them pass exams and exploit their potential for their benefit and the society.

By KAVYU-KURA

OVER 100 victims of snake attacks in Mwingi may not be compensated after the government suspended the exercise citing falsified claims.

The victims are among hundreds of others across the country that will miss on compensation as the Ministry of Wildlife moves to enforce the suspension imposed last February.

The suspension came as the government launched investigations into what is suspected to be a massive rip off that had seen it pay millions of shillings to phony snake bite injuries and death claims.

About 100 persons from Mwingi region who had been injured or killed by snakes had not received their compensation when the government slammed a temporary ban of payments citing falsified claims.

Residents on Mwingi where cases of snake attacks have been prevalent are now at a loss following the suspension of compensation. Sources at the Mwingi Kenya wildlife Service office said that at least 10 cases of snake bites are reported every month.

It was further established that the suspension of compensation of snake bite claims through a ministerial directive was occasioned by revelations that crooks and fraudsters connived with crafty medical personnel and police officers to present false claims that passed as genuine and were paid.

"The government realized that

Snake bite victims abandoned by state



Fifty-year-old Katindi Mutemi of Malawa village in Nuu division accompanies her three-year-old granddaughter at the Mwingi District Hospital where she was admitted after she was bitten in the hand by a snake. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

it was losing lots of money by paying fictitious claims and thus in February slammed a country-wide suspension on payment of claims related to snake bite injuries or deaths. However, claims for attacks, death or injuries resulting from other wild animals are being honoured," our source said.

In mid April, the warden in-charge of Kora national park and the Mwingi north game Reserve Wilson Njue confirmed the suspension of the payment of snake bite claims. Njue disclosed that as the suspension took effect in February he had up to 100 snake bite claims forms that were awaiting payment.

He however pointed out that since the suspension was meant to facilitate investigations into the government rip off through falsified claims, residents who would be attacked by snakes should continue filing reports with his office.

"The suspension does not mean that the claims will never be paid. After investigations are concluded, a decision will be made and the genuine claims may be paid who knows. Therefore those who are attacked should not be discouraged but should report to us as we wait for the conclusion of the probe," said Njue.

Women invent survival tactics in Mwingi

By PETER MUTUKU

INSPIRED by the drive to become self-reliant, a group of women have embarked on an initiative that has helped to transform their livelihoods and increase their earnings.

The group first began by growing drought resistant crops such as sorghum, millet and sunflower before they invested in value addition.

They now make bread, snacks and chapattis using the traditional crops and today they have estab-

lished a niche in the market through their trade name, "Enziu Commercial Bakers". The chairlady Mwikali Momboko says the group who membership currently stands at 30 has been able to educate their children and fend for their families.

The women are also engaged in traditional basketry, mats and ropes, which are sold within the district.

"We are able to generate revenue, just in the same way as our counterparts in offices," explains Momboko.

The group has helped to demys-

tify the traditionally held notion that women are basically dependant on their spouses for survival.

The women have also been able to attract support from the government sponsored National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP).

Through NALEP, women have been sensitized on how to grow drought resistant crops such as sorghums among others including other income generating activities," explains Momboko.

KNCCI Nyeri branch elects new officials

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE newly elected Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) Nyeri County branch chairman Joseph Machira has vowed to revive the branch.

Machira who is a local businessman said he is ready to rejuvenate the branch so that the local businessmen can benefit and take the branch to greater heights.

He vowed to mobilize resources in order to build a four storey building at the KNCCI office's plot. The commercial building will have offices and a conference hall.

"We are looking for a starting base. Then we shall recruit many members and build a commercial building," said the chairman. The branches have been dormant for the last few years and the offices were rent out to other people and the offices are now being used as a hotel and as a church.

The polls were peacefully held with Wilson Mwaniki being elected as the vice chairman. Nineteen management committee members were elected to represent the eight districts in the county.

The KNCCI national board member Ben Odhiambo Kitoto was present to supervise the elections.

Most of the elections in counties countrywide have been held ahead of the national elections which will be held in Nairobi to elect the national offices.

And, Iria-ini Tea Factory in Othaya has released the initial two tonnes of ready for the supermarket shelf-branded tea bags to the British retailers Marks and Spencer. The tea bags, branded Mt. Kenya Tea, will then be launched in London, in a move expected to give small scale tea farmers attached to the factory a much higher return for their produce.

The Chairman of the factory's Board of Directors Githinji Wanjohi said that although the initial amount exported

last month was small, he expected the sales to rise and was optimistic that they would be selling much more quantities in future. Githinji was speaking when he received a Land Rover vehicle worth Kshs 4 million from Africa Now to help with extension work as it develops its diversification projects.

"The branded tea project was only one in our diversification program that is meant to increase farmers' incomes that includes a tree farming, passion fruit growing and honey production," said the chairman. The deal with Marks and Spencer has been realized through the advocacy of Africa investment lobby

Africa Now which has been working closely with the factory to improve its productivity capacity and corporate governance. Africa Now Director Jane Terry Nyambura who was present said the vehicle was a reward in recognition of the factories uptake of new ideas meant to improve the small scale farmers' livelihoods through higher incomes.

"Africa Now has been involved in training farmers on their role in our company's management, other available opportunities while the management and staff were trained on sound financial management and accountability to our shareholders," she said.

By MALACHI MOTANO

STATISTICS from the Ministry of Education indicate that secondary school enrolment increased from 1.02 to 1.7 million between 2007 and 2010, an increase of 67.56 per cent. In 2003, the transition rate from primary to secondary school level was 46.3 per cent. This year 539,792 KCPE students were absorbed into secondary schools, which translates to a transition rate of 72.5 per cent. This is an increase of 26.3 per cent from 2003, which is considered to be beyond the expected MDG target of 70 per cent. However, in North Eastern province the rate of enrolment has been adversely affected with stakeholders expressing fears that the above projections may prove unrealistic.

Kelly Lanyasunya is 14-years-old, and is learning at Lesadai primary school in Samburu Central District (central-northwestern Kenya). I just joined a new school a few weeks ago (February 20), I got a new uniform and I am making friends but if this area gets insecure, I will have to move to another school. Like her classmate, Nabik Kekichorumongi, is forced to change schools whenever bandits attack the surrounding villages.

Stephen Leparachwo, head teacher at Lolkunono primary school in Samburu Central, said Lesadai primary school often receives parents bringing their children from Pura, a neighbouring area affected by banditry.

"When they come, some are even without food. The bandits follow the fleeing residents (and their cattle), not giving the children a chance to read," he said.

Much of the insecurity is due to cattle-rustling between the Samburu, Pokot, Turkana and Borana communities, according to local residents. In September, for example, Pokot cattle raiders killed 32 people of whom 11 were school boys in Samburu Central.

Rustling has also affected food production, especially in fertile areas like Ngano on the Kirisia ranges, where bandits lurk in the beautiful landscape, causing malnutrition among the schooling population.

According to the headmaster of a local school, Simon Lenolkulal, insecurity worsens day by day in Ngano, "Sometimes we could hear gunshots, so we seek cover on the ground with the children.

"There is a high rate of transition even of school teachers here... Teachers are reluctant to work here because of the insecurity. One week there is peace, the next week we are moving... Every week we enroll new children, and then when there is tension they leave."

The school relies on food aid from agencies like the UN World Food Programme (WFP). According to Lenolkulal, however, people could farm the land and eliminate food aid, if there were more security.

Education remains elusive for pastoral communities

Kenya may not achieve the education for all (EFA) 2015 target, a declaration that was made by the world governments over a decade ago (MDG 2) in Dakar Senegal



Pre-school children. Majority come to school not learn but for food. Thanks to WFP school feeding programme
Photo/Malachi Motano

Bernadette Lesuruan is the deputy head teacher at the neighbouring Lgoss primary school, "When there is conflict and the parents flee, we have more children coming to the classes."

Food scarcity tends to drive up school attendance, local residents said. When there is a general food distribution, enrolment in school goes down, while in more difficult times the number of children increases, Lesuruan said.

"During such times you see young children carrying toddlers to school for the food... During the drought, the children were entirely relying on food in school. Some were fainting after coming from home hungry. When there is no food (at all), school attendance is very low."

Male/female teacher ratio

There are few school teachers and hardly any female teachers. At Lgoss, Lesuruan was the only female member of staff.

Since I came here (in 2008) more girls are staying in school especially those who would run away for the period of their menstruation," said Lesuruan. "I bring pads to the school for

the girls."

Apart from the location of the school, 12km from the nearest shop-

ping centre, the high cost of sanitary pads also feeds absenteeism.

Early marriages also affect girls'

attendance at school: Most drop out in the middle primary school classes. In 2008, some Samburu schools had no girl candidate sitting the national primary school leaving exam.

"There is a mentality that if girls are educated and get jobs, the earnings will not return home but go to the husband," said another teacher.

Most of the boys in school are late entrants; some of the girls stay at home to work. "In this community people are not fond of keeping children in schools," the teacher adds.

Night school

However, some communities are trying to educate residents about the value of education: Currently under way in Baragoi District, the pastoralist night school initiative targets cattle herder children who are unable to attend day school.

"The children leave the fields at 4pm and then attend class," said Emanman. "The students get 'uji' (maize meal porridge) in the evening and are taught until 10pm."

Some children from these schools have progressed to the formal education system, but the night school initiative is largely designed to teach basic literacy to herders and others, he added.



Nabik Kekichorumongi and Kelly Lanyasunya of Lesadai Primary School have changed schools severally due to insecurity. Photo/Malachi Motano

Who ordered Manandu's killing?

Kitui set to build modern honey factory

By PETER MUTUKU

PLANS are underway to put up a honey factory in Kitui town at a cost of Ksh20 million. The project has been initiated with support from the Tana and Athi River Development Authority (TARDA).

The Kitui Honey Refinery Project Manager, Mr. Joses K. Mugambi, says that the factory which is touted as the largest in Eastern Province comes as reprieve to farmers in the area who have suffered exploitation from middlemen. He spoke during a farmers field's day organised by the KEFRI Kitui Regional Research Centre.

Mugambi says the factory will serve farmers in Kitui, Machakos, Mbeere and Meru among others. He urged farmers to increase production to enable them benefit from the facility. Mugambi says that honey is a remedy for several conditions including treatment of wounds, severe coughs, colds and arthritis among many other ailments.

KEFRI regional Director, Dr. James Ndufa, who presided over the function said that the institute will educate farmers on good practices and encourage them to plant trees.

"KEFRI mainly focuses on enhancing the capacity of farmers to increase production by training them free of charge," he explains.

The director decries the rate at which local farmers engaged in charcoal burning have depleted indigenous trees but added that KEFRI has come with ways to conserve forests in the area. He says that farmers can now income from planting trees.

During the field's day farmers were sensitized on variety of tree species and educated on both medicinal value and trees that can be grown for commercial purposes.

By KAVYU-KURA

DETAILS have emerged over the force behind the ongoing fresh investigations into the slaying of the former Kitui North (now Mwingi North) Member of Parliament Philip Mutisya Manandu 27-years ago.

The Link established that failure to make public the findings of an inquest in to the murder of the MP by an Administration Policeman on January 17, 1985 had remained a source of disquiet and anxiety among his family members and constituents.

Besides, Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka has exerted pressure to have the truth about the brutal murder of his predecessor and three people by the trigger happy policeman by writing to the Attorney General Githu Muigai demanding the digging up of the truth and making it public.

During the late MP's 27th memorial anniversary fete at his Kaningo home attended by Kalonzo as well as the Prime minister Raila Odinga on March 23, family members led by widow Rose Muliwa Mutisya made an earnest plea that the mystery surrounding the brutal be unraveled.

Apparently moved by the family's desperation for the truth, both Kalonzo and Odinga conceded on the need to put the matter to rest. They stressed the need to re-open investigations into the matter.

Hardly two weeks after the late Manandu's memorial, the VP wrote to the Attorney General Githu Muigai requesting for fresh inquest into the MP's murder. In the letter dated April 4, Kalonzo expressed curiosity that results of an initial inquest ordered by then AG Mathew Guy Muli were not made public.

"During my speech, I strongly suggested that the inquest be made public and a fresh inquest be undertaken to ensure that anybody with any relevant information including the widow, Mrs. Rose Manandu and one of the survivor's of the attack, retired teacher Daniel Mukiti Kyambo are interviewed," the VP's letter in part.

The Director of Public Prosecutions Keriako Tobiko has since written to the Commissioner of Police Mathew Iteere directing him to immediately open fresh investigating into the matter.

Alluding to the finding of the Guy Muli inquest that were never made public, Tobiko asked the commissioner of police to "forward to this office all the relevant files and proceedings relating to the inquest said to have been ordered by the late Hon. Attorney General Mathew Guy Muli.

"Appoint a team of experienced police investigators to work together another team from my office to undertake thorough review and re-evaluations of the existing files and records relating to the death of the late Hon. Manandu and interview and interrogate the persons named above and any other person who may possess relevant evidentiary material." Tobiko's told Iteere in the letter that gave a 30-days time frame.

Meanwhile the widow of the slain MP said she was ready to tell all she knows about the killing. Both the Muliwa and Kyambo said that they were first hand witnesses of the cold blooded murder of the MP 27 years ago and would tell the truth about what happened.

They were with the MP when he and three of his supporters died in a hail of bullets on the evening of January 17, 1985 outside the MP's Bini-sa bar in Tseikuru Market. The killer Administration Police officer later took his life with the same gun.

The duo spoke in the wake of reports that Toibiko had on April 4 ordered the police commissioner, Iteere, to set up a team to open fresh investigations into the MP's death.

But as Muliwa welcomed the fresh investigations in to her husband's death she pointed out that no official communication had been made to her. She said; "I was only informed by relatives working in Nairobi that the

newspapers had a report that a fresh probe into the murder had began."

She said she was happy that at last the government had heard the cries of the family and moved in to ensure the truth was unveiled.

She said: "My son Muthami, and I are ready to give our statements to the probe team about what we know about the killing. We were there and witnessed everything first hand as the policeman opened fire."

Kyambo who was seated near Manandu at the time he was killed and only escaped death miraculously said he was equally ready to cooperate with the investigating team and give details of what he saw and what he knows.

"I was there on that sad evening and I saw the armed policeman walk to where Manandu was seated and open fire at point blank. I am ready to tell the truth," said Kyambo who escaped with his life but two of his teeth were knocked out by a bullet.



LEFT: The late Manandu's widow, Rose Muliwa Mutisya, who says that she will tell all she knows about her husband's murder to the probe team. RIGHT: Daniel Mukiti Kyambo who survived the brutal attack at which the former Mwingi north Member of Parliament Philip Mutisya Manandu was killed. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Services fails to take off in Bumula District

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

Bumula District is yet to become fully operational six years after it was created by President Mwai Kibaki. This has forced residents to seek essential government services from other districts.

The situation has largely been blamed on the haphazard manner in which Kibaki and his predecessor Daniel arap Moi have created more districts throughout the country ostensibly to bring Government services closer to the people.

However, some of the newly created districts lack enough funds to enable them to fully discharge their mandate.

Bumula district is one of the newly created administrative units that have failed to meet expectations of the residents in terms of improved service delivery due to lack of budgetary allocation. The district which also doubles as a constituency has 10 locations and 25 sub-locations. It covers an area of 347.8 square kms and has 34,934 households with a population of 178,897 people as per the 2009 census. Despite its huge population

and surface area, the administrative unit does not have a police station to enforce law and order.

Lack of this key Government security component is not only detrimental to area residents socio-economic development but also to foreign investors.

The area is endowed with arable land suitable for growing sugarcane maize, millet, sorghum and cassava.

However, due to insecurity, there are no financial institutions in the area to offer services to farmers in terms of payments for their farm produce, dues and

savings. The scenario defeats the purpose for which the district was created, as access to basic services remains a mirage. Realizing that the district residents have for long lacked essential Government services, Bumula CDFC recently set aside Kshs0.5 million to assist in the construction of a Police Station.

It is, however, paramount that local leaders and civil society organisations lobby for adequate funding from both the Exchequer and CDF in order to urgently construct a police station.

Mijikenda rally for better leadership

By BEKADZO TONDO

A COMMUNITY lobby group in Kilifi County has rolled out civic education program that seeks to empower voters to effectively participate in the election of good leaders in the coming general elections.

The group drawn from the seven sub-tribes of the Mijikenda said they were committed to sensitise the residents on how to identify good leaders during the coming general election.

According to the group chairman,

Boniface Mwamuye, the team held a meeting at a Kilifi hotel recently where they rolled out the civic education programme which will be conducted in all the seven constituencies in the county.

"Our forum has developed a programme on how we will carry civic education in Kilifi County on how best to get leaders for election," Mwamuye said. The members drawn from the Giriama, Chonyi, Kauma, Jibana, Rabai, Kambe and Ribe, said everyone interested in the Governor,

Senate, Women representative and the MP seats in the county will have to undergo a vetting process and that only those cleared will be supported by voters. Speaking to *The Link* after the meeting, Mwamuye said the group has so far held two meetings at Chonyi and Misufini in Bahari and Magarini constituencies respectively.

Mwamuye said the group receives support from Ecumenical Centre for Justice and Peace officials who help them in analysing the Constitution as far election process are concerned. An

official of the organisation Kashero Chinyaka, who attended the meeting, said for the Kilifi County to develop, elected leaders ought to observe high standards of good governance

"Good governance is a key component in development and as an organisation we have agreed to work together with the inter sub-community group of the Mijikenda tribes to offer the civic education," Chinyaka said.

Chinyaka said electorates also need to be educated on the laws governing the electoral process as per the

Constitution. He said a survey done in the past in the region had shown that electorates have been violating the electoral law by registering as members with different political parties something which is likely to deny them the opportunity to vote.

"Our people are not aware that it's an electoral offense to register as a member of more than one political party and that is one of the reason that as an organisation we have decide to go to the grassroots and educate the people," Chinyaka said.

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

Act on this report now to avert more violence

THE findings of the baseline survey by the Constitution and Reform Education Consortium (CRECO) on conflict mapping and profiles of 47 counties is hardly surprising. It has just confirmed what we have said repeatedly in our newspaper pages and supplements on conflict trends in Kenya and the need for vigilance and preparedness to deal with the symptoms.

The fact that about 80 per cent of the counties have been ranked as either moderate or high risk conflict areas, should prick hard the conscience of even the most thick-skinned authority into proactive action. Otherwise, God forbid, the last post-election violence may look like child's play this time round.

Already, the country is being Balkanized into tribal zones with tribal groupings like GEMA and KAMATUSA being allowed to meet openly; suspectedly with the encouragement of the powers that be. Strong political parties are also being destroyed by prodding key leaders to decamp so that they can run for presidency solely to split that votes along tribal lines to force a presidential run-off. A country that 'officially' encourages division along tribal lines is a country that has lost its head.

In our view the criminal charges against the four Kenyans at the International Criminal Court (ICC) would not be a threat to peace if the real powers in this country did not decide to side with the suspected masterminds of the orgy killings that followed the forced announcement of the flawed presidential election results in 2007. The people would have been made to see the ICC process as a bulwark against the runaway impunity in this country. But, contrary to reason, the people are being incited to see the ICC as a threat to their kingship.

The government must act on cases of ethnic intolerance, border conflicts, political party zoning, competition over resources (e.g. land) and proliferation of dangerous weapons that have been rightly identified as factors that could trigger conflicts, especially in hotspot counties.

It is time for the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and other state agencies to live upto their billings and come up with ways of strengthening non-state actors and state actors in conflict-prone areas to jointly play greater roles in peace-building efforts ahead of the general elections.

It is now up to the state agencies to move with speed to put structures and measures in place to ensure that the threat of conflict in the counties is closely monitored and diffused if we are to avoid a repeat of the ugly events of the aftermath of 2007 general elections.



COMMENTARY

Food security initiative taps varsity talent

CLIMATE change has largely been blamed on the rising cases of food insecurity in the country.

The scenario has been complicated by use of outdated farming technology which has prompted two multinational companies in Kenya to engage university students to address the situation.

Students in Free Enterprise Kenya (SIFE-Kenya) in various public and private universities in Kenya are being sponsored through Rockefeller Foundation and Coca Cola Central, East and West Africa Food Security Initiative project.

Under the initiative, university students who are members of SIFE Kenya are expected to devise modern techniques of farming and identify soil that supports various crops in different weather conditions using methods that are not harmful to the environment yet productive to the farmer.

The initiative not only seeks to engage youth in productive work but also come up with ways to mitigate the adverse effects of climate that threatens food security in the country.

Addressing varsity students drawn from both public and private universities at a hotel in Nairobi, James Shikwati, SIFE Kenya Country Director, said this was an opportunity for the youth in universities to showcase their talents in modern Agriculture technology as opposed to the ancient time.

Among the universities represented at the meeting were University of Nairobi, Egerton University, Moi University, Africa Nazarene University, USIU, Catholic University of East Africa, Kabarak University and Strathmore University among others.

Shikwati stated that SIFE-Kenya is open to all universities in Kenya and it is up to the students to form SIFE group in their respective universities. He further stated that SIFE has helped many students to acquire jobs or become self-employed especially in this era of high rate of unemployment amongst the youth.

He said SIFE-Kenya will hold competition for varsity students in the established groups in June 30, 2012 and participants are expected to come up with various Agri-business projects they have developed in their universities as their own initiatives. The aim of the competition is to provide simple and creative alternative ways of doing farming in the 21st Century which is coupled with many challenges, Climate change among them.

SIFE-Kenya this year's theme is: Feeding Kenya in the 21st Century; Building Business and Youth Alliances.

"Students are very creative and using

COMMENT

By HENRY OWINO

knowledge acquired in various courses, they can come up with good and modern sustainable agricultural or food production innovations for farmers who still use outdated methods. We want the corporate and the youth to facilitate access to food production and its security nationwide," Shikwati said.

Shikwati told the students not to spend a lot of time chasing for white collar jobs yet farming is another source of income.

Mr. James Nyoro, the Managing Director, Africa Rockefeller Foundation said most problems are more of policy than technology because once it is in place the rest will follow without doubt. He added that most people confuse climate change for drought yet the two are far apart.

Nyoro said climate change does not mean drought as many people may assume but it comes with benefits that if well utilized, a lot of food can be grown as long as farmers are educated on the new weather patterns. He said that climate change can be managed by implementing proper strategies and good policies that would ensure the situation is better off than continued dilapidation.

He explained that food security is the availability of food, its affordability in terms of pricing, getting it whenever one needs it in sufficient quantities on a consistent basis and having sufficient resources to obtain it for nutritious diet. Nyoro said food production is therefore the system of making food available for the family, region, nation or the continent regardless of its long term sufficiency.

"Price fluctuation in seeds, fertilizers and other farm inputs is another major problem faced by farmers leading to low food production hence food insecurity in the country. However this alone cannot solve the problems until young and energetic farmers especially the youth from universities take farming seriously," Nyoro advised.

The Managing Director, Africa Rockefeller Foundation said high productivity for commercial farming, regular workshops to educate farmers on modern farming techniques like crop rotation, good leadership, right political will and good policies are the only solutions that would ensure food security in the country. He reiterated that proper investment in agriculture production, having efficient producers, risk reduction by

insuring crops, tools and equipment, use of insect protected and drought tolerance crops forms the basis of food security.

Dr. Florence Wambugu, the Chief Executive Officer, Africa Harvest, said feeding Kenyans in the 21st Century need modern advanced Science and Technology which is the key of improving Agricultural production. She therefore called upon the varsity students in SIFE-Kenya to use their skills to avert the poor system of food production in the country and introduce modern farming methods that will ensure food security not only in the country but in Africa.

Dr. Wambugu said most farmers are now trying to adopt the modern farming techniques but the challenges they face are numerous starting from land utilization, crops/seeds suitable for the farmland, weather patterns due to climate change caused by global warming during production time. She said other setbacks experienced after harvest includes; storage, package, distribution, transportation to the market and pricing of food which might discourage commercial farmers to produce food that would ensure its security.

She however said at Africa Harvest, they train farmers both young and old on horticulture production and other tissue crops like bananas, cassava among other drought resistance crops which mature within short period of time and are beneficial to most farmers in terms of food and generating some little money.

Carren Mercy Ekwang, the president of SIFE University of Nairobi said they have taken Agri-business seriously which has seen the University winning the World Cup trophy twice in a row in New York and Paris. She was optimistic that they will still emerge the winners in the competition scheduled for 30th June.

Mercy said the University of Nairobi SIFE has several projects for instance, rabbit keeping, garbage collection in Githurai estate, Green House for horticulture farming at Kibera slums among many other projects in the pipeline.

According to Mayiani Saino, SIFE-Kenya Programme manager, there will be over twenty teams competing and each university is expected to have forty members but only 4-6 students would represent the entire group.

Saino said the competition is open to all universities but SIFE members only. She said the best group will be awarded depending on their good report, projects, membership recruitments, consistency in good representation among other secrets based known to the panelist of judges.



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The Link

Enhancing governance for all

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Magarini receives Kshs.65m CDF cash

By BEKADZO TONDO

ABOUT Kshs.65 million out of over 433 million of Constituency Development fund disbursed to Magarini Constituency in Kilifi County since the initiation of the fund in the country cannot be accounted for.

Area residents are now up in arms demanding that an audit be done to expose the looters of the public funds. The constituents, who last month held a peaceful demonstration to press for the accounting of the funds by the area CDF committee, complained that projects are seen to have been done and completed in paper work but there was nothing at the ground.

Records of the National Constituency Development Committee show that Magarini got Ksh6 million in the first allocation in the financial year 2003-04 and in the latest allocation of 2011-2012 it was awarded Ksh87,754,103 bringing the total to Kshs433,266,004.

Sources told *The Link* in Magarini Constituency that the area residents became suspicious that things were not correct as far as identification and funding of the CDF projects is concerned. Data posted at the National Constituency Development Fund website reveals that non-existent projects were funded during the period in dispute.

"Some of projects that were purported to have been identified and allocated funds in the website do not exist on the ground," says a human rights activist Mathias Wale.

Wale says area residents have conducted their own social auditing exercise on the projects which has established that most of the projects are just on paper.

"As the beneficiaries of the projects we decided to conduct our own social auditing on the projects and discovered that most of the projects said to have been started and completed on paper were not at the



Residents of Magarini constituency in Kilifi county demonstration in the area streets protesting misuse of about ksh 65 million of the area CDF monies. The demonstrators claimed the funds were spent on projects which were none existent at the ground demonstration photos by bekadzo tondo Photo/Bekadzo Tondo

ground," he adds.

Wale who is the secretary of Malindi Residents Forum, said that a series of training programs on good governance conducted by Institute Participatory Development (IPD) had equipped area residents with skills to monitor their development programs.

According to Wale the residents social auditing exercise found that the local CDF kitty had allocated Kshs2.5 million to drill Kamale bore hole, but nothing existed on the ground.

Other projects claimed to have been initiated but were not existing include allocation of Kshs 500,000 to buy desks at Bate primary school, Kshs700, 000 to construct classrooms at Bomani Primary School.

During the demonstration which was dispersed by anti riot police, the residents complained of favourism in

the allocation of bursary funds. Wale claimed that records from the CDF office show that students from outside the constituency in universities had been allocated more money compared to the local students.

However, the area MP, who is also the Fisheries minister Amason Kingi denied misuse of CDF funds in his constituency and blamed his political rivals for the unfounded allegations.

"This demonstration was purely organised by my rivals because the issue of CDF mismanagement has no facts," says Kingi. Kingi, who is the Minister for Fisheries Development and an acting minister for Industrialisation has declared his interest for the governorship position of Kilifi County. The chairman of Malindi County Council Ngombo Kithi, who is also a close ally of minister Kingi ruled out

the claim that the area CDF committee was involved in shady deals.

"This is a time of campaigns ahead of the coming general elections and thus some leaders are likely to engage in smear campaigns to tarnish the names of other leaders and thus the electorate must be wary of such leaders," Kithi says.

The director of IPD Mzungu Ngoma said the residents have a democratic right to protest when things are not done as required and blamed the police for blocking the protestors.

Ngoma said his organization which works closely with Amkeni Wa Kenya has been involved on civic education programs direct from the school levels so that the people can know their rights and the procedures to follow when things are not going on well.

Churches encourage child abuse, says official

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

CHURCHES operating in Samia and Bunyala districts have been accused of encouraging child abuse and delinquency.

The accusations were echoed by Samia District Children Officer (DCO) Dishon Otuko when addressing members of the Locational Children Council from Bunyala West during the close of a three-day workshop on child rights and protection in Port Victoria recently.

The children officer expressed concern saying churches have failed to provide proper and effective spiritual guidance to children from their early childhood.

"Churches in the two districts have failed to provide spiritual guidance to children at a tender age to inculcate a sense of direction in them so as to grow uprightly," he said. He said church leaders were only bothered about adults.

Otuko said the negligence on the part of the church leaders has caused a number of children to become delinquent a situation, he noted, has

made them rebellious even to their own parents.

The children's officer said most reported cases on delinquent children engage themselves in criminal activities after spending the better part of their time watching pornographic videos leading to early marriages, unwanted pregnancies and prostitution among other vices.

"Research done by Children Department has proved that majority of children, who watch pornographic videos and engage in prostitution are found to be those who have rebelled against their churches and parents due to neglect," said Otuko.

Otuko said in every 10 cases of child abuse reported, seven cases are found to come from Christians who do not go to church, who rebelled or whose children have opted out of the church.

He at the same time expressed concern saying that in the year 2011 a total of 52 children in Samia District dropped out of school due to early marriages with ten of them having been married off after their parents received dowry.

Otuko however called upon the church leaders from the two districts to go back to the drawing board and reach the families of their members in order to find out how their children live and also provide adequate spiritual guidance and counseling.

The Children Officer commended the sponsors of the seminar led by Mrs Gloria Ababu, a representative from APHIA-PLUS, a Non-Governmental Organisation, promised to continue sponsoring more such trainings in the entire Busia County aimed at addressing child abuse cases.

The sensitisation forum was attended by members of the provincial administration, medical officers, police officers, volunteer children officers from the two districts and other stakeholders.

Bunyala District Children Officer Maurice Okiru, who also attended the workshop on his part warned that legal action would be taken against child abusers, especially on parents who marry off their young girls daughters for purposes of getting material wealth.

"Legal action would be taken

against anybody engaging in child abuse hence denying them the chance to go to school and learn," said Okiru, adding that majority of parents in Bunyala have allowed their children to engage in fishing and early marriage. Meanwhile, Kenyan fishermen have appealed to the government to protect them from being harassed by Ugandan police whom they accused of confiscating their fishing gears.

The fishermen and the residents of Bumbe beach in Samia district, who had attended a peace building forum under the auspices of Abenengo Youth Group recently expressed outrage saying they were being tortured by the Ugandan police. "The government has turned a deaf ear to our plight despite numerous appeals for protection from harassment by the marine police officers from Uganda," said the fishermen.

The vice-chairman of Bumbe Beach Fishermen Committee, Nicholas Onyango Okado, on his part said the fishermen operating at the beaches such as Bumba, Buyukha and Bujwanga have no say over their fish.

Kisii water woes set to end soon

By **BOB OMBATI**

GUSII Water and Sanitation Company (GWASCO) has commissioned multimillion water projects in Kisii County to serve residents in the suburbs of Kisii town to ease water shortage and improve sanitation.

The Company's Managing Director, John Magoba said Water Services Trust Fund (WSTF) had granted the company Kshs15 million to jointly implement the water projects.

Magoba said a 100,000 litre Water Tank was being installed at Nyamataro suburb to serve the area residents and the neighborhood with clean piped water, adding the project will be completed in September.

The MD said three water ki-

osks have been built at Daraja Mbili market towards Nyamataro to benefit the traders and area residents besides the hotels within the area.

Kegati Water Treatment Plant, he said was being upgraded to pump 18 million litres of water per day up from 6 million and asked Lake Victoria South Water Services Board to rehabilitate pumping facilities to hasten the process.

Magoba, who spoke to The Link in his office, said the company will set up a water laboratory to test the quality of water in the area especially water fetched from springs to ensure it was fit for human consumption to avoid break out of water borne diseases.

The officer asserted that some commercial establishments had ceased using the Company's water

and bought untreated cheap water from vendors, risking the lives of their customers.

He urged the Hoteliers to invest in huge water tanks in their business premises and use treated water from the Company, stressing it had enough water only that the operators were unwilling to use the essential commodity.

The officer said some hoteliers and real estate developers had sunk unreliable boreholes and were having problems treating water and maintaining them, adding it was more expensive than using the company's clean, treated and piped water.

Magoba noted that the Company has 8000 active clients, adding that it targeted to increase the number to 12000 with the new connection and increase its rev-

enue base from the current Kshs10 million to Kshs15 million per month.

Magoba disclosed that clients owed the company over Kshs 10 million in arrears, adding that government offices were major defaulters. The government channels funds to the districts for overhead costs. But, the officers in charge do not pay money and keep on promising, said Magoba.

He said that company workers were forced to disconnect water for defaulters, who, he noted tarnished the company's name that it had failed to provide water. The officer warned corrupt workers to desist colluding with clients to waive charges as this would ground the company, stressing they risked being shown the door unceremoniously.

Row erupts over ownership of cashew nut factory

By **BEKANDZO TONDO**

A MAJOR showdown looms between Kilifi residents and Millennium Development Company over a dispute in ownership of the cashew nut factory.

Local leaders led by the chair-lady of Kilifi Town Council Mrs. Esther Kache want the factory to revert to the community and plans to repay the Kshs56 million debt owed to the company when the factory was put under receivership.

The leaders argue that the factory belonged to the community and proper procedures were not followed when its ownership was transferred to private investors.

Dr Owan Baya of Pwani university who led community representatives during a meeting with the management of the Millennium Development Company says that the over 300 acres of land holding the collapsed Kilifi cashew nut factory have not been properly utilized to generate income and boost the economy of the Kilifi county.

He says that local leaders feel that the land holding the factory and the factory itself are being under-utilized and thus should revert to the community to enable residents exploit its potential.

During the meeting, the chairman of Millennium Development Company Mr. Charanjit Hayer however expressed shock that leaders want the factory to revert back to the community.

He said that the move was uncalled for and urged leaders to instead explore ways through which the community can benefit from the investment through creation of more job opportunities instead of disrupting company's operations through changing ownership.

"I am totally surprised that you intend to repossess the company hand it over to the community," said Mr. Hayer.

Mr Hayer challenged the leaders to follow the laid down procedures as the factory was legally transferred to a private developer.

"This is a private property and proper channels must be followed before negotiations to jumpstart the recovery process can begin," said Mr. Hayer.

The chairman accused leaders of politicizing the matter as the company owns the property legally and the management will not be intimidated by their move.

Mr. Hayer urged the leaders to notify the company through proper channels before they can agree to any negotiations with the community.

However, Dr Baya informed the chairman that the leaders had come to officially inform the company of their plans before they can proceed with the recovery process.

Hayer agreed to meet a section of the leader with the board of directors of the company to formally discuss the matter.

Good governance gives glory to Mwingi council

By **KAVYU-KURA**

LACK of political interference in projects has seen the County Council of Mwingi pull itself from a poorly performing local authority to take up the eighth position nationally in the performance contract ranking.

The County Clerk Elijah Mutambuki said political good will and a corruption free environment has seen the council leap from position 168 in 2009 to position 36 in 2010 and position eight last year out of the 175 local authorities in the country.

Mutambuki said that councilors had given workers a free hand and did not interfere with projects thus enabling the council to greatly improve on its performance. He said in the latest rating, the council was the best in Kitui County while it was number two after Machakos Municipal Council in the entire Eastern province.

In the recent performance contract evaluation results released at a ceremony officiated by President Mwai Kibaki at the KICC in Nairobi, the Mwingi County Council was also ranked position three in the County Councils' category after Saiya and Thika in first and second slots respectively.

The County Clerk also further attributed his council's improved performance to the existence of safeguards that ensured that the council did not lose its revenue and project monies in corrupt deals. He said most of the projects were also complete

within the prescribed deadlines.

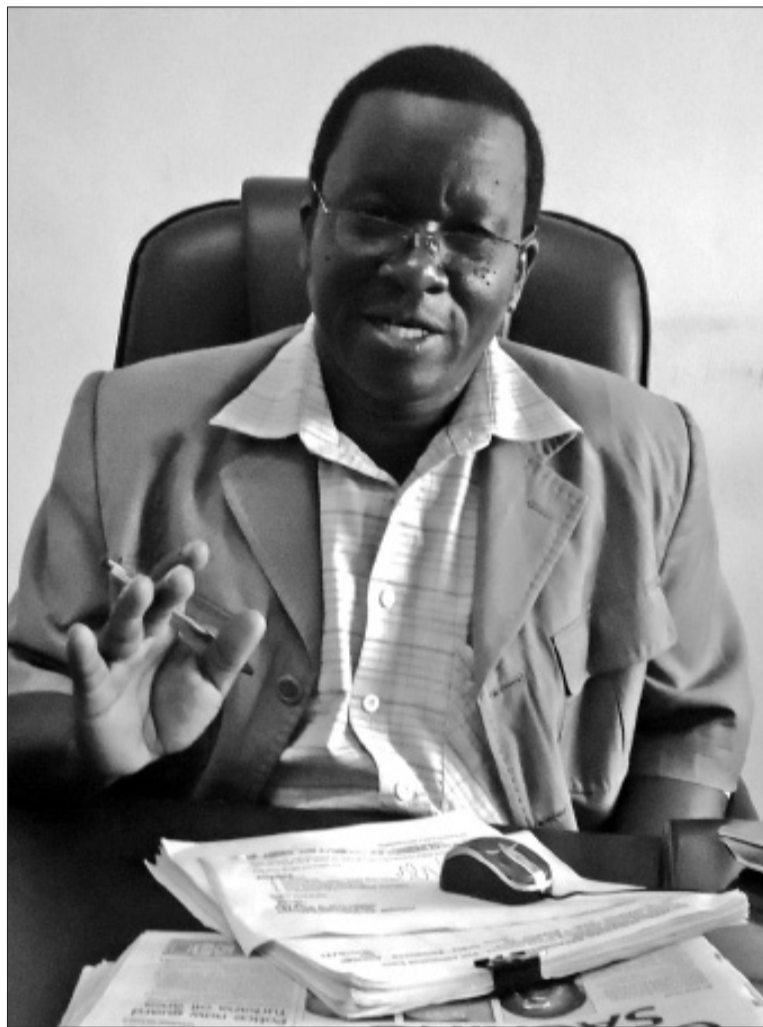
"We sealed most of the loopholes previously used to divert council's revenue thus cultivating goodwill among the residents within our jurisdiction. In return, the residents paid taxes to the council on projects were completed within the specified period," said the Clerk.

He said when he was posted to the council slightly over one and half years ago, he found the then "underdog and poorly performing council," grappling in underperformance but immediately employed working strategies that led to increased performance within a very short period of time.

"When I joined the Council it had been ranked position 168 in performance but I introduced strategies in which workers began working as team players but not as isolated groups or individuals. In no time we were ranked position 36 among the 175 local authorities while in last year's performance evaluation we were placed position eight," he said with a ting of pride.

Mutambuki said the performance had also to do with the ability to harness political good will from the civic leaders. He added that accountability in the use of funds had also been given top priority.

"We are looking forward to improving on our performance further. Next year we expect to be at the apex. At the moment we are focusing on areas that require upgrading within the council," said Mutambuki.



The Mwingi County Council Clerk, Elijah Mutambuki, speaks about the sterling performance of his local authority. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Threats of hunger in Mwatate as crops fail

By **BRIGHTON KAZUNGU**

RESIDENTS of Mwatate Division in Taita Taveta County are faced with starvation.

The residents say the area has registered total crop failure due to the unreliable rainfall pattered coupled with human wildlife conflict," she says.

A resident, Elizabeth Mzungu, says that the massive invasion by jumbos had exposed them to perennial starvation.

"Elephants usually destroy plants before maturity. They have completely destroyed the cow-

peas, pigeon peas, and maize crops. Where are we going to get food to feed our families?" poses Maktau ward councillor, Flumence Mshila.

Mshila adds, "We don't want to continue being dependent on government relief food as it is not enough to feed our families."

The residents say the elephant menace has left some of them virtually destitute after bringing down their houses and destroying properties.

The jumbo invasion has also seen learning in several schools paralyzed after hundreds of the affected students failed to turn out.

Residents are faced with a dilemma since KWS cannot compensate them because the law only gives a consolation fund for injuries and deaths caused by wildlife attacks.

"Under the current policy, individuals who are injured by the wildlife are entitled to Kshs 50,000 in compensation while in cases of death, bereaved families qualify for Kshs 200,000," says Ms Christine Boit, a senior warden in charge of community in Tsavo conservation area.

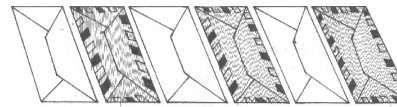
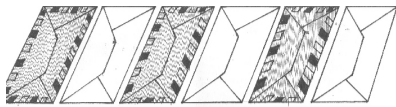
According to the civic leader, residents are likely to remain poor if there are no measures to contain the

menace.

KWS senior warden in charge of Tsavo West southern sector, Samuel Rukaria says that the problem can only be resolved if residents approve the project to fence off the area.

Locals are however opposed to the fencing project claiming that their land might be taken away by KWS.

"We have spent huge sums of money in surveillance and chasing the animals using a chopper. The same resources could be channelled towards supporting community projects if residents approved the fencing project," said Rukaria.



Save parents illogical fees increase

IN the din of the current political noise in a country that has been in the election mode since the bungled one in 2007, attention seems to have shifted from issues of importance to the electorate to alliance building by the political class ahead of 2013 General Elections.

The lawmakers are so immersed in their quest for votes, which have seen them run around the country, wooing the ever-gullible voters.

Matters would have been different if this and other elections were about issues of compelling public and national interest.

Talking of issues, some school heads, taking full advantage of this perpetual confusion and glaring accountability gap, have taken into arbitrarily increasing school fees.

This happens even after the students are issued with a fee structure stating how much is to be paid for a given school year. No sooner is this amount paid than the parents are asked to cough out more cash, with head teachers citing inflation and Government reluctance to bump up the subsidy. It is as if the only ones who are cushioned from the ravages of runaway inflation are parents.

Not even the Ministry of Education guidelines concerning levy administration is adhered to.

Recently, a public boarding school issued a fee structure stating clearly that students will pay an annual fee of Ksh.38,000, the bulk of it, Ksh.25,000 to be paid during the first term.

Just before the end of the term, parents were called for a meeting where they were asked to part with Ksh.5,000 more during the second school term. Students were expected to report with the full amount of Ksh.19000 for second term with no instalments and the balance of Ksh.3,900 to be paid in the final school term.

Education provision has become a cash cow: the school bus project, borehole, dormitory construction and others where parents pay the entire four years.

Question is: where does this money go? Is it any wonder that some head teachers would rather hang on than go on transfer after 'investing' so much in the institution under their jurisdiction?

Unlike banks known for having hidden charges carefully concealed in the fine prints, parents are fleeced in broad daylight, with the full knowledge of education officers. Parents, who complain during meeting seeking to know the basis for the arbitrary increment, are arrogantly asked to play ball or transfer their children to other schools.

It appears parents will have to organize themselves into distinct groups and address the issues seeing that their elected representatives have failed miserably!

The media too has a crucial role to play and must take up such issues and stay with them until the relevant authorities do something constructive.

For, what is democracy and media freedom if civil liberties are trampled upon by unscrupulous individuals and institutions?

Dafala Ibrahim,
via e-mail

Police brutality to blame for the rise in Kenya's death toll

THE police seem to have overstepped their mandate of enforcing law and order by engaging in violent acts that claim lives.

They have thus been dubbed agents of death. From past reports and incidents, it is clear extra-judicial killings, and enormous brutality has left many orphans, widows and widowers, and many others destitute and disillusioned.

This is typical for a country whose citizens are at risk from officers who are supposed to ensure security.

The senseless killings by the police witnessed lately are a sheer lawlessness and outright abuse of the inviolable, indivisible, and inalienable human rights.

A case in point is the Dandora killings that claimed lives of innocent Kenyans who were only minding their business.

This has so far elicited mixed reactions from far and wide: The trend has scaled up to levels beyond jurisprudence.

Needless to mention the demoralising acts allegedly meted on the locals by the Kenya Defence Forces during the peace restoration in Mt. Elgon region few years ago, the police force, too, and no wonder the military fraternity, has often been found on the wrong side of the law.

Raping women, molesting minors, and violating other human rights that call for immediate redress.

That lives can be lost so casually reflects the shortcoming of law enforcers to value human life. Actually, this is a situation that has been with us for a while.

It is about time that reforms took effect. Police cruelty and heinous acts like the one witnessed in Trans Nzoia



The killings by the police witnessed lately are sheer lawlessness and outright abuse of inviolable, indivisible and inalienable human rights.

County early this month is one among many of those that go unnoticed and out of the public glare.

In 2008, Prof Alston and the former Commissioner of Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, Hassan Omar, were vocal on extra judicial police killings.

The matter seems to have been downplayed and termed as lies without proof.

This marked the onset of the game of musical chairs that ensued between the civil society and the Gov-

ernment.

It is illogical for a law enforcer to flout the very law that he or she is obliged to adhere to.

This prompts questions on the level of training of the police officers, and warrants stern action taken against wayward officers.

If indeed Kenya wants to remain a safe haven, then respect of human rights and justice should be to on the agenda.

Bendict Toroitich,
via e-mail.

All job agencies abetting slavery should be closed

THE call by the Central Organisation of Trade Unions (Cotu) that the Government should outlaw foreign recruitment and employment bureaus until the Ministry of Labour and Foreign Affairs come up with a law to regulate their operations is justified.

There has always been public outcry and this is evident on the occasional media reports about Kenyans who look for greener pastures in foreign countries only to be subjects of slave trade and not the lucrative jobs they were promised.

Even though the high rate of unemployment in the country has become a nightmare, which the Government and the youth are still battling, it should not be seen by other people as opportunity to dupe vulnerable Kenyans into taking up perceived employment only to turn them into servitudes.

These individuals still remain Kenyan citizens even as they look for employment opportunities outside the country and, therefore, the Government must remain proactive to ensure that there is no room for witty individuals running these agencies to carry out blatant violations of fundamental rights of Kenyans abroad.

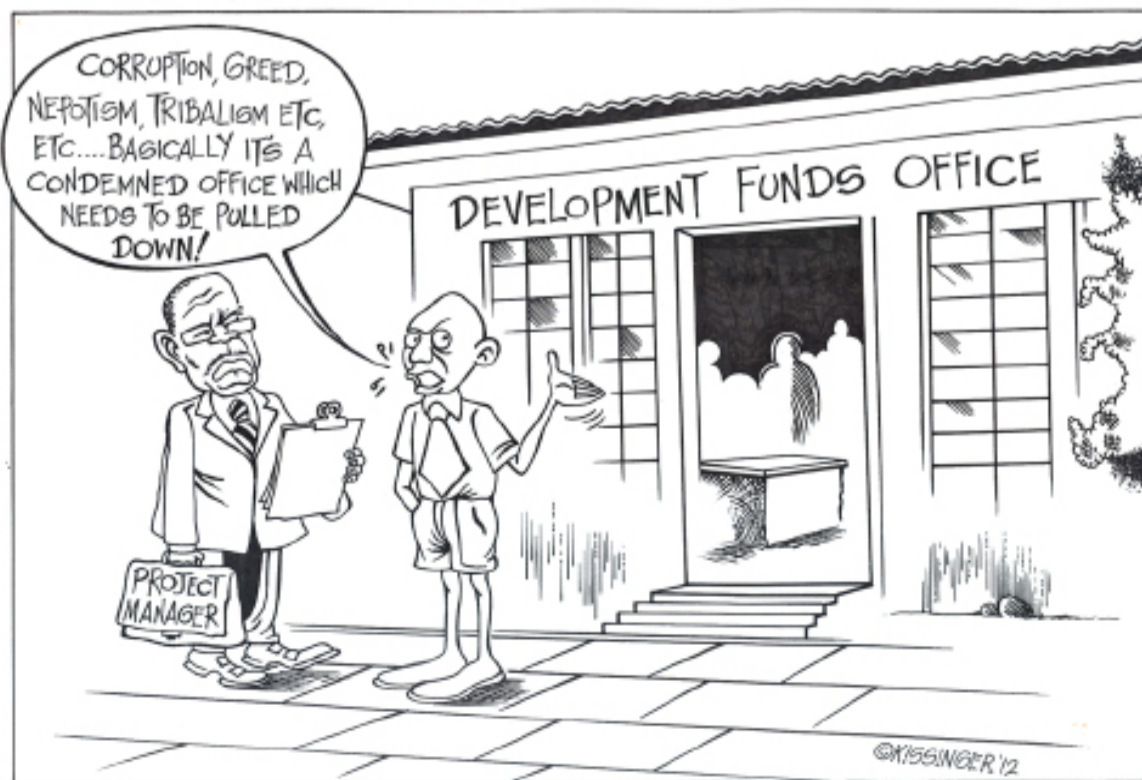
The most worrying thing is that the old labour laws that govern foreign recruitment agencies at the moment have failed to address the escalating cases of violation of human rights even as our country boasts of a new transformative Constitution with most dynamic and robust fundamental rights and freedoms in the world.

It is, therefore, imperative for the Government to move in with speed and enact new laws that will make these agencies accountable for their operations and also affirm the respect for human dignity, rights and freedoms of all their clients.

However, Kenyans especially the youth must not be gullible to these unscrupulous people who promise them heaven on earth, but instead learn from the chilling stories of other Kenyans who came back home after years of mistreatment from their masters.

Not all that glitters is gold.

Nicanor Ndiege,
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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By HENRY OWINO

SIXTY ministers and several technocrats in charge of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), Finance and Planning, and Education from African continent held the first ever forum on STI for Youth Employment, Human Capital Development and Inclusive Growth for Africa in Nairobi, Kenya.

The forum's objective was to chart way forward on how Africans can depend on their own available local resources for innovation to its respective countries' technology without necessarily depending on the Western countries.

The chairperson of African Ministers' Conference on Science, Technology and Education and also the Minister for Science and Technology in South Africa, Hon. Naledi Pandor said Africa do not need to rely on funders or outsiders to develop technological but to innovate and be innovative. She added that Africa governments must be ready to make the resources easily available to the innovators for that innovation to take place in large scale and be recognized and spread to other African countries hence the world.

Pandor added that Africans themselves must be ready and willing to partner up with all sectors not just innovation processes but all scientific technologies both private and public. She alluded that united the Africa nations will grow technologically but if divided all shall fall apart regardless of the resources availability.

She said proper planning, implementation and innovation techniques must work hand in hand for technological innovations since Africans are blessed with good talented skills which are not yet identified and tapped for developments.

"Africa should not depend on Western countries for innovative approaches but should rely on their own local available resources to build on their technological developments. Ones the skills and talents most Africans have are tapped and supported by governments then the continent will have brighter future ever seen," said Pandor.

The host was Kenya's Minister for Higher Education Science and Technology, Prof Margaret Kamar who said Kenyans are well known for their innovation which has been adopted by the world and today the technology has improved to greater scales.

She suggested that to address the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that the universe is headed towards, the governments of various countries should allocate 1 per cent of its gross domestic profit (GDP) for STI development.

Prof Kamar said the amount may look very little but if well utilized can help create job opportunities to the majority of the youth who are unemployed yet are talented in various innovation skills which are untapped.

The host Higher Education, Science and Technology Minister pointed

African leaders meet to pursue own STI agenda

out that for underlined innovations to be addressed the following objectives must be put in place seriously; taking stock of consolidated innovations and plan for STI, building of experiences from lesson learnt from past exhibition innovations and add to new ones, promote rule of policy measures, encourage the role of research, explore the role of innovation in local countries, examine brain to brain innovations and design possible response strategies.

"It is high time we stop so many declarations we have made in the past and take action now by implementing all the good thoughts to work. It is only this way that Africa will move to that next level we are hoping for technology wise," Prof Kamar said.

Prof Kamar said in Africa, it is only Tanzania and Tunisia who have achieved the 1% gross deposit profit (GDP) to Science, Technology and Innovation as proposed. She said South Africa has not yet achieved it but drawing closer while is far below the mark at 0.54% which means a lot need to be done to push it to the required percentage.

Erastus Mwencha, the deputy chairperson, African Union Commission said it is only 7 per cent of the Commission's budget is allocated for Africa research for higher education. He regretted that is very little considering higher education is the pillar to technological innovation.

Mwencha suggested this need to be improved if at all, more research leading to new innovations for technological developments in line with the MDGs concerns.

Donald Kaberuka, the President for African Development Bank (AFDB) said Africa will only forward if they become together to create wealth in innovation not dependency syndrome. He reiterated that universities are under pressure to mould careers and sometimes quality is always compromised.

The AFDB President said that may be one of the reasons why most of African universities are not ranked amongst the top best universities of the world. Kaberuka urged the technocrat experts in higher education to come up with institute specialization for particular career such as innovation and technology than converging courses and students.

The Minister of Communication, Science and Technology in Tanzania, Hon Makame Mnyaa Mbarawa said they have taken seriously innovation after realizing problems with African development agenda which is heavily

relying on Agriculture that depends on weather patterns and substitute it with manufacture services which again are weakly integrated in nearly all African states hence unpredictable.

Mbarawa said Tanzania have therefore allocated 30% of the national budget to STI, developed STI institutions for Science and Technology, one known as Nelson Mandela Institute of Science and Technology for Masters students in Dar else Salaam and Arusha Institute of Technology purely for technologists.

The Tanzania Minister said someone wrote a book and quoted that: "The future is not some a place we are going but the one we are creating now. The paths to it are not found but made and the activity of making them changes both the makers and the destination," adding that is why Tanzania is making some progressive steps in innovations hence technology advancements in the country.

"There is need to recognize the importance of Higher Education, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) for socio-economic development. Supporting and promoting economic and entrepreneurial opportunities in Africa is the way out to STI realization," Mbarawa suggested.

The three days conference of Africa Ministers in charge of STI and Education came up with the following declaration to be observed and implemented by all African countries; to be guided by the Act established by African Union and the declaration of the Summit of the Heads of State and Governments of January 2007 which underscores the role of STI in socio-economic development and in the achievement of the internationally

agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

Further be guided by the commitment of African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government for devoting at least 1% of GDP for Research and Development. Acknowledging the commitment and the role of AUC and regional, multilateral and international organizations namely, AfDB, ADEA, UNECA, and UNESCO, among others in advancing STI and youth development in Africa.

The technocrats experts in innovation and technology also agreed that to create youth employment, human capital development and inclusive growth as conference theme states, all countries should strive individually and collectively towards the development, review and implementation of STI policies, law, strategies, programmes and action plans at regional and national levels for enhancing STI in Africa as captured in the conference theme.

They resolved to enhance the linkages between Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) with Education and Labour Markets in Africa, by implementing specific actions at the national and regional levels, to support the improvement of STEM education in both contents and skills. This was seen as one way of strengthening linkages between knowledge generation and enterprise development and put the necessary measures in place to encourage African youth to pursue studies in the sciences, technology including ICT, engineering and mathematics.

The conference agreed to strengthen Scientific Research in Africa by promoting and increasing investment in collaborative research at national,

regional and intra-regional levels and support institutional and human capacity building in research for development.

To ensure that STI is used to solve societal problems such as water, health, ICT, energy and agriculture, harnessing STI for sustainable development was seen key factor to help improve the well-being of the African people.

Putting place adequate mechanisms to facilitate knowledge production and technology transfer between countries through strengthening of regional networks thus South to South and North to South cooperation and developing appropriate financial instruments.

Promoting STI as a driver for inclusive growth and youth employment with a focus on entrepreneurship was given emphasis to looked into by ; supporting innovation and entrepreneurship programs for youth skills development and empowerment, integrating STI into national and regional sustainable development agenda at all levels, giving priority and streamlining specific national programs that focus on close interaction between governments, academia and small medium enterprises (SMEs) and supporting the improvement of rural development and informal economy.

Commitments to strengthen Higher Education and Research Institutions, including Research Infrastructure, to increase Human capital in STEM as well as knowledge production and dissemination, contribute to the initiatives aimed at promoting STI for development in Africa, namely AMCOST, UNECA's Science with Africa Conference, the AfDB-AUC-ECA-ILO Youth employment, UNESCO and ILO Youth and STI and engineering focused initiatives among others.

Support the full establishment and management of the Pan Africa University (PAU), the African Observatory for Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI), and AU's research grants as well as support the Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA) in Science review process.

Enhance collaboration with among others, AUC, UNESCO, UNECA, and AfDB on the development of national and regional STI policy instruments, the reform of national STI systems, and the promotion STI indicators. Finally the experts called upon AUC to effective implementation and agree to establish mechanisms at national and regional levels to support oversight of these declarations.



Some of the ministers for Science and Technology at the Conference in Nairobi recently.

Kilifi DC calls for legalisation of Mnazi

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE government has been asked to legalise tapping, selling and drinking of the Coconut Palm Wine (Mnazi), the Kilifi District Commissioner Benjamin Wachira has said.

He said the drink was extensively used in Coast Province by the locals due to its low cost and availability and therefore urged the government

legalise it. The DC urged the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) to develop quality standards for the wine to ensure safety of its users.

"Mnazi wine is the common local bear taken by many people in Coast including those coming from other regions because it is locally available and cheap and it will be wise to have it legalized" said Mr. Wachira.

The DC was speaking to local

and upcoming youth traders during a stakeholders meeting to sensitize them on the importance of selling certified products and getting the proper registration of their products by Kenya Bureau of standards.

KEBS, Coast branch Manager, Vincent Cheruiyot, told the forum that his organisation had plans to develop the quality standards for the local wine and soon the product will be

sold in the market.

"KEBS has developed quality standards for Chang'aa soon after the Government legalised local brews but we are currently concentrating on the development of the same for Mnazi wine from Coast and muratina from Central Province," Cheruiyot said.

Cheruiyot confirmed that most Kenyans could not afford beers sold

in the market and there was a need to improve the quality of local brews and wines to ensure they do not harm our people.

D.C Wachira said mnazi wine could be a source of income for the Coast people if proper policies were put in place to guide in the tapping and conservation of the product to ensure it does not harm the lives of its consumers.

Govt repossess two fish landing sites in Malindi

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Government has repossessed two fish landing sites from private developers and more others are being targeted for recovery, the Fisheries Development Minister has said.

Amason Kingi said Lands Minister James Orengo had nullified the allocation of the two fish landing sites at Malindi, which have been returned to the local fishermen.

The minister made the remarks at Mtondia Chief's office when he addressed fish pond farmers in Bahari and those of Chasimba in Chonyi division.

"My ministry is in the process of recovering all the grabbed fish land-

ing sites along the Coastal line and as I speak fish pond farmers and two fish landing sites which had been grabbed by private developers have been revoked," said Mr Kingi.

The minister, who was accompanied by the chairman of Malindi County Council Kingi Ngombo and Kilifi town council Esther Kache, said his ministry will reclaim all grabbed public utility plots including the fish landing sites and public recreational beach sites.

Kingi said: "the grabbing of public utility plots such as the fish landing sites and public recreational areas like that of Jomo Kenyatta public beach will not be tolerated and am challenging the private developers who could

have grabbed such sites to politely surrender them"

He expressed shock that over 400 fishermen had been displaced after their fish landing site at Bofa in Kilifi had been grabbed by a private developer.

"Bwana Minister we are pleading with you to assist us recover our bofa fish landing sites which had been grabbed by a private developer and as we are talking to you now we have been evicted from the site," said the chairman of Bofa beach management unit Mr. Hamad Juma.

The Minister directed that the private developer who grabbed the land to return the site failure to which the government will forcefully reclaim it.

Mr. Kingi further warned private developers who have blocked access routes to the beach to pull down the perimeter walls immediately.

"Kenyans have rights to access the beach areas either for recreational purposes or for fishing and any private developer who blocks such routes with perimeter wall stands to face prosecution" said Kingi.

The minister directed all local authorities and district commissioners in the area to ensure all the blocked access routes to beach are immediately reopened.

"Local authorities and the officers from the provincial administration have powers to block any private developer from erecting perimeter

walls which block access routes to the beaches and I am directing the clerks to the councils in coast and the officers from the provincial administration to ensure all blocked routes are reopened" said Mr. Kingi

The minister said civil servants have the duty to implement government policies and they should not wait ministers to come down to the districts and address small problems which they could easily handle.

"Ordering a developer who erected buildings near the ocean shore lines and blocking of access routes to the beaches does not require a minister to fly from Nairobi as the clerks to the council and the DCs have the powers to do the same," said Mr. Kingi.

Authority vows to tame cowboy contractors



Public Works Minister Chris Obure (left) is shown the ongoing project of Othaya Level 4 Hospital by the superintending architect Samuel Mbogo (right). Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

ROGUE contractors will soon become history if proposals outlined in the National Construction Authority Act are implemented.

All contractors are to be registered afresh, retrained and regulated by the authority once the new law becomes effective.

"Currently it is difficult for the government to regulate the sector because contractors are not registered under one body. The proposed centralized registration authority has powers to black-list contractors and recommend the expulsion of others if they do not meet the minimum requirements," said Public Works Minister, Chris Obure.

This new law targets all the 7,000 contractors in the country in order to ensure rogue contractors are locked out of the industry.

The minister said the National construction Act is ready and the gov-

ernment will soon announce the date when the act will become operational.

He said that the Act will provide the legislative framework for centralized registration and training in the construction industry which is lacking at the moment to rein in on cowboy contractors who do not have the technical or financial capacity to undertake construction work.

Obure was speaking at Othaya Level 4 Hospital when he inspected the facility.

Earlier, he toured Nyeri South District headquarters in Othaya town and the Nyeri Technical Training Institute in Nyeri town where he inspected the ongoing construction projects done by his Ministry.

He said the registration mechanism is currently fragmented with every government agency maintaining its own register.

"The new law will ensure that only competent contractors are awarded tenders to curb the proliferation of

briefcase contractors," he added.

The minister said the registration will also ensure that the projects undertaken are of good quality and completed on time while barring non-performing contractors from migrating and actively tendering for projects in other Ministries.

The Minister pointed that the mechanism is a complete shift from the old era where projects were never completed due to poor planning leading to the stalling of projects while ministries are left paying huge sums of money in pending bills for uncompleted projects.

"The Act will see constitution of a management board to register and conduct business. The board will ensure that only earmarked projects are undertaken and done when funds are available to ensure timely completion," he added.

On the ever rising cost of labour and construction materials, the Minister said discussions are ongoing with

the Treasury to review base rates in line with the current trends of inflation.

"The escalating cost of labour and materials has seen contractors fail to meet obligation on the works tendered for, leading to distortion of the Government's programmes," he added.

Obure added that the effect of rising labour and material cost was particularly experienced during the 2007 post election violence where overall cost went up by 57 per cent due to displacement of people.

"We have however noted the cost of construction has gone up considerably due to the high cost of building materials which has been brought about by inflation and also the aftermath of the post election violence which rocked the country in year 2008," he added.

Othaya District hospital which is being upgraded to Othaya Level 4 hospital at a cost of Sh 436 million will be finished by May 10th this year.

Mariakani bikers defy council over new levy

By BEKADZO TONDO

MOTORBIKE operators in Mariakani town are up in arms following the introduction of Kshs500 monthly charges by the local authority.

The angry operators confronted the chairman of Mariakani Town Council Charo Dena during a public baraza at Mariakani Milk Scheme and demanded that the council revoke the new levy. Led by their spokesman Paul Katana, the operators accused the council of imposing high levies on them. Trouble started when Katana took to the floor and urged the council to revoke the charges failure to which Motorbike operators will boycott paying them.

"The council is fleecing motorbike operators in Mariakani by forcing them to pay high levies of Ksh500 per month and the blame should go to the council chairman who failed to consult the operators before increasing the charges," Katana said.

But in quick rejoinder, Dena accused politicians in the area of inciting operators in order to win their support ahead of the coming General Elections. "The council cannot revoke the monthly charges imposed on the motorbike operators because the new levy has been gazetted following approval by the Ministry of Local Government. Politicians should refrain from inciting the public to boycott paying of levies to the local authority," Dena said.

Dena said the council relies on the revenue generated from service levies to discharge its mandate and asked leaders not to politicize the issue. He said all traders must comply with the directive on payments or risk prosecution. "The council will continue collecting the money from the motorbike operators as the charges have been approved by the Minister for Local Government," said Dena.

A motorbike operator, Jacob Safari, who spoke to *The Link* on their behalf, argued that the Ksh500 monthly fee they are being forced to pay by the council was too high and called for its reduction. "As motorbike operators, we are not opposed to payments of levies to the council, but the new charges are too high and we appeal to the council to reduce the same," Safari said.

The operators said the motorbikes they are operating are for hire and thus may be forced to halt their operations if the charges are not reduced.

"Most of us have families and rely on this business for our livelihoods but if the council insists on levying the new charges, we have no option but to close shop," said Safari.

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

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

Project unites CSOs for peacebuilding

BY the time you read this column, we will know how many legal political parties we have in Kenya. At this moment of writing, the majority of the political parties in Kenya are trying to get their houses in order to be able to register in accordance with the requirements of the new Political Parties Act. If parties do not comply with the Act, they will not be able to participate in the next General Election. Currently only six political parties have been awarded their certificate - which ensures that the party has a national outlook, 1000 members in at least 24 counties, a governing body that addresses gender, regional, ethnic and minority balance and has offices in 24 counties. This ongoing exercise is very important, not only for the legitimacy of the political parties but also for the consolidation of democracy in Kenya. A parallel exercise which consolidates efforts in peacebuilding has been taking place in the Partnership for Peace project in the month of April.

Between the 10th and 17th of April, Communication and Coordination (C & C) took place in each of the three regions. The purpose of these meetings, which have occurred periodically throughout the Partnership for Peace project, is to bring together the CSOs in each region and to strengthen their work as individual organizations and as networks. The focus of this round of C & C meetings was sustainability, thus we worked on how best to strengthen

MANAGER'S COLUMN



By
HANNA CLIFFORD
(PROJECT SUPPORT MANAGER)

the regional networks so that they could act as a tool for sustainability of the partnership for peace project. Through the CSO networks the achievements of the Partnership for Peace, particularly the capacity building and training on peace-building, will be maintained and built on, resulting in further capacity to prevent and resolve conflict in the three regions. The outcome of each of the C & C meetings was a sustainability strategy for each of the networks.

The CSO network in Western region, which brings together CSOs from Vihiga, Bungoma, Kakamega and Busia counties, is called the Western Region Peace Network (WREPEN). WREPEN was formed quite recently, and is currently in the process of registering as an official organization. There is a great deal of commitment and enthusiasm among the Western CSOs to work as a network, and after having recently appointed a new Chairman, Moses Odikor, the group is moving forward in unison. Some of the general challenges which WREPEN have been facing are a feeling a marginalization by some CSOs, lack of funds for activities, low visibility of the network. During the C & C meeting, the group worked on strategies to improve the

functioning of the network and ensure long-term success.

In Nyanza, the Nyanza Partners for Peace Alliance (NPPA) has been formed. The NPPA is an alliance of 41 CSOs working throughout Nyanza region, from Migori to Siaya. The coordinator of the network is Edwin Adoga, who was appointed by the members after proving his capability during his time as Regional Coordinator for the Partnership for Peace in Nyanza. The management of the network is shared across a number of member CSOs, as well as every member having a place on one of the four committees created to oversee the progress of the network. The NPPA benefits from the fact that its members are relatively young and full of enthusiasm for change. Notwithstanding, a challenge which the network has faced so far has been a lack of focus and direction for the network – what can the network provide over and above what individual member CSOs can offer, for example?

In Rift Valley, due to the vastness of the region, three networks have been formed, one covering south rift (NABOK), one covering central (BAKENA) and one for the North Rift (COPEN). The progress of each of the networks in Rift Valley has been quite varied. NABOK and BAKENA have not yet formalised their alliance, and yet they represent very cohesive and functional cooperation – already having organized joint activities. COPEN on the other hand, while it has been a registered and formal entity

since 2010, has struggled to find its purpose and unite its members. During the C & C meetings BAKENA and NABOK networks worked on ways to strengthen their alliance, through carrying out more joint peace activities. These joint activities would also enable the network to raise its visibility and potentially bring in additional funds. COPEN on the other hand, focused more on creating a more balanced and accountable leadership, and improving communication that could drive the network forward. Each of the networks has created action plans for the coming months that aim at implementing aspects of their sustainability strategy.

The sustainability strategies for all the five networks can be found on www.partnershipforpeace.eu and in this month's supplement you will find more articles about the meetings.

It is hoped that the networks will succeed in guiding communities through the upcoming elections, complementing the efforts by the government to ensure that those running for election do so peacefully and for the advancement of all Kenyans.

For the International Project Manager,

The writer is the Project Support Manager of the Partnership for Peace Project. For comments or suggestions write to:
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Trans Nzoia IDPs' horrifying tales of destitution

BY JOHN NYAMBUNE

JUDITH Nakhumicha (not her real name) is barely six years of age. The look on her face says she has seen it all. Donned in a frayed cream dress that reveals her skinny malnourished body, she sits helplessly under a tree feebly chasing away houseflies that find pleasure feeding on her open wounds.

Her reddish eyes look pale and exhausted and, neighbors say, she has been crying since morning after her

mother removed jiggers from her infested legs and hands.

However, Nakhumicha is not alone. Her situation is replicated in many children who live in pathetic conditions in the Patakwa and Teldet IDP camps in Trans Nzoia County. The situation at the camp is an indication of how low humanity can sink.

The new Constitution under Chapter Four, states clearly that: "Every person has inherent dignity and the right to have that dignity respected and protected".

The IDPs live in tattered tents, which despite being patched with paper bags that

are sawn together with sisal, are almost in agreement that they cannot take it anymore. They have seen better days and no effort to repair them can bear any fruit. As such, the occupants have to bare cold nights in the evening while during the day the tents are as dusty as any earth road.

But that is not all. Nakhumicha's problems are complicated by poor sanitation and lack of toilets in the area with most families languishing in poverty, and highly dependent on aid from either government or donors.

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Church leaders urged to preach peace

By **NYAKWAR ODAWO**

CHURCH leaders in Busia County have been challenged to be in the forefront of promoting peace in their respective areas in order to guarantee harmonious co-existence among the various ethnic communities in their areas of jurisdiction.

Speaking during a peace building forum held at Bukalama ACK church in Nambale district sponsored by the European Union in collaboration with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and Mt Elgon Residents Association

(MERA), recently, the group chairman John Ochemo said the church was in a better position to preach peace.

Mr Ochemo said the main objective of the forum was to engage in active peacebuilding process in the areas that were seriously affected by the post-election violence such as Western, Rift Valley and Nyanza provinces ahead of the next general election in order to promote peaceful co-existence especially in Busia County, which is a cosmopolitan region. He called upon the members of various community based organisations and church

leaders drawn from the entire Busia County who had attended the forum to work closely with the local provincial administration to sow the seeds of peace.

The provincial coordinator in charge of peace building forum Peter Chem, who was also present, on his part said a total of 120 groups, 40 from each of the affected provinces (Western, Nyanza and Rift Valley) had been targeted and will be used to reach 3 million people through civic education ahead of the next general elections.

"The European Union through Konra-

dAdenauerStiftung and Mt Elgon Residents Association is targeting 120 groups at the grassroots level that will be used as a platform to reach the 3 million people through civic education aimed at promoting peaceful co-existence among the various ethnic communities," Chem said.

Even so, he cautioned members of the community based organisations involved in peacebuilding initiatives to advise the people from their respective areas, especially the youth, not to be used by politicians to create disunity.

Trans Nzoia IDPs' horrifying tales of destitution

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Despite the effort of the government in resettling IDPs from Rongai in Nakuru on a 700 acre piece of land in Chepchoina and Kapkoi farms in Kwanza District early this year, native IDPs of Trans Nzoia who are victims of tribal clashes of 1992/1995 and 1997 post-election violence are still landless.

Patakwa camp has 250 IDPs while Teldet, which is the largest, holds 373 IDPs who are all congested in one and half acres of land.

Mary Nangila is mother of six and grandmother of four amongst them Nakhumicha. She has lived in as a squatter in Patakwa camp since her childhood.

"I was born here and this is my native land, but it never crossed my mind that one day I will be a squatter in my own ancestral land," she says adding that things changed during the tribal clashes of 1992/1995 and the post-election violence of 2007 when they were forced to flee to Kitale show ground.

"The government under the Peace Initiative 'Operasheni Rudi Nyumbani' assured us of our safety and told us to go back home. We came back here and we were informed that this land belonged to somebody else," she said, tears welling into her eyes.

She continues, "Because we do not have a privilege of owning the land as we are barred by both government and private developers to cultivate the land, we are just congested in this tiny land".

Due to the congestion, sanitation in the camp is pathetic and the smell of dry fecal matters of both human beings and livestock permeates the atmosphere as chicken are busy searching for food in the matter. Victims say the toilets in the camp are permanently shut down after they started overflowing four months ago.

"We have several cases of stomach problems and other related diseases that affect both children and adults. Some people who have money are forced to go to the nearest market known as Embakassi about four kilometers away to access a toilet on the pretext that they have gone shopping," says Mr. Peter Ndiema a resident of Patakwa.

Kenya Land Alliance North Rift representative Mr. John MatandaMkwele accused the government of failing in its mandate. "In Trans Nzoia, we have IDPs and they need also to be resettled, this people have been using non-violent ways to go the district



IDPs in a camp.

commissioner's office and Ministry of Lands but no help is forthcoming. The Government should re-consider finding alternative ways of re-settling these IDPs. There are many IDPs groups like Trans Nzoia Squatters Alliance and Umoja Clash Victims". He said.

The victims in the camps have also blamed the judiciary for dragging land cases for upto 10 years saying they have lost confidence with it.

According to Mr. Mkwele judiciary has been reluctant in giving verdicts on pending land cases.

"Cases of double allocation and trespass are very common. For instance, two people are allocated the same land and both of them have legal documents, when cases are taken before the court it takes several years to resolve them.

Some complainants wait for long for justice to be done until they grow old and die before justice is done or cases concluded. He said adding that the National land Commission should be formed urgently as it will be able to solve land issues.

"Kitale High court has only one judge after one of them died, it is difficult for him to

handle all the cases at the same time", said Mr. Mkwele.

Mr. Leonard Barasa Director Catholic Justice Peace Commission in Kitale blamed the past regimes of ignoring the plight of IDPs. He further accused some politicians and government officials of grabbing several hectares of land from the victims who did not have land title deeds.

"Almost 5000 victims are still landless since tribal clashes of 1992/1995 and post-election violence of 1997. While, the National Accord paved way for the government to resettle landless people, we were sidelined during the 'Operasheni Rudi Nyumbani'. They went ahead and destroyed IDPs camps at the Endebess without informing us. The government should stop being selective and give equal treatment to the IDPs and squatters remaining unsettled," he observed.

Special programmes officer in charge of the IDPs North Rift Region Mr. Peter Erepete said the government is still looking for land to resettle the victims.

"Ministry of Lands has responsibility of buying the land and sub-dividing it into two

and a quarter acres of land for each IDP, we cannot estimate how much the land will cost but I know there is enough money to do this work. Our obligation as special programmes is to resettle them and building houses for them. But this will be done as soon as the land is available and we agree with the owner," Erepete explained.

Mr. Barongo Gideon, a lawyer based in Kitale, says the Government has an obligation of resettling the victims. "Although the constitution has not come out clearly on the issues of the IDPs, this does not deny them the right to own land. They are also entitled to own land. They need to be treated like any person. The constitution says that everybody has a right to own land."

Sabaot MP Eugene Wamalwa says he will push the three bills namely National Land Commission Bill 2012, land registration Bill 2012 and Land Bill 2012 to pass in parliament to bring some relief to squatters and IDPs in the country at large.

Regional Provincial Commissioner for North Rift Valley and Turkana Regions, Mr. Wilson Wanyenga said vetting of the IDPs in Patakwa and Teldet has been completed.

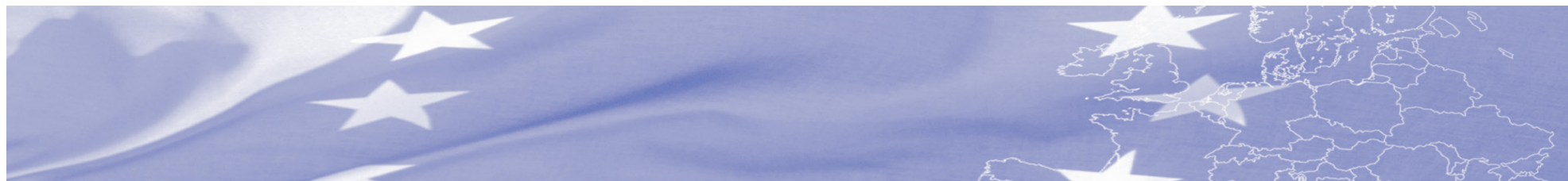


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By LUKE KAPCHANGA

Webuye meeting outlines causes of conflict

FROSTY relationships and poor negotiating skills between provincial administrators and church leaders are fueling insecurity in Webuye.

This was said during a peace meeting for Webuye division in Bungoma East district. The meeting was organized by Ambana Sirende CBO and facilitated by Mount Elgon Residents Association, under Partnership for Peace Project funded by the European Union.

Church leaders were accused of inciting the youth against the provincial administration whenever conflict arose between them.

The meeting identified rising poverty levels among the youth as a major concern as it has been linked to insecurity which could spark off violence during election period.

Michael Barasa, an official of Ambana Sirende Community Based Organization, said children as young as 9 – 12 years are involved in criminal activities.

"The trend of insecurity is worrying when school going children turns to criminality to fend for their families and meet their personal needs," Barasa observed.

The pace for the open forum was set by the Western provincial coordinator Peter Chem, who urged participants not to expect much information from facilitators.

"We are here to learn more from you, so kindly speak out openly on underlying issues that are likely to spark off violence in this area," Chem said.

Isabella Wanjala told the meeting that food insecurity has led to increased cases of theft, and house break-ins in general.

"Those stealing are after securing food, as they lack alternative sources of income generation," she said. She challenged leaders at all levels to be agents of change to create job opportunities and maximize on land use.

Rose Wakasa, who heads a CBO for teenage mothers, complained that most girls were giving birth at home before attaining 18 years.

The boys behind the pregnancies, she noted, were Bodabodariders who are very irresponsible due to unreliable sources of income to support families.

The problem gets worse when the boys



Youth during post election violence in 2007/2008. Inset: Peter Chem, Western Provincial Coordinator.

abandon pregnant girls at the parents homes, who also lack adequate income to support additional family members.

Richard Situma decried the breakdown of the social fabric, where by the community has no say when it comes to discipline of children in their upbringing.

"In the past children belonged to the community but now parents do not want their children to be punished when they go wrong," he observed.

Provincial administrators pointed an accusing finger to parents over the rising cases of teenage pregnancies and insecurity.

BramwelJuma, assistant chief for Malaha, complained of high rates of primary school drop outs saying this meant that the affected children may not be able to secure meaningful employment in the future.

Juma said children who drop out of

school get employed as house helps and farm hands and because of the meagre income, majority end up as gangsters.

This group also marries early and get divorced when life becomes difficult due to scarce resources.

On his part, Hussein Simiyu, the assistant chief for Misikhu, accused parents for turning early pregnancies into business.

Simiyu told the meeting that some parents opt for out of court settlements especially when offenders are willing to pay fines.

"Most girls suffer in silence especially in cases where the culprits pay fines or when the offenders are close relatives," he said

He complained that poor parenting and failure by parents to provide necessary needs is the cause of insecurity.

Simiyu noted that drug abuse is on the

increase among the youth and the supply chain is well connected from Uganda up to Mombasa.

"The drug business is protected and any attempt to disrupt the distribution network can be repulsed fiercely," he said.

The drug supply chain is highly connected and those arrested are released under unclear circumstances when they appear in court

Leaders at all levels were accused of setting bad example to the youth on development and discipline. Job Matala said leaders do not provide any direction to the people and thus cannot be relied upon to bring about peace and development.

He complained that leaders do not understand themselves; they do not know the concerns of the people other than worship wealth.

Western peace builders vow to soldier on

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

ENDING of the Partnership for Peace Project funded by the European Union (EU) will not mark the end of peace programmes in western region.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that partnered with Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) under the umbrella of Mount Elgon Residents Association (MERA) during the implementation of the EU funded peace project have vowed to proceed with the peacebuilding programme.

The 40 CSOs have formed one organisation called Western Region Peace Network through which they will continue to pass on the knowledge achieved through the Partnership for Peace Project.

Speaking in KakamegaTown recently during a two day meeting, the peace network members said that it would be self-defeating if peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes in the region were to stop immediately after the exit of the EU funded project.

Consequently, the CSOs asserted that with or without donor funds they will

continue to build peace and ensure that the knowledge gained during the three year project implementation period is passed on in order to avert violence.

MERA was given the mandate to continue coordinating the activities of the network including sourcing for funds as the organisation awaits registration certificate from the registrar of societies.

The Partnership for Peace Project International Manager Hanna Carlsson appealed to the members of the network to be focused and embrace teamwork.

Ms Hanna observed that for the or-

ganisation to be sustainable it should have effective management, positive relationship with stakeholders and high quality services that respond to felt needs.

A consultant with the project, Ms Kristina Flodman, emphasized the need for the network members to update themselves regularly in order to work harmoniously.

She called upon the network members to embrace internal monitoring and evaluation through regular appraisal meetings.



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PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

Address roots of poverty to preserve peace

By JONATHAN KIMUGE

COMMENTATORS in Europe talk of a crisis in the Euro Zone where countries such as Austria complain of 5 per cent unemployment and about 6 per cent of the population living below the poverty line. When we consider that Kenya has 40 per cent unemployment and 50 per cent of its population lives under the official poverty line the concept of a crisis in Europe seems rather shallow.

Kenya alone has about 25 million inhabitants living in abject poverty and according to the United Nations 12.5 million are threatened with drought and famine in the region. This contrasts with many who live in luxury in the metropolis of Nairobi next to Africa's largest slums. Something is very wrong and radical changes are required.

East Africa's ails are not caused by one single factor. There are a complex series of causations that are playing and hindering economic empowerment. This article is an attempt to throw light on the complexities and yet offer new dynamic models which will probably facilitate and speed up growth.

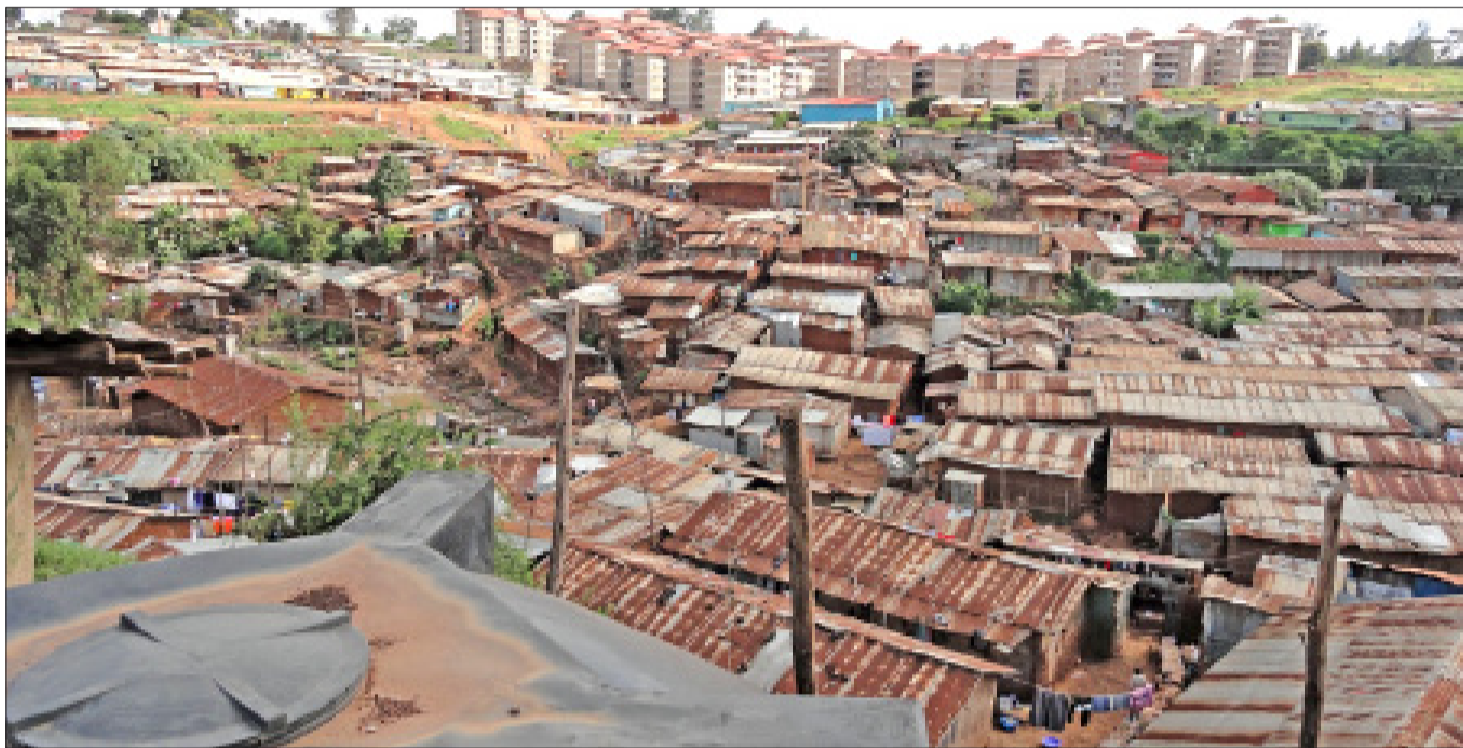
The Causations:

1. Climate Change: Global warming is causing the migration of deserts and once fertile land is now arid or semi-arid and no longer conducive to traditional farming methods. 75% of Kenya is according to the United Nations either arid or semi-arid and the remaining fertile farm land is mainly to be found in the Great Rift Valley.

2. Crop diseases and pests: The crops are being attacked by natural hazards which are mutating and changing making management of farmland complex. It requires skilled know how to respond to crop diseases and the vast majority of the population simply do not have the capacity to understand the diseases and administer or afford the consultants to do this for them so the appropriate measures can be implemented.

3. Population Growth: Somalia has a staggeringly high birthrate of 6.3 births per female. When we consider that some females die young and are infertile the number of births per head is extremely high. Developed nations such as Austria have just 1.3 births per female. Rapidly expanding population adds greater pressure on the existing resources.

4. Longevity: Kenyans live to an average age of 63 years which has increased from 55 years just 5 years ago. The reason for the low life expectancy is because of diseases such as HIV, TB and Malaria and inadequate health care and prevention. Kenya has the 4th highest HIV infection rate in the entire World. Many of those who were



A section of Kibera slum in Nairobi. Many Kenyans live below poverty line.

infected have now sadly perished which has raised Kenya's life expectancy, however, we are left with a lost generation. 10 per cent of Kenyan children are orphaned. The youth require mentoring and nurturing to secure a robust future. However, there are too few mature and experienced Kenyans to help these orphans and disadvantaged youth develop to secure the future.

5. Racism and Nationalism: Tribal rivalries in Africa are deep seated. Rwanda's genocide is not that long ago. The post-election violence in Kenya back in 2007-2008 left thousands dead and millions displaced. It is still lying under the surface and there continue to be great challenges to heal the Kenyan soul and bring communities together in trust and focused on the

"Common Good". The new Kenyan constitution is a bold attempt to address these issues but it is yet to be implemented.

6. Civil War: The instability in the region and in particular in neighboring Somalia is adding further pressure to Kenya and East Africa generally as refugees flee the life threatening situation. The negative perceptions this is having on the rest of the World is challenging the tourist industry as well and denying Kenya income from visitors who are staying away in their thousands.

7. Misguided Charity: Prof. Muhammed-Yunus is a critic of charity which he argues fails to facilitate sustainable growth. Charity is based on pity and often doctrine rather

than smart and sustainable solutions. The sheer amount of money that is spent paying for pilgrims to fly to Africa from developed countries, not to mention their upkeep and living expenses is a significant financial investment. Arguably, these acts of charity actually exacerbate the situation adding to the attraction of people to flee to the slums.

There is the need therefore to fast track changes in people's thinking on how to engage duty bearers to come up with solutions to the problems that bedevil the marginalized and disadvantaged in the society that breeds conflict.

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Police cautioned against torturing suspects

By KAVYU-KURA

THE Police force has been cautioned against subjecting suspects to torture as this could lead to prosecution of concerned officers.

The senior human rights officer at the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, Lois Atambitsa Munala, said recently that the Kenyan constitution and various international conventions criminalized torture and any form of human rights violation.

She asked the police to apply human rights based approach while handling suspected criminals and the general public to avoid a brush with the law. She said police officers needed to acquaint themselves with human rights principles in the course of their work.

The KNCHR official was speaking at the Kitui Agricultural Training Centre during the training of 50 police officers on the ideals and principles of human rights. The two day training workshop was organized by the Kitui paralegal office in conjunction with KNCHR.

The human rights official noted that in the face of the impending reforms, the officers must cultivate human rights culture in their work in order to bridge the widening gap between them and the members of the public.

She pointed out that the KNCHR seeks to work hand in hand with the police in upholding human rights of all Kenyans and would not hesitate to seek redress for persons whose rights were

violated. She added that charges would also be pressed against violators of human rights.

Munala said KNCHR was constantly monitoring government agencies for alleged violation of rights and ensures redress for genuine violation cases. The organization, she added had also a role to advise the government to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights.

She said that there was need for the police boss to respect the rights of junior officers by ensuring they did not stay long in hardship stations, given punitive transfers, awarded promotions on merit and the rights to their families respected.

An official from the Kitui paralegal office Christine Beth noted that the training sought to minimize manhandling of the public

by the police. "We wanted to train you on human rights based handling of the public in order to ward off animosity and mistrust among the two groups," said Beth.

The police officers were inducted on the Chapter on the Bill of rights in the new constitution, how to handle suspects and the public in a humanely manner and their relationship with KNCHR among other topics.



The Kitui Deputy OCPD, Moses Kanyi (right), among other police officers who received training on human rights issues at the Kitui Agricultural Training Institute. Photo/Kavyu Kura

World Bank funds fishing activities at the coast

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Government has received Kshs 3 billion from the World Bank to improve fishing activities in Coast region. Fisheries Development Minister Amason Kingi says the funds have been channeled to the government through Kenya Marine and Fisheries Institute (KEMFRI).

The funds will mostly be used to fund research programmes on fisheries matters, train local farmers and equip them with modern fishing gears.

The Minister laments that coast province which has a vast cover of Indian Ocean waters has been producing only six percent of the total fish exports in the county while the rest comes from Lake Victoria.

"It is shocking to learn that Coast Province, which is endowed with enormous water resources from the Indian ocean has only managed to contribute six percent of the total fish exportation while Lake Victoria and other local water sources from rivers and other lakes from upcountry have been producing over 94 percent of the fish being exported to other countries," said Kingi. The minister

however blamed lack of modern fishing gears by the local fishermen in Coast Province for the low fish catch.

Minister Kingi said "Our local fishermen have no capacity of catching big tonnes of fish due to the overreliance on local fishing gears like canoes which cannot venture into deep seas fishing while others use local fishing lines." Kingi made the remarks at Vitengeni divisional headquarters recently where he addressed fish pond farmers after inspecting the farming activities in the field.

The minister distributed fish liners to the fish pond farmers and gave his personal donation of Kshs 100,000 to Vitengeni fish farmers association to improve their farming activities.

Kingi who was accompanied by his assistant minister Ali Chiba and the Fisheries Director in charge of fish quality Assurance and Marketing Okumu Makogola said his ministry was committed to develop fisheries activities in Coast.

He said part of the World Bank donated funds will be used to support fish pond farming in the Coast region to ensure fish production

is improved and challenged other fishermen especially from Lake Victoria to increase their production.

The minister said though the coast soils are not good at holding fish pond waters, the government will not relent in encouraging farmers to continue with the farming saying the farmers will be supported with fish pond liners to contain water. "The type of soils found in most parts of Coast Province are porous something which has made it difficult for the ponds to hold water but that challenge will not make my ministry to stop the project as it will support the farmers with fish pond liners to contain waters in the ponds" said Mr. Kingi

The minister further said the government will construct a fish processing plant in all counties where fish pond farming is practiced. He said the farmers need fish processing plants in their respective areas so that the fish can be processed and more value added so that farmers can fetch good profits.

He said his ministry will liaise with the water ministry to supply water to fish pond farmers in

Ganze through water buzzers as the area was too dry.

Farmers led by the chairman of Vitengeni Fish Pond association Mr. Kennedy Mwangome had complained to the minister that most fish pond farmers were about to abandon the farming due to lack of water for their ponds. "Water sources to feed our fish ponds, remains a big challenge to our farmers in Vitengeni and we appeal to the government to supply us with water or else we abandon the farming" said Mr Mwangome.



Mr. Amason Kingi: Fisheries Development minister.

Who enjoys the wealth of Taita Taveta County?

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

TAITA Taveta County is vastly endowed with enormous resources which singles it out as one of the richest Counties in the Country. From minerals found in the low land areas to great opportunities for ecotourism and Agriculture, the county is a hidden treasure whose potential remains largely unexploited.

The county is rich in minerals that range from Asphalt, Iron Ore, Green garnet, Ruby, Tsavorite, blue sapphire and garnet. The minerals are mainly concentrated in the low land areas of Kasighau, Chungaunga, Kamtonga Mwachabo and Mkuki.

However, the resources have not been fully exploited to earn locals any substantive income. Poverty levels remain high in the area where residents toil endlessly in the mines to eke out a living. Most of these mines are privately owned by prominent businessmen and politicians while locals only work as casual labourers. Poor working conditions coupled by insecurity and low wages mainly define the mines.

In 2009, a Scottish mining prospector known as Bridges Campbell who discovered Tsavorite was attacked and killed by a gang of youths on his way to the mines in Mwachabo area in Mwatate constituency. Political interference also continues to impede investments in the sector. Prospects to mine iron ore at Kishushe area have stalled due to politicization of the project. Scores of attempts by prospectors to invest in the mining project have been fruitless as politics take an upper edge. Last year Devki Steel Mills Chief Executive Officer Raval Guru attended a special full council meeting and announced plans by the company to spend Kshs36 billion in putting up a steel processing plant in the area. He said that if the project proceeds according to plan, then 90 percent of the jobs would go to the local community to help address the rising poverty levels.

However, some local leaders are opposed to the plan and have convened several meetings to incite residents against the investor who they claim is part of a clique that wants to amass immense wealth at the expense of the residents. The District Geologist officer Edward Omito has remained silent over the matter.

Apart from mining, the region has enormous potential in agriculture and is endowed with a number of tourist attraction sites namely the scenic hills and the unique forests which are likely to boost the economy of the county.

Areas of Werugha, Mwanda, Mhange and Taveta are known to produce milk and vegetables which are then sold to big hotels in Mombasa and other parts of Coast province. The region also boasts of mountain forests such as Ngangao, Fururu, Chawia and Mbololo which are said to be the only homes to some unique birds and butterflies.

Researchers have been visiting the area to study birds such as Taita Apalis, Taita white eye and Taita thrush which are only found in Ngangao forest. These resources if well utilised can help generate enough revenue in the area. Pascal Mtula, who is a local investor, says that most businesses in the area are not structured to benefit the local residents. "Most people do vegetable farming but they lack ready market to sell their produce and earn regular income," says Mtula.

Numbers not the answer to women problems

By PETER MUTUKU

AS MORE women prepare to ascend to leadership positions as guaranteed in the Constitution, questions abound as to whether the seats will attract individuals who are able to articulate women issues in a way that helps in the alleviation of poverty to spur development in different parts of the country.

A program's officer with the Caucus for Women leadership, Joy Masheti says that numbers only, may not help to bring the desired change.

According to Masheti, zeal is the key thing, women who are committed to aspirations of fellow women at all levels and are determined to see change. "Some women will be elected to parliament but still stand with their respective parties even when important women issues are being discussed," she says.

She cites an example of how women in the tenth Parliament came together during the Constitution review process in Naivasha and endorsed affirmative action which is now entrenched in the constitution. "That was the first time that Martha Karua who is Narc Kenya leader took a unified stand with the likes of Rachel Shebesh and Millie Odhiambo from Orange Democratic ODM," she says. She says that unless gender sensitive women are elected, then we are likely to miss out on this grand opportunity to mainstream gender in all governance processes.

"When women are included in decision making process they will help in making a gender sensitive budget which is likely to spur development and address the needs of all without discrimination," she added. "If you look at our parliament which is male dominated, many of the times they make decisions that appear to favour their male domain, but if we can have more women representatives, the needs of both gender are to be addressed and thus contribute to meaningful development," she added.

According to Masheti, if Kenyans want to reap the fruits of this constitution they have to be ready to implement it to the later.

"This is the only way to go, to involve both genders and to elect people who are result driven not just for the sake of getting the numbers but people who are driven by passion," she advises. Masheti says that the Constitution enables this to be realized at the County level where it states that not more than two thirds of one gender will be allowed to seat in the county assembly.

According to the Constitution, (Article 177(b)) not more than two thirds of the membership of the assembly shall be of the same gender.

According to the book beyond numbers which narrates about the impact of women in leadership in East Africa, "one way to improve women's status is to train those in various cadres who will serve in the government and non-government organizations to act as catalysts of change and facilitate the integration of gender in decision making and policy formation."

Karen Sherman, Executive Director for Global Programs at Women for Women, says that "When you invest in women, they typically invest 90 per cent back into the health, nutrition and education of their families, as opposed to 30-40 per cent for men."

By KAVYU-KURA

A MEMBER of Parliament has expressed fears that the millions of shillings to be paid out to residents of Mui Coal basin in Kitui County in compensation may lead to family breakups. The MP for Manyatta Emilio Kathuri who is a member of the Parliamentary Committee on Energy, Information and Communication said unless the money is managed prudently it may lead to disintegration of the family unit.

Kathuri stressed the need for proper counseling of the Mui basin community to ward off family disintegration. "We have in the past seen families break up when they get colossal amounts of money. There is need to avoid such cases within the Mui coal basin here in Kitui," said Kathuri.

Kathuri made the remarks recently when he led another member of his committee Cyprian Omollo (MP Uiri) in a tour of the Block A and B of the Mui coal basin. The entourage also included members of intergovernmental committee on coal led by the chief geologist in the Ministry of Energy Eng. John Omenge.

They were received at Yoonye area by Mutitu District Commissioner James Kamau and the Community liaison committee on coal that included lawyer and an aspirant for Mutitu parliamentary seat Mike Mulei and a Mining Geologist at Magadi Soda Mumo Kiema. Kathuri asked community liaison committee members to take up the responsibility of cautioning locals against the mismanagement of the money. He said there was need for residents who will be displaced ensure they acquired land to set up new homes.

Saying that already the exchequer had spent up to Ksh. 1 billion in coal explorations, Kathuri said his committee would continue to support and closely monitor the coal project that would not only turn round the economy of Kitui but that the entire country's at large.

Omenge noted that the coal project will be the engine to drive the economic growth in Kitui and asked the locals to tap into the coal value chain by investing in businesses that correlate with coal project. He called for training local youth in skills that will enable the get jobs in the coal extraction project.

MP cautions over Kitui coal millions



MPs Cyprian Omollo (left) and Emilio Kathuri listens to the chief geologist, Ministry of Energy, John Omenge during a visit to the Blocks A and B of the Mui coal basin in Kitui county recently. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

He assured that the local community would be involved in every step of the implementation of the coal mining project. He said residents who will be involuntary forced out of their homes will be given various relocation options to choose from. He said displacement will be progressive and systematic to ensure it had a human face. Omenge criticized Non-governmental organizations for confusing the locals by peddling lies thus inciting them to oppose the coal project. He called on NGOs liaise with the ministry of energy personnel in order to give the right information about the coal project.

At the same time an assurance was made that all the residents of Mui coal basin who will be displaced during the mining of the commercial mineral may be resettled in South African model Eco villages.

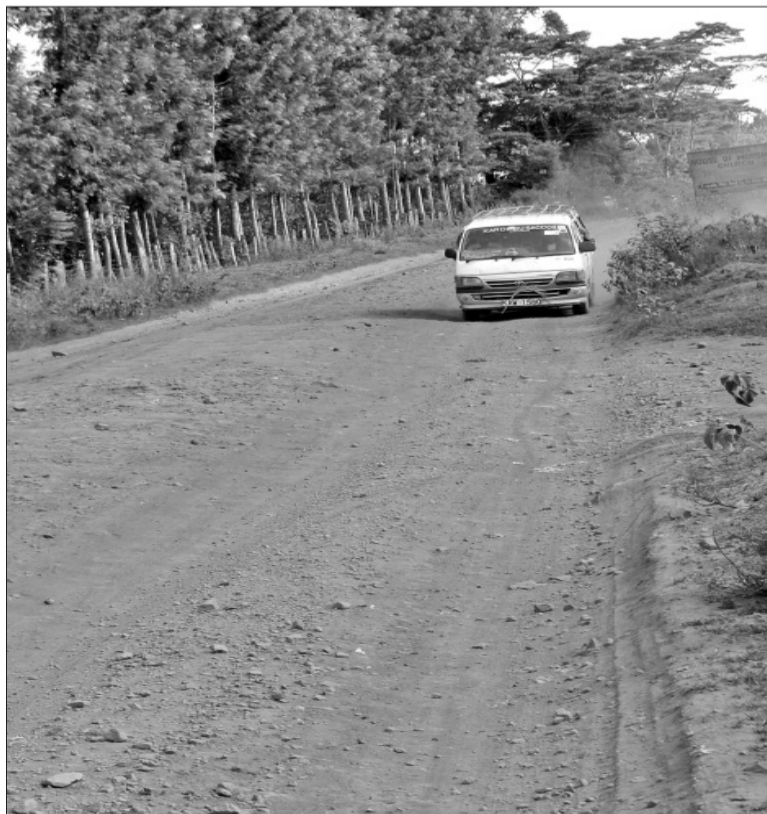
According to Commissioner of Lands, Zablon Mabea who was in the entourage, the government intends to move the affected people into "highly developed" settlement schemes where they will be provided with all the basic amenities. Mabea recently said that the integrated resettlement approach will involve the government creating a township and the building modern homes that will be accompanied by schools and hospitals.

The Eco village plan is a clean break from previous resettlement systems. Traditionally displaced persons are usually given monetary compensation and left free to migrate to regions of their choice. "We must be careful enough to avoid creating a more complex squatter problem with broken families where villagers are duped by land brokers and end up as

squatters" Mabea said.

Mabea said the government was developing an integrated master plan for urban settlement and housing for people in mining regions and other resettlements. Geologist Omenge said an inter-ministerial committee overseeing the project will discuss the proposed Eco-village resettlement action plan with the local community before it is implemented.

"It will be easier to provide them with water, electricity and even good schools if the displaced people are settled in the same area than when they are left to scatter all over on their own" Omenge said. He added that resettlement of those to be affected will be done with a human face so that the local could view the project positively and that compensation will be paid out as per in internationally accepted World Bank rates.



The 10 Kilometre Kiamabara- Karatina- Mung'etho road which is being upgraded at a cost of Kshs20 million. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Mathira road set for repair

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE government has earmarked Kshs20 million for rehabilitation of a ten kilometre road in Mathira East district.

The Construction of the Kiamabara- Karatina-Mung'etho road is scheduled for completion by October this year.

The road is being constructed under the Roads 2000 project which seeks to improve the standards of roads in the area.

Area MP Ephraim Maina said that the project will help ease communication and transportation of agricultural goods in the area.

"It will also help to create employment for the local youth who will be hired to work in the project. Motorists will no longer complain of regular breakdowns

of roads after the project is finished," he said.

He however proposed that the road be upgraded into bitumen standards.

The MP at the same time said that he will oppose plans by the government to raise to Kshs 500 the monthly contribution to National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) by self employed people.

"This move violates the rights of Kenyans, majority of who cannot afford to raise the required Kshs 500 per month due to the prevailing economic hardships," said Maina.

The MP said that the government should improve health facilities in the country and employ enough medical staff instead of forcing Kenyans to remit cash for medical cover.

EU, Danida release huge funds for environment

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE European Union has disbursed Kshs 2.3 billion to fund environmental programmes in the country.

The four year programme under the Community Development Trust Fund (CDTF) is a joint initiative between the European Union and the Royal Danish Embassy (Danida) which is scheduled to run up to 2014.

The programme targets the environmental component of community development programme in addition to climate change and renewable energy.

Speaking during the launch of Mt Kenya Environmental Conservation and Poverty Reduction Project at Karindundu area in Nyeri County, Danish deputy ambassador Ole Thonke said the funds have been channelled to 97 projects in the country.

"The Community Development Programmes seeks to reduce poverty in the country through empowering communities to initiate and implement community based socio economic infrastructure and environmental conservation projects," said the ambassador. He said the purpose of the funding is to mainstream community-led approaches to poverty reduction and sustainable management of natural resources in rural and peri-urban areas.

Danida will disburse Kshs 1.4 billion to CDTF environment facility through its Natural Resources Management Programme to finance various community led management initiatives of natural resources as well as projects on climate change, renewable energy and gender.

The programme is being implemented in line with the Denmark's commitment to the Kenya Joint Assistance Strategy and in consist-

ency with the relevant government of Kenya policies and strategies such as Vision 2030, medium term plan and country strategy paper.

Planning PS Edward Sambili in a speech read on his behalf said the funds have been earmarked for community environmental management projects. 39 of the 97 projects target the five major water towers namely Mt Kenya, Aberdares, Mau forest complex, Cherangani and Mt Elgon which were the target of the Community Environment Facility.

Those present included Mt Environmental Conservation group chair-

man Stephen Muniyiri, Community Environment Facility Programme Manager Joseph Ruhui and CDTF programme coordinator Salesius Miu.

Thonke said 15 projects in Nyeri County will benefit from the funding amounting to Kshs 151 Million. The envoy said the funds would be used to rehabilitate the degraded areas of Mt Kenya forest.

"The officials entrusted in the implementation of the funds should uphold transparency while using the funds so as to reap maximum benefit from the donation. We are also work-

ing with dispensaries and health centers to improve the health standards of local communities," the envoy added. The diplomat said the targeted projects will help reduce pressure on the natural resources in the country's water towers.

The Central Provincial Director of Planning Grace Muimi noted that most of the projects that could not be funded due to insufficient funds must be implemented in order to improve their livelihoods and urged other donors to contribute more funds to the CDTF to enable reach out to more communities.



Danish Deputy Ambassador Ole Thonke hands over financial documents to the Mt Kenya Environmental Conservation and Poverty Reduction project chairman Stephen Muniyiri at Karindundu area in Nyeri County. Community Environment Facility Programme Manager Joseph Ruhui look on.

Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Migori women urge MPs to speed up land laws

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

HUNDREDS of women in Migori County want parliament to hasten the enactment of land bills to make it easier for them to own land, especially after the death of their spouses.

According to the women, despite the promulgation of the constitution, widows continue to lose

matrimonial property after the death of their spouses.

According to Milka Awiti, who works in the Macalder mines in Nyatike, Migori County, land remains critical to women's empowerment as majority hardly benefit from the mines, even when the gold has been discovered in their own pieces of land.

"Here, land is still solely in

men's hands," she says adding that despite the provisions on the new constitution, women have been marginalised economically as they do not own any land.

She says things are even made worse whenever gold has been discovered in a piece of land owned by a woman since the men within the locality always believe they are then the ones to run the mines.

And while she says some progress has been made in the legislation aspect, there was still a lot to be done by the implementer's to ensure that the rights are not just in paper.

And because of this, she says most women within the gold mining areas, even the actual owners of the land have been reduced into scavenging from the ashes thrown away by the men and looking for the little gold they can ever get from it. Things have become worse as men abandon their families after they receive payments from the lucrative trade.

Similar sentiments are shared by Margaret Awino, a resident of Oruba area in Migori district. She says that any new legislation to

empower women on the issue of land ownership will have to be accompanied by a campaign to change perceptions at the village level and especially within the provincial administration.

"We might have the most powerful legislations but as long as chiefs still believe women cannot own land, then there is nothing much that will be achieved," she says adding that in the rural areas, the chiefs still play the role of arbitration on and matters and will need to be educated on the new rules.

She also underscores the need to increase the number of times, the lands board sits to ensure that land cases are sorted out faster.

On her part, Education Center for the Advancement of Women, (ECAW), Chairperson Dennita Gati, the issue of women inheriting the land will have to be reinforced in the new land bill even if it has already been mentioned here.

"In Kuria, when it comes to land, women simply have no say," she says adding that they have not been allowed to own land by the customs.

Group moves to empower Kilifi women

By BEKDAZO TONDO

A WOMEN organisation has disbursed Ksh35 million to empower women and youth economically in Choni and Kikambala divisions of Kilifi district.

Chonyi was allocated Ksh15 million, while Kikambala got Ksh20 million. According to the Coast Coordinator of Women of Kenya Initiative (WOKI), Ms Rachel Dzombo, the funds will assist the groups to start income generating projects.

Ms Dzombo said WOKI was formed to empower vulnerable groups such as women, youth and men in the region by offering them loans so as to be able to engage in small-scale income earning projects.

Dzombo, who is a former Permanent Secretary for Gender and Social Services, said lack of financial support to women and youth had contributed to high levels of poverty in many families. She said the poverty levels in the country could drastically improve if vulnerable women were supported with finances.

"Lack of financial support among women and youth has contributed to high levels of poverty facing many families in the country and it is the obligation of Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) and the government to join hands and assist them," Ms Dzombo said.

She was speaking to women who had gathered at Karisa Maitha Stadium to sensitise women on issues related to their rights. She said local women can now access the funds and pay school fees for their children while others can start business or engage in commercial agriculture.

"Woki supports the youth, women and men groups with loans so that they can easily pay school fees for their children, start business or engage in commercial agriculture instead of begging," Ms Dzombo said.

She decried the increased cases of sexual harassment among women in the area adding that women and underage girls were sexually harassed daily and urged the government and police to protect them.

Kilifi District Commissioner, Benjamin Wachira warned chiefs and village elders against tackling rape and defilement cases at the villages. "All rape and defilement cases need to be reported to the police and later taken to court for disciplinary actions to be taken against the culprits.



Miss Dennita Gati talks to the girls during the training.

Hard work pays off for Machakos council

By PETER MUTUKU

MACHAKOS Municipal council has been ranked amongst the best performing local authorities in the country in the recently released performance contract results.

The council, which took the third position countrywide, attributes its performance to hard work.

"It is through hard work by all our staff that we have managed to get recognition countrywide as a top performing council. I also want to thank the civic leaders for providing us with a conducive working environment," adds Machakos town clerk Sheikh Abdullahi.

Abdullahi also lauds the residents and the business community for working closely with the council.

He says that the council will continue engaging the business community through dialogue and consultations to ensure growth of the town.

"I want the business community to understand that the council will continue to engage them through dialogue to ensure the growth and development of the town through partnership because we cannot succeed alone without them," he says

The council has been registering improved performance in the last three years. During the 2007/08 the council ranked dismally at position 152. However, in 2008/09 the council made a drastic turn and took position 13 but in 2009/10 they dropped to position 69 before jumping back to position 3 in the 2010/11 local authorities' performance contract.

The clerk said that in the municipalities category, the council was



Machakos town clerk Sheikh Abdullahi displays the trophy they were awarded for top performance in the 2010/11 local authorities performance contract during celebrations at the council grounds. Machakos town mayor Timothy Kilonzo looks on. Photo/Peter Mutuku

ranked in position one because the top position was taken by the town council of Kikuyu while position two was taken by the town council of Othaya. "In the performance contract 2010/11 we had 70 targets and we managed to excel in 8 of them meaning we surpassed the targets by 30 percent. We

scored highly in 59 of the targets while good in 3 of the targets and that is how we managed to become position three countrywide in local authorities' performance contract." Abdullahi said.

Newly elected Machakos County Chamber of Commerce boss Simon Kitheka also lauded the council and

pledged to rally the business community in efforts to support the council for the continued development of the town.

Machakos town Member of Parliament Dr. Victor Munyaka who was present at the event lauded the council and added that the council should be given the lead role in development and planning of the Konza ICT City.

"I will move a motion in Parliament to endorse the Municipal Council of Machakos as the lead agency in planning and development of the Konza ICT City because it has shown that it is capable and can perform better," Munyaka said

He also said that the Konza ICT City is within Machakos County and not Makeni County as speculated by leaders from Makeni.

Munyaka urged the local investors to embrace the development opportunities provided by the Konza ICT city.

"I call upon the locals to embrace the Konza ICT City and invest heavily because they stand to benefit. We do not want people from outside the county to be the only investors at Konza," the legislator said

Machakos town mayor Timothy Kilonzo urged civic leaders and council staff to maintain the harmonious working relationship to ensure that they maintain their performance so that they can take the lead position in the next local governments performance results.

The mayor urged all stakeholders to continue partnering with the council to develop the town and ensure quality service delivery in order to maintain the top position in performance.

Community forces ban on charcoal

By KAVYU-KURA

CHARCOAL burning in Mui area of Kitui East District has been banned with immediate effect owing to a simmering row with the residents.

The area District Commissioner Martin Mwaro and the Kenya Forest Service Zonal Manager John Njoroge says charcoal burning has been banned to forestall any ugly or tragic incident between the residents and charcoal dealers.

The decision to slam the ban by the authorities came in the wake of an incident in mid April in which irate Miambani villagers impounded and detained a lorry carrying charcoal and threatened to set it ablaze in an apparent public driven campaign to curtail charcoal trade.

The about 100 villagers had to be restrained by the area civic leader Stanislaus Mulongo as they threatened to destroy private property while others bayed for the blood of the lorry crew.

The residents were up in arms over wanton destruction of forests due to charcoal burning and have vowed to physically block any charcoal burning activities because the authorities were doing nothing to stop the harmful activity, according to Cllr. Mulongo.

As the villagers milled around the lorry with intend to burn it, the crew stealthily sneaked from the scene to save their skin only to emerge hours later in the company of a contingent of Administration Police officers.

The head of the security team, inspector Munyoki pleaded with the irate villagers not to take the law into their hands but his efforts bore no fruit as the residents insisted they would not allow the charcoal to leave the area.

They went ahead and detained the vehicle for hours as they offloaded the bags of charcoal.

Later, the chairman of the larger Mwingi Charcoal Transporters Association Joseph Kimwele arrived at the scene wielding documents to vindicate the lorry crew. However, the villagers remained adamant that the lorry must be towed to Mwingi police station.

Kimwele and his team, however, managed to trick the villagers to allow the offloaded bags of charcoal back into the lorry as exhibit for the possible case to be filed in court against the lorry crew. Once all the bags of charcoal were back on the truck, the crew sped off at high speed to the chagrin of the villagers.

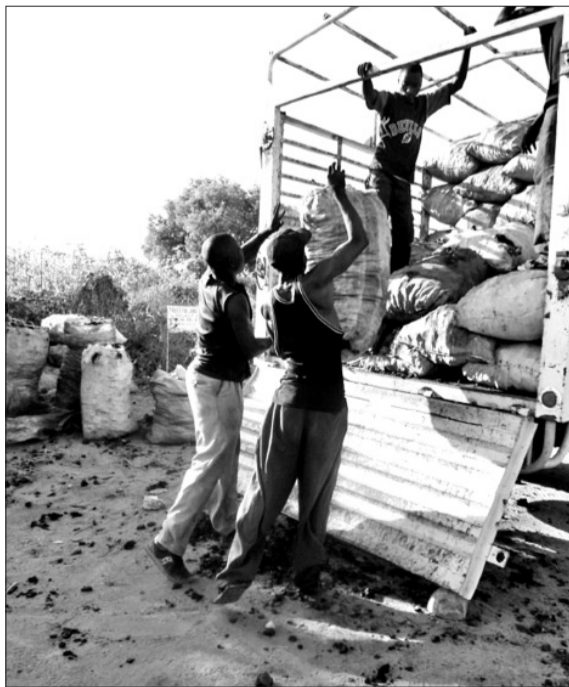
Speaking on phone later, Kimwele dismissed the incident as overt infiltration of cheap politics into the charcoal trade. He said efforts to hamper the charcoal trade would come a cropper as it was legalized through an Act of parliament.

Cllr. Mulongo said that there has been a hue and cry over consistent destruction of indigenous forests due to unchecked but sustained charcoal burning in his Mui area. The activity has left huge tracks of land

bear and unproductive wasteland.

"Due to the charcoal production, the areas of Kalikioni, Mikolosoni, Nduvani, Nzia, and Kathangu are no longer productive. We hope the media and the civil society would move in to highlight the serious dilemma my people are faced with," said Cllr. Mulongo.

He said he feared that unless the authorities intervened promptly, it was highly likely that something disastrous would happen as the residents take the law into their hands to block charcoal trade in the area.



The lorry crew upload bags of charcoal that had been offloaded by the irate Miambani villagers. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

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Plan International launches school feeding program in Ganze

By BEKADZO TONDO

OVER 11,500 hungry children in Ganze District have been selected to receive food under Plan International feeding programme.

According to the Kilifi Programme Unit Manager, Ms Margaret Kahiga, 35 education institutions, mostly primary schools, have been put under the feeding programme.

Speaking to The Link at Moving the Goal Posts Grounds at Mnarani in Kilifi town during celebrations to mark 75 years of Plan International in its commitment to children affairs, Ms Kahiga said poverty facing families in Bahari and Ganze had forced children to drop out of school.

Children from different primary schools converged at the grounds and held all sorts of activities including playing games and dancing that climaxed with being refreshed with soft drinks and some meals.

"Plan International has launched school feeding program in 35 learning institutions in Ganze so as to retain hunger stricken children in schools," said Ms Kahiga.

She said the schools benefiting from the project were selected following survey reports conducted by the district drought management office in collaboration with the Ministry of Education on drought and poverty in Kilifi District.

"A special criteria was used before arriving at the selected schools and that came after doing survey reports on the poverty facing families in the area and the drought which has been experienced in the area for the past two years," said Ms Kahiga.

She said many girls from the area were forced to drop out of schools due to poverty, early marriages and pregnancies. "The transitional rate of school going girls in Bahari and Ganze is low due to the level of poverty incidences in families," said Ms Kahiga.

Ms Kahiga further said death cases of children below five years was still a challenge in the survival of infants in the district and said Plan International will offer some food support to healthcare centres to improve children's health status. She said her organisation currently supplies food to institutions such as Roka, Kizigo, Takaungu and Junju, Sokoke and Palakumi health centers in Bahari and Ganze with uni-mix.

Ms Kahiga said Plan International has been conducting some awareness programmes to the community on children rights saying most of the children rights were being violated.

She said many girls have fallen victims to defilement, but since the community have not known the rights of the children, such cases are not taken to the authorities such as the children office or the police for legal actions to be taken against the culprits.

Nema set to rehabilitate dams in the country

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE National Environment Management Authority (Nema) has set aside Kshs 17 million for rehabilitation of various dams and wetlands in the country.

Nema's audit committee chairman Edwin Muinga Chokwe said that the authority will work with the local community to hasten the rehabilitation process.

The chairman who was accompanied by the Central Provincial director of environment Wachira Bore spoke during a tour of Hohwe dam in Mathira district.

Chokwe also toured various dams and water pans which have been rehabilitated by the authority in Laikipia, Nyandarua, Nyeri

and Murang'a Counties.

He said Kshs 800 million has been spent in de-silting, fencing and tree planting activities in Hohwe dam in Mathira District of Nyeri County.

"The authority was sourcing for funds to help rehabilitate other water points and major water towers in the country," he added.

He at the same time said there was need for massive public education and awareness on fires, so as to control spread of fires, especially in various water towers in the country adding that the recent series of wild and forest fires was a threat to the environment, since it reduced forest cover which is dismally low.

He called for increased media

campaigns and public forums to help educate wananchi on how to control and extinguish forest fires.

Chokwe called for community participation in conservation of the environment, especially wetlands that are threatened by people who practice farming activities.

"We will continue to sensitize the public on the need to promote conservation as a venture to arrest climate change. Let the public know that environment is life and all world countries are doing everything to promote conservation activities," said Chokwe.

Other dams which the board is concerned are Kabura-ini in Kieni, Kigumo in Murang'a and Chepalungu dam.



Nema's audit committee chairman Edwin Muinga Chokwe pumps water in a borehole at Hohwe dam in Mathira district. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Ganze youth, women to get state loans

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Government has disbursed Ksh4 million to empower women and youth groups to fight poverty in Ganze District. According to the D.O Bamba Stephen Kaloki, the funds will be distributed to youth and women groups in the area through loans to initiate income generating projects.

Mr. Kaloki said the funds are to be disbursed through the district poverty eradication committee and urged the targeted people to form groups and apply for the funds.

"Beneficiaries in the first allocation must repay the funds to enable other groups receive funding and have projects replicated across the county and boost their income," said Mr. Kaloki.

He said due to unreliable rainfalls in the area, most families have been forced to depend on Government supplied relief foods and from other well wishers as the people could not be able to produce their own food.

He said Bamba division is one of the divisions in Ganze district, which has been adversely hit by famine due to prolonged drought and urged the people to take advantage of the funds to apply for loans to initiate projects.

Local leaders claimed that residents were walking long distances in search of water for domestic use while livestock farmers have migrated from their areas to look for pasture and water for their animals.

Mitangani Ward Councillor Daniel Mangi challenged the Government to come up with better ways which could help the region produce food to sustain their families instead of depending on relief foods.

He urged the Government to set aside funds that can be used to construct dams in the three divisions of Ganze district so that farmers can start farming through irrigation.

Bussy Busia-Kisumu highway set for repair

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE government through the Ministry of Roads has set aside Ksh1 billion for the re-carpeting of the Kisumu-Busia Highway, which connects East and Central African countries.

This was disclosed by Roads Minister Franklin Bett at the Busia Bus Park during a familiarisation tour aimed at establishing the status of the busy highway recently. The minister said the re-carpeting of the highway will include

the establishment of the cycle tracks for motorbikes, bicycles and pedestrians to minimise frequent road accidents in the region, which he said had been on the rise in the past few months due to the poor status of the road.

Bett instructed the Traffic Police department to ensure that overloading by long distance vehicles is curbed once and for all saying the highway has extensively been damaged by overloaded trucks ferrying goods to and from the neighbouring countries.

The re-carpeting of the highway will take approximately 12 months and urged the contractor who has already been identified to adhere to the timeline adding that Busia-Malaba highway will also be rehabilitated.

He called on the Busia town residents to report overloading cases to the authority so that legal action can be taken against those involved. "Overloading is purely to blame for the poor status of the busy Busia-Kisumu highway. It is your responsibility to report

overloading cases to the authority as a matter of urgency so that appropriate action can be taken against those involved," said the minister.

Labour Assistant Minister Sospeter Ojaamong, who had also attended the occasion on his part appealed to Lands Minister James Orengo, who was also present, to move with speed and carry out thorough investigations at the Busia Lands department where claims were being made that people have been issued with fake title deeds.

By MORRIS GITHENYA

MURANG'A College of Technology, rated among the best managed institutions in the country, has received the coveted International Standard Organisation (ISO) Certificate.

Kenya Bureau of Standard issued the administration of the institution with a Standard Mark Certificate after nearly five years of struggle to comply with the set standards and

Murang'a receives coveted ISO certification

guidelines.

Senior deputy Director of Technical Training at Ministry of Higher Education Jackton Andai said it was a Government policy that all departments be ISO certified.

Andai spoke when Kenya Bureau of Standards official, James Wainaina presented the Board of the institution with a certification on

quality management systems.

The Principal Fredrick Magua, said in the recent performance contract ranking, the college had been ranked in the 9th position out of the 69 tertiary institutions in the country.

On certification, Magua said students from the college can work anywhere in the world.

The Principal said that the col-

lege is striving to improve the quality of education offered to the students.

Wainaina said KEB was committed towards ensuring Kenyans get quality and tested products.

"As a department we have to do our mandate by ensuring that Kenyans are safe when using any of the products," said the KEB official.

By PETER MUTUKU

Mbiti defies the rain gods

IN a sun-baked Vinda village at the Far East of Kitui Central District in Kitui County, Itila Mbiti is regarded as a model farmer by all standards. Mbiti uses furrow irrigation by digging trenches along seasonal rivers cutting across his farm to water his plants.

The 67 year old man has been in fruit farming agriculture for the last 40 years. Mbiti's farm is covered by green and healthy vegetation that is rare to find in arid and semi arid regions.

The farmer grows bananas, paw paws, oranges and mangoes. The fruits of his labour are evident in his farm where burgeoning trees weigh down their produce. The healthy canopy of banana plants in his farm would rival those found in Kisii.

The farm also has about 300 orange trees. Elsewhere in his 15 acre farm is a section dedicated to sugarcane stretching several metres.

"Per season I get about Ksh60,000

from the sale of oranges alone. Most of the buyers come to the farm," he says. The farmer reveals that he also earns substantive amounts of money from the sale of bananas and other fruits. The 67 year old farmer who is the envy of the village abhors laziness and is up by 5.00am to check on his farm.

"Through farming I have been able to educate my children, at least to form four level. Those who did not go past form four cannot blame me, it was their wish, not lack of school fees," avers the farmer, a father of 19 children and a husband to two wives. His first born is a military officer while others are teachers.

Mbiti who did not get formal education recalls how he made up his mind to go full blast into farming after "wasting six good months in Mombasa" idling around.

"I was 25 when I went to Mombasa like many of my contemporaries. After staying there for a few months, I realized it was vanity. I came back home and fell in love with farming," Mbiti says, adding that there is a lot of unexploited potential in farming.

Mbiti digs trenches to deviate sections of seasonal rivers cutting across his farm and the water spreads freely to water his plants. He has done this for the last 40 years, getting bumper harvests each passing year.

His second wife Vivian acknowledges that her husband is a workaholic. "Initially I thought he would work himself to death but overtime I have become used to it. It is very common to see him working in the farm late in the evening with sweat dripping all over his body," she proudly says of her husband.

However, it has not been a rosy farming affair for him. He remembers an ugly incident three years ago when a farmhand he had hired was buried alive by a wall of sand near a river while flattening a section of the farm. When Mbiti went to check on him, he found the wall had caved in.

"I called his name but there was no response. I panicked. Neighbours assembled here and helped to retrieve his body while some villagers were baying for my blood," says the old man, pointing to where the farmhand was buried. Through the help of his clan, the farmer however settled the matter the traditional Kamba way by compensating the family of the deceased.

But a challenge that has been bothering Mbiti overtime is the pathetic road network in the area. He says most of his produce goes to waste before

it could get to the market due to poor roads. The bananas and sugarcane are transported using hired donkeys to Kalundungu market in Kitui town, about 30 kilometers away, he notes.

The nightmarish journey from his farm to the market starts at 3.00 am if he has to make it to the market on time. Each donkey is hired at Ksh200 to do the work. However during the rainy seasons, it becomes even difficult for the beasts of burden to navigate the alleys, prompting the farmer to sell his produce at throw-away prices.

He observes, "If the road network was good, farmers in this area like myself would be very rich, but now we are forced to watch our produce rot in the farm since we are unable to get it to the market. Our efforts are certainly going to waste."

Mbiti appeals to the area MP Charity Ngilu to ensure that access roads in the area are made to ease the transportation burden and reap maximum benefits for his sweat.

Banana farming transforms lives in villages

Although for many years Banana has been considered just like any other crop, in the last decade its farming has taken another dimension and slowly reclaimed its adorable position amongst otherwise erstwhile dominant cash crops in the Eastern side of Mt. Kenya, argues Malachi Motano.

PLACES like Meru South, Imenti South, Imenti Central and the newly created district of Maara in Tharaka Nithi County had coffee and tea as dominant cash crops in the upper region while the lower parts had other crops like cow peas, sorghum, millet, cotton, and green grams.

However, the experience today depicts a different scenario especially in the upper regions. Though coffee last season fetched millions of shillings to farmers the enthusiasm amongst banana farmers is overwhelming.

In the places where farmers had coffee, farms have now been replaced with bananas after the deductions of huge coffee loans either acquired by the societies, factories or individuals soured and became unserviceable. This posed an eminent danger and coffee farmers had little to gain from the coffee sales after the deductions and many quietly disappeared from

the scene. Were it not that the government stepped in to offset the debts worth billions of shillings owed to coffee farmers, the region would not be producing much of the product.

They engaged in quick paying farming activities like dairy cattle and banana farming.

One of the farmers who had invested so much in coffee farming to an extent of establishing his private coffee factory in Kanguku village in Iruma Sub-location Miriti Chabari recounts, "I have never regretted my decision of shifting to banana farming. I would not have been able to educate my children to university level."

He remembers when he would wait for a year to get any proceeds from coffee delivered to the coffee factory. "This is why I thought of initially seeking a license to establish a private factory, the idea I also kicked out of my mind", he claims.

The realization that banana delivery meant instant payment made many wild and they enthusiastically engaged in the farming. The quick growth from planting to harvesting comparing with other crops also endeared many to opt for banana planting.

A recent aerial surveillance in the eastern side of Mt. Kenya forest re-

veals that near the peripheral of the forest one could see patches of big green leaves that are identified as those of banana plantations though not as pronounced as the tea bushes.

However, in some other parts the bananas crops are covering a sizeable part of an individual's entire land meaning that some farmers are now prioritizing on banana farming.

A drive along the ridges that characterize the vast Meru region clearly reveals that banana farming is now a force to reckon with.

Coffee societies in the region have felt threatened as some farmers have started opting for banana farming and they are using the same coffee farms to plant bananas. As argued above the returns from coffee are diminishing at the expense of other cash crops mainly bananas.

The Maara District Co-operative Officer Ms. Anastasia Wacuka says that the highest paying coffee factory paid its members at Kshs.95 per kilogram adding that with these kinds of payments, farmers will surely go back to rehabilitating their coffee or plant fresh seedlings probably of superior quality than what they already have in their farms.

The impetus of banana farming



Farmers tour a banana plantation.

has been enhanced because of technologically advanced varieties that have come into the market today. The Maara District Agricultural Officer (DAO) Mr. Kirera Mwirigi says that banana farming is one of the horticultural crops that have made an indelible mark in agricultural activities in the district.

Due to its various uses like cooking it as a food, eating it as a fruit selling it as a quick cash crop, leaves and stem being utilized as fodder for the cows and goats makes it unique. "In fact, banana farming had gone along in enhancing food security in the area," Mr. Mwirigi says.

The Officer says that conventional varieties that were being planted earlier in the district were not yielding well-paying bananas due to the small size. He however says that with the introduction of new varieties developed bananas like the tissue culture, banana farmers are now getting much more than what they used to get about ten years ago.

The problem is however how to satisfy the great demand of these new varieties that were developed by the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI). The same institute is credited with developing other varieties like Grand Nain, Chinese Cavendish, Williams, Lacatan, Paz and Valery. Other varieties grown in the area include Dwarf Cavendish, Wanjare (sweet bananas) and Uganda red.

"Our farmers are aware that the tissue culture is a better variety and they always ask us to provide or make arrangements on how they could ac-

cess" the DAO says. The Meru South District Horticultural Officer Ms. Aileen Mwendandu says that farmers were now coming together to address the problem of marketing their produce. She adds that already six groups are now in place and are selling their produce as a group.

"This has greatly enhanced their bargaining power and they were selling between Kshs. 12 and Kshs. 14 per kilogram," she says. The six groups combined produced 119,056 kilos from January this year that earned them Kshs. 1,576,524 shillings by the end of April this year. The 6 groups are Mwonge Kilimo, Nkio Banana, Mukamanda self-help group, Mugarirwa Horticultural group, Kamugunda group and Kibugua Kilimo Group.

Good varieties and with good husbandry takes 16-18 months from planting to harvesting while after that 8-10 years of harvesting, the crops declines in productivity. The replacement of plantation is however recommended after this to maintain better yields that would benefit farmers.

Many parents are able to sustain their children in schools by selling bananas and submitting the returns bit by bit to the school administration and were able to see their children through to secondary education.

The Iruma Mixed Day Secondary School Principal Mr. Kariuki Thairu confirms, "some parents have been approaching me to be paying the fees in bits and by the end of a term or form 4, they end up clearing the fees after selling bananas."



A banana plantation in Mt. Kenya region.

Photo/Malachi Motano

Bomet, Narok farmers tour Laikipia County

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

A GROUP of farmers from Narok and Bomet counties have toured Laikipia and Meru counties to familiarise themselves with Conservation agriculture.

About 20 farmers who visited Lengetia, Wango Embori and Ngare Ndare farms in an exchange programme were happy to learn more on the new modern technology.

Conservation agriculture involves zero or minimum tillage of farms, a technology which is mostly practiced on arid and semi arid areas.

An agricultural farmer Letoluo Kishuyan from Olkurto area in Narok North district noted that climate change has in the recent years affected crop production, planting and harvesting seasons, thereby necessitating acquiring of new methodologies.

Kishuyan however lamented that the new technology may be costly to small scale farmers because tools involved are expensive.

Another farmer Rose Cheruiyot from Tendwet Village, Che-

maner division in Bomet county said farmers in the area have started embracing the technology, whereby they are growing passion fruits.

"Bomet is not as dry as Laikipia County and since our group started growing passion fruits through conservation agriculture, we have witnessed a great difference. We have learnt a lot in this programme," said Cheruiyot.

An agricultural officer from Laikipia East Julius Gitonga said the new farming technology has immense benefits since costs previously charged on ploughing and harrowing have been minimized.

Gitonga added that by using the method as compared to conventional farming, there is high rain infiltration into the soil and low surface runoff.

He also said that there is reduced time in the farm.

On the issue of machinery, the agricultural officer said small scale farmers can afford them because there are those that are hands and animal drawn.

Qureish Noordin, the project coordinator of the Lake Victoria Basin Commission who sponsored



Some of the Bomet and Narok farmers who toured Laikipia County recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

the trip said that the farmers were exposed to innovative farming

methods which will enhance their income and reduce pollution and

soil erosion and hence conserve environment.

Auditors at Nzoia Sugar as cane stealing spikes

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

FORENSIC auditors have been dispatched to Nzoia Sugar Company following the rising cases of cane theft at the nucleus estates which have cost the company Ksh 100 million from 2007 and undermined cane development.

The audit approved by the company's board of directors will help unravel the mystery surrounding the scam and those involved. The auditors will investigate paired stacks, wrong estimations and hanging tickets from 2007 to 2011. They will specifically interrogate staffs handling harvesting, transport, payments and records.

The consultants, PKE (Pernell Kerr Forster), will be paid a fee of Ksh.3.5million and are expected to hand over the report findings to the Chief Executive Officer Saul Wasilwa in a month's time after commencing work.

Sources at the company said despite the declining cane yields at the nucleus estate, the matter has never been reported to the board of directors. They further alleged that the findings might be doctored as those involved in the poaching of the company's cane are well connected individuals who could influence the outcome.

They cited the recent spate of fire outbreaks in the nucleus which has burnt an estimated 1,000 acres of cane in a deliberate bid to divert attention of the auditors.

With the evidence of widespread fires, auditors will not be able to make sense of poor cane husbandry in the nucleus, which has resulted in losses by the company, yet it allocates a lot of resources in cane development.

Again management classifies burnt cane as lost, yet there are cases when cane is harvested and sold to



Sugar plantation: Cane theft has been rampant at Nzoia Sugar Company.

Butali Sugar Company, but this is not reflected in the records.

The audit follows the rising cases of stealing of nucleus cane which is allegedly transferred to an outgrower farmer who also works with the company. This was confirmed by Agriculture manager Macklins Wasike, in his statement to the police on September 9, 2011.

Wasike stated that after receiving information that unscrupulous individuals were stealing cane from the nucleus, he went to field no.243 in the accompany of agriculture services manager Michael Kulundu ,and indeed found that it was true. He admitted that IT staff were behind the vice as they had doctored reports from the field.

He explained that there was glaring evidence that field tonnages were lower than actually realized and hanging tickets do exist. "The har-

vesting tickets for nucleus estate are quite different from the outgrowers both in colour and serialization including format", Egesa said.

He explained that drivers of tractors which collect cane usually pick yellow copies of harvesting tickets, to allow them to weigh the cane ,while at the weighbridge a transport clerk verifies the ticket for confirmation.

Out grower farmers have of late opted to sell their crop to other millers mostly Mumias, Butali and West Kenya sugar companies which pay them better rates.

Farmers accuse the management of Nzoia of poor extension services, delayed payments for harvested cane, exploitation and insensitive to their concerns.

A source at the agriculture department, noted that extension staff at the company are merely engaged in in-

formation generation, collection and forwarding them to management.

They never meet farmers to advice on existing problems, emerging issues, make resolutions and make follow ups for intervention.

"What is worrying is that extension officers never interact with farmers and only wait for directives from superiors ", the source added.

The top - down approach, the source revealed is hurting the extension services and the information delivered as orders from senior managers is either distorted or diluted by the time it reaches the farmer.

The managers are working on the assumption of knowing it all, and junior staffs have to implement what they are told, discouraging extension officers to report any findings from the field.

The management has the presumption that cane farmers should be educated, yet they are knowledgeable and have goals and targets to achieve whenever they grow cane.

The source further went on, "there is a crisis in the agriculture department regarding the set timelines for cane harvesting, fertilizer distribution, in put charges and payment time frame".

This he added had resulted in inefficiency when it comes to handling farmers issues.

He cited the case Alice N Nasongo, whose weighbridge ticket is 612115, field no. 34312400430- according to information compiled from the field.

Office records of the same farmer give variation of the filed no. as 34312400431. This means that the farmer can either claim payments twice or lose out completely.

There are those cases where the farmers names are changed, like that of Linet N. Wakhungu weighbridge ticket 612307 dated 28/2/2012, field

no.362146607780. On harvesting programme the name given for the same field was that of Kennedy S change.

The forensic consultant is expected to follow guidelines issued by the Head of public service and secretary to cabinet Francis Muthaura in 2010 on cases that involve public officers.

In a circular to Attorney General, Permanent Secretaries' and Chief Executives Officers s of state corporations dated 24th may 2010, the guidelines were a commitment to implement directives by the president and prime minister to fight corruption and restore integrity in the public service.

It notes that delays in resolving suspected corruption cases due to legal procedures led the public to have a perception that Government is not able to fight the vice. The concerned officers were given power to dismiss, interdict or suspend affected persons in line with regulations.

Mr Joseph Kawa, NSC public relations officer said the forensic consultants have been called in as a strategy by management to streamline improved performance in the agriculture departments

"The company is undergoing changes for improved productivity and service provision to our farmers", he said. He denied claims that extension services were dysfunctional as farmers needs were being addressed on time with harvesting programme going on systematically.

Kawa emphasized that extension services were being offered to farmers by having organized field days, farmers barazas and demonstrations.

The company he noted has been able to organize 60 field demonstrations, 123 field barazas, tours by directors , all this provide forums for farmers to discuss issues affecting them.

Murang'a coffee farmers acquire milling plant

By MORRIS GITHENYA

MURANG'A Coffee farmers have acquired a milling plant worth Ksh40 million from Brazil.

Management of Mugama Farmers Cooperative Union bought the plant to minimize transportation costs and exploitation of farmers by private millers who have invaded Murang'a coffee growing areas for the last three years.

Receiving the plant recently, the union chairman Francis Njinjo, said the machine will ensure that the substantive amounts of money spent in the transportation of coffee beans is paid out to the farmers. The milling plant is expected to start operating next month after being assembled.

"The main purpose of purchasing the mill is to ensure that farmers money that is channeled towards the transportation of coffee beans to the millers is dispensed with," said the chairman.

The milling plant situated in Maragua town, will create employment and ensure increase of coffee production to meet the increasing international demand, said Njinjo.

Last year, leaders' resolved that Murang'a town will serve as the county headquarters while Maragua town will remain as an industrialisation centre with Kenol being a commercial centre.

Union's General Manager Ephantus Wanjohi said farmers have been waiting for the arrival of the plant. Maragua is perceived to be the centre of Murang'a County thus all the societies can access it for delivery of their coffee beans.

The union, Wanjohi said, will provide all the required farm inputs to farmers to ensure they increase production as a gesture to appreciate the government's move in waiving loans amounting to Kshs1.2 billion that had been a burden to institutions in the past two decades.

"Mugama union has opened stores in all the seven constituencies in Murang'a County in a bid to have all the farmers get services near their homes. All the required farm inputs

will be made available," said Wanjohi. Cooperative societies leaders recently flocked to Maragua town to have a glimpse of the machine saying their dream of Murang'a owning its coffee mill has come true.

The leaders talked of how they have been exploited by private millers by exaggerating milling loses and other expenses.

Over the last three decades farmers from Murang'a have been keen to establish their own milling plant in order to save them the agony of losing their cherries to thugs, said Njinjo.

Coffee experts said private millers have opposed the purchase of the mill through their agents due to fears that all the societies will transport their produce to the mill for milling.

Njinjo recounted how the late Cabinet Minister John Michuki facilitated the importation saying he will forever be remembered for the gesture.

The government has since released a Kshs 1 billion waiver to Mugama

Farmers Union and Murata Sacco to waive loans that were burdening the coffee farmers to extent of uprooting their trees.

Meanwhile, following the acquisition of their own mill, Coffee farmers from Murang'a have resolved to terminate their milling contract with private millers once the Eastern Aberdare Cooperative Coffee Mills (EC-COMILL) becomes operational.

Thousands of coffee farmers said they will not renew contracts with millers upon expiry of the current contracts to support their recently acquired coffee mill.

Mugama Farmers Cooperative Union has already imported a Ksh40 million coffee mill from Brazil that aims at reducing farmers' expenses in milling the black gold coffee.

During a meeting chaired by Mugama Union Chairman Francis Njinjo and his Ecomill counterpart Maribe Karanu, the farmers also resolved to increase coffee production to meet the

increasing demand in the international market.

Maribe said the mill is expected to be operational by July this year. The mill is being assembled in Maragua town. The mill will help farmers earn money previously used to facilitate transportation of coffee beans to private millers, said Karanu.

Njinjo called on farmers concerted efforts to curb coffee theft that has affected farming.

We as farmers must look for ways to curb coffee theft that has become a menace, said Njinjo also chairman to New Kiriti farmers cooperative society in Mathioya.

Union's General Manager Ephantus Wanjohi said they have opened merchandise stores to ensure farm inputs are accessible.

He said the union stores have been operational in all divisions. We are out to ensure increased coffee production by availing the required farm inputs, said Wanjohi.

Embu farmers unite for better returns

By PETER MUTUKU

FARMERS from seven different agricultural sectors in Embu County have joined hands under one umbrella body so as to increase their bargaining power in the agricultural sector. The farmers drawn from the dairy, horticulture and other sectors want to find lasting solutions in the agricultural sector.

KARES agribusiness services organizing director Cyrus Mbogo said that the farmers under the Rugendo dairy alliance want to build a strong farmers' institution that will help them in outsourcing financial services.

Mbogo pointed out that the farmer's have realized that it is only through working together as a group that they can attain the required economic benefits from their farming activities and avoid being exploited by middlemen.

"We are trying to come together as farmers from all the sectors to establish strong and powerful bargaining power, because farming as individuals is not only exposing us to exploitation but also denying us the benefits of trade," he said. Mbogo noted that they intend to increase the agricultural productivity of the area by ensuring that farmers access reliable and affordable farm inputs.

Irene Ndwiga a farmer in Embu district said that they are looking forward towards the operationalisation of Rugendo dairy factory which will soon be installed with milk cooling systems from the ministry of cooperatives development and marketing.

Ndwiga said that the farmers plan to embark on value addition instead of selling their milk products to other companies to enable them reap highly from their produce. "We as farmers plan to invest in value addition to maximize on benefits in the market instead of selling our produce at throw away prices," she said.

She said that Rugendo dairy receives 40 000 litres of milk daily from farmers in Embu only, saying if they can access quality animal feeds they can be able to produce even more and help curb the prevailing milk shortage in the country.

Ndwiga was categorical that the farmers will be having difficulties in practicing farming for economic development unless they come together and have a collective access to credit services, farm inputs and jointly sell their products.



A farmer picking coffee in his farm. Photo/File

Malindi Coconut plant to be ready soon, says Kingi

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Government is putting up a Coconut Processing factory in Malindi at a cost of Kshs.500 million.

Acting Minister for Industrialisation Amason Kingi says the factory will become operational by the end of this year.

Speaking to the residents of Chasimba location at Jomeka, Kingi says the project is a joint initiative by the Government and development partners. "The government is funding the project to the tune of Kshs 100 million. Donors will contribute the remaining amount," said Kingi.

The minister notes that Coast region highly depends on coconut and cashew nut trees for their mainstay but very little support has been accorded to the two cash crops.

"The government seems to have put more emphasis on tourism industry as the only source of income for the Coast region and deliberately ignored the two cash crops which have

a direct impact on the economy of the local people," he adds. The minister at the same time says that plans are underway to revive collapsed factories in Coast region and cites Kilifi cashew nut factory, bixa at Kwale and cotton ginneries in Malindi among those earmarked for the exercise.

He says the move aims at uplifting the living standards of local residents and augmenting efforts to alleviate poverty. He notes that currently coconuts farmers were being forced to sell their nuts to the neighbouring countries at throw away prices due to lack of a processing factory.

"The coconut tree is vital and can help in the production of brooms, carpets, earrings, bangles, Coconut oils and many other products to help create wealth for the Coastal people and generate revenue for the government," said Kingi. He challenged the coconut farmers to form Saccos to enable them reap from the benefits of trade once the new processing factory becomes operational.



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Othaya coffee farmers receive share certificates

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

OVER 2, 600 coffee farmers in Othaya who are shareholders of the Othaya Coffee Mill have received their share certificates.

The 2, 643 shareholders who are members of Othaya Farmers Cooperative Society received their share certificates recently at the coffee mill situated at Gatuya-ini area near Othaya town and presented to them by Central Provincial Cooperative Officer Stanley Mwenje.

The mill is a modern facility of the society which has a share capital of Kshs 6.6 million. Since it was started last year, the plant has milled 765.92 tonnes of coffee from the 19 coffee factories affiliated to the society.

"The coffee mill was purchased following frustrations and sabotage by some commercial millers we had contracted to mill the society coffee. The mill started operations on 7th June last year and has since been a source of employment for the local people hiring nearly 100 casual workers supported by some society staff," said the society chairman Newton Mwangi.

The mill is one of the activities undertaken by the society. It has been an attraction to other coffee based cooperative societies in the country.

The milling plant has since hosted visitors from all over the country,

others from abroad and from African coffee producing countries such as Rwanda.

The society is now planning to open coffee shops and kiosks for promotion of domestic coffee consumption.

"Various strategies have been laid down to take the society to the next phase of growth. They include roasting the coffee, packaging it and selling of branded Othaya Coffee in supermarkets," the chairman added.

Mwangi at the same time advised the society members to improve coffee husbandry so as to raise both the quality and quantity of their produce.

The chairman requested the society members to make supplementary effort so to recover production and quality of coffee which probably will bring massive results to their lives.

"We appeal to all members to make additional effort to improve production and quality since this is the only way you can earn higher returns and eventually get dividends from the mill," the chairman said.

Central Provincial Cooperative Officer Stanley Mwenje appealed unto the farmers to continue investing in the coffee industry and put more effort to reach more than 6 Million Kilograms of the production since last year they were able to have 3.9 Million kgs of coffee.



Central Provincial Cooperatives officer Stanley Mwenje (right) awards a certificate to a coffee farmer at Othaya coffee mill headquarters in Othaya recently. Photo/File

Kisii coffee farmers relieved of debt burden

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

The Government has waived coffee debts worth Kshs.18million owed to small-holder coffee farmers in Gusii region.

Co-operative Development and Marketing Minister, Joe Nyagah, says the waiver seeks to enable small-holder coffee growers across the vast region to focus their energies on producing quality coffee to enable reap maximum profits from favourable prices in the world coffee market.

Speaking in Kisii during a leaders meeting at the Gusii Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union(GCFCU) grounds, Nyagah disclosed that the Government waiver came as demand for Kenyan coffee in the world coffee market increased tremendously especially in India and China.

Among societies whose debts have been waived include GCFCU and Wakenya Pamoja Sacco Society whose debts amounted to Ksh 13million and Ksh5.7million respectively.

The GCFCU used part of the Ksh13million to purchase a truck valued at Ksh 11.2million to facilitate the transportation of coffee to the market, while Wakenya Sacco spent Ksh 5.7million to advance loans to small-holder coffee growers to offset farm labour expenses to improve their coffee production.

The Minister who was accompanied by the Commissioner of Co-operatives Fredrick Odhiambo, Nyanza Provincial Co-operatives Officer, Zephaniah Osok among other officials from the Ministry, clarified that the debt waivers only cover phase one.

Phase two will be implemented if parliament approves the Ksh4billion captured in the current Government supplementary budget.

He spoke as it emerged that the coffee subsector in Gusii region is picking after farmers who had initially abandoned the crop in favour of alternative crops like tomatoes, bananas and other fast maturing cash and horticultural crops due to mismanagement are back with a bang.

Already the farmers are exploring possibilities of adopting the Brazilian coffee variety widely known as Batián as part of efforts

to ensure that production is sustained throughout the year to avoid disrupting operations at the newly established coffee mill in the region.

Speaking at Moromba Main Farmers' Co-operative Society grounds in Naymira, Mr William Asiago who is a farmer in the area Asiago points out that Batián was fast maturing and would help to ensure coffee production is sustained throughout the year, translating to increased farmers earnings and alleviating poverty at household levels.

He says that the mill will not only help to curb widespread cases

of coffee theft in the area but also reduce the high costs of transportation and increase farmers' earnings.

"With the establishment of a coffee mill in Gusii region, incidents of coffee theft will be minimized as the distance to the new mill has been reduced together with the costs of transportation," stated Asiago.

Asiago challenged local co-operative management officials to educate farmers on the importance of embracing modern crop husbandry and agronomic practices, to tap the benefits of the new coffee mill in the region and maximize their coffee earnings.



Co-operative Development and Marketing Minister, Joe Nyagah recently commissioned Gusii Coffee farmers Co-operative Union's lorry bought at Ksh11.2m.

Farmers demand action against traders selling fake seeds

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

FARMERS in Trans-Nzoia County want the Kenya Seed Company (KSC) to deregister stockists selling counterfeit maize seedlings.

This follows the seizure of over 4,000 kg of the seeds from a leading supermarket and a stockist in Kitale by the police and KSC officials.

The farmers accused the businessmen of defrauding them and undermining their efforts to realize bumper harvest.

Mr. Joel Gesuka, who spoke on behalf of the farmers, said the sale of uncertified seeds would ruin their productivity.

"We are not sure whether the seeds we planted are going to germinate. We want KSC to blacklist all dishonest agents, particularly those who were found selling fake seeds in Kitale," and Gesuka at a news conference.

According to the farmers uncertified seeds have far reaching implications and may totally ruin maize growing in the region. They urged the Government to ensure the unscrupulous businessmen involved in the fake seeds cartel are punished.

"We want proper investigation over the fake seeds because we fear there are attempts from certain quarters to cover up the matter," Gesuka said.

They asked KSC to do away with agents and instead distribute seeds through the National Cereals and Produce Board and Kenya Farmers Association.

MCK vows to standardise journalism training

By MORRIS GITHENYA

THE Media Council of Kenya (MCK) has vowed to standardise media training in Kenya in order to realise high quality personnel, a member has said.

A council member, Linus Gitahi, said the body will standardize curriculum of journalism training in the country to ensure quality is adhered to.

Gitahi also the chief executive officer at Nation Media Group said regulation of courses at institutions offering journalism would see quality students after the trainings.

He was responding to queries raised by Mt Kenya University's board of trustees' chairman Simon Gicharu. Gicharu had asked the council to regulate the country's journalism training centres saying some of the institutions have been invaded by unscrupulous characters. "Kenyan journalists are rated among the best in the continent. We cannot condemn the sector when we can do something to ensure training process remains credible," Gicharu said.

At the same time, Gitahi said Kenyan universities should nurture talent that can be used in local TV programmes. He said there was a lot of unexploited talent in the country's institutions of higher learning that could replace foreign content in our television stations.

He questioned the logic of Kenyan TV stations airing foreign movies when we have abundant activities which can fill the space. He was officially launching the School of Journalism at Mt Kenya University, Thika.

Gitahi, was the Chief Guest during MKU's Journalism Department Open day ceremony where he also received newly acquired radio and TV equipment 'valued Kshs20 million.

The Nation Media CEO asked universities and other institutions to use research and innovation to create job opportunities and help the country move towards realisation of Vision 2030.

He said last year the Nation Group launched The Next Big Thing, a forum that is meant to nurture talent among the youth. There is no reason why MKU cannot be the next big thing in Kenya.

Communication innovations like Facebook, Gitahi said was initiated by university students adding that Kenya had the potential to come up with global innovations.

At the same time, he said the young generation should work towards national integration and cohesion, rather than copy foreign ideologies.

Mudavadi assures traders of fairness in stalls allocation

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

DEPUTY Prime Minister Musalia Mudavadi has assured traders in the newly opened Kamukunji market in Nyeri that transparency will be upheld in the allocation of market stalls.

The Deputy Prime Minister who was in the company of Cabinet Ministers Soita Shitanda and Esther Murugi said only genuine traders will benefit from the stalls in the market that was officially opened by President Kibaki recently.

The assurance followed reports that the allocation exercise was marred by corruption.

Murugi who is the area MP said that traders who were initially operating from the market must be given consideration during the allotment adding that the few stalls which will be left will be given to the less fortunate in the society.

The initial beneficiaries are 465 traders while the total stalls are 513.

Mudavadi said the exercise must be done in a transparent manner adding that those involved must show honesty.

The DPM said the stalls must

first be given to the genuine traders who gave way for construction of the market.

"My ministry together with the Nyeri Municipal Council will ensure that transparency and accountability guides the allocation of the market stalls taking cognizance of the traders relocated from the site and already enumerated as well as the vulnerable and special groups such as orphans, widows and people with disabilities," said the Housing Minister.

He assured the residents that an allocation committee will be estab-

lished comprising officers from his ministry, the municipal council and the beneficiaries to oversee transparent allotment of the market stalls.

Nyeri Kamukunji market which has taken one and a half years to be completed has over 500 market stalls, one cafeteria and an ablution block.

The Kshs 223 million modern market is a result of close collaboration between the Ministry of Housing through the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme and the Nyeri Municipal Council.



The Kshs223 million Nyeri Kamukunji market which was officially opened by President Kibaki recently. INSET: Musalia Mudavadi (left) with Housing Minister Soita Shitanda during the official opening of the market. Photos/Joseph Mukubwa

Oparanya in defence of Ababu

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

PLANNING Minister Wycliffe Oparanya has defended Budalang'i CDF committee from alleged embezzlement of project funds as had been claimed by some residents.

The Minister, who was on an inspection tour of CDF projects in Budalang'i Constituency recently, said he had received several letters from some residents claiming that most projects were non-existent yet the CDF committee had allocated funds towards the same.

Some of the projects the minister said had been listed as non-existent included Siagonjo Stadium, Lugale Primary School administration block, multi-purpose dining hall at Makunda Primary School and Busagwa Youth Polytechnic among others.

However, the minister confirmed the existence of the projects which are operational and appealed to the residents of Bunyala to stop politicising development projects.

"I have personally visited some of the projects claimed to be non-existent and have confirmed that they are there and operational," said Oparanya, adding that they should keep off anti-development politicians who want to find fault on others at the expense of development.

He said following the complaints, he sent a team of auditors on the ground from the ministry to carry out a spot check on all the CDF projects in the constituency adding that the auditors' established that the funds had been properly accounted for and that there were no ghost projects as claimed.

Oparanya said since the CDF's inception in 2004, Budalang'i Constituency has done well than most constituencies in the country.

The minister said the Government will disburse an additional Ksh17.5 million, which will be sent to each constituency in order to ensure that all incomplete CDF projects are finalised before the next general election.

The area MP Ababu Namwamba on the other hand said Budalang'i Constituency was the only one that had been given an additional civic ward. On projects, the MP challenged those spreading propaganda that Budalang'i CDF had been misused to come out in the open and pinpoint the ghost projects.

"Those spoiling the name of Budalang'i CDF committee claiming that money had been allocated towards ghost projects should come out in broad daylight and pinpoint the said projects rather than speaking behind my back for their own political mileage," said the MP, adding that he should be left in peace to serve his constituents.

Unite or perish, rights groups warned

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

LACK of collective action among human rights defenders may jeopardise the movements' activities in the country. The Independent Medico-Legal unit (IMLU) Executive Director Peter Kiama decries the scenario saying it may defeat the purpose for which the movement was born.

Kiama says that the scenario does not only put human rights defenders lives at risk but also opens room for state officers to infiltrate the movement through proxies. He stresses that dialogue and collaboration between different human rights actors are requisite for their own safety and provision of quality services to torture victims.

The director said human rights defenders' workload and their enemies

have since multiplied due to the Kenya's cases at the International Criminals Court (ICC) in the Hague and bill of rights enshrined in the constitution.

"It is apparent that human rights defenders are more insecure than even during the nyayo era due to the ICC issue and the widened Bill of Rights which Government officers especially in the lower hierarchy do not want to embrace," he says.

Kiama as a results challenges human rights defenders in Bungoma County to build new networks and strengthen them so as not to be shaken by the powers that be. For the purposes of speeding up their response towards tortured people in order to preserve evidence, Kiama asks human rights activists to let the communities know them and the work they do.

He, however, challenges human rights defenders to be conversant with judicial reforms, police reforms and bill of rights in order to be smart in their activities.

The director adds that for the human rights activists to effectively tackle government officers, they should know the rules and policies pertaining to the issues being handled.

Kiama asserts that the work of human rights activists is not just fault-finding but also to engage public officers in discussions with a view to providing alternative policy measures.

The IMLU boss discloses that his organization will soon train doctors particularly pathologists attached to it on forensic medical report writing in order to strengthen torture victims evidence in courts of law.

Kiama made the remarks recently in a Bungoma hotel where he met leaders of human rights organizations and doctors operating in Bungoma county and its environs.

Human rights defenders who attended the meeting include Catholic Justice and Peace Commissions (CJPC) co-ordinator Albinus Muga, Mwatikho Torture Survivors Organisation coordinator Taiga Wanyanja and his Field Officer Emmanuel Khaemba and Martin Wanyonyi from Legal Aid Centre.

In attendance also were Dr Peter Marumbu, Dr Amin, and Dr Joseph Owolla, all from the public sector. Kiama was accompanied by IMLU board of Directors vice chair Dr Mohammed Said and Kamau from National Coalition for Human rights defenders.

Kilifi resident oppose coal mining in the area

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

HUNDREDS of Zowerani residents in Kilifi District have rejected plans by the ministry of energy to establish a coal plant in the area.

The residents say the project is set to jeopardize their only source of livelihood if allowed to go on.

Led by their chairman Benjamin Dadu, the residents further say that more than 600 people will be displaced if the project goes on as planned.

Dadu says that the community will only consent to the project if the affected community members are fully compensated and given an alternative site for resettlement.

He notes that the land targeted for the project is covered by palm and cashewnut trees from which the community derives their livelihood.

He demands that an environmental impact assessment survey be undertaken to establish the viability of the project.

The residents lament that the project may not generate equal value to the land and the plants if they allowed the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen) to forge ahead with the project.

The area councilor Gambo Mwambeni says local leaders were not involved by the provincial administration in the consultative meetings that preceded with the identification of the site.

Gambo further says that they will oppose plans to impose the project on the community and added that respective investors must work hand in hand with the residents so that the project may succeed.

Women led by Naomi Kadzo said that their land is fertile and they have been practicing agriculture for many years and demanded for an explanation from the provincial administration as to why the land was hived off without their consent.

Mrs Kadzo says that residents were shocked when a group of strangers visited the area to conduct feasibility studies without prior consultations.

Kilifi DC Benjamin Gachichio however says that the residents were consulted and he was disappointed by the move they had taken.

He says he plans to convene a public baraza to resolve the problem.

Churches urged to unite Kenyans

By KAVYU-KURA

THE church has been challenged to play a key role in reuniting Kenyans ahead of the forthcoming general elections.

The Kenya Film Commission CEO Peter Mutie and the Information Secretary Ezekiel Mutua said recently that the country heavily relied on the church to move forward and avoid a repeat of the 2008 post-election violence. The duo was officiating over the consecration on the newly built Ielanthi AIC Church in Kithyoko area in Yatta district in early April.

Cautioning over the re-occurrence of political violence, Mutie urged the church to help the country shun tribalism and elect the right leaders in the coming general elections. Mutua, on his part, asked the church to revert to spearheading development and management of devolved public funds in rural areas.

"The Church must be the leading light. You understand that in the next six or seven months we will enter a very trying time of seeking to elect

the people who will lead our country. The church's active participation cannot be gainsaid in order to get the right leaders and preclude what befell us in 2008," said Mutie.

He lamented that in 2008 Kenyans senselessly butchered and killed each other. He pointed that as the country moved towards elections, the church guidance was as critical as was crucial. "We need to pray for those with bad intentions in order for our country to shun negative tribalism that would result to fare-ups and hostilities," said the Film Commission boss.

Mutua expressed concern that although in the past, the best schools and health facilities in the country were established and run by church missionaries, in Ukambani and other rural areas of Kenya, the role of the church has since diminished significantly leading to the stalling of development. He called on the church to reclaim its lead role of not only donating money for development projects but to also sensitising Wananchi on their role in the wake of the new constitutional dispensation where resources

will be devolved to the grassroots.

"We need trusted leadership and participatory development. The church needs to have a voice that will ensure transparency and accountability in the management of resources. I know for sure there is no leadership in the rural areas that has a voice as trusted as that of a church," noted Mutua.

He said the church should not be a sidelined in development but should be incorporated in CDF boards and be in the core of decision making in devolved governments. He said he was optimistic that the devolved system would actively involve the church for the sake of transparency and accountability.

He stressed the need to enlighten and educate Wananchi about the benefits that come with the new constitution. "I think this is the time that we need the church to take that role to sensitise the public," pointed the Information secretary.

He said the citizens need to understand what the new constitution means for them in terms of governance, in terms of their power to participate in the management of the country's affairs.



Information secretary Ezekiel Mutua (left) and the Film Commission CEO Peter Mutie unveils the plaque to mark the consecration of the Ielanthi AIC church in Kithyoko area of Yatta district. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

ESP opens doors for women fishers

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

FISH farming in Nyanza province has opened doors for women entrepreneurs in a field that has been considered culturally a man's domain.

Women can now freely engage in the production and sale of fish, thanks to the introduction of the Economic Stimulus Programme by the government.

Initially, women fishmongers had no option but to rely on their male counterparts to get their stock because they were never allowed to venture into the lake. This forced them to trade sex for fish and the resultant effect has been the high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. The ESP projects have however helped women to transcend cultural barriers and become self-reliant in the fish trade.

"Prior to the introduction of the ESP sponsored project, women who dared indulge in the trade were scorned by the community and treated with disdain. But with the ESP, majority have been able to form self-help community groups that have empowered them to take charge of their trade," adds Dorina Atieno, a member of the group while feeding fish in her three pond. The group whose name means tilapia in dholuo resonates with success as members own ponds which have become their only source of livelihood.

"Dorina started with one pond three years ago after she received a go ahead from her husband. The venture is a resounding success as she earns from between Ksh 30,000 to Kshs70,000 from each of the four ponds she has established.

She says that initially people thought that the ESP initiative would collapse. "However when we had the first harvest and the society around saw that the results were impressive, there was a remarkable change of attitude towards us," she says, adding that this helped the groups number to grow.

Dorina and her group are among farmers in 31 constituencies in Nyanza who are producing over 100,000 metric tonnes of stock worth Ksh 140 million.

"I managed to clear school fees for my children after partial harvesting. We no longer rely on revenue generated from sugarcane," Malin Likowa, another farmer in the group says. Likowa started fish farming two years ago.

Fish farming has a higher return as fish is not prone to diseases like other farm animals and unlike crops, their survival is not limited by poor weather conditions because farmers who start with 1,000 fingerlings are assured of the same number at harvesting.

"In Migori County, the government started with 1,065 farmers with a particular focus on women groups. About 1,244 fish ponds were built through the Economic Stimulus Programmes," adds the county fisheries officer in a recent meeting in the county.

It is back to the roots for Ukambani over hunger

By PETER MUTUKU

DROUGHT which has for decades remained a dominant feature in Ukambani region is quickly fading as residents embrace drought resistant crops.

The Ministry of Agriculture through the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP) has helped transform the area by encouraging and supporting farmers to revert to traditional plants.

Mwingi District Agricultural Officer, James Muchoka says that through the programme farmers have abandoned food crops for drought resistant crops such as sorghum, millet, green grams, cassava, sweet potatoes, mangoes, poultry and camel keeping among other income generating activities. He says that currently the

community has formed interest groups mainly in Mwingi Central, Mwingi West, Mwingi East, Kyuso, Mumoni, Enziu, Ukasi and Tseikuru to grow crops for both domestic and commercial purposes.

Among groups formed through support by NALEP include the 4KK Youth Group in Tseikuru Location, Mwingi North Constituency, which is currently engaged in poultry keeping.

The youth group comprising of 20 members has been trained on poultry management. The group has also been funded by the World Vision to construct poultry houses, drugs, feeds and solar driven incubator.

The plans to buy a solar panel to enable them operate the incubator to hasten the process of hatching of eggs and improve production. The group is

currently keeping over 40 local hens.

In Enziu sub-location, Waita location, another group of 30 members is engaged in the production of sorghum, millet and green grams.

The group has managed to invest in value addition and the results are impressive. Today the group is force in the market and has acquired a trade name, the Enziu Commercial Bakers through support from NALEP-SIDA.

The group started with only 16 members and the figure has grown to 30 members (eight men and 22 women). In Nguni division, the Kaghui Youth Group in Ukasi market has ventured into camel keeping project. The project has been funded to tune of Ksh722,800 through NALEP ASAL component.

The group however faces a myriad

of challenges and has been unable to penetrate the local market where the community regard camels as dirty and therefore their milk is seen as unhygienic and a cause for diarrhoea, transmits livestock diseases, pests and also leads to desertification. The group however plans to harness camels capacity to plough, weed and provide transport during dry season. Further Kisungi Basketry Self Help Group that is located in Konyu sub-location, Katse Location, Mumoni Central division, Mumoni District is engaged in the making and selling of traditional baskets locally in large numbers.

Through NALEP-SIDA, the group has been trained on local basketry and is engaging in the making of fireless cookers, chopping baskets, trays and wall mats in 2009.

Shun tribalism and prosper, Bungoma residents told

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

ALTHOUGH Bungoma County has the potential to become a commercial hub, lack of visionary leaders continue to consign the area into stagnation.

The Regional Commissioner, upper western Mr. Rashid Mohammed advises Bungoma County residents to shun tribalism and elect leaders on the basis of their capacity to provide quality services.

Rashid, at the same time points out that ethnic diversity must be reflected in leadership to address its cosmopolitan stature and promote peaceful coexistence.

He reiterates that without peace and good leadership, the residents cannot benefit from the enormous potential in agricultural, tourism and cross border trade.

The provincial administrator further reminds those aspiring to be County leaders that the new constitution provides for equitable distribution of resources.

He challenges County leaders to respect the supreme law reiterating that for peace to prevail there must be equitable distribution of both the national and County cake.

One of the objects and principles of devolved government as outlined in Article 174 (h) of the constitution is to ensure equitable sharing of national and local resources throughout Kenya.

Rashid made the remarks recently at a Bungoma hotel during the National Cohesion and Devolution Forum.

The two day forum was facilitated by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in collaboration with Kenya Correspondents Association (KCA).

Participants drawn from all parts of the County were taken through the constitutional reforms at County level, realities, gaps, understanding the dynamics of devolved governance in Kenya--County challenges and opportunities and land policy among other topics.

The facilitators included William Oloo, Paddy Onyango, Martin Oloo and Khisa Caleb among others.

Jigger survivors now live normal lives

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

INITIALLY, they would cry foul over negligence and even walking was a problem, but today, they are busy walking and working in their farms.

Forty two-year-old Mary Nyawira is among the about 2,000 people from Mathioya district who were initially infested with jiggers, but have recovered and can work to put food on the table.

The mother of six children works tirelessly in a three acre farm donated by Ahadi Kenya Trust to jigger infested families in Gatugi village in Murang'a County to enable them fend for their families.

About 3,000 tissue bananas have been planted in the farm to enable the families generate revenue from the initiative.

This project aims to boost food production and also alleviate poverty.

Apart from this plantation, those who have fully recovered have each planted 50 banana trees in their homes where they also expect to make bumper harvest soon.

"I am expecting more than Kshs 10,000 in the next few months once my 50 bananas mature. This will enable me to feed my family since the bananas were not affected by the dry spell which hit the area early this year. We are using them for cooking and also for ripening," says Nyawira.

At the neighbouring home is Elishiba Nyambura, 35 who is also expecting a bumper harvest.

"My five children were infested with jiggers. My legs were also infested and it was not possible for us to engage in any meaningful activity. My husband was also badly infested. Today, we are a happy family. We are able to seek for casual jobs while my children are able to concentrate in school," says Nyambura.

These are among the many fami-

lies at Karung'e area where Ahadi Kenya Chief Executive Stanley Kamau started the project of fighting jiggers before spreading to other parts in the country.

He has since established many projects for those who are already healed including banana and bee keeping projects.

The banana project is expected to rake in Kshs 400,000 in the next three months as the bananas have started maturing.

"From there, we expect to get about Kshs 1.2 million in another four months. This money will help the families to buy clothes, school uniforms and other family and school items," says Kamau during the fifth celebrations since the trust was formed.

The people of Gitugi village now are expected to form a community based organization where the income generated from the projects will be shared equally among them.

Ahadi Kenya and other joint or-



Ahadi Kenya Trust CEO Stanley Kamau with anti-jigger ambassador Cecilia Mwangi during the tour of a tissue banana project in Mathioya District of Murang'a County. At the centre is one of the jigger infested victim who has since recovered. Photo/ Joseph Mukubwa

G7 alliance calls for peaceful elections

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

THE deputy Prime Minister, Uhuru Kenyatta and Eldoret North MP William Ruto have re-emphasized the need for forgiveness and reconciliation among the Kenyan communities.

Speaking at Posta Grounds in Bungoma town, the two politicians asked Kenyans to remain united during and after the next general elections saying their prayer meetings are aimed at uniting Kenyans.

Consequently, the two dismissed those against the prayer meetings 'as associates of Satan' who are not willing to see this nation heal from the ills of the post election violence.

"People who are always against

prayers are Satanic because they do not wish anything good for the human race," Ruto claimed.

Ruto said the prayer of G7 members is to see peaceful elections in the country.

He reiterated that no citizen of this country will be killed or have his/her property destroyed during the struggle for this nations leadership.

Uhuru echoed Ruto's sentiments saying that never again shall Kenyans turn against each other during and after the elections.

Kenyatta urged all political leaders to strive to unite people arguing that it is upon the leadership and Kenyans themselves to ensure that peace prevails in the country.

He challenged other political leaders to support the G7 initiative to unite Kenyans instead of castigating them.

Kenyatta asserted that it is only through forgiveness and reconciliation that Kenyans can work together regardless of their party's affiliations to rebuild the nation.

He reminded Kenyans that they are duty bound to decide the political destiny of this country without coercion and intimidation.

The MP as a result challenged Kenyans not to allow foreigners to choose a leader for them adding that the move will belittle the country's sovereignty.

Speaking at the same function Saboti MP Eugene Wamalwa blamed

organizations have vowed to continue initiating other viable projects aimed to help the families who initially were not recognized in the society.

"The projects will go a long way in empowering the people economically and also enable them generate some income. Jiggers menace cannot be eliminated unless the affected families are empowered economically," he adds.

About 200,000 jigger-infested people have received free treatment and fully recovered from the menace.

Kamau says the jigger menace is real in many parts of the country and calls upon the government to set aside funds to help eradicate the parasite.

He says that funds must be allocated at county levels to help eradicate the vermin which is blamed for high poverty levels.

The Ahadi Trust boss says more resources should be channelled to primary schools and semi arid parts of the country to help fight the menace.

According to statistics more than 400 people have succumbed to death owing to severe jigger infestations in the past five years. In Murang'a County one person dies every month.

He laments that lack of proper funding was hampering the fight against vermin at the same reiterating his earlier calls for the government to come out with an anti-jigger policy as it was doing to other diseases like cancer and Malaria.

The anti jigger crusader also notes that through the initiative hundreds of pupils who had dropped out of schools due to the parasites have been treated and have now gone back to school.

Anti-jigger ambassador Cecilia Mwangi said this is a major milestone since those who were initially ignored by the society are now engaging in productive work to build economy in the area.

political violence in the country on the Government's failure to address youth unemployment problem.

Wamalwa challenged the coalition Government to empower the youths in the country economically so as not to be used by politicians to cause violence.

"The government should look for ways that will enable the youths to fill their pockets with money and not stones which they use to perpetuate violence," he said.

Wamalwa said that although the youths in the country constitute 73 percent of our population the coalition government has failed to put in place clear mechanism and policies to address their plight.

Over a million Kenyans infested by jiggers

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

ABOUT 1.4 million Kenyans suffer from jigger infestations, a senior Public Health official has said.

The Vector and Vermin Control division and the department of Environmental Health in the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation official, Peter Wanjohi, who was addressing an interagency committee on Public Health and Sanitation during a three-

day sensitisation workshop held at a Busia hotel recently attributed the high rate of jiggers infestation to poverty, poor housing and sanitation and ill-health.

The public health officer said the main predisposing factors for jiggers' infestation are poor housing especially dusty floors, poor personal hygiene practices such as infrequent washing of feet and poverty as a constraining factor in access to proper housing, ad-

equated water supply and sanitation.

"Thus behavioural and sanitation interventions are the most important jigger control mechanisms followed by physical provision of proper housing or modification of existing structures such as plastering of walls and smoothening of floors with cement mortar, slime or cow dung," said Wanjohi, adding that wearing of shoes, though not scientifically proven as a method of jigger infestation control

can be a useful barrier to new infections.

He said spraying of infested households and pets with pyrethroids has been on-going as a routine activity by environmental health personnel in endemic district, however the activity has been hampered by stigmatization, lack of community participation in planning, implementation and evaluation in the fumigation and treatment programmes rendering them unus-

tainable, limited funding and poor housing and inadequate water and sanitation.

Jigger endemic areas were identified as Central, Coast, Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western provinces and that the most-at-risk population cohorts are children under 10 years, the elderly and the physically and mentally disabled persons in the affected areas, approximately 10 million.

The three-day sensitisation workshop was attended by all Provincial Public Health Officers' countrywide, university students, teachers and other related departments.

By HENRY OWINO

Women trust fund kitty remains under utilized

THE government now intends to increase allocations disbursed through the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) in a move that seeks to empower more women economically.

According to Mr. Wainaina Wa Njeri, the Women Trust Fund Chief Executive Officer, the fund is anchored on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that seek to promote gender equality and empower women.

The fund was started in 2007 and its operations officially began in 2008 with only eleven partners. Today up to Ksh2.3 billion has been allocated to the kitty and Ksh.2.1 million loaned out to various women enterprise groups.

Women groups that qualify for funding receive up to Ksh.0.5 million depending on their approved business plan. They are required to repay with slight interest of as low as 8 per cent rate far down compared to what most commercial banks that charge as high as 25 per cent. The WEF remains the lowest interest fee charger.

"We have two types of loans groups which is Tujumarishe and Tuinuke, designed to help women sustain their businesses", says Wainaina.

Wainaina was speaking at a function in Nairobi organized to motivate women to form business enterprise groups and borrow the money that has been set aside by the government for women entrepreneurs. He mentioned that in the mid-term plan of the vision 2030, one of the most important areas to address is the issue of gender and equality. He stated that the government is committed to improving the lives of women because they contribute more to economic development of the country.

The Chief Executive Officer added that all loans are given as zero



An open air market along Ngong Road with some household basic needs.

interest loans and hence have benefited over 439,000 women in the country so far. He added that the state intends to impact more women in the coming years in the spirit of reducing the disparity gap.

"We are not only happy that our credit services are available in all the counties but also affordable

to all Kenyans", says Wainaina. He also added that they give loans to groups running economic activities and to individual women with sustainable business ideas.

He also promised that from next year, the amount of money lent to viable women groups will be doubled in each category adding that there is

no minimum amount of loans given to any individual women.

According to Gladys Arisa, women should use technology to find business connections, networking with fellow business people and quicken communication than physical movements.

Arisa said recent International

Research findings indicate that technology has negatively affected more women than men due to their frequent usage of computers, mobile phones and television. She cited that the research also indicated that majority of women prefer social media to any other form of communication more than their male counterparts.

"Women should not celebrate the development of technology but should use the technology to make money. Network for business purposes and ensure out of ten calls you make, seven are for expanding your businesses," says Gladys Arisa.

Arisa stated that in twenty hours of a day, a woman would spend at least sixteen hours in one of the modern facilities either partially on it or fully glued to it. Social media on computer internet, she highlighted takes the lead in modern technology facilities usage by women especially in urban centres with television following a cross sectional of women either in rural or urban areas.

She regretted that mobile phones are used widely in making or receiving calls which are not business oriented but could be used to network to find business partners and may be to order or purchase for more stock.

She however, urged all women who have not yet formed or joined any business enterprise groups to do so as the government is ready and committed to support women business enterprises geared towards economic development of the country hence empower women nationally.

Plans underway to rescue abused children

By PETER MUTUKU

PLANS are underway to rescue children in worst forms of child labour (WFCL) in the country, through a pilot project sponsored by International Labour Organization - International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC).

The initiative is to be implemented through the government aided Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) Project.

The project which targets three districts of Kitui, Kilifi and Busia aims at creating child labour free zones in the country, says Titus Kithome, the Kitui Local ILO-IPEC-SNAP Co-ordinator. He says that the project is slated to benefit a total of 8155 children from the three districts upon its completion in 2015.

He explains during the implementation period about 3700 children will be removed from hazardous work, 300 protected in the work places and undertakings and 4155 stopped from joining the labour sector.

In addition 100 families will be facilitated to engage in income generating activities through training schemes and micro-finance schemes.

The Kitui project targets 3000 children and will be implemented in five locations by three organizations namely the Kitui Development Centre (KDC), the Catholic Diocese and the Child Welfare Association.

"The theme is to accelerate concerted action to combat child labour," says Kithome adding special attention will be paid to children in worst forms of labour through Integrated Area Based Approach (IABA).

Janet Mumo, the KDC Project Manager says her organization targets 1800 children in three locations of Changwithya East, Wii and Kitui Township which produces high number of child labourers due to their proximity to the District headquarters.

She says 1000 children will be rescued from worst forms of child labour by initiating a number of activities.

"We have established child labour committees from the sub-location and

district level to make the process more inclusive," explains Ms Mumo asserting that the move will enable the communities to identify those supposed to benefit from the project.

She, however, observes that since one of the main factors that lead to child labour is poverty at the household level, vulnerable families will be helped to start income generating activities to improve their incomes. Ms Mumo avers that youth participation will also be encouraged through staging of drama and plays in some schools as a way of ensuring that the interest of the child is catered for.

"The objective of the project is to have effective models for establishing child labour free zones in the area in addition to harmonizing the child legislation programmes with the National Action Plan to eliminate child labour in the country", says Mumo.

Despite introduction of free primary and secondary education, child labour persists and the situation has been aggravated by the prevailing harsh economic times.

Hunger claims lives in Turkana

By MALACHI MOTANO

AT least 14 people have died in Kenya's north-western Turkana region - the first hunger-related deaths in the current regional drought, even as the rest of the country begins to receive short rains.

The MP for Turkana, John Munyes, says the deaths were in three remote villages after the government failed to transport food to drought victims. The United Nations says more than four million Kenyans are threatened by starvation in the region's worst drought in 60 years.

Other countries affected are Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti. The 14 people who died were Kenyan adults, but children are also severely malnourished, says the Member of Parliament adding that people feel abandoned.

Mr Munyes, who is the labour minister in Kenya's coalition government, says the death toll would have been higher if the Red Cross was not distributing aid in Turkana.

"It would have been a disaster," he said. Mr Munyes said the deaths were

not caused by a shortage of food, but by "lack of logistics". The government had failed to transport food to villages, he said. The UN says the drought has been caused by a lack of rains for successive years. It has declared famine in parts of Somalia, which is worst affected.

About 1,300 Somalis - mostly women and children - are crossing into Kenya each day in search of food, the UN says. The UN's Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) said that famine was "likely to persist until at least December 2011".

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called on the militants to let the aid through in Somalia. "Al-Shabab are preventing assistance to the most vulnerable populations in Somalia," she said. "I call on al-Shabab to allow assistance to be delivered in an absolutely unfettered way throughout the area... so that as many lives as possible can be saved."

Some 3.2 million people in Somalia are in need of immediate life-saving assistance - almost half the population, the UN says.

BACKGROUND

THE new legislation borrows heavily from Chapter 6 of the Constitution on Leadership and Integrity and demands that public officers bring integrity and honour to their offices as well as the country.

The Act has been tailored to arrest misuse of power by placing an obligation on state officers to serve the people rather than rule them. It is likely to stem the culture of impunity which has, for decades, eroded public confidence in governance institutions and undermined the rule of law.

Responsibility of leadership

The Act borrows heavily from the Constitution (73 (1)) which outlines that the authority assigned to a state officer is a public trust to be exercised in a manner that is:

- (i) Consistent with the purposes and objects of the constitution
- (ii) Demonstrates respect for the people
- (iii) Brings honour to the nation and dignity to the office
- (iv) Promotes public confidence in the integrity of the office

The guiding principles of leadership and integrity include

- (a) Selection on the basis of personal integrity, competence and suitability or election in free and fair elections
- (b) Objectivity and impartiality in decision making and in ensuring that decisions are not influenced by nepotism, favouritism and other improper motives or corrupt practices
- (c) Selfless service based solely on the public interest, demonstrated by
 - (i) Honesty in the execution of public duties
 - (ii) The declaration of any personal interest that may conflict with public duties
- (d) Accountability to the public for decisions and actions
- (e) Discipline and commitment in service to the people

Oath of office of State officers

Before assuming a State office, acting in a State office or performing any functions of a State

office, individuals are to take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation of office in the manner and form prescribed by the Constitution.

Conduct of State officers

The new law affirms stipulations in the Constitution that a state officer has an obligation to behave, whether in public and official life, in private life or in association with other persons, in a manner that avoids.

- (a) Any conflict between personal interests and public official duties
- (b) Compromising any public or official interest in favour of a personal interest
- (c) Demeaning the office the officer holds

A person who contravenes the provisions



The enactment of Leadership and Integrity Act marks a new order devoid of wayward politicians. It signifies a new era where individuals have run for political office and are appointed even with criminal charges hanging over them. The new law sets out integrity standards for public officers, including the President, Deputy President, Ministers, MPs and Judges. The standards are to be applied to those who will seek political office and will be fully effective in the coming elections. The new law implies that individuals with criminal charges are no longer fit to hold public office until they are cleared.

reports FAITH MUIRURI, our Sub-Editor and Staff Writer.

- (a) Is liable for disciplinary action in the respective office
- (b) May, in accordance with the disciplinary procedure be dismissed or removed from office.

The law provides that a person who has been dismissed or removed from office is disqualified from holding any other state office.

Financial probity of State of-**icers**

The law directs that a gift or donation to a state officer on a public or official occasion belongs to the government. The law provides that the officer remits the gift or donation to the State unless in cases



Nairobi City Hall

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where they are exempted under an Act of Parliament

In an apparent reference to the constitution, the new law also bars state officers from

- (a) Maintaining foreign bank accounts except in accordance with an Act of Parliament
- (b) Seeking or accepting a personal loan or benefit in circumstances that compromise their integrity

Restriction on activities of State officers

The Act prohibits a full time State officer from participating in any other gainful employment. Further, the law also bars State officers from holding office in a political party. Currently, a number of state officers continue to hold positions in political parties in direct contravention of the Constitution.

Further, the law provides that a retired State officer who is receiving pension from public funds is not legible to hold more than two concurrent remunerative positions as chairperson, director or employee of

- (a) a company owned or controlled by the state
- (b) a state organ

Citizenship and leadership

The law also provides that a person is not eligible for election or ap-

pointment to a State office unless they are Kenyans.

The legislation makes it illegal for a state officer or a member of the defence forces to hold dual citizenship.

However the provision does not apply to

- (a) Judges and members of

equitable provisions of services

- (d) Involvement of the people in the process of policy making
- (e) Accountability for administrative acts
- (f) Transparency and provision to the public

- (i) Men and women
- (ii) Members of all ethnic groups
- (iii) Persons with disabilities

The new law lays emphasis on the need to uphold the values and principles of public service in

deputy governor of a county or other member of the executive committee of a county government

- (i) Attorney-General
- (j) Director of Public Prosecutions
- (k) Secretary to the Cabinet



Parliament in session.

- (b) Any person who has been made a citizen of another country by operation of that country's law, without ability to opt out.

Values and principles of public service include

- (a) High standards of professional ethics
- (b) Efficient, effective and economic use of resources
- (c) Responsive, prompt, effective, impartial and

of timely and accurate information

- (g) Fair competition and merit as the basis of appointments and promotions
- (h) Representation of Kenya's diverse communities
- (i) Affording adequate and equal opportunities for appointment, training and advancement, at all levels of the public service of

- (a) all state organs in both levels of government
- (b) all state corporations

According to the constitution, a State office means the following offices

- (a) President
- (b) Deputy President
- (c) Cabinet Secretary
- (d) Member of Parliament
- (e) Judges and Magistrates
- (f) Member of a Commission
- (g) Holder of an independent office
- (h) Member of a county assembly, governor or

- (l) Principal Secretary
- (m) Chief of the Kenya Defence Forces
- (n) Commander of a service of the Kenya Defence Forces
- (o) Director General of the National Intelligence Service
- (p) Inspector General and the Deputy Inspectors General of the National Police Service or
- (q) An office established and designed as a State office by national legislation.