

Rights body rejects move on gender rule

By FAITH MUIRURI

THE KENYA Human Rights Commission is strongly opposed to plans to amend the constitution to give effect to Articles 27 (8) and 81 (b) which require that not more than two thirds of those elected in parliament shall be of the same gender.

Although the proposed amendments are meant to achieve gender parity in the next General Elections, the human rights body, however, feels that any changes in the constitution are bound to subvert the popular will and expose the supreme law to further mutilations.

In a terse statement, the human rights body says changing the constitution just two years after promulgation would reverse gains already enshrined in the supreme law.

The commission argues that this will set a bad precedent of resorting too quickly to constitutional amendment whenever there is a challenge.

“Gender issues are also likely to be relegated to the periphery and addressed in a simplistic manner, and thus rob women of the gains outlined in the Constitution,” warns the statement.

The human rights body cites the old Constitution which was subjected to 27 amendments in



Participants follow keenly during a recent conference on Women, Peace and Security at KICC recently.

Photo/Henry Owino

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EAC to harmonize Higher Education Curriculum

By HENRY OWINO

THE East African Business Council (EABC) and Inter-University Council of East Africa (IU-CEA) plan to harmonise education curricula for institutions of higher learning among East Africa Countries.

The two organizations further seek to promote the collaboration between universities and the business community in East Africa.

The initiative will aid in human resource development and research in order to contribute to the region’s socio-economic development.

The two institutions have therefore agreed to jointly address issues that are pertinent to sustain-

able socio-economic development and regional integration by exploiting various key areas such as; enhancing linkage between the private sector and universities, encouraging the private sector to support research and innovations by universities in the community, promote the utilization of research output and innovations from universities by the Business Community and identifying areas in Higher Education curricula and relevant research for the region’s sustainable development and holding joint forums, conferences and exhibitions.

Other notable events includes; identifying possible options in narrowing gaps between ba-

sic/applied research and industry needs, working out alternatives to facilitate access to new ideas and know how, to work together in disseminating benefits of intellectual property and commercialization among others.

The EABC as the umbrella organization of the Private Sector in East Africa is at the forefront in facilitating Private Sector participation in the EAC integration process. Its members are drawn from the Private Sector Partner States, constituting of companies, business associations and government agencies involved in facilitating trade.

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just 40 years with most regressive as early as 1964, 1966, adding that this should not be repeated.

"The Constitution 2010 is not flawless and can be amended but the timing now is not strategic," reads the statement in part.

The chairperson of National Gender and Equality Commission Winfred Lichuma however supports the proposed constitutional amendment, saying the two thirds gender rule is a good provision but it lacks the mechanism to deliver.

"There is a proposal to amend the constitution to give us a process on how we get to realize the two thirds representation at elective position levels," she explains during a high level conference on Women, Peace and Security. However, the human rights body underscores the need to explore other options adding that the Constitution provides for legislative and administrative mechanisms to resolve any constitutional matters.

Article 81 as read with Article 27 has given Parliament a blank cheque to design an electoral system driven by gender sensitive considerations.

The Constitution has already done its bit by providing both the principle and provided some constitutional quotas on gender (nominated and special seats; zebra lists)

The Constitution (and courts) tasks the details of the mechanism of implementing the two thirds gender rule to legislative and administrative means.

Options

The Human Right Commission is now rallying support towards the amendment of the Elections Act and the Political Parties Act to provide for the realization of the two thirds gender rule.

According to the human rights body, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) must also develop rules that facilitate the implementation of the two thirds rule in the forthcoming General Elections.

The commission says that the Political Parties Act must be amended to ensure that party nomination lists reflect 50 percent gender balance within each county and for the total number of counties i.e. 145 male and 145 female nominees for the 290 elective seats.

The Human Rights Commission further proposes that the Elections Act be amended to ensure that every

political party fields a governor and running mate of opposite genders and that 50 percent of governor nominees for each party must be women.

"This means every party fields 23 men and 22 women for governor on March 4, 2013. The above amendment should apply to county assemblies too so that each party ensures that its final lists of nominees has 50 percent male and 50 percent female candidates for the total number of wards in each County. The commission further wants the Elections Act to give the electoral body powers to reject non-compliant nomination lists

The commission argues that the adoption of the proposals would guarantee the realization of the two thirds gender rule and hopefully surpass the 18 percent short fall anticipated in the National Assembly; 7 percent in Senate and the possible 33 percent short fall in County Assembly.

"If the proposals are adopted, then the two thirds gender rule will be realized without bloating the three houses and passing on a huge financial burden on tax payers.

The commission says the proposal will address the problem of gender representation in a strategic and sustainable manner that does not result in voters feeling that women cost them too much.

The constitution provides for 290 elected MPs and 47 women picked from counties, adding up to 337. To

meet the gender principle, the country must elect at least 117 women or men. If the mark is not met, then the new arrangement captured in the proposed amendment requires that political parties give names of the disadvantaged gender from a list to comply with the constitution.

Additional seats would then be created specifically to fill in the gender gaps after elections and any shortfall would see an increase in house seats by the same margin.

This means that the number of MPs and Senators in the next parliament could shoot up beyond the numbers provided for in the Constitution and would be determined after elections.

Implications

Sitting MPs should thus support the proposals as they do not threaten in anyway their re-election chances. "There are 80 additional seats i.e. 145 seats for men in National Assembly; and 46 new seats for men as governor or running mate; and 23 new seats for men as Senators. This means all men in the tenth Parliament can still hold elective seats in the National Assembly or Senate as Governors or deputy governor," adds statement.

In addition, the proposed amendments compel political parties to shun tokenism in recruitment of female members and in determining which women candidates to field.

Nomination processes have in the

past been abused by leaders in political parties who appoint their friends, associates and allies, thus denying deserving women who work with the communities.

Further, the amendments if adopted would compel political parties to encourage female participation and the active participants would help prevent gender based violence at elections.

The commission says the proposals would help transform Kenya's electoral system from being patriarchal and individual driven to ensuring that party manifesto and popularity are what sells.

Challenges

The proposals are likely to be rejected by male MPs who perceive them as a threat to their political ambitions. The human rights commission however feels that there is no cause for alarm since there are 80 new seats in the National Assembly as well as the fact that many incumbents have expressed interest in positions of Senator, Governor and deputy governor.

Another challenge may arise from the fact that plenty of women who have political ambitions and leadership capabilities, may shy away from elective seats as they have in the past been elbowed out by the patriarchal violent way in which elections are held and the lack of support from political parties, who view them as a liability. The proposed formula thus

makes competent women an asset to the party.

Other concerns are pegged on fears that men may end up being the under-represented gender. However the human rights body dispels their fears and says that these formulae will only offer many female candidates (50 percent) but will not instantaneously address the patriarchal attitudes with which most Kenyans vote. However, it will be watered down by party loyalties resulting in a minimum of one third women representation that is elective.

Nominations

Nomination is a constitutional quota that is already in Constitution 2010 in the form of the 47 women representatives seats in the National Assembly; zebra lists and the two thirds rule itself.

The commission says that further constitutional quotas should be avoided, as this will require constitutional amendment or even a referendum.

The human rights body nominations present numerous challenges that range from the fact they best work when they are applied to less populous marginalised groups; Women make up over 50 percent of the population; having too many of them nominated not elected reverses the intended gains of addressing gender needs strategically. Nomination takes a practical gender needs approach

Whose agenda do the nominated pursue? That of those who nominated them or that of ordinary women voters who did not vote for them? Who nominates?

47 women representatives in the Constitution are elected, thus clearly owned and answerable to voters. The Constitution has deliberately kept the number of nominated to a minimum and must be in line with Chapter six. This avoids the question of 'Who are the nominated answerable to?'

Getting the one third number of women through nomination will result in a bloated and expensive government; voters will begin to see women leaders as a financial burden rather than leaders equal to male leaders.

This thus calls for practical gender needs as opposed to strategic gender needs approach.

Legislative and administrative measures can deliver the two thirds gender principle in a manner that ensures that under-represented gender is always elected and not nominated.



Women conference for peaceful election in 2013 elections. Photo/Henry Owino

EAC to harmonize Higher Education Curriculum

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The institution is well known for its projects and programmes which are designed to bring together potential business partners by developing critical contacts and business relationships. It also provides a forum for exchange of information and ideas to raise East Africa's investment profile both regionally and globally.

Another concern in the programme is addressing issues that limit private sector competitiveness in trade and investment.

To ensure these proposals become a reality, the two institutions are holding the first joint conference for East

Africa Higher Education forum scheduled to take place between October 24-26, 2012, in Arusha, Tanzania.

All the five East Africa Communities; Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda Burundi and the host Tanzania, concerned Ministries are attending including other expertise from various countries to help forge way forward for the big dream ahead.

According to Mr. Keli Kiilu, EABC Board Director, the forum brings together higher education managers, researchers, and the business community and policy makers from EAC Partner States. He said they would deliberate on the role played by universities in fostering regional integration and

the development of knowledge-based economies in the East African Community, through forging linkages with the business community.

Mr. Kiilu explained that the main objective is to provide a convergence platform for higher education and the business community, so as to discuss and strategize on how to develop effective higher education systems in East Africa. He added that it would be linked to industry for the promotion of sustainable socio-economic development and East Africa's regional integration.

"Our specific objective is to establish collaboration between universities and the business community for the

region's sustainable socio-economic development through enhanced industrial performance and investments in higher education and promoting the development of skills and competence-based curricula and building consensus on developing a common higher education area for East Africa," Mr. Kiilu, the EABC Board Director, explained.

The EABC Board Director emphasized that it will help in mainstreaming the relevance of university-generated knowledge and human resources for the well being of the general society, and strengthening excellence of universities by developing strategically focused curricula and research.

The strategic focus of EABC is to bring all private sector associations under EABC fold in order to give the EAC private sector a stronger voice. It would enhance private-public sector dialogue with a view to ensuring that the private sector plays its rightful role in driving the EAC integration agenda.

Other benefits are; working towards a business environment that is conducive to trade and investment, enhancing the capacity of EABC national focal points and other trade support institutions to be competent advocates for the private sector and improving private sector competitiveness through provision of regular business and trade information.

Teachers strike needed mediators, not hardliners

By HENRY OWINO

THE industrial dispute between the teachers and the government dragged for three weeks because none of the parties were willing to strike a compromise.

Teachers on the one hand felt betrayed after the government reneged on the implementation of a salary package deal that had been sealed way back in 1997.

The Government on the other hand displayed a grandstanding tactics which were not offering any remedy to what had become a major crisis in the education sector.

Third term is always the shortest and crucial for students preparing to sit for national exams and thus the strike disoriented most of them.

Most parents were forced to hire private tutors to coach their children while others took them to private schools to catch up on the syllabus.

"My son is a candidate at Olympic primary school in Kibera, Nairobi and thus I had no option but to enroll him to a private school for the three weeks teachers stayed away from school.

A series of negotiations to break the salary impasse between Government and the two unions thus, Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET) officials in most meetings hit deadlock.

The first hurdle was during the meeting held at Labour Minister, John Munyes' office where the government's request that the teachers commit themselves to a return-to-work formula before the start of structured negotiations collapsed.

However, union officials from both Knut and Kuppet officials always stood their ground and were unwilling to renounce the strike first before the government tabled its offer. Knut was always led by the chairman Wilson Sossion while Kuppet had Akelo Misore secretary general and Omboko Milemba, chairman.

On the other hand, Education Minister, Mutula Kilonzo's threats to sack the striking teachers worsened the situation. In fact most teachers regarded him as a dictator who did not understand the education docket and needed to quit the office.

Several meetings prompted by the government to amicably resolve the strike in a structured manner failed due to the hardline positions taken by both sides. For instance a meeting chaired by the acting Secretary to the Cabinet and the Head of the Civil Service, Francis Kimemia, Mutula, Finance Minister Njeru Githae, Public Services Minister Dalmas Otieno, Attorney General Githu Muigai and Teachers Service Commission officials was highly anticipated to resolve the dispute but again nothing fruitful came forth.

During that meeting, Mutula request that teachers renounce the strike to allow for "structured talks" without making an offer, fell on deaf ears. On the 300 per cent demanded by teachers, Mutula said: "There is no way that one can be achieved after the TSC Act has been assented to." He said that although the 1997 agreement promising the increment was a legal notice, it was subservient to the TSC Act.

Apart from the 300 per cent salary increment, which is supposed to have been implemented in phases over the last 15 years, the teachers were also making other demands that were intended to harmonize their salaries with those of the other public servants. They were also de-

manding that their allowances be increased in line with the agreement they had signed in 1997.

Teachers were left out in the recent harmonization of civil servants salaries recommended by Otieno. "I don't know why he (Dalmas) decided to leave teachers out without consulting me," Mutula said in response to questions raised by the union officials.

To make matters worse, in Parliament, members (MPs) supported the strike and promised to pass the supplementary budget to cater for their salary increases once it was presented to Parliament.

The MPs described the teachers' demands as legitimate since the government had signed a Collective Bargaining Agreement in 1997 binding itself to pay the salary increments the teachers were asking for.

The MPs accused Education Minister Mutula Kilonzo of failing to show leadership and issuing threats instead of seeking dialogue between the government and the teachers' union. In fact, Parliament had to move a motion of adjournment to allow the House debate the teachers strike.

Peris Chepchumba, MP Eldoret South, accused the government of sleeping on the job and failing to factor in the salary increments in the

budget.

Peris said the government should consider a supplementary budget which MPs would endorse. Nominated MP Mohammed Affey said it was shameful for police to teargas and beat teachers like criminals and asked Police Commissioner Mathew Iteere to prosecute those caught in camera violating the teachers' right to demonstrate.

However, Olago Aluoch, MP for Kisumu Town West described the strike as "grave" and dismissed it as illegal, and supported Mutula orders to Directors of Education (DoE) to identify and stop the salaries of striking teachers.

Martin Ogindo MP for Rangwe, nevertheless opposed a proposal that a supplementary budget be introduced in the House to cater for the demanded salary increases since it would not address where the money will be coming from in the subsequent budget allocations.

The support striking teachers received from the House gave the Knut chairman Wilson Sossion, momentum to fight on for their pay increment after the KNUT Secretary General David Okuta fell sick.

In future, the government intervention must be prompt to avoid paralyzing key sectors in the country.



Teacher demonstrate during teachers' strike recently.

Illiterate men urged to join Adult Education

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

MEN from Nyeri County who are illiterate have been challenged to join the department of Adult Education and acquire knowledge that can help them improve their standards of living.

Nyeri based industrialist, Thuo Mathenge said statistics from the government showed that men were shying away from classes while more women were enrolling themselves.

Speaking during this year's International Illiteracy Day, Mathenge said it was worrying that in Nyeri County, 3,890 adults had enrolled for the special education, out of which, only 807 were men.

"This trend is very worrying and something must be done. We must come out with a lasting solution that will compel men to be literate," he said, after the ceremony which was held at Kiamuiru Primary School near Nyeri town.

During the ceremony, whose theme was 'Literacy for peace' learners were awarded with certificates.

Mathenge who is a Nyeri governor hopeful said this year's international theme for the ceremony was befitting for the country as Kenyans brace themselves for the general elections.

"There is no other better theme that could have been coined, especially for our country since we need to emphasize on the need for us to co-exist peacefully as we approach the electioneering period," Mathenge said.

He told men to face the reality and accept to join learning centres which are over 260 within the Nyeri County whose literacy level stands at 76 per cent.

"With the devolution of the governance system, we need to brainstorm and come out with ways of helping the adults who have never been in class to enroll as this is the only way that we can develop our County," Mathenge who owns Brade Gate Poultry Industries said.

He said men must accept the reality and stop indulging in alcoholism at the cost of development while women were busy with various development projects.

The County director of Adult Education, Maina Macharia said main challenges facing their department were lack of resources, infrastructure and teachers.

Mathenge disclosed that it was practically impossible for 128 teachers to serve 264 learning centres across the County, adding that they were forced to learn on schedules due to the shortage.

Youth poly registers high student enrolment

By TITUS MAERO

THE Sigalagala Youth Polytechnic in Kakamega has relocated to a more spacious building at the Kakamega Teachers Co-operative (KATECO) Plaza in a bid to accommodate the large number of students.

The Kakamega Campus Co-ordinator Mr Wilberforce Jahonga says the number of student population had gone up to 200 and thus could not fit in the fa-

cility.

The Co-ordinator said that the institution had started new courses to keep abreast with demands in job market.

Jahonga pointed out that at the inception of the campus in 2007, the institution was only offering three courses in Secretarial, Accountancy and Community Development.

The administrator said the institution which has 40 lecturers is currently offering Certificate

and Diploma courses in Science Laboratory Technology, Land Survey, Supplies Management, Early Childhood

Education and Human Resources Management among others.

He said that the introduction of the Higher Education Loan Board (HELB) had disbursed Ksh 1.5 Million to needy students at the institution.

Meanwhile, the Masinde Muliro University of Science and

Technology (MMUST) has introduced market oriented courses to enable students fit in the flooded job market.

mVice Chancellor (VC) Professor Barasa Wangila however said that the institution was faced with numerous challenges that range from in nd administrative work.

The V-C said that increased demand for higher education has not been matched with relevant and quality interventions.

Kenya accused of excluding women from peacemaking

AS Kenyans join the rest of the world in marking twelve years after the unanimous adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 this month, women in the country are still grappling with very low numbers of representation in leadership positions.

This is despite the existence of international policies that explicitly call for women's involvement in decision making at national and international levels.

The government has ratified and is a signatory to key gender equality and human rights international instruments. Key among them include:

- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979);
- The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981);
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003);
- The United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security (2000)

The UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security underscores the crucial role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, repatriation, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction.

The resolution particularly emphasises the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all peace and reconciliation efforts.

Exclusion

However, women in the country remain largely excluded from peace and security processes despite their efforts to preserve social order, educate for peace at the grassroots and advocate for the equitable distribution of resources at the national level.

Lawyer Betty Murungi who is a gender and conflict expert says that the marginalization continues to hinder efforts to build sustainable peace and stable communities in the country.

"Women's rights are not overtly addressed, while their recommendations are excluded from final agreements," she adds during a high level conference on Women, Peace and Security held in Nairobi.

She cites the inclusion of only two women in the Kofi Annan led peace talks in 2008 after violence rocked the country following a disputed presidential poll, both of whom were affiliated to political party systems.

She says that women voices were missing in the negotiating table despite the fact that they bore the highest brunt in the

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conflict.

Statistics

The Director General, United Nations office in Nairobi Sahle-Work Zewde shares similar concerns and says the representation of women in formal peace processes and negotiations remain unacceptably low.

She says that this is despite the fact that they are the hardest hit in times of crisis and estimates the number of women raped and infected with HIV/AIDS during the post election violence of 2007 at 1500 women.

She reveals that a study conducted by UN Women in 2009 of 21 major peace processes since 1992 showed that women participation is strikingly low.

- Only 2.4 percent of signatories of peace agreements were women;

- No woman has been appointed chief or lead mediator in UN Sponsored peace talks and

- Women's participation in negotiations delegation only averaged a mere 5.9 percent.

"Yet we are fully aware of the role women play in peacebuilding and more importantly know that their participation remains imperative and critical to ensure that their interests and needs are reflected and addressed," she adds.

Value

Zewdi says that women's contribution to peace-building is vital as they add immense value to peace processes.

"We can learn from countries that have made remarkable strides in including women in peace processes and have made a difference. Within the African continent, we saw the role women played in Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone and even in Somalia where women created the "sixth clan" to influence the male dominated peace process in Djibouti in 2000. Women will not only speak about the 'so-called' women issues, but will speak on behalf of the voiceless, bringing the needs of the silent majority and critical mass to the table which until now has been dominated by men," she explains in her key note address at the conference.

The Director General says that the inclusion of women helps to develop sustainable peace which has an impact politically, socially and economically.

"The inclusion of women in peace processes should never be an option; it is a requirement and a right. It is impossible to achieve ever lasting peace and security in a nation, if women are not at that table as they rep-



Women aspirants oppose nomination fee introduced by IEBC ahead of the General elections.

resent over half of the population," she affirms adding that men must ensure that women are at the table and that women's rights are meaningfully addressed and included in peace agreements, conflict management, judicial reforms, security sector, in service provisions and in truth and reconciliation processes.

Achievements

The Director General at the same time says that Kenya has made remarkable achievements and cites;

- The inclusion of provisions of the resolutions in the new constitution with the two thirds principle, affirmative action and the bill of rights

- Governments Blueprint, Vision 2030

- The development of the Kenya National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 which is being spearheaded by the National Commission on Gender and Development, through the support of UN Women and the Government of Finland.

- Kenya continues to show commitment to the provisions of UNSCR 1325 and this is demonstrated by signing the Declaration on SGBV in Kampala last year.

Disparities

The chairperson of National Gender and Equality Commission Winfred Lichuma however insists that much still needs to be done.

She notes that women have been excluded from the very

structures and mechanisms that make decisions on issues affecting them and their security.

"The country has done poorly in terms of women representation in decision making levels with the number of women in Parliament currently, translating to a mere nine percent compared to countries such as Rwanda which has the highest representation of women in Parliament at 56 percent," she adds.

She however says all is not lost for Kenyan women as the Constitution (Article 27 (8)) now provides that not more than two thirds of members in elective and appointive bodies shall be of the same gender.

She at the same time challenges women to push for the realization of the principle since no right can be granted on a silver platter.

"The constitution is just a legal framework and cannot guarantee us seats. Women need to push for the realization of the gender principle as enshrined in the Constitution as no right can be realized on a silver platter," she says.

She says that many women suffered during the 2007/2008 Post Election Violence and thus the need for the government to put adequate measures to avert similar incidents.

She at the same time notes that the government is yet to prosecute perpetrators of the post election violence. "Although some of the suspects are facing trial at the ICC, very little has been done at the local

level to bring justice to the victims.

The UN women Country Director Zebib Kavuma adds that very little has been done to address the injustices committed during the violence that erupted after the 2007 General Elections.

"The violence and horror that ravaged the country in 2007/8 wrought negative psychological, emotional, physical, and economic impact on all Kenyans and more specifically on Kenyan women," she explains adding that it has also not been addressed.

Action plan

She notes that the country is preparing for another General Elections and calls for the implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 which seeks to ensure the inclusion of women in peacekeeping and conflict prevention processes.

Zabib underscores the need to increase gender awareness on conflict prevention processes and include women in peace negotiations, ensure the protection of women and children from sexual and gender based violence, and importantly, to respond to the needs of women refugees and internally displaced persons in Kenya ahead of the elections.

The Country Director also calls for the creation and strengthening of accountability mechanisms to prevent the suffering of women at the hands of perpetrators of violence.

State calls in Interpol to help trace stolen books

By MALACHI MOTANO

THE Ministry of education has invited Interpol to track down text books worth Ksh 5 million stolen in a series of robberies in schools in Trans-Nzoia County.

This comes after protest by local leaders led by Cherangany MP Mr. Joshua Kuttuny over police laxity to curb violent robbery of the books.

According to Joseph Wamocho, the Director of Education in Trans-Nzoia County Wamocho in Kitale, the government has invited Interpol to probe the thefts of the books. Over 20 schools have been attacked and books stolen.

"We want the Interpol to track down the perpetrators. The education of the children in the county is at stake." In what is suspected to be a highly coordinated syndicate, the stolen books are shipped to South Sudan where sources said are on high demand.

However, despite the fact that the text books are stamped and coded, they have become the target of the robbery syndicate. Wamocho said the robberies witnessed at local schools are alarming and has sabotaged learning in the affected schools.

"The thefts are worrying and the spirit of Free Primary Education FPE is on its knees in the region. We are reaching out the Interpol to assist unearth the scam," said the official.

Mr. Wamocho says his department is liaising with the local district security agencies to provide armed officers to guard all schools.

"The schools have become vulnerable to robberies because they are guarded by unarmed watchmen. We want armed officers deployed in these institutions," he disclosed.

The Education Director says he has summoned school management committees to discuss insecurity in schools and come up with possible measures to contain the situation. The meeting, he said would also deliberate on low enrolment in most schools in the county attributed to rampant child abuse.

At least more than 20 schools in Kwanza district have been broken into and books stolen in the past

months with the consignment transported and sold to schools in Kapoeta County in South Sudan. Two watchmen have lost their lives during the robberies staged at Goseta and Marinda primary schools respectively.

There were two thefts at Goseta primary school. Some of the schools broken into are Kapkoi, Kees, Ndala, Kapomboi, Zea and Gesarate. Others are Mesa, Mukuyuni, Soimining, Bwayi, Malam and Kees secondary school.

The attack has spread to Trans-Nzoia West district with Birunda and Sikulu becoming the latest institutions of the thefts.

The deputy head of Goseta primary school, Mr. Enock Omony said the watchman Isaac Orose was attacked and killed by the robbers armed with crude weapons before they stole the books after breaking the library room.

"We discovered the body of the watchman in a pool of blood in one of the classrooms. The schools lost

books worth Ksh 260,000 and police visited and recorded statements," said Omwonya. The robbers, he said target course books which are on high demand in schools in South Sudan.

Omwonya said the third robbery attempt was repulsed by three watchmen deployed to guard the school. "We have been forced to hire three watchmen to protect the school after we lost a watchman and text books and the parents are to dig deeper into their pockets to pay watchmen," he said adding that the South Sudanese government has copied and is currently implementing the Kenyan syllabus attracting the individuals out to make quick money.

A visit to affected schools discovered that most children are suffering due to lack of reading materials following the thefts.

"The poverty level here is high and parents have challenges to support the education of their children and the books purchased by government were helpful," she added.

Mr. Kimani Njoroge, the Kwanza

Deputy Education chief, confirmed there is crisis at the affected school and that teachers have been advised to distribute books to learners to evade the thefts.

Source said that there are high connections between book dealers in Kenya and South Sudan. "Some corrupt dealers in Kitale and Liki-choggio have traced lucrative market for the books in South Sudan," the source said. Speaking in Kitale, Kuttuny warned that the robbery would compromise education in the county and censured police for doing little to seize those responsible.

"How can robberies take place in more than 20 schools without police arresting any suspect? Let the government intervene because the robbery pose a threat to learning," said the lawmaker.

Kitale police Chief Lucas Ogara said investigations were on over the theft but no arrest has been made. "Investigations are on but we have not made any arrests," said the official.



Trans Nzoia county director of education Joseph Wamocho speaks to reporters in his office.

Teachers implored educate public ahead of polls

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

TEACHERS have been challenged to educate the masses on new governance structures to enable them to vote wisely during the forthcoming general elections.

Former Kanduyi Member of Parliament (MP) Wafula Wamunyinyi noted that teachers have always been relied upon by society to give direction in matters of national importance.

Wamunyinyi as a result urged teachers to ensure that this country gets not only a democratically elected government but also a focused leadership.

"You should not relent in your fight for quality, transparent and accountable leadership," the former MP told teachers.

Wamunyinyi who was speaking to teachers in Bungoma town recently emphasized the importance of vetting aspirants for all elective seats provided for by the constitution.

The former legislator reiterated that teachers being the eye of the community at the grassroots should assist ordinary Kenyans in identifying the best leaders at all levels of governance.

He cautioned the electorate against choosing leaders by trial and error or on the basis of party affiliation arguing that doing so may lead to ineffective leadership.

"The devolved government system needs leaders with proven leadership skills who can be entrusted with public resources," the former MP said.

Wamunyinyi at the same time also asked teachers in Bungoma County to be dedicated to their work in order to continue posting good results in national exams.

He, however, quickly challenged the government to ensure that teachers are properly paid and adequately facilitated.

"The government is duty bound to adequately facilitate you so as to provide quality education to the learners," he said.

Wamunyinyi observed that for education standards in the county to improve the government must employ enough teachers and provide a conducive working condition for them.

Head teachers in Kisii tipped on education

By BOB OMBATI

SCHOOL heads in Kisii County have been challenged to find ways of improving education standards in the area to reciprocate the gesture by the government to increase their salaries and allowances.

Kisii County Director of Education, Isako Konchora who addressed over 300 school principals during the election of the Secondary Schools Heads Association officials at Gusii Institute of Technology said that the government has provided infrastructure to create conducive learning environment and there was no excuse for poor performance in

national exams.

The county education boss commended the teachers for successfully and peacefully negotiating with the government in the harmonization of their salaries, stressing that it should be reflected through hard work and better results.

The Officer, who was accompanied by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) county director Martin Adede, at the same time, told the teachers to prepare the candidates well to curb cases of cheating which have tarnished the county's image.

During the elections attended by several Principals from secondary schools in the area, Jairus On-

choke of Kiobegi secondary school in Nyamache district was elected the KESSHA chairman after garnering 168 votes against his sole opponent David Kebiro who gathered 146 votes.

Douglas Moroti was voted in as the vice chairman with 155 votes defeating Joyce Orioki who managed to get 119 votes while Pamela Maina was elected secretary after beating Samson Getanke with 180 votes against 78 votes.

James Ponti was unanimously elected Treasurer through acclamation as his rival Innocent Mogunde accepted defeat while Justus Auta was elected sports chairman.

Haroun Onchonga was elected

sports Treasurer while Tom Sagwe was elected the chair for Drama festivals with Amos Bogonko taking the Treasurer's docket.

George Okeyo was voted in as Science Congress chairman with Alfred Omayio elected Treasurer. Elijah Ochako is the Music chairman while Zachary Onsinoyi will be his Treasurer.

Onchoke told The Link after the polls that he will collaborate with the teachers and the County Education and TSC officers to improve education standards and infrastructure and asked the losers to support his team for the interest of learners.

The official faulted the govern-

ment for taking long to address the teachers grievances to end their three-week strike, noting that it had wasted learners time and prompted the Kenya national examination council (KNEC) to change the examination's schedule to allow the Kenya Certificate of Primary Examination (KCPE) and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) ample time to prepare for their exams.

Saying that the county was the first to conduct such elections, he commended the school Heads for conducting the elections peacefully and challenged other counties to emulate it.

Othaya lawyers irked by the backlog of cases

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

TWO lawyers from Othaya are worried that the many cases being filed in the courts seeking constitutional interpretation might delay the general elections.

The lawyers led by Peter King'ara and Priscilla Nyokabi said there are too many cases linked to the General Elections that are yet to be resolved in courts.

They said there was need for the courts to determine and conclude the pending issues on time.

"There are many cases involving boundaries and others touching on individuals aspiring for political seats. There is need to expedite those matters so that the general elections will not be delayed further," King'ara who is vying for the Othaya parliamentary seat.

Nyokabi who is the executive director of Kituo Cha Sheria lamented that many people have not read the constitution as copies are very few and costly since a copy goes for Ksh 250 in the few areas they are found.

"The government should print 10 million copies like the ones which were printed during the referendum so that people can be able to access it and read. These copies are very few and should be printed now instead of rushing the last minute," she added.

Nyokabi who is Nyeri County women representative aspirant said the copies should be found in all homes and offices.

On the two thirds majority in the political parties, Nyokabi decried that the political parties have sidelined the women adding that not many political parties have vacancies for women and people with disability.

Earlier, King'ara who had attended the burial of Edward Ndirangu Njakai said Othaya has lost a hard working and honest man who was the BoG chairman of Irindi Secondary School.

Meanwhile, Nyeri Hospice Executive officer Saraphina Gichohi has called upon the government to set aside funds to facilitate the management of cancer in Nyeri County which has registered high prevalence in the recent past.

"The list of patients has risen to over 200 with different cancers, a sharp contrast to the past when we

used to have less than a hundred," he added.

She said this while in Nyeri town recently as she briefed a parent on how to attend to his 12-year-old boy suffering from post nasal spaces cancer that has resulted in the paralysis of his lower body.

Gichohi said that though there is a drastic change of lifestyle by many residents in the area including dietary habits that might have resulted to the high prevalence, the level of awareness on the causes and preventive measures is too low as there are insufficient funds for the task.

The CEO was afraid that lack of awareness would increase cancer cases that make it hard for the organisation to offer its services as most people cannot afford to raise the huge amounts of money required for treatment.

She as well said that the disease that has mostly affected people aged

between 35 and 75 has great impact in Mathira constituency.

She also recommended for the government to fund a scientific research in Nyeri County in order to find out the causes of the disease.

Meanwhile, retiring Kenyans can now expect to receive their benefits from the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) within 12 days of their last day of work, following reforms in the pension scheme.

The Fund's General Manager for Corporate Affairs and Company Secretary Hope Mwashumbe said the fund is being re-engineered to be able to release member's dues in the shortest time possible after retirement.

"Workers should expect their benefits as soon as they leave work as long as they submit the relevant letters and their contributions statement at the fund is up to date," she said.

Mwashumbe added that the fund

is upgrading its information systems to ensure members' records are up to date all the time to avoid delays in processing the final members' benefits as has been in the case in the past.

She was speaking at a Nyeri hotel where she briefed the fund's 211 staff from the Central and Eastern Regions on the changes they will be expected to institute following a re-branding of the fund that is coming soon.

She revealed that similar staff briefings were being held simultaneously countrywide to update staff on expected changes as they will be expected to ensure the rebranding is a success.

The manager said the rebranding will not be just a change in our images but will be a complete overhaul of the way we do our business adding that they had to bring all the staff on board as they will be the ones to effect the anticipated changes.



Lawyers from Othaya Peter King'ara (left) and Priscilla Nyokabi speak at the Othaya PCEA church recently. At the centre is local leader Thuku Kiruga. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Election violence still haunts Taita Taveta County

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

TAITA Taveta County is often revered as a safe haven for peace and tranquility, a factor that has seen scores of citizens establish settlements and enterprises in the area regardless of their ethnic background.

The region is one of the few places where various communities are known to coexist peacefully with the locals.

Scores of businesses in the hotel, mining and property sectors in Mwatate, Wundanyi, Voi and Taveta towns are owned by people from outside the County.

But following the bitter experience of the 2007 post-poll violence, no one seems ready to leave anything to chance, not even in Taita albeit it's impressive history in maintaining peace.

After the post-polls violence, more than 1,200 Kenyans were reported killed, thousands more injured, over 300,000 people displaced and around 42,000 houses and many businesses were looted or destroyed. A significant number of cases of sexual violence were also reported.

Today as political temperatures mount rise in readiness for the next general elections, tension is also mounting among people of different ethnic background and some people are not sure enough whether the Country is going to hold peaceful elections.

"I have known Taita as a peaceful place but nonetheless I am planning to close down my business and travel back to Kitui before the political campaigns reach climax. I can't take chances," said Anthony Kioko, a middle aged man who runs a mitumba kiosk in Voi town.

Apart from the tension that has been associated with the past experience, election boycott calls by the controversial Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) has complicated matters as the election date draws closer.

A couple of weeks ago, thousands of leaflets were reportedly circulated in Kwale, Mombasa and parts of Taita Taveta county warning of bloodshed if residents participate in the elections.

There is also a growing concern over boundary issues where leaders in Taita Taveta are raising eyebrows about the alleged hiving off of Mtito Andei and parts of Tsavo East National park to be party of Mtito Andei Ward in Kibwezi East Constituency in Makeni County. Further, the hiving of Mackinon Road town to Mackinon Road Ward of Kinango Constituency in Kwale County is also likely to cause flare-ups.

State reopens talks with community over coal mining

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Ministry of Energy has initiated fresh negotiations with residents of Zowereni in Ngerenya location, Kilifi County, to resolve the stalemate over the construction of a coal fire electricity generation plant in the area.

The project which was supposed to have kicked off at the beginning of this year was put on hold after land owners and the local leadership rejected the project arguing that they had not been consulted prior to its implementation.

A chief geologist from the Ministry of Energy Mr John Omenga confirmed that the government had initiated fresh negotiations with the land owners to seek their approval before the project can be allowed to proceed.

"The Ministry of Energy which is the implementing agency is currently holding talks with land owners at Zowereni in Ngerenya location to agree on mode of compensation once the project takes off," said Mr Omenga

Mr. Benjamin Dadu who spoke

on behalf of the land owners demanded to know why the government had earmarked 330 acres for the project without consulting them.

"The government seems to be driven by a hidden agenda in their bid to construct the project as residents were not consulted and were only shocked to see strangers accompanied by the local chief inspecting the plot," said Mr. Dadu.

Mr Dadu further expressed shock that the acquisition of the land was announced through a gazette notice despite the fact that the local people

were not aware of what was going on.

"We blame our chiefs who colluded with senior government officials to sanction the takeover without informing us and therefore we do not want the project," said Mr. Dadu.

He further argued that the project was a threat to the residents and unless measures to mitigate on environmental threats are outlined, we have no plans to approve the project.

The chief geologist however assured the residents that the project will not proceed until the two parties come into agreement.

The officer explained that the project was still at the feasibility study stage and thus there was no need for worry.

"Officers from the Ministry of Lands, Energy and the officials from KenGen are just conducting a feasibility study to establish its viability in the area," said Mr. Omenga.

Mr. Omenga said once the feasibility study report is released, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) will carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and give their verdict.

Coast youth groups rally against violence

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

A YOUTH group in Wundanyi has embarked on a mission to preach peace during and after the forthcoming elections.

The group which is composed of at least 25 members mostly aged between 18 and 30 years old respectively is working under the aegis of Taita Taveta Youth Forum for County Aid and Development (TYFCAD).

According to the group's chairperson, Nelly Ilaoh, they have managed to incorporate in their activities a component dubbed "Supporting Active Participation in Peaceful and Fair Elections at the Coast (SAFE Coast)."

"Under the project, we target residents at the grassroots and educate them about their rights and importance to participate in the elections. We feel that residents need to understand without peace the Country will be in a shambles since the economy will be affected directly," says Ms Ilaoh.

She adds that most of their peace programs target the youth because they are vital players in peace initiatives around the world.

Ms Ilaoh says through outreach programmes in the villages they also equip the youth with entrepreneurship skills to enable them become self reliant in life.

This, she observes has gradually helped to empower them financially so that they are not subject to manipulation by politicians come the next general elections.

"Youth constitute two-thirds of Kenyan population and most of them are jobless. Majority are thus misused by politicians to push their agenda. This we seek to stop by empowering them with skills that will enable them earn a living," explains the Chair.

She says the group which was established way back in 2008, works in conjunction with another vibrant group called Voi Youth Forum under the support of USAID.

Tyfcad also carries out projects like "Education Through Listening (ETL)" where they educate the public predominantly the youth on how they can possibly stay away from the drug and substance abuse menace to avert violence.



National Cohesion and Integration Commission's Halakhe Waqo (left) and Africa peace forum acting executive director Amb Ochieng Adala (right) during the launch of a media monitoring report on the Implementation of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Agenda in 2011.

ETL Coordinator Adalla Dulla, says under the program they also sensitize the youth on HIV prevention measures such as use of condoms and contraceptives as another indirect way of maintaining a more safe and peaceful environment.

"We encourage the youth to keep off drugs because in most cases the youth are easily manipulated while they are under influence of drugs. We also educate them on methods of HIV prevention as well as use of contraceptives since we know at times these can be the key areas of conflict," notes Dulla.

He admits that pulling big numbers of youth together is always a challenge. However he is quick to add that in most of their programs they have managed overcome the challenge by animating their programs by use of Public address systems on road shows, attractive captivating dramas and music to attract the youth in impressive numbers.

"Tyfcad is made up of creative members. We usually come up with creative themes on drugs, constitution,

peaceful elections and more besides.

A few characters pick their roles in and we come up with an educative play. We rehearse and hit the road show with a selection of quality and latest music. That way youth turn up in large numbers. In the process we deliver our message and the deal is done," says Ms Rebecca Manga, a peer educator at Tyfcad adding that they also print huge banners carrying messages they want to deliver to the public.

They also have a component for Talent shows where talented youths are given chances to show case their talents in comedy, singing, dancing and more besides while sticking to the themes on pertinent issues in line with the programmes.

Meanwhile, a National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) commissioner in charge of Coast Mr Halakhe Waqo, says engaging groups like MRC in dialogue is the only sure way of finding a lasting solution to the insecurity problem they pose.

Mr Waqo says issues advanced by MRC such as historical injustices

cut across the whole country and the government need to act with speed to have them resolved amicably before the situation gets out of hand.

"Dialogue is the only way to have these crisis resolved. If the government fails to act with speed, the situation might turn from bad to worse because the group might consider going violent," notes the Commissioner.

He adds, "These crisis are all over the nation and in other areas like in Turkana and North Eastern the situation is worse because the communities in those areas are already armed with illegal fire arms and they are watching how the government will react to the Coast situation.

"Suppose we push MRC too far and they decide to riot, the Country might plunge into chaos since other regions with similar grievances might also decide to use the same means and this could be terrible if we consider places like North Eastern and Turkana which are already awash with guns."

He says currently NCIC is engaging the group in dialogue adding that there has been some positive outcome.

Kilifi women device grand campaign plans

By BEKADZO TONDO

WOMEN leaders in Kilifi County have set up a body to explore modalities to win seats during the forthcoming general elections.

The Kilifi County Women political caucus is set to spearhead the campaigns for all women seeking elective positions.

A founder member of the group Naomi Sidi says that women came together and resolved to create a formidable force to front the women agenda in the political arena.

"Most women aspiring for political seats in Kilifi County are faced with myriad challenges including lack of finances and thus need support from a central body to formulate strategies that will enable them capture the seats," said Sidi.

The body has received a unanimous endorsement from women drawn from all corners of Kilifi County.

The body is chaired by nominated councilor Lina Buni, former chairlady of Maendeleo ya Wanawake in the larger Kilifi District Sarah Chitavi is the vice chairperson while nominated councilor Elizabeth Ngala was elected the group secretary.

Others elected officials include Mrs. Kavumbi Thoya as the treasurer and Mrs. Tabitha Nimrod as the group organizing secretary among others.

Former Permanent Secretary Rachael Dzombo who also attended the forum said time had come for women to unite and support each other's bid for elective posts.

Mrs. Dzombo is vying for a parliamentary seat in the newly created Kilifi South Constituency.

Ms. Sofia Kombe who has declared interest in the position of women representative said she is the best candidate for the seat and hopes with the backing of women, youth and other male voters she could deliver.

Former chairlady of Kilifi town council Aisha Karisa appealed to the media to give women aspirants coverage during the campaign meetings.

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

A WATER bottling project in Nzoia Sugar Company is marred in controversy after senior officials allegedly pocketed Kshs15 million as a pre condition to award the tender.

The officials, who include the chairman of the board of directors Lawrence Sifuna and two other members of the board, were accused of allegedly receiving the cash in order to influence the tendering process.

Three Chinese owned companies are said to have been shortlisted, after the bidding process which had attracted 19 companies, and one of them was awarded the tender despite protests by a section of the directors.

The water bottling project had been earmarked for completion during the 2011/2012 financial year at a cost of Ksh.120million.

Sifuna who maintains that the project is viable, estimated its cost at

Kshs.300million.

He at the same time absolved his directors from accusations that they were influencing the tendering process, saying that they are not members of the tendering committee.

The controversy emerged as it became apparent that the company is set to supply sugar cane worth Kshs.4.4billion to Butali Sugar Company without clear arrangements from the board of directors. The company has further spent Ksh. 20million on anti-poaching campaign.

The decision by Nzoia Sugar Company to supply cane which belongs to contracted farmers to Butali Sugar Company goes against its stated principal activities of producing and selling sugar. In an agreement dated 13th July 2012 and signed between the two companies, the supply is to

take place from the months of July, August and September.

The letter says "the quantity of the mill cane supplied will be 40,000 tonnes at the price of Ksh.38,000 per tonne, with an option to negotiate for additional quantities".

The sugarcane is to be sourced from Khalumuli, Matulo, Kituni, Maraka, Milo, Sitikho, Miendo, Bokoli and Matisi areas. A down payment of Ksh.11million was requested for administrative purposes.

However, the agreement cautions Butali against poaching cane as this will result into paying Nzoia Ksh.20,000 for every impounded lorry truck. Sifuna confirmed that the deal was still in force as Nzoia Sugar Company has excessive cane.

The Company he said was considering to keep paying farmers, while

the factory closes for annual maintenance. But some of the directors, who requested anonymity, insisted that they have never discussed the supply of cane to other millers.

Sources at the factory claimed that the arrangement was done by senior managers without the approval of the board, as this could not be factored anywhere in the company's accounting system.

The letter indicate that the letter was signed by Saul Wasilwa, the managing director, Macklins Sikuku the Agricultural manager, and Benson Khwatenge the Company's secretary on behalf of Nzoia Sugar Company while JN Patel who is the administrative director and Agriculture manager M Lukano signed on behalf of Butali Sugar Company.

According to the financial state-

ments of the company for the year ending June 2011, sugar and molasses were billed as the only source of income. In that financial year, income generated from sugar was Ksh.4.6billion, while molasses generated Ksh.85 million, with a gross turnover of Ksh.3.9billion.

Cane poaching was identified as a serious problem and was threatening the base of the company's raw materials and strategies were being developed to protect the raw material.

Senior management to opt to sell cane from contracted framers without approval from the board goes against its mandate.

The role of the board of directors is to safeguard shareholders assets- which include cane and enhance transparency and accountability of its managers.

Graft blamed for failure of Nzoia bottling project

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

Fall of Kismayu calls for measured jublations

It was pleasant to receive the news of KDF liberating Kismayu from the dreaded Alshabaab militia who has dominated it for half a decade.

The fall of Kismayu was a major milestone achievement for the Kenya defense Forces (KDF) who launched a blistering attack a year ago to prevent the militia from frequent incursions to Kenya to cause mayhem.

Operation Linda Nchi, as the KDF codenamed their well-thought out intervention to end the Somali conflict, has received widespread support from world leaders and Kenyans alike. Before the Kenya troops joined ranks with their comrades the Amisom, the AU team was hard pressed even to keep peace in Magadishu.

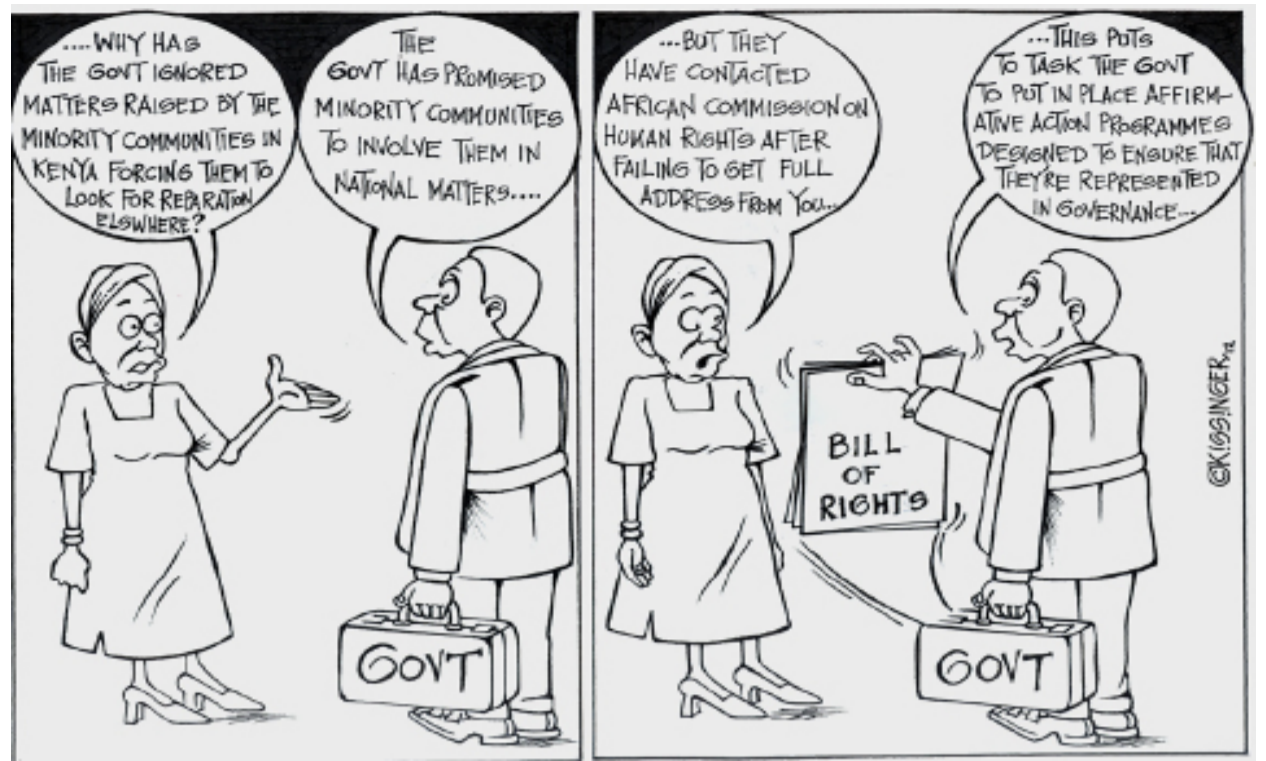
This latest operational achievement apart from being a key element of Amisom's operational plan is critical test that goes to validate operational potency of Amisom forces particularly the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) who are playing a lead role in the pacification mission in Somalia.

In commending the KDF following the capture of Kismayu, President Mwai Kibaki, was rightly excited from the choice of words in congratulating our gallant soldiers. The president was spot on when he said "This is a game changer for the people of Somalia, it is a defining moment. A people long used to being subject of forces of terrorism that sought to engage in a siege mentality of extremism now have a good chance of restoring peace in their country, and engaging in productive economic and social opportunities."

We congratulate the president for providing leadership in removing a problem that many nations, including USA, have tried to remove without success. In fact the president was bullish while attending the annual High level debates of the United Nations General assembly in New York, where he firmly reiterated Kenya's commitment to resolving the daunting peace and security challenges facing Somalia for decades.

But while Somalia remains a global security topical issue, the gains made by Kenya defense forces goes further to redeem the image of our military force as a highly trained and disciplined organization capable of tackling complex military operations through practical strategic solutions.

The complexity of plans to deal with amorphous enemy such as the Alshabaab cannot be gainsaid. And therein lays the challenge that calls for measured jublations and an understanding that if the fall of Kismayu was hard, keeping up with the expected guerrilla attacks will be harder and more prolonged.



COMMENTARY

In search of Kenya's panacea

The adoption of the Rome Statute and the advent of the International Criminal Court (ICC) have significantly influenced democratic transitions and the rule of law in a number of African countries, but the intervention in Kenya is only one tool for achieving long-term change, writes ALLAN NGARI.

Kenya's fate as a country struggling with transition was sealed when violence erupted following the publication of the results of highly contested presidential elections at the end of 2007. Almost four years later, in September 2011, the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber II began hearings to confirm charges in two significant cases involving six Kenyans suspected of bearing the greatest responsibility for the December 2007 to January 2008 post-election violence.

These hearings began after the ICC Appeals Chamber conclusively decided in late August that the two cases before the court were admissible. The ICC rejected submissions by the government of Kenya expressing its ability and willingness to handle the post-election violence prosecutions on its own. It is expected that the Pre-Trial Chamber will deliver its ruling to confirm or deny the prosecutor's charges against the six suspects by the end of this year.

Critically, this decision will certainly shape the course of political manoeuvring in Kenya as preparations gear up for the next general election, expected to be held in March, 2013. Stern warnings have already been issued against incendiary statements, and particularly those that may heighten political tension and/or increase the possibility of a repeat of past violent conflict. The so-called 'Ocampo Six', named with reference to the ICC Chief Prosecutor, include deputy prime minister, finance minister and possible presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, as well as other senior public servants and influential political leaders.

However, the tone of the 2013 polls will also be inescapably set by deeply rooted political and historic forces, with influence far beyond that of the ICC's intervention.

Parallel to the gaining momentum of the ICC process, Kenya's political elite and their followers have been cruising towards the national election. The work of the Court, in fact, appears to have had only a limited impact on the fluid mindset of the political class. Similar to other pre-election periods in the country, shifts in affiliations and formations of new political alliances for preferential presidential candidates remain a constant feature.

The truth beneath the surface in this seemingly peaceful East African country

is that elections have always been a show of Kenya's limited success in dealing with its lurking demons of ethno-political intolerance. In 48 years of independence, state patronage in dispensing the country's bounty has always been circumscribed along ethno-political lines. With each regime change has come an inevitable vilification of the preceding government as having been incapable of confronting the nation's challenges and of realising the proverbial golden pot at the end of the rainbow. Numerous ethnic communities are disenfranchised through these processes, evoking uneasy analogies to the plight of the majority of black South Africans under apartheid. And though Kenya's ethnic divisions are less blatantly segregating than the policies of apartheid, corruption, the embezzlement of state resources and irregular land allocation based on political favours remain rife, and these have far-reaching effects on ordinary citizens.

As long as significant divides persist along ethnic lines, prospects of future electoral violence remain a real possibility. In this respect, little has changed since the ICC's intervention. Prosecutorial zealots have argued in response that the Court should not be seen as a panacea for Kenya's problems. The arm of the law can only go so far in bringing about profound social change; rather, it has been used with more success to address impunity gaps, for example.

However, both domestic and international law have also arguably lagged behind some of the most pressing challenges of the times. The Rome Statute of the ICC, adopted in 1998, is the first international treaty to codify the crime of apartheid – 'committed in the context of an institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime' (Article 7.1(h)) – as a crime against humanity. This is laudable, but South African apartheid is now a monster of the past, slain by universal suffrage in 1994 well before the adoption of the Rome Statute. Although the effects of apartheid policies are felt to this day, these effects are not criminalised and neither is there the capacity or the political goodwill to conceive of such a criminalisation. These lingering effects

of oppressive regimes and armed conflict often eat into whatever is left of the remaining societal fabric.

It does appear that the tone and intensity of political verbiage around ethnicity in Kenya has changed since the commencement of the ICC interventions. There have been significant steps towards promoting national reconciliation and social cohesion through national institutions such as the National Cohesion and Integration Commission among others. Tribal politics seems to be getting less coverage. The current cases before the ICC have also ensured that the issue of inter-ethnic differences remains a prominent issue in public discourse in a manner that cultural practices traditionally have not allowed. In many ethnic communities in Kenya, it is culturally unacceptable to confront wrong-doing, particularly when the offender is in a position of authority. This practice has, in some places, prevented open confrontation and critique of the underlying causes behind the electoral clashes of 2007.

What now needs to happen, beyond the current cases before the ICC and indeed the Court's remit altogether, is substantive work to build lasting social cohesion across Kenya's ethnic groupings. This will be essential for sustainable peace in the country. This cohesion must go beyond mere tolerance and coexistence, and should not rely on coercion to enforce cordial relations where deep-rooted resentment remains. Rather, these negative sentiments among ethnic groups must be challenged and resolved in order to build a cohesive nation, within a context of celebrating the good practices of cultural diversity.

Kenya is not alone in this challenge of social cohesion, which can also be found in other nations in transition on the continent. Perhaps as a continent, through the offices of inter-governmental agencies such as the African Union and civil society organisations, and even through communities and individual efforts, we should identify these challenges as universal but focus on localised and locally owned solutions. Failure to do so will compromise our efforts towards justice and reconciliation across Africa.

The writer is a project officer in the Justice and Reconciliation in Africa programme at the IJR.



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PCEA wants elections held in August next year

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

PRESBYTERIAN Church of East Africa (PCEA) wants the general elections to be held in August next year.

The PCEA Moderator David Gathanju said the August 2013 date will be the right time for the IEBC to hold elections to create more room for the implementation of the constitution.

Gathanju said there is no need for hurry adding that the relevant institutions preparing for the polls should be given enough time to prepare.

He added that it will be just four months after the proposed date of March 2013, the Government should therefore agree on the proposed date.

"The constitution will have been implemented fully if elections are held in August next year. The IEBC will also have enough time in order to conduct the elections properly without any hiccup on the implementation of the constitution. The Biometric method of voting should not be done in a hurry," he said.

The moderator was speaking during the opening of Mt Kenya region assembly annual conference at Tumutumu Girls High School in Mathira district.

On the recent Mombasa chaos where churches were burnt, the moderator called upon the Government to use all its machinery to ensure that the criminals who were involved are charged in the court of law.

He said the church is reading politics in the violence adding that there are some politicians who do not want peace in the country.

"There are some political elements in the country that do not want to peace in the country and

instead are diverting the thinking of Kenyans," he added.

The church said that although it is a member of NCCCK, the NCCCK should not rush to sue the Government over the Mombasa chaos but instead give it more time to conduct investigations.

"This is not a religious war but only some criminals who want to provoke Christians in order to be seen as if it is instigated by religion," he added.

On the teachers strike, he urged teachers to give dialogue in future instead of punishing innocent children.

"The teachers are role models of the society. They should give

dialogue a chance. They need to understand that they are also parents. Strike will not help the nation," he added.

Meanwhile, about fifty leaders from Nyeri County are happy that the Anglo-leasing warship has finally docked in Kenya.

The leaders who spoke in Nyeri town recently said that they have now found the truth behind the Anglo-leasing warship JASIRI.

"We now know the political lynching of the then minister for National Security minister Chris Murungaru by the then British envoy and his local henchmen was just mere political and eco-

nomical war that was perpetuated to protect the British economic interests," they said.

In a statement which was read by former nominated councilor Eliud Njua, the leaders noted that many of their leaders have suffered political setbacks having gallantly played singular and vital roles in national politics like Murungaru.

They therefore said there is need to guard the economic, social and political gains made by President Mwai Kibaki.

They also urged the Government to take urgent remedial measures to save the setback and suffering of the wananchi.



PCEA Moderator David Gathanju inspects a guard of honour mounted by Tumutumu Parish Brigade recently at Tumutumu Girls High School in Mathira district during the opening of Mt Kenya region assembly annual conference.
Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

County commissioner vouches for peaceful elections

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

KISII County Commissioner, Ms Lydia Muriuki has underscored the need to intensify civic education in the area to educate the residents on the need to uphold peace during and after the elections.

She says the youth should be targeted for civic education as they are more prone to incitement by politicians to cause chaos during electioneering period, adding that all aspirants should be given an opportunity to present their electoral pledges without being exposed to violence.

"The public should be made aware that election is an event that comes and goes. There is need for everybody to embrace peaceful co-existence dur-

ing and after elections to avert skirmishes that have in the past characterized most parts of the country within the same period," states Muriuki.

The Commissioner asked supporters of respective candidates to become tolerant to divergent views during electioneering period to avert violence and disruption of their competitors' campaign rallies and meetings.

She at the same time urged political parties to allow transparency to prevail during the nominations of their respective candidates to ensure only winners clinch tickets to run for respective seats.

The commissioner says flawed party nomination processes have in the past locked out vulnerable women aspir-

ants from contesting for elective seats.

Speaking during the official closure of a two-day workshop on peace building and county cohesion at a Kisii hotel, Muriuki called for fair and transparent party nominations and peaceful election campaigns to avert political violence against women aspirants.

The County Commissioner, at the same time warned leaders in the area against sharing out county positions among male politicians and leaving out women from the political equation.

She said that the electorate should be left to decide through the vote on who should hold which county position based on merit and a transparent electoral process.

"I am warning local leaders

and politicians to desist from sharing out county positions among male politicians, as this will exclude women in leadership positions," warns Muriuki.

She also cautioned residents against perpetuating negative stereotypes against women seeking for political positions but instead accord them a fair chance to compete for various political positions with their male counterparts.

"With the new constitutional dispensation in the country, local communities must discard their retrogressive cultural practices that undermine women's leadership and live to the realities that women have been constitutionally mandated to compete with their male counterparts for political positions provided for in the constitution," observes Muriuki.

Bungoma council on the spot over graft

By LUKA KAPCHANGA

CIVIC leaders at the Bungoma Municipal Council have ousted the town clerk Michael Owade, citing poor administration and embezzlement of funds.

The councilors accused the town clerk of being the architect of the confusion that had characterized the presentation of the 2012/2013 budget estimates.

Mayor Patrick Suleji had termed the reading of the estimates as null and void saying "they are a mess."

The mayor accused the clerk of failing to involve civic leaders during the preparation and presentation of the estimates.

Suleji went further, "accepting this presentation will be taking the public who elected us for a ride, when we have to be accountable for any public expenditure".

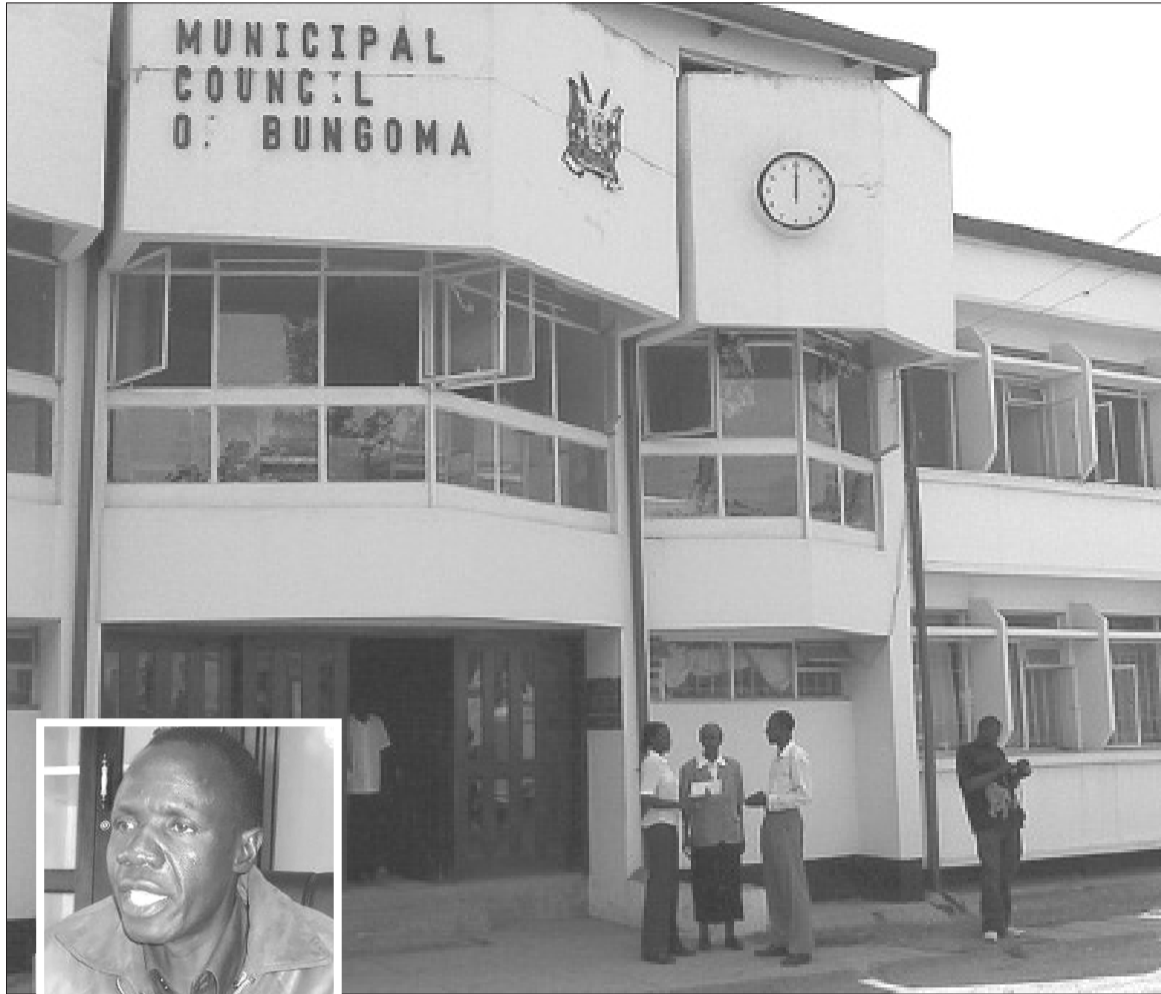
He said that he was notified to attend the meeting 30 minutes before the actual presentation and was shocked when the town clerk failed to show up.

He insisted that his rejection of the budget estimates was based on the fact that the implementation of projects during the 2011/2012 financial year under LATF was marred by inconsistencies.

Further, the Councilors were not given copies of the budget estimates, to enable them to question the expenditure and allocations.

Cllr. Christopher Kalabayi wondered, "how are we going to respond to the presentations when we have no copies to refer to – which is unusual and abnormal".

During the 28th July budget



Bungoma Municipal Council Hall. Inset: Mayor Patrick Suleji.

estimates reading civic leaders pointed an accusing finger at the town clerk who was absent, for forcing the budget on them, while window dressing project implementation of the previous financial year.

Finance, staff and general purposes committee chairman Joseph Magudah read the budget estimates amid disapprovals from both cllrs and members of the public.

The mayor rejected the al-

leged spending of Ksh 13million on projects in the wards as projected in the estimates.

According to the estimates, delays in the disbursement of LATF had interfered with the project implementation process for the 2010/2011 financial year.

The estimates had projected that most of the projects earmarked for implementation during the 2012/2013 financial year had overlapped from the previous years.

The delays on project implementation were however blamed on contractors who had no financial capacity and technical know-how to carry out the work.

But the civic leaders blamed the town clerk and petitioned the permanent secretary in the ministry of Local Government to remove the clerk.

The Cllrs who spoke from the mayors parlour were categorical that Owade will never be allowed in the office again.

Calls to strengthen pension scheme intensifies

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government has been asked to explore possibilities of converting the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) to a pension scheme to enable the retirees to enjoy their contributions for a longer period.

A former MP who is also the chairman of the Kenya Medical Training College retirement benefit scheme, Joe Donde says retired workers still do not enjoy their savings under the provident fund.

The former Gem MP said that the retirement benefit Act should be amended to enable the NSSF members get their payments each month.

"The government should convert it to a pension scheme so that the retirees can get their cash every month. Paying an approximately Ksh 2,000 to the 1.85 million senior citizens is loose change for the government," he said.

He said that the senior citizens

should get their contributions on a monthly basis to enable them enjoy their sunset years.

Speaking during the KMTC annual general meeting, Mr Donde said the NSSF provident fund does not favour the retired workers.

"The NSSF is still a provident fund and when someone retires they are paid their contributions in a lump sum which does not help the retirees," he said.

Mr Donde also asked the government implement the payment of stipends to every senior citizen.

He said that every retiree who has contributed in anyway should be paid at least Ksh1,000 every month adding that it is part of the government policy.

"When I was in parliament we passed a bill to pay everyone aged more than 65 years old Sh2,000 every month but there has been poor implementation," he said.

Mr Donde said the senior citizens should be paid the money

to turn to in difficult economic times.

Under the provident fund, members are paid a third of their contributions on retirement followed by a monthly payment until the lapse of the scheme time limit.

KMTC board of trustees chairman Samuel Obura called on the government to offset a Ksh423 million deficit in the fund's budget.

The pension scheme members say their contributions are not enough to offset it saying their salaries are less than those of other civil servants.

They want their salaries reviewed so that their contributions to the fund can go up for the scheme to be sustainable, said Mr Obura.

The scheme moved from the defined benefit to defined contribution according to the government regulations.

Under the defined benefit, members were paid the amount they had agreed with the fund



Mr. Donde

but the defined contributions payments are not determined but can vary according to the fund finances. "If the KMTC went under, we would not be able to pay our members as we agreed because of the deficit," he said.

The members contribute 10 percent of their salaries to the scheme with the sponsor contributing 20 percent.

Deploy staff to completed CDF projects, Gvt urged

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

THE government has been asked to deploy staff to schools and health facilities constructed through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF).

Tetu MP Francis Nyammo said most of the facilities which have been constructed to increase access to services are yet to become operational due to lack of staff.

"We always consult the Ministry of Medical Services during the construction of such facilities but once completed, the department fails to honour its part of the bargain to deploy staff to man the facilities," he said.

Speaking during a free medical camp at Wamagana primary school in Nyeri south district, the MP said the purpose of constructing the facilities is not met due to lack of staff adding that the residents do not benefit in time.

The MP lamented that the CDF projects could end up as white elephants due lack of personnel adding that there is some disconnect between the development of projects and staff hiring.

"There is an urgent need to harmonise the development of schools and health facilities with the relevant ministries," he said.

He also called on the government to harmonise fee charged in hospitals to avoid cases where some hospitals inflate the fee.

The legislator said the sick are falling victims of commercialized medical services adding that some health facilities are fleeing them.

Mr Nyammo said there is an urgent need to regulate medical fee to enhance medical ethics.

"People are falling victims of commercialised medical services and the government needs to give more regulations to harmonise hospital bills," he said. He added that the sick know the bills they ought to pay after they are treated noting that in other countries the cost of treatment is known on diagnosis.

More than 3,000 Nyeri residents benefited from the camp where about Ksh3 million was spent according to the Nyeri district medical officer of health.

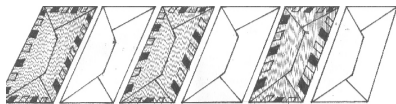
Speaking on behalf of the officer, the Nyeri south community medical officer Lydia Nyaramba said most of the patients were diagnosed with cold related diseases.

She said most residents above 40 years were testing positive for pneumonia, ear nose and throat ailments, and diabetes due to the cold weather being experienced in the area.

"Most of those testing positive are above 40 years and more than 70 years old. These age groups are also testing positive for diabetes due to poor eating habits," she said.

The sick were referred to the Nyeri Provincial General Hospital and other health facilities for specialized treatment.

The camp was organized by the FT Nyammo foundation with several medical and financial institutions donating medicine, staff and cash. The camp is organized biannually to offer the Othaya, Mukurweini and Tetu residents free medical services close to their homes.



Soldiers returning from Somalia need mental care

I WONDER if there is any post-traumatic stress management system in place for Kenya's war veterans. This is a critical support that our soldiers who are returning from duty in Somalia seriously need.

Last October, Kenya rolled its tanks and heavy artillery into the lawless nation under the Operation Linda Nchi, whose goal was to flush out Al-Shabaab. Never in history had Kenya, as a sovereign state, gone to war. Pessimism was lingering at first but KDF, through air power, naval assaults from the pirate-infested Indian Ocean launch pad and boots on the ground, proved everyone wrong.

The enemy was flushed out in most parts of the lower sector, their source of revenue stifled and a good portion of them neutralised. The sigh of relief and happiness seen in the faces of the Somalia in the pacified areas was just glamorous.

Just like in any combat, damage is two-way. Our soldiers, on day-to-day, they see their comrades heroically succumb to the enemy fire, remember fresh cadavers they trample on in the war front; scene they were not used to a year ago. At the same time, their families are worried each sunrise of whatever news might come the next minute.

Trauma is real, and especially upon return of an old boot from deployment. Some of these former combatants never quite find peace with themselves.

Even just connecting with people around them is often difficult. Repercussions are always gruesome. Suicide, homicide and all sorts of grisly acts as have been witnessed elsewhere. Who knows, we might witness the same in our neighbourhoods if not mitigated now.

Within the military, operations are always classified and we ordinary civilians are never privy to things inside the barrack fences.

In my opinion, post-war traumatic stress management is crucial. I would urge urgent treatment within the barracks and field for the service men, and to help veterans' families cope with the situation. Similar attention should be paid to police officers who are increasingly becoming vulnerable in lines of duty.

Joab Onyango,
via e-mail

Sporadic attacks in Tana proves NIS sleeping on job

For decades, Kenya boasted of having one of the best security intelligence agencies in East Africa.

However, the capacity of the National Intelligence Service to deliver is now in question given the recent spate of sporadic attacks in Tana River County. How could one explain, in a span of one month, more than 100 people were killed and thousands displaced in tribal clashes if NIS was in control?

This coupled with the state of insecurity in the hands of terrorists, NIS is proving a real bad news for millions of Kenyans living under untold fear. One wonders why our internal security forces are often caught flat-footed by criminals despite having a high budget NIS.

Creg Waga,
via e-mail

KDF has made Kenya proud and proved it's not a ceremonial army



Kenya Defence Forces soldiers celebrate outside Kismayu University after they took control of the institution from the command of Al-Shabaab militia recently.

THE Kenya Defence Forces troops, working alongside those of Somalia Transitional Army and Amison, have achieved a rare feat.

The soldiers have succeeded where the mighty USA failed terribly. To capture of the strategic port of Kismayu from the right grip of Al-Shabaab is no mean achievement. The victory has proved to the entire world that Kenyan forces are equal to any military assignment anywhere on the globe.

Al-Shabaab is a rag tag militia group mostly associated with terrorism. In the military sense, the group can at best be described as a guerrilla group.

On this premise, fighting them is a totally different ball

game from conventional war known to most soldiers. To defeat them required efficient intelligent gathering and superior war tactics.

Other nations were doubtful about the mission to drive the insurgents out of Somalia and liberate those suffering people.

But the Kenyan fighters took a proactive approach, and marched in fully convinced they had to win the war. A series of victories strengthened their resolve to free Somalia.

It did not take long before the Somalis held their first polls in two decades. Signs of a thriving economy are now evident as hotels and foreign embassies open their doors. All these were possible due to the

indefatigable KDF troops and their AU allies.

I join the rest of Kenyans and the entire world in saluting our gallant soldiers for doing us proud.

KDF is not the ceremonial army that doubting Thomases wanted us to believe. It yearned for an opportunity to show the world how mighty its soldiers are. And the Somali deployment presented that chance.

Today is a day of great national pride for the people of Kenya and Africa as a whole. The Somali victory is a clear sign that African problems call for African solutions. Congratulations, dear soldiers.

Bernard Amaya,
via e-mail.



Gvt agencies are to blame for failures of anti-counterfeit phones

RECENTLY the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) started switching off thousands of counterfeit mobile phones.

This action, though justified in terms of enforcing local and international laws, is certainly high-handed as it will mainly affect the poor who cannot afford a genuine Nokia, Samsung, iPhone and Blackberry. Besides, I am not sure if CCK, the mobile operators and Kenya Revenue Authority have considered the revenue implications of such an action.

Switching off thousands of subscribers translates into loss of millions in terms of voice and data traffic, which will negatively affect the incomes of mobile phone operators besides loss in taxes. This at a time the national budget is under great pressure due to demands for salary increase from teachers, lecturers, doctors and nurses.

The move also brings out lack of co-ordination between the various government agencies, which should first be addressed rather than resorting to punishing innocent consumers who may not understand the difference between 'Ericsson' and Ericson.

Kenyans are aware that the Kenya Bureau of Standards is responsible for checking the quality of all goods imported into the country. Kobs has spent a lot of money in hiring pre-shipment inspectors, who should stop poor quality goods from being shipped into Kenya. What have these inspectors been doing as fake phones entered the country?

I hope some clever lawyers takes up this matter and files a class suit against the government and its agencies for the inconvenience that Kenyans will suffer. We cannot have government institutions failing to enforce laws then covering up their failures by resorting to punishing innocent citizens.

The most reasonable thing to do is block the activation of any new fake phone, but let those already in use to continue until they die off naturally.

Concerned Kenyan
via e-mail



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

Write to:
The Editor,
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E-mail: thelink@wananchi.com

Irate Kieni residents storm police station

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

OVER 400 residents of Kieni East district of Nyeri County recently stormed Narumoru Police station protesting over their missing colleague.

The irked residents who arrived on foot and others in boda bodas stormed the police station and demanded to know the whereabouts of Robert Mureithi Mahinda who went missing recently.

The residents led by Kiama mathaga councilor Marete Ringera and local leader Mathenge Simon alias Kanini Kega while waving placards stormed at the busy station and brought business to a standstill.

The residents barricaded the Narumoru – Nanyuki highway for about an hour protesting over the matter saying police must help them trace their missing man immediately.

Mbuthia Muriuki who is a friend of Mureithi said, “We want our man either dead or alive. We have been having sleepless nights since he went missing,” said the councilor.

They claimed that the father of one who is in his early thirties might have been killed by Kenya Wildlife Service rangers who have been guarding the expansive private Solio Ranch and maybe his body dumped along Mwiyo River.

The councilor claimed that Mureithi who is a local trader called a colleague in order to be picked by a boda boda since he was in danger and since then the mobile phone went silent.

Kanini said police must move swiftly to ensure the man is found in order to avoid chaos since the locals wanted to storm the ranch and carry out the operation despite the area being a protected area and has dangerous animals.

“We want the police to move quickly since several complainants have recorded statement

over the matter. Government machinery must move very fast,” he said.

Nyeri OCPD Kirunya Limbitu who arrived during the pro-

tests addressed them and a team of ten people was picked in order to work with the police trace the man at Solio Ranch.

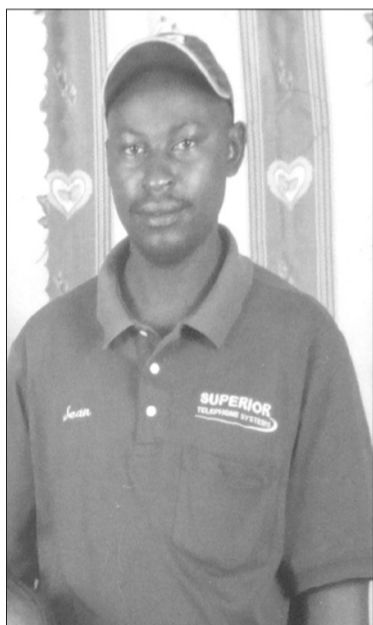
The wife of missing man

Wanjiru Mureithi said she reported the matter after her husband’s mobile phone went dead.

The man is yet to be found to date.



Kieni leader Mathenge wa Simon alias Kanini Kega (right) tries to calm the irked residents when they stormed Narumoru Police Station in Kieni East district recently. Photos/Joseph wambugu



Robert Mureithi Mahinda who went missing recently.



The wife of missing man Wanjiru Mureithi (left) is consoled when she broke into tears at Narumoru town.

Lack of IDs set to bar youth from voting

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

KAKAMEGA County residents have expressed fears that millions of youth may not participate in the forthcoming general election due to lack of identity cards (IDs).

The residents led by Mr. Evance Udoto expressed concern over delays by the government in issuing IDs to the applicants in the region.

Udoto alleged that the government was using delaying tactics on the pretext that the region is in the proximity of Uganda border purposely to disenfranchise the youth their right to vote.

He noted with regrets that very few youths in the region may register as voters when the registration exercise kicks off because of the cumbersome process in getting IDs.

Udoto asserted that the anticipated failure by the youths to vote during the forthcoming historic general elections due to lack of IDs is tantamount to official rigging of the elections.

Consequently Udoto challenged the ministry of state for immigration and registration of persons to hasten the process of issuing IDs to all applicants without discrimination.

He asked immigration Minister, Otieno Kajwang to make good his promise of establishing mobile registration centres in all corners of the republic without more ado.

The move, Udoto said will enable youths who have attained 18 years and above to acquire IDs with ease and hence register as voters.

Udoto emphasized the need for the youths to vote enmasse during the next general election saying they are the most enlightened people in community capable of identifying leaders who befit the new system of governance.

“It will be very sad if majority of our youths and who are the most enlightened people in communities can not get the opportunity to vote due to lack of IDs”, he said.

Udoto who was speaking recently at Nang’anda in Navakholo District of Kakamega County added that the elections will not be free and fair if millions of youths cannot cast their votes. According to 2009 national census, there are 1,114,587 youths in the age bracket of between 15 and 24 years in Western province.

Majority of these young people are yet to be issued with IDs, a factor that is worrying not only the political leadership of the region but also those aspiring for elective positions.

By PETER MUTUKU

Embu council yet to embrace anti-tobacco law

THE Tobacco Act is yet to become operational in Embu five years after its enactment due to lack of enforcement.

The provincial administration on the one hand blames the local municipal council for failing to establish designated smoking zones to protect nonsmokers.

Acting Embu West DC Daniel Obudo says it is impractical to enforce the Tobacco Act of 2007 when there are no designated areas for smoking.

Speaking from his office, the DC explains that the implementation of the law has thus been hampered by the lack of smoking zones.

“Unless local authorities in the area establish smoking zones, then

it is impossible to protect nonsmokers from secondary smoke. No one has ever been arrested in the town for smoking in public places,” said the DC. The Embu municipal council on the other hand says there are no clear mechanisms to guide in the implementation of the Act.

The Mayor Peter Murithi says although the council had designated smoking zones, the smokers had failed to use them.

He says that the council has not assigned askaris within the town to enforce the law as majority work as revenue collectors adding that the implementation of the Act is difficult.

“Why should the askaris go after smokers when they should be collecting levies from traders to generate revenue for the council? The government should set the format for implementation,” said the mayor. Area public health officer Peris Nyaga says the department is formulating ways to facilitate the implementation of the law.

“We have not started implementing the Act here but we are planning to enforce it to protect nonsmokers from secondary smoke, said Mrs Nyaga.

A resident, Martin Fundi said smoking in many towns across the country is not allowed and wondered why it is permitted in Embu.

He said smoking in the streets is a common phenomenon adding that some people smoke even in restricted areas. “We are used to having smokers in the town and they do it with impunity because they are never arrested. People who flout the law in other towns are being arrested but in Embu we are ever exposed to the smoke,” said Mr Fundi.

Residents have been complaining that they are being affected by the smoke and called on the public health and municipal council to protect them from secondary smoke.

They say smoking is being treated like a healthy habit and called for the

arrest of the smokers. Another resident, Gloria Njoki says it is unfortunate that the town is yet to implement the Act years after it was formulated.

She adds that the public should be made aware of the dangers of secondary smoking to help in the enforcement of smoking law.

Under section 32 of the Act, Kenyans have the right to be protected from exposure to second hand smoke while section 33 prohibits smoking in public places apart from designated smoking areas. Involuntarily exposing nonsmokers to tobacco smoke is an offence stipulated under the tobacco control act 2007.

Wave of union strikes set a litmus test for government

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

THE industrial unrest witnessed in recent times has set a precedent for future workers' protests which hitherto were illegal in the nation.

This scenario may also be used as a litmus test for the next government to be elected under the new constitution dispensation.

Virtually all presidential candidates have affirmed their commitment to fully implement the new constitution.

Those who have developed appetite for the presidency claim that the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, is a panacea to the problems currently facing the country.

However, whether or not the new constitution will put ugali on every Kenyan's table and narrow the gap between the salaries of MPs and other professionals' remains to be seen.

To say the least, the recent teachers' strike, doctors strike and lecturers strike were stimulated by house speaker's call to have MPs perks increased.

Kenneth Marende, goofed when he said that those who already have should be added more.

He irked taxpayers and indeed workers who live from hand to mouth when he advocated pay rise for MPs who already live in luxury courtesy of their huge pay./

To add insult to injury, Kenyan parliament perhaps offers the highest pay to its members among the common-wealth parliaments and some other parliaments in the world.

For instance, when Kenyan MPs began to earn Ksh. 851,000 per month, their counterparts in the following countries were earning and may be are still earning money equivalent to Kenya shillings as follows:-

- Nigeria Ksh. 61,666 – monthly salary and allowances
- India Ksh. 75,938 – monthly salary and allowances
- Tanzania Ksh. 116,667 – monthly salary and allowance
- Uganda Ksh. 180,000 – monthly salary and allowance
- South Africa Ksh. 246,642 – monthly salary and allowance

It is therefore dishonest and decep-

tive for the national assembly speaker to tell Kenyans and the world at large that Kenyan MPs earn peanuts.

The Kenyan legislators, without exaggeration, smile all the way to the bank as teachers, doctors, factory workers and security officers who toil day and night languish in poverty.

In fact the legislators seem to be reaping where they have not sown since their pay is not commensurate with the work done in terms of time spent in parliament.

Despite the huge salary Kenyan MPs carry home every month, they work for fewer hours than other public officers including peasant farmers.

The Kenyan parliament has an average of 16 hours per week broken down into Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday full day and Thursday afternoon.

Translated into working days of eight (8) hours daily; as regards to other public and even private institutions, the plenary session of parliament are only two (2) days weekly or 106 days per year assuming that there

do not break for recess.

Although the legislators are supposed to transact house business for only three (3) days in a week, the house is ever characterized by lack of quorum, a fact, Marende is fully aware of.

The MPs spend much of parliament time running their personal errands at the expense of parliamentary work which they are elected to do.

Some of our legislators are fond of disappearing into thin air immediately, after making technical appearance for the purposes of earning the allowances.

Even if the maximum time available to each member is 10 minutes on substantive issues before parliament such as bills, some MPs, have never had time to contribute because they are always busy looking for property to grab.

Lack of quorum, compounded with the MPs few working days / hours greatly contribute to delays in debating and passing of crucial bills by parliament.

For instance, Mps recently had to burn midnight oil to ensure that key legislative proposals are passed before the deadline set by the constitution.

However, passage of such important bills in a rush is dangerous to this nation since the bills may not be thoroughly scrutinized and exhaustively debated. The MPs have no reason what-so-ever to delay bills until the last minute since they are tasked with legislative matters only.

Failure to take their work seriously makes one to easily deduce that they do not deserve any pay increment let alone the Ksh. 851,000 they are earning now.

All Kenyans should stand up and say NO in unison to any proposal to have MPs salary increased even by a penny.

In fact patriotic Kenyans should demand that the MPs forfeit half of their pay to go towards the striking workers pay because the legislators seem to be earning the money for no service rendered.

Controversy hits orphans kitty in Teso

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE orphaned and vulnerable children kitty is mired in controversy with guardians in Teso South District alleging that they are being forced to part with bribes before the children can access their monthly stipend.

Guardians who take care of the orphans at Kaliwa location say that they have been forced to part with between Ksh50 and Ksh1,000 before they can receive their monthly payments. They further claim that the Children Officer Mrs Eunice Odenwa has been pocketing half of the cash earmarked for each child.

Led by Mrs Mary Etyang, the guardians claim that the orphans have only been receiving half of the cash allocated to them by the government.

They say each child is entitled to Ksh 4,000 after every two months but the amount has allegedly been slashed by half by the officer without giving an explanation. "The orphaned and vulnerable children from Kaliwa location are suffering because the person who has been entrusted with the cash transfer program has been paying them half of what they are entitled to get," claimed Etyang, adding that at times the said orphans end up getting nothing at all.

Etyang who takes care of an orphaned child in form two says that scores of orphans in the area have been forced to drop out of school due to lack of school fees as funds earmarked for their upkeep is diverted into personal use by corrupt officers.

"It is indeed very sad to note that scores of orphans in the area have been forced to drop out of school due to lack of school fees despite the fact that the government had introduced a Cash-Transfer Programme aimed at ensuring that orphans enjoy equal opportunities in life," said Mrs Etyang.

The parents added that their efforts to get assistance from the local provincial administration have been fruitless adding that the said officer has allegedly been bragging to them that no action will be taken against her by anybody.

"We are appealing to the area Member of Parliament who is also the Labour Assistant minister Sospeter Ojiamong to move with speed and come to the aid of the orphaned and vulnerable children who are being denied their rights by the said officer. However, effort by The Link to get comment from the said officer over the allegations did not bear fruit as she could not be reached through her cell phone.



KNUT members in solidarity during the recent teachers strike.

Busia leaders urged to curb entry of small arms

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

BUSIA County Task Force Committee has been urged to work closely with the community policing committees from their respective areas to ensure no small arms are sneaked into the county from the neighbouring country.

Addressing the stakeholders during the official opening of a one day forum on illicit small arms and light weapons organized by the Kenya National Focal Point Secretariat at a Busia hotel recently, Busia County Commissioner Joyce Isiakho called for unity saying no single country can address adequately or handle the issues of Small Arms and Light Weapons in isolation.

The county commissioner underscored the importance of the forum

saying it is part of a wider global campaign against the proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the attempt to curb loss of life, destruction and illegal usage of the weapons.

"In this regard we appreciate the International, Regional and Sub-Regional Instruments such as UN Protocol, United Nations Programme of Actions (UNPOA), Bamako Declaration, Nairobi Declaration and Nairobi Protocols, together with other initiatives which provide us with moral and legal direction of action and interaction in the Great Lake Region and Horn of Africa and the continent at large, since no single country can address adequately or handle the issues of Small Arms and Light Weapons in

isolation," said Isiakho.

"We are all witnesses to daily atrocities visited on our people by indiscriminate use of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Cross border banditry, Cattle rustling, armed conflicts amongst communities, carjackings, increased acts of terrorism and other criminal activities fuelled by the availability of small arms and light weapons," she added. Isiakho noted that the government had established the national focal point as a model to guide in the fight against the vice since 2003.

"We must therefore acknowledge and applaud efforts by the Government to establish and operationalize the National Focal Point and put in place other measures in accordance with the Nairobi Protocol," said the

commissioner. She said the establishment and operationalization of both the Provincial and District Task Forces will help empower members with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them carry out their mandate as per the Protocols and other existing policies and legislation.

"It must however, be acknowledged that due to limited resources, the implementation of the Nairobi Protocol has not been carried out as expected," said the commissioner, adding that this calls for a stronger political will and good will from the Government and the members of public respectively. The commissioner also noted the importance of Gender mainstreaming in all peace and security processes including addressing

the problems of proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons.

"We should always endeavor to uphold the spirit of our constitution by promoting women participation at all levels," she said, emphasizing that the success of the efforts can only be measured by the levels by which the task-force is able to effect reduction in the evils caused by usage of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as the degree to which the move is able to attain meaningful peace, stability and development.

The forum was attended by all the provincial administration, education officers, and local political and religious leaders from the entire Busia County.

Media challenged to highlight climate change

By BOB OMBATI

JOURNALISTS have been challenged to report on climate change related issues to help members of the public cope with the changing climate.

Helen Mutie, an official with Peace Pen Communications (PPC) which is a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) says that Kenyans are unable to detect changes in climate due to ignorance and are unable to plan for their Agricultural activities.

She told a one day media workshop at a Kisii hotel that climate change had affected the lives of farmers and pastoralist communities due to erratic rainy seasons and prolonged periods of dry spells.

The official said it was imperative for Journalists to be conversant with climate change and sensitize members of the public on the same to help them respond appropriately to the

changes.

Mutie noted that conflicts related to resources like water and pasture were related to climate change, noting that prolonged dry spells followed by heavy down pour led to floods, deaths and displacement of people.

She cited the Orma and Pokot conflicts which she linked to the scramble for the scarce pasture owing to long dry seasons, adding that such conflicts were being experienced in arid and semi arid areas where pastoralists compete for water and pasture.

PPC Project Officer, Jayne Rose Gacheri noted that some rivers had dried up due to the destruction of forests and other human activities, which had led to climate change and unpredictable seasons.

Gacheri noted that members of the public had experienced mudslides and floods due to the effects of climate change while farmers were confused owing

to the changes in rainy seasons, affecting their planting and harvesting seasons.

The officer noted some people in arid areas had diverted water courses and constructed houses due to the prolonged dry seasons only to be submerged during heavy downpour and flooding.

"They lose their properties including animals to flashy rains. They need to be sensitized not to interfere with nature to avoid problems" said Gacheri.

She urged Journalists to write analytical stories on climate change to enable the policy makers to enact relevant legislations to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change.

Some reporters, noted Gacheri focused on hard news and forgot to make follow ups to find out the conditions of flood or drought victims and how they are coping with life after

climate related disasters.

Riamogire Energy and Technology Centre (RETEC) senior Programmes officer, Kennedy Gichaba attributed Climate change to deforestation and interference with water sources, saying that rivers have dried up in Kisii county due to the planting of gum trees near water sources and along rivers. He noted inadequate water for domestic use and irrigation during dry spells had fuelled conflicts among the residents.

Baraton university lecturer, Herbert Omari urged Kenyans to plant environmentally friendly trees and crops together to help improve on soil fertility and agricultural production to enhance food security.

Omari told participants that the forest trees enriched the soil with useful nutrients which the crops use to grow quickly and healthy, enhancing food security for consumption and sale.

Kaya elders pledge to re-afforest shrines

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

KAYA elders have decried the wanton destruction of Kaya forests and vowed to take a leading role in conserving the shrines.

The elders blamed the depletion of the forests on the rapid population growth which has led to encroachment into the gazetted forests holding the cultures and traditions of the Mijikenda community. Kaya elders said the most endangered forests are those in Kwale where influential personalities have been targeting the shrines for grabbing.

The elders led by Gabriel Garero, the Kaya Mudzi Muvia elder in Rabai, have now taken up the duty of patrolling the shrines to safeguard them from intruders.

"Kaya elders from the Kauma, Rabai and Duruma communities were taken for training on the conservation of the forests, most of us are fully prepared to conserve our scared forests," said Garero.

The elders said their resolve to protect the sacred forest had come after the Government, through the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, organized training for the elders on how they can conserve the cultures and traditions of the Mijikenda by conserving the shrines.

The conversation and protection of the sacred forests was also supported by United Nations Educational, scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), which offered funds for capacity building.

To sustain their work, the ministry and Unesco also provided the elders with beehives to start honey farming to enable them get something to sustain themselves.

But the elders complained that due to their old age they need support from the Government in getting security agents to protect the forests.

They also complained of hunger facing most of the elders and challenged the Government to support them with relief food.

Recently, the elders celebrated the completion of the first phase of the Kaya forest conservation where Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Permanent Secretary Jacob Mairon and Director Gladys Gatheru attended the function. Ms Gatheru said the first phase of the forest conservation programme by the Kaya elders cost Ksh.3.4 million from the Government and Unesco.

Dr. Marion raised concern that the identity of the Mijikenda community was on the verge of collapsing following the massive destruction of the Kaya forests.

The PS said the most threatened sacred forests were those in Kwale, Kilifi, Tana River and Lamu counties. He said the government would look into the possibility of getting funds to fence off the shrines. He warned that the Government would repossess illegally acquired land.

County commissioner roots for peaceful elections

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

KISII County Commissioner, Ms Lydia Muriuki, has underscored the need to intensify civic education in the area to educate the residents on the need to uphold peace during and after the elections.

She says the youth should be targeted for civic education as they are more prone to incitement by politicians to cause chaos during electioneering period, adding that all aspirants should be given an opportunity to present their electoral pledges without being exposed to violence.

"The public should be made aware that election is an event that comes and goes. There is need for everybody to embrace peaceful co-existence during and after elections to avert skirmishes that have in the past characterized most parts of the country within the same period," states Muriuki.

The Commissioner asked supporters of respective candidates to become tolerant to divergent views during electioneering period to avert violence and disruption of their competitors' campaign rallies and meetings.

She at the same time urged political parties to allow transparency to prevail during the nominations of their respective candidates to ensure only winners clinch tickets to run for respective seats. The commissioner says flawed party nomination processes have in the past locked out vulnerable women aspirants



One of the political rallies held in Kisii County recently.

ants from contesting for elective seats.

Speaking during the official closure of a two-day workshop on peace building and county cohesion at a Kisii hotel, Muriuki called for fair and transparent party nominations and peaceful election campaigns to avert political violence against women aspirants.

The County Commissioner, at the same time warned leaders in the area against sharing out county positions among male politicians and leaving out wom-

en from the political equation.

She said that the electorate should be left to decide through the vote on who should hold which county position based on merit and a transparent electoral process.

"I am warning local leaders and politicians to desist from sharing out county positions among male politicians, as this will exclude women in leadership positions," warns Muriuki.

She also cautioned residents against perpetuating negative stereotypes against women seek-

ing for political positions but instead accord them a fair chance to compete for various political positions with their male counterparts.

"With the new constitutional dispensation in the country, local communities must discard their retrogressive cultural practices that undermine women's leadership and live to the realities that women have been constitutionally mandated to compete with their male counterparts for political positions provided for in the constitution," observes Muriuki.

The need for reconciliation in Kenya

By ALLAN NGARI

KENYAN politicians have seemingly learned very little from the 2007 violence and continue to manipulate ethnic grievances for personal gain.

March 4, 2013 is an exciting and daunting date as once again Kenyans will go to the polls to cast their votes.

Unfortunately, Kenyan political contests have not always been smooth sailing, and past elections have been marred by irregularities and violence.

Most notably, the disputed 2007 presidential elections led to two months of widespread violence during which approximately 1,000 Kenyans died and 350,000 were internally displaced. These two months also dispelled the long-standing image of Kenya as a bastion of stability in a regional sea of volatility.

The post-election violence (PEV) also cemented Kenya's status as a "country in transition." The political settlement which ended the violence created a hurricane of reforms and new institutions designed to not only deal with the PEV, but also Kenya's long legacy of injustice and impunity.

Some of these institutions have already concluded their work, including the Commission for the Investigation of Post Election Violence and the Independent Review Commission, while others such as the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) are in their closing stages.

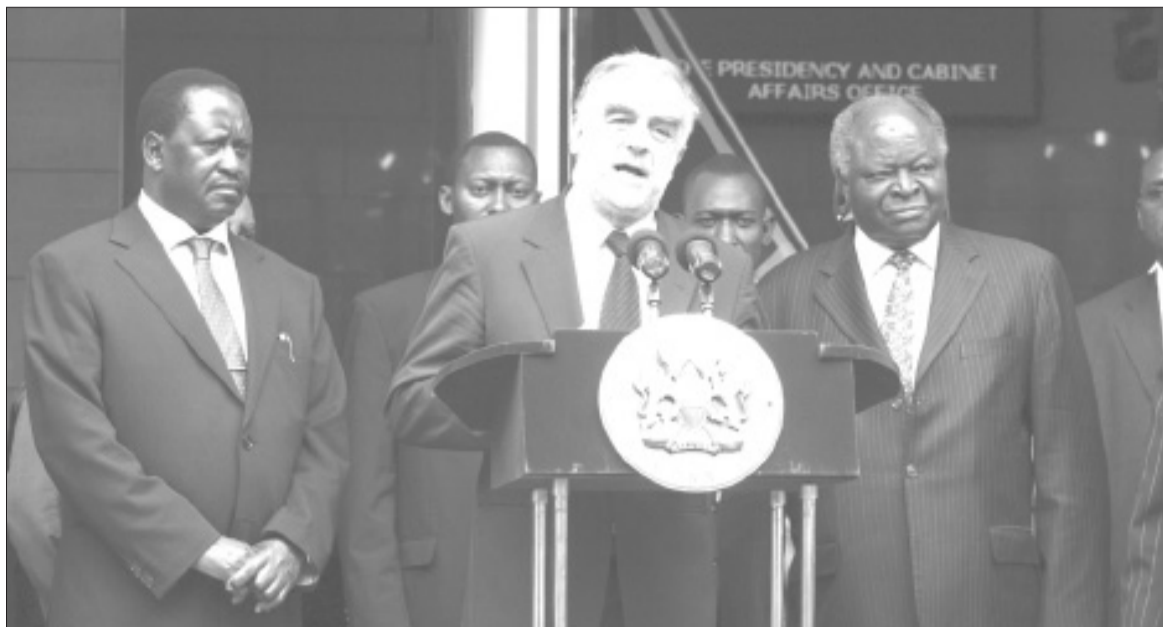
Despite significant challenges to its credibility, as well as budgetary constraints, the TJRC's soon-to-be-released report could provide a collective and consensus-based truth on many of Kenya's most sensitive issues from its past.

However, some Kenyan politicians have called for an embargo upon the release of the TJRC report; out of fear that it will re-open national wounds and exacerbate political tensions.

This concern is especially poignant with the 2013 elections looming in the near future. It is plausible that its content, which will shed light on events spanning the post-independence period, may be used to sow more divisions in an already fragmented country.

These challenges pose a true test to the functioning of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), the only permanent creation of the 2008 political settlement, which is mandated to prosecute perpetrators of hate speech (among other tasks). Some will inevitably accuse the NCIC of fomenting tribal politics if it takes a robust approach to its mandate.

As if these challenges were not enough, a range of other outstanding issues must also be addressed before the March 2013 elections. The new constitution, a further outcome of the 2008 political settlement, created numerous new elective posts that need to be enacted legally and implemented in practise.



Mr. Ocampo (centre) addressing the nation during the intervention of the post election violence. Looking on is the Prime Minister Raila Odinga (left) and President Mwai Kibaki.

Kenyan Parliamentarians have held numerous, long and intensive sittings to debate, amend and pass legislation consistent with the new constitutional framework. This has not been an easy task, as many of the new laws and policies under consideration involve the very issues that threaten to tear Kenya apart – including access to land, equitable distribution of resources and government devolution.

The International Criminal Court's (ICC) interventions in Kenya are also bound to affect the country's future. Two of the four Kenyans charged with responsibility for the PEV are presidential aspirants and come from ethnic groups that have dominated this highest office – Uhu-

ru Kenyatta, Deputy Prime Minister and son of Kenya's first President, and a former Cabinet minister, William Ruto.

The ICC's intervention has become highly politicised, as leaders of some ethnic groups have denounced the prosecutions as attacks on their own communities, and attempts to eliminate specific candidates from the presidential election. These seeds of discontent, if not carefully managed, could erupt into violence.

Beyond the ICC interventions, perpetrators of many crimes committed during the PEV have not been brought to account. Indeed, a recent Human Rights Watch report indicated that only two convictions have

resulted from the more than 1,000 killings committed during the PEV.

Concerted efforts must be made to remedy this situation.

Meanwhile, though the Kenyan government has done good work in resettling IDPs, much more work and support for victims is needed as many remain in temporary camps.

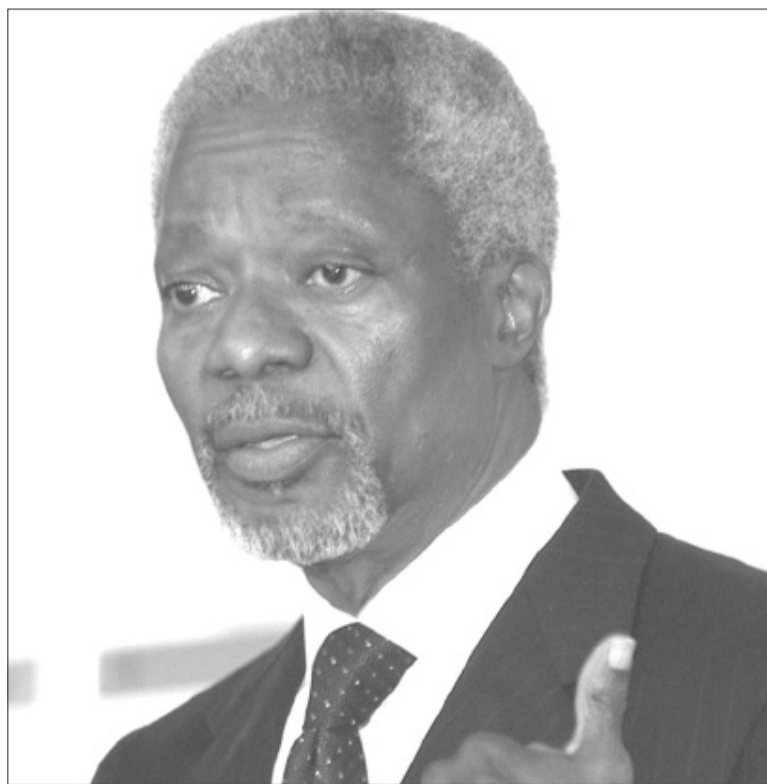
Score s of ordinary Kenyans who were victimized or lost loved ones during the PEV have not healed or experienced reconciliation with their fellow citizens.

Many perpetrators remain present in local communities, their continued impunity posing a continued challenge to reconciliation. Many IDPs, for example, refuse to return to their homes out of fear that the 2013 elections will also be followed by widespread violence and intimidation. Indeed, some Kenyan politicians have seemingly learned very little from the 2007 violence and continue to manipulate ethnic grievances for personal gain.

It is in light of these myriad initiatives aimed at influencing Kenya's transition that the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) launched a two-year tri-partite project designed to train key Kenyan stakeholders in reconciliation theory and practice.

This project will be jointly implemented by the IJR (South Africa), the NCIC (Kenya) and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (Sweden) and will consist of policy interventions and training sessions with crucial Kenyan leaders. We believe it is absolutely vital that Kenyans gain a common understanding of reconciliation and its specific application to Kenya. By doing so, Kenya's transition towards peace, justice and development can be secured.

Allan Ngari is project leader for the Kenya and International Justice Desk, at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation.



Dr. Kofi Annan who mediated the coalition.

Busia civic leaders oppose manual voting system

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

OVER forty civic leaders from the entire Busia County have strongly opposed the manual system of voting which they said had contributed to the 2007/2008 post-election violence that led to the loss of innocent lives and property.

The civic leaders led by Walatsi ward civic leader councilor Jack Wambulwa argued that manual voting

systems are prone to manipulations and politicians can easily interfere with the vote register to tilt the results in their favour.

"As civic leaders of this county, we are not going to sit back and watch as the country opts for a system of voting that is likely to deny Kenyans the right to elect leaders of their choice," said the civic leaders, adding that Bio-metric Voting Registration [BVR] system of voting will ensure voting is

done in a transparent and accountable manner.

"We are therefore earnestly appealing to the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission chairman Isaack Hassan to go ahead and acquire the Bio-metric Voter Registration machines however long it will take so long as election is done fairly and to the satisfaction of Kenyans," they said, adding that as representatives of the people they will not sit

back and watch as the commission is pushed into hasty decisions.

The civic leaders spoke to the press during the start of a six-month diploma course on County Governance at Danian College, a branch of Bondo University College in Busia town recently.

The civic leaders at the same time said the course will boost their capacity as leaders ahead of the establishment of the county system of govern-

Commission set to improve services in EAC towns

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

THE Lake Victoria Basin Commission has pumped Ksh. 60 billion towards a project that seeks to improve water supply and solid waste management in 15 towns.

The project which is set to be implemented in the next four years will cover the five East African Community member States – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi.

Under the project that has been dubbed "Lake Victoria Water and Sanitation (LVWATSAN) Initiatives, infrastructure will be developed to help resolve problems that arise due to lack of proper water and solid waste management systems in towns.

According to LVBC executive secretary Canisius Kanangire, the project has been funded by the African Development Bank and seeks to find long lasting solutions to problems linked to rapid population growth in secondary towns like unplanned expansion, run-down and non-existent basic infrastructure and services, and pollution of the environment and the lake ecosystem.

Kanangire says that only three towns in the country namely Keroka, Kericho and Isebania have been earmarked to benefit from the project. He points out that Lake Victoria serves as a major trans-boundary resource for EAC countries with a high potential to accelerate the growth of the towns around it if it is managed well. "In recognition of the challenges presented by rapid urbanisation in the basin, the project will ensure that we increase both water supply and sanitation coverage," he said in Kisumu. The project, Dr. Kanangire adds has been pegged on the Millennium Development Goals to help develop basic infrastructure.

The project was set to start last year but was delayed since the bank wanted it to begin uniformly in all the five countries, according to the official. "This was quite cumbersome considering that every country had to fulfill the requirements set for it," he said.

He said so far all the countries had established offices to coordinate water supply and solid management plan. He said after completion of the project will serve residents in the secondary urban centres, especially the poor, women and children.

Also set to benefit are water user groups, local institutions and organizations responsible for service provision, whose capacity and efficiency will be enhanced.

The fruits of the project will also be reaped by non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, among others.

Dr. Kanangire disclosed that another plan to develop transport between the five countries was underway to boost business and promote integration. "Busia, Namanga, Rwanda-Burundi borders are set to benefit," he said. The board is also seeking funds to clean the polluted Kisat river in Kisumu.

"Water from river is used for domestic purposes by some people and this is a health hazard. We feel something has to be done to improve its standards," he said. LVBC is one of the specialized commissions of EAC.

Overview of the County

Introduction and Objectives

THE new law grants county governments powers, functions, and responsibilities to deliver services (Ref: *The Link October 2010 Edition*) and to:

- (a) provide for the implementation of Chapter Eleven of the Constitution pursuant to Article 200 of the Constitution;
- (b) give effect to the objects and principles of devolution as set out in Articles 174 and 175 of the Constitution;
- (c) give effect to Article 176 (2) of the Constitution in respect of further decentralisation;
- (d) provide for the removal from office of the speaker of the county assembly in accordance with Article 178 of the Constitution;
- (e) provide for the powers, privileges and immunities of county assemblies, their committees and members under Article 196 of the Constitution;
- (f) provide for public participation in the activities of the county assembly as required under Article 196 of the Constitution;
- (g) ensure that the community and cultural diversity of a county is reflected in its county assembly and county executive committee as contemplated in Article 197 of the Constitution;
- (h) prescribe mechanisms to protect minorities within counties pursuant to Article 197 of the Constitution;
- (i) prescribe additional requirements in respect of the publication of county legislation as contemplated in Article 199 of the Constitution;
- (j) provides, pursuant to Article 200 of the Constitution, for—
 - (i) the manner of nomination or appointment of persons to, and their removal from, offices in county governments, including the qualifications of voters and candidates;
 - (ii) the procedure of assemblies and executive committees including the chairing and frequency of meetings, quorums and voting; and
 - (iii) the suspension of assemblies and executive

- (k) committees; prescribe, pursuant to Article 235 of the Constitution, uniform norms and standards, for—
 - (i) establishing and abolishing offices in the county public service;
 - (ii) appointing persons to hold or act in those offices, and confirming appointments; and
 - (iii) exercising disciplinary control over and removing persons holding or acting in those offices; and
- (l) provide for the promotion, evaluation and reporting on the compliance by county public officers with the values and principles in Articles 10 and 232 of the Constitution.

The County Government comprises of the County Assembly and the Executive Committee

County assembly

The county assembly is to serve as the legislative arm of the County.

The assembly comprises of

- (i) Members elected by registered voters of respective wards
- (ii) Special seats earmarked to ensure that not more than two thirds of the membership are from the same gender
- (iii) Six nominated persons from marginalised groups including persons with disability and youth
- (iv) The speaker who is an ex



The promulgation of the new constitution two years ago created a two-tier level of governance, namely the National Government and the 47 County Governments. The predominant eight provincial elections held in 2010 and the general elections as stipulated in Chapter Eleven of the Constitution and the enactment of the County Government Act thus comes into effect. The Act provides for an efficient and effective framework for the county governments in terms of the county executive and legislative matters. In this report, our Staff Writer FAITH OCHIENG provides an overview of the Act

officio member.

All nominations are expected to reflect the diversity of the people of Kenya.

The new law makes it mandatory for every County to enact legislation prescribing the following county symbols—

- (a) the county flag;
- (b) county coat of arms; and
- (c) the county public seal.

The County Executive has been vested with powers to develop symbols of the county through a consultative process. The symbols are to be approved by the county assembly by legislation.

The Act directs that each County symbol must have unique symbols that are not replicated from existing National symbols.

Functions of County Assemblies

The Constitution (Article 185) vests the County Assembly with powers to make laws that seek to ensure that the County Government effectively discharges its mandate.

In addition, the County Assembly exercises oversight role over the county executive organs

The Act sets out that the County Assembly is to receive and approve plans and policies for

- (a) the management and exploitation of the county's resources
- (b) the development and management of its infrastructure

The Act further obligates the county assemblies to:

- (a) vet and approve nominees for appointment to county public offices;
- (b) approve the budget and expenditure of the county government in accordance with Article 207 of the Constitution, and the legislation contemplated in Article 220 (2) of the Constitution, guided by Articles 201 and 203 of the Constitution;
- (c) approve the borrowing

by the county government in accordance with Article 212 of the Constitution;

- (d) approve county development planning; and
- (f) perform any other role as may be set out under the Constitution or legislation.

Role of County Assembly members

The new law vests members of the County Assembly with the responsibility to —

- (a) maintain close contact with the electorate and consult them on issues before or under discussion in the county assembly;
- (b) present views, opinions and proposals of the electorate to the county assembly;
- (c) attend sessions of the county assembly and its committees;
- (d) provide a linkage between the county assembly and the electorate on public service delivery; and
- (e) extend professional knowledge, experience or specialised knowledge to any issue for discussion in the county assembly.

The law further directs that a member of the County Assembly should not directly or indirectly get involved in the —

- (a) executive functions of the county government and its administration; or
- (b) delivery of services as an officer or employee of the county government.

Members of a county assembly are to be sworn in by the County Assembly clerk within fourteen days, after the announcement of the final results of an election.

County Assembly Party Leaders

The Act provides for both the leader of the majority party and a leader of the minority party in the County Assembly.

The legislation defines the leader of the majority party as the person who is the leader of the largest party or coalition of parties in the county assembly.

According to the Act, the leader of



President Kibaki during the promulgation of new constitution which created county governments

County Government Act

years ago paved way for local Government and the provinces were replaced with counties after the next Generation Constitution. The enactment at opportune moment. Work for the realisation of executive, legislature and JUDICIAL WITH MUIRIRU provides

the minority party is the person who is the leader of the second largest party or coalition of parties in the county assembly.

The Act sets out the basic order of all County Assemblies as follows —

- (a) the speaker of the county assembly;
- (b) the leader of the majority party; and
- (c) the leader of the minority party

Further, the county assembly proceedings are valid despite—

- (a) there being a vacancy in its membership at the particular time; or
- (b) the presence or participation at the particular time of a person not entitled to be present at, or to participate in, the proceedings of the county assembly.

County executive committees

The law vests the executive authority in the county on

- The county governor and the deputy county governor
- Members appointed by the county governor with the approval of the assembly from among persons who are not members of the assembly

Functions of the Executive Committee

- Implement county legislations
- Manage and coordinate the functions of the county administration and its departments
- In addition the committee may prepare proposed legislation for consideration by the county assembly
- Provide the county assembly with full and regular reports on matters relating to the county

County Assembly Service Board

Each County is to have a county as-

sembly service board which comprises of-

- (a) the Speaker of the County Assembly as the chairperson;
- (b) the leader of the majority party or a member of the county assembly deputizing him or her, as the vice-chairperson;
- (c) the leader of the minority party or a member of the county assembly deputizing him or her; and
- (d) a resident in the county, appointed by the county assembly from among persons who have knowledge and experience in public affairs, but who is not a member of the county assembly.

The county assembly clerk is to serve as the secretary to the county assembly service board.

Functions of the County Assembly Service Board

The county assembly service board is responsible for—

- (a) providing services and facilities to ensure the efficient and effective functioning of the county assembly;
- (b) constituting offices in the county assembly service, and appointing and supervising office holders;
- (c) preparing annual estimates of expenditure of the county assembly service and submitting them to the county assembly for approval, and exercising budgetary control over the service;
- (d) undertaking, singly or jointly with other relevant organizations, programmes to promote the ideals of parliamentary democracy

The law stipulates that a County Assembly may make standing orders consistent with the Constitution. The Act regulates the procedure of the county assembly for the proper conduct of proceedings

The county assembly proceedings are valid despite—

- (a) there being a vacancy in its membership at the particular time; or
- (b) the presence or participation at the particular time of a person not entitled to be present at, or to participate in, the proceedings of the county assembly.

The county assembly has pow-



Nairobi City Hall. Inset: Local Government minister, Paul Otuoma.

ers to establish committees and ensure that each member of the county assembly is appointed to at least one committee.

Right to petition county assembly

A person has a right to petition a county assembly to consider any matter within its authority, including enacting, amending or repealing any of its legislation.

Each county assembly is to prescribe a procedure for exercising the right.

No civil or criminal proceedings may be instituted in any court or tribunal against a member of a county assembly by reason of any matter said in any debate, petition, motion or other proceedings of the county assembly.

The national law regulating the powers and privileges of Parliament are to apply to a county assembly with the necessary modifications.

Recall of a county assembly member

The electorate in a county ward may recall their member of the county assembly before the end of the term of the member where the member—

- (a) violates the provisions of Chapter Six of the Constitution;
- (b) mismanages public resources;
- (c) is convicted of an offence under the Elections Act.

A recall of a member of the

county assembly can only be initiated after the High Court confirms the ground.

A recall can be initiated twenty-four months after the election of the member of the county assembly and not later than twelve months immediately preceding the next general election.

The new law makes it impossible for more than one petition to be filed against a member during his term in the county assembly.

A person who unsuccessfully contested an election under the Elections Act is not eligible, directly or indirectly, to initiate a petition under this section.

Petition

A recall is to be initiated through a petition and filed with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission —

- (a) in writing,
- (b) signed by a petitioner who is a voter in the Ward in respect of which the recall is sought; and
- (i) was registered to vote in the election in respect of which the recall is sought;
- (ii) accompanied by an order of the High Court issued in terms of section 27(3).

The petition has to—

- (a) specify the grounds for the recall;
- (b) contain a list of such number of names of voters in the Ward which represent at least thirty percent of the registered

- (c) voters in that Ward; and
- (c) be accompanied by the fee prescribed for an election petition.

The law directs that the list contains the names, address, voter card number, national identity card or passport number and signature of the voters supporting the petition.

The Act underscores the need for the petition to represent the diversity of the people in the Ward.

The petitioner has been vested with the responsibility to collect and submit to the Commission the list of names within a period of thirty days after filing the petition.

The Commission is to verify the list of names within a period of thirty days of receipt of that list.

The Commission, responds within fifteen days after the verification, issues a notice of the recall to the speaker of the county assembly.

The Commission is to conduct a recall election in the Ward within ninety days of the publication of the question.

Recall elections

Where a member of the county assembly has been recalled, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission has powers to frame the question to be determined at the recall election.

A question is to be framed in a manner that requires the answer “yes” or the answer “no”.

(To be continued in the next Edition)

Kenya keen on emulating German development model

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

KENYA may soon adopt a policy document from Germany on rural development projects, the parliamentary budget committee vice chair Mr. Alfred Sambu has said.

Sambu disclosed that in Germany one project is set up in each constituency every financial year through a development policy dubbed "one village one project".

He disclosed further that the parliamentary budget committee recently visited Germany to learn how development projects are initiated and implemented there among other issues.

Sambu said the development plan process in Germany has enabled every constituency to have a flagship project each financial year.

He claimed that with the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) Kenya can go places in terms of development projects if it can borrow the planning policy from Germany.

"Kenya will not be the same if we can use CDF to put up development projects worth Ksh. 500 million and above in every constituency each financial year, the MP said.

The parliamentary budget committee vice chair who is also Webuye MP was categorical that with the Germanic development planning policy, collapsed industries such as Pan Paper Mills can be revived.

CDF was established in 2003 through an Act of Parliament to facilitate development projects in each of the country's 210 constituencies.

The fund was initially pegged at 2.5 per cent of the total annual revenue collection and was and still is controlled by sitting members of parliament (MPs)

In some constituencies the fund is yet to have big impact on the citizens' socio-economic development

because MPs fund so many projects but thinly.

However, CDF is unprecedented in the history of Kenya's development planning because at no time had such a huge amount been released directly for local development and to be directly under the care of the MPs.

Kenya's development strategy has undergone various metamorphoses since independence and it remains to be seen whether the Germanic policy will also be tested or not.

Between 1965 and 1983, the national planning process was guided by a national policy paper called sessional paper No. 10.

The main features of the policy

focused on central planning, thus the needs of the people were identified at the national level and without consultations from the beneficiaries.

This process was driven by a desire for uniformity where all the parts of the county were looked at as being the same.

The policy ignored the fact that people communities and geographies were different to an extent that they did not need similar things all the time.

For instance, the policy in 1970's influenced establishment of cattle dips in all sub-locations in the country even in areas where people did not need them.

The policy failed the nation in

terms of deploying human resources where they did not have roles nor capacities for example posting of forest officers in Wajir and fisheries officers in Mwingi among other areas.

From 1983, planning changed and the focus shifted to a new strategy called, the District Focus for Rural Development.

This strategy introduced a bottom-up planning process, thus from the sub-location, location, division, sub DDC and the district; district development committee (DDC).

Although the intention of the process was fairly appropriate it was dogged by less clarity and over bearing by the provincial administration.



A group of MPs led by Mr. Alfred Sambu (seated second right), Vice Chair of the Parliamentary Budget Committee in a group photograph.

Kisii women roll out peace mission

By BOB OMBATI

WOMEN leaders from Sotik and Borabu districts have rolled out a peace drive that seeks to promote harmonious coexistence among communities living along the common border.

The Sotik Borabu Women Peace Drive targets women and youth along the border and in rural areas who bear the highest brunt in times of conflict.

The Group's coordinator, Sally Kirui says the initiative also targets leaders, council of elders and church leaders from both Kisii and Kalenjin communities who have been tasked with the role of preaching peace in their respective meetings.

Kirui spoke during a peace forum that brought together 60 participants drawn from Bomet and Nyamira counties.

She said during the 2007/8 post election violence, women and chil-

dren bore the highest brunt, stressing that more women are being trained on peace and reconciliation to reunite the affected communities.

Kirui who was flanked by the project's officer, Rebecca Nyaanga lauded the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Kenya Transitional Initiative for supporting the group to set up a resource centre at Chepilat along the common border where peace meetings were being held to unite the border communities.

Kirui challenged women to contest for many elective posts instead of waiting to be nominated by their respective parties after the general election. The official noted that it was wrong for women to only contest as county reps in the 47 counties and refuse to run for other seats because this was bound to create gender imbalances.

She said it would be difficult for

women to get a third of the elective seats at the counties and national government if they failed to contest for the seats and waited for the nominations.

"Women should not expect to get the seats on a silver platter. They should compete equally for elective positions," said Kirui.

She noted that if the women failed to get the elective seats, the affected counties will be forced to nominate more women leaders or male to meet the gender rule outlined in the constitution, noting that it will increase the counties' wage bill and hamper its social and economic development.

Women leaders, noted Kirui had proved that they could perform well like their male counterparts citing some constituencies in Rift valley where women had been elected to parliament and their constituencies were shining.

"Kenyans should shun stere-

otypes attached to women as being weak and that they should be in kitchen. They should be seen first as leaders and not women just like the way men are seen," said Kirui.

She challenged women to be peace ambassadors, noting that they had lined up peace workshops and radio programmes in local languages to preach peace a head of the polls.

She challenged women to be in the forefront to spearhead peace campaigns to ensure that peace is maintained in the forth coming general elections.

"Twelve radio programmes will be aired in Kisii and kalenjin languages with each community getting six," revealed Kirui.

The official urged politicians to shun misusing youths to attack their opponents during campaigns, saying they risked being disqualified from the race while the youths will be arrested and prosecuted.

Water project provides reprieve to Kieni farmers

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

RESIDENTS of Kieni East District are all smiles following the completion of Ksh11.3 million irrigation project, which now supplies them with piped water for irrigation and domestic purposes.

The residents of Thirigitu location have access to water all year round following the construction of water tank within the project area with capacity to hold 225,000 litres of water.

However, the residents want the government to construct a dam across River Nairobi to provide them with enough water for irrigation.

Ngogithi water project chairman Yustus Matu asked the government to construct a water storage facility at the River Nairobi to ensure sustainability of the venture.

"The government should construct mega dams to harvest rain water so that we can continue irrigating our farms during the dry weather," he said.

Farmers also want the project commercialized by distributing water to neighboring sub locations to earn them income.

"We now irrigate our farms and this has improved food and pasture security and we now sell our surplus food to the local market," said Zavelia Gachambi.

They said they need more water for fish farming where the 20 members of Mathina Cross Section Self-help group have set a pond as a pilot project.

The Safaricom foundation and ActionAid funded the project to the tune of Ksh8.1 and Ksh2 million respectively with the Nyeri constituency development Fund and municipal council giving less than a million each.

"A few years ago there was sheer poverty in this dry area which had been forgotten because it is in the middle of a productive region," said ActionAid head of programs Evelyn Samba.

She called on the government to come up with a comprehensive way of resolving food security saying that it should look for right investments to change the lives of the poor.

About 300 households benefited from the project and they are able to access clean piped water for domestic use.

"We have been able to access quality water at our doorsteps in the last one year and we do not have to travel long distances in search of water," said Ms Gachambi.

The farmers have been able to convert the once dry region into an agriculturally productive zone where they grow various kinds of foodstuffs.

Ms Gachambi said cases of domestic violence have gone down due to economic empowerment through agriculture.

Govt set to implement UN resolution on women

By FAITH MUIRURI

THE government has developed a National Action Plan (NAP) to guide implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on inclusion of women in conflict prevention, resolution and management.

The action plan is being spearheaded by the National Commission on Gender and Development, through the support of UN Women and the Government of Finland.

The plan which is set to be launched this month, will be rolled out in 2013 to help ensure the inclusion and equal participation of women in peace keeping and conflict prevention at the local level.

According to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, Amb. Franklin Espila, the action plan is in compliance with resolution 1325 and seeks to ensure that women participate in formal decision making structures and increase their representation in ongoing peace processes.

The UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security underscores the crucial role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, repatriation, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction.

Approach

The PS says the national action plan will adopt a multi dimensional and multi sectoral approach to help bridge the gender gap in peace building initiatives.

Ambassador Espila points that the national action plan is premised on a theme dubbed "To involve women is to sustain peace" and aims at increasing the participation of women in decision making levels, institutions and mechanism for the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

The PS says the action plan also seeks to prevent the violation of women rights by mainstreaming a gender perspective in all processes of conflict prevention, resolution and peace building.

"The adoption of the action plan will pave way for the effective and timely participation of women in recovery programs including disarmament processes," he adds.

Relevance

He says that integration of a gender perspective in ongoing peace processes is vital if peace and development has to be achieved. "The promulgated constitution has opened space for women to ascertain the protection of their rights and equal participation at all levels of governance including peace building initiatives," he explains

The PS however adds that the country is faced with challenges on how to achieve the two thirds gender

principle.

"I therefore call on Kenyans to register in large numbers and to also campaign and vote for women in the elections to help bridge the gender gap. This will ensure that women concerns on security are addressed at high levels of participation," he added.

He at the same time called on Kenyans, donors and Civil Society Organizations to renew their commitment and provide resources for the implementation of the action plan.

Challenges

Lawyer Betty Murungi who is a gender and conflict expert says that lack of resources continues to impede the implementation of resolution 1325 in the country.

Murungi says that the situation has been compounded by lack of political will and the absence of a clear line of responsibility in the National Action Plan

She says the NAP will act as an impetus for women who are currently seeking justice against violations and atrocities committed against them and enable women to participate in governance and conflict resolution mechanism.

Goodwill

The chairperson of National Gender and Equality Commission Winfred Lichuma says that the adoption of the action plan will ensure women ac-

tively participate in the ongoing peace building initiatives.

She at the same time calls on the government to allocate resources towards the implementation of the action plan to help raise the visibility of women engaged in peace building and security processes.

Commissioner Lichuma says the implementation of peace building initiatives will now take a coordinated approach to avoid duplication of efforts and a disjointed process that has little impact.

"We must try to consolidate ongoing peace initiatives to avoid fragmentation. This will help us adopt a unified approach in all the peace issues," she adds.

She says that the national action plan will be simplified and women sensitized on existing legislations on resolution 1325 to help enhance their participation in respective peace committees.

She at the same time cautions that unless the national action enjoys political goodwill, women may never enjoy it.

She intimates that the commission is currently lobbying the office of the President to house the Action plan as this will help marshal the required political support.

"We need to identify ways through which we can capture the political goodwill. Without the political will, we can have a good document but may never enjoy it," she adds.

The chairperson says that currently the commission is waiting for the steering committee to validate the plan. "Once it is validated, the Action plan will be ready for use," she adds.

She says that the commission will monitor and evaluate progress made in the implementation process.

Strategy

The UN women Country Director Zebib Kavuma says Kenya will become the ninth African country to develop a National Action Plan on implementing UNSCR 1325.

"This plan, when it is finally released, will consist of Kenya's strategy, specific goals and actions that must be taken in order to guarantee full and equal participation of women in all peace and security initiatives," she adds.

She says the protection of women, girls and boys, from sexual and gender based violence during and after conflict is highly pegged on inclusion of women in peace and security initiatives and in post conflict recovery processes.

The action plan, she says will help create and strengthen accountability mechanisms to prevent the suffering of women at the hands of perpetrators of violence.

"Once the national action is in place, women needs in peace building efforts, especially in post conflict contexts will be addressed adequately," she notes.

New guidelines to curb cane poaching released

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

SUGARCANE farmers in Western Province have received a temporary reprieve following issuance of new guidelines aimed at curbing cane poaching in the area.

Among measures earmarked for implementation include the requirement that millers present a list of farmers they intend to contract for cane harvesting before they can be allowed to harvest cane in a rival's zone.

This is meant to ensure that targeted farmers are not contracted elsewhere and hence minimize poaching cases.

"With such proposals, cases of cane theft will be a thing of the past although some competitors have opposed to them," said Nzoia Sugar Company Managing Director Saul Wasilwa during a meeting organized by the provincial administration in Kakamega.

Mr. Wasilwa urged Provincial Administration and the industry regulator, the Kenya Sugar Board (KBS) to enforce the guidelines and deal firmly with companies that flout the law.

He regretted recent cases where two people were killed, a tractor burnt and property worth millions of shillings destroyed during skirmishes that erupted in Mumias Sugar Company zone.

He revealed that Nzoia Sugar Company (NSC) has recovered stolen cane worth Ksh8 million in one year, which the firm has already paid back to the affected farmers contrary to earlier claims that the monies were being put in private accounts.

The meeting at the PC's offices brought together managers from Mumias, Nzoia, West Kenya and



The remains of a tractor burnt down by supporters of rival sugar millers Busia County recently. Two people were killed and property worth millions of shillings destroyed during the skirmishes. Inset: Tractor delivering sugarcane to the factory.

Photo/File

Butula sugar companies.

Mumias Sugar Company (MSC) Managing Director Peter Kebati advised cane farmers to shun millers who engage in cane theft as this was undermining investments in cane development that run into millions of shillings.

"Some people might want to portray us as the aggressors, but we have valid contracts with our farm-

ers, which cane thieves want to overlook and we have to move in and ensure our investment is protected at all costs," said Kebati.

The Kenya Sugar Plantations and Allied Workers Union National chairman Macdonald Wamacho accused KSB of laxity and called on its officials to resign.

Mr. Wamacho said KSB has kept silent even with revelations of unli-

censed millers causing unnecessary fracas in the sugar belt.

"We will mobilize farmers and workers to reject KSB because its officials are engaged in questionable dealings as unlicensed millers desperate to justify their existence continue to break the law in a bid to illegally squeeze their rivals out of the market. This habit is unacceptable," said Wamacho.

Excitement as oil is detected in Nyanza

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

NYANZA could be the next target for oil exploration if the ongoing geophysical studies by Tullow Oil Exploration Company confirm existence of large quantities of oil deposits.

Recently, Members of Parliament from Nyanza gave the company a go-ahead to carry out feasibility studies without raising anxiety until the drilling bear's fruit.

Areas earmarked for the study include Nyakach, Nyatike, Migori, Rongo, Gwassi, Gem, Rangwe and Siaya as they could be sitting on the black gold.

The move follows speculations that oil deposits have been found in Nyakach moments after Tullow Company struck oil in Ngamia 1 village in Turkana early this year.

The leaders who were held up a meeting with the company in Kisumu explored ways through jobs would be created through the exploitation and spreading drilling costs.

During the meeting, the company through its Group Scholarship Scheme country manager Martin Mbogo offered to sponsor 10 Kenyans for post-graduate studies in UK universities.

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Fish project to boost economic growth

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

PLANS are underway to establish a multi-million shilling fish processing plant in Kisumu town to help boost foreign exchange earnings, create employment and combat poverty.

According to the plant's Managing Director Ruth Odinga, the fish plant will serve

as a subsidiary to the Kisumu Ethanol factory and is slated to create nearly 4,800 jobs.

"This is a big accomplishment for Nyanza people and has the potential to create hundreds of new permanent jobs once rolled out," said Ms. Odinga.

Currently, the project is awaiting the disbursement of donor funding following

the completion of feasibility studies.

"We have constructed about 80 ponds and intend to set up 200 more for the project expected to spread across the six counties in Nyanza," she said.

About 800 youths are set to be recruited to construct the ponds. The public-private partnership is also expected

to create new business and train approximately 4,000 workers for careers in high-growth industries.

Ms. Odinga argued the fish project would contribute to strengthening of economics of not only Kisumu, but also Migori and Homa Bay and Kisii counties.

She said the plant will put emphasis on increasing pro-

ductivity, efficiency and competitiveness in the content of sustainable development and linkages.

The project comes at a time when the Government is laying greater emphasis on role of the private sector in food production, marketing and conservation of sustainable use of natural resources.

This will increase productivity, reduce inflation and enhance private sector investment in agriculture by enhancing exports and improve farmers' earnings in the face of biting poverty.

Over the years, high demand for food has led to increases in food prices and further pressure on food and agricultural inputs.

"This is why there is urgent need to enhance food security through expansion in domestic food production and less dependence on imports," she said.

This, she said, would be achieved through focused production of fish livestock, vegetables and fruits.

"This initiative shows how we are working hard to leverage existing resources to enhance local efforts to build public-private partnerships that support economic growth and job creation," she said.

Ms. Odinga encouraged fishermen to take advantage of available domestic and international markets, the aquaculture sub-sector and embark on intensive aquaculture farming.



Fish processing plant in Kisumu town is underway to help boost foreign exchange earnings.

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The scholarship will cover travel, tuition and accommodation at an estimated cost of \$305,000 (Kshs25.8 million) and will be rolled out on an annual basis.

Students roped in the programme will pursue studies in Geophysics and petroleum Engineering, Oil and Gas Law and Environmental Science, as well as Econometrics.

MPs Jakoyo Midiwo (Gem), Ochieng Daima (Nyakach), Fred Outa (Nyando) Erick Anyanga (Nyatike), John Pesa (Migori), John Mbadi (Gwasi) and Martin Ogindo (Rangwe) among others were in attendance.

The law makers asked Tullow to drill several areas where geologists anticipate oil deposits.

"We want Tullow to discover oil deposits in Nyakach and Nyatike among other areas which are rich in natural resources but lack technical capacity to drill," said Anyanga.

They vowed to co-operate with Tullow officials who agreed to proceed with pilot studies in Nyakach before they spread to other regions.

Excitement as oil is detected in Nyanza

Tullow Kenya BV was incorporated in Kenya in 2010 and is a subsidiary of Tullow Oil plc. Tullow holds seven licenses in Kenya, six of which it operates.

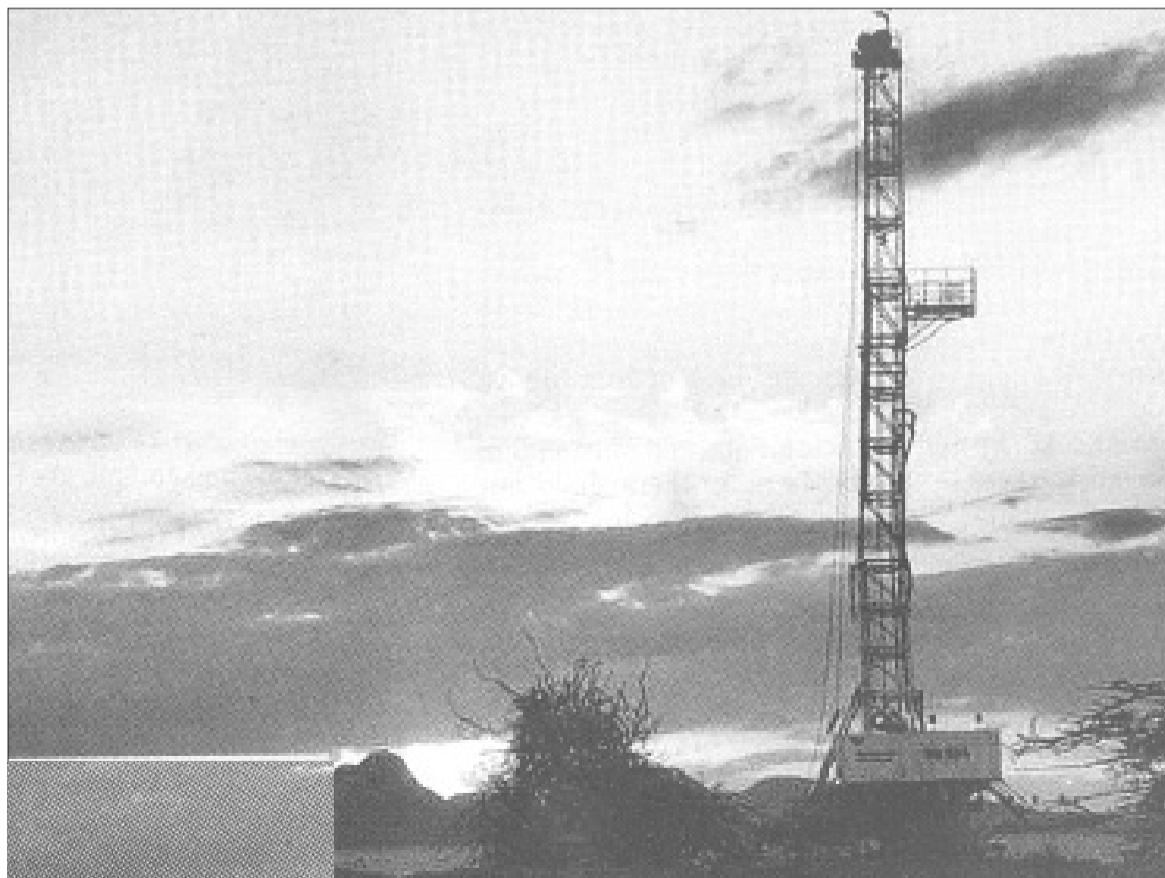
In March this year, Tullow announced the first major oil discovery in Kenya at Ngamia 1 well in Turkana County.

It also said a production contract for exploration of oil has already been signed with local communities.

The contract, which has been lodged with the Ministry of Energy and the Parliamentary Committee on energy, gives local communities the right to be engaged throughout the exploration to be carried out by the Canadian company.

Recently, 65 councilors in Turkana demanded to be told what the community stands to benefit from the oil deposits in their area before they could allow access to the oil exploration sites.

They claimed there was no communication by the company about the sharing of revenues from the oil once drilling starts.



Ngamia-1 oil well in Turkana that was discovered after drilling by Tullow oil company early this year. The oil well was first drilled to an initial depth of 1.041m.

Grit pays off for landless group

By MALACHI MOTANO

WIDOWS, widowers, orphans and other vulnerable people who have been landless for many decades in Trans Nzoia County are now settled in Narok South after acquiring a 7,500-acre piece of land.

These members of Mama Na Mtoto group have for long been volunteering their services, for example, cleaning and washing Kitale town. Finally they have acquired the land through savings of their meager earnings that they have engaged in for the period they have been leading the miserable life.

Wilson Siata Maika is the Group chairman "We first started contributing Ksh. 20 on a daily basis and later raised it to Ksh. 60 that saw us buy one acre piece of land, enabling us to resettle 10 widows in Birunda area of Trans Nzoia West district."

Through their contribution the Chairman says, the group managed to raise the Ksh. 4.2 million that enabled us to acquire the land after our members especially the widows made more efforts to contribute and the government assisted us in identifying the land", chairman Siata said

The group secretary John Barasa Nang'ole and Judith Mukhwana Wangasa the treasurer say that after resettling the ten widows they became motivated and intensified their contributions that saw each of them contribute Ksh. 4000 hence managing to raise the money that they used to buy the Narok land.

After raising the contribution, the Chairman continues, the group started to liaise with other groups of people with similar plight hence started working with a Nakuru based

Kenya National Organization for Victims of Ethnic Clashes - KNOVEC that played a pivotal role in ensuring the group gets the land.

Members left Trans Nzoia on August 24 this year for their new pieces of land where they are now starting a new life, where each member is expected to get a reasonable amount of land that shall have their lives transformed greatly.

According to the Chairman, most members were affected by tribal clashes of 1992, 1997 which took an ugly turn during 2007/2008 post election violence and have since lived miserable lives that could not

enable even their children to access basic education.

The treasurer says "We have been suffering for a long time as many of us live on rented houses hence we could not afford anything more than some little food on our table after toiling in casual jobs and we therefore see this as a true answer to our prayers by God and we are happy we are going to have a place we can call ours".

Unfortunately, none of the politicians in the area or administrators of all the regimes that have been in power ever thought of addressing their plight, hence each of them had to fight tooth and nail to main-

tain the contributions and now they are set to get the returns.

According to the Officials, before landing on the Narok land they had tried to search for land nearer home but didn't manage to get one till they got the one in Narok which they said despite being far from their homeland, they have no other-wise but to settle there and get on with their new lives.

They are also appealing to the government and non-governmental organizations among other donors to come in and assist them with tents and other humanitarian assistance as they prepare to put up structures on the land.



The group secretary John Barasa (left) addresses journalist on their rare achievement.
Photo/Malachi Motano

Red Cross in praise of Aids funding agency

By TITUS MAERO

THE Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) has lauded efforts by the Global Fund (GF) to support the fight against HIV/Aids disease in Kenya.

According to KRCS Programme coordinator Miriam Nguni, a total of 170,000 patients suffering from HIV / Aids scourge have been put on Anti-Retro Viral (ARV) drugs through KRCS programmes with support from the Global Fund (GF) since its launch in the country in the year 2011.

Speaking at the launch of the Global Fund (GF), round 10 at the Kakamega Golf Hotel, Nguni said KRCS had signed a contract with GF Secretariat based in Geneva, Switzerland as a Non State Principal recipient to under-

take HIV / Aids programmes.

Nguni said KRCS signed US\$ 4 Million funding with the GF for a five year period to be disbursed in two phases to enable the largest humanitarian organization in the country undertake its HIV / Aids activities country wide.

"The Global Fund (GF) Round 10 for HIV / Aids programmes has been anchored in the Kenya National Aids Strategic Plan (KNASP) of 2010-2012 which seeks to deliver a HIV free society in Kenya by reducing new HIV infections," She pointed out.

Nguni noted that the money from the Global Fund (GF) also aims at improving the quality of life for those infected and affected by the terminal disease and also to mitigate the social- economic

impact of the scourge among the sick people.

The official said the money is also used to increase access to HIV Testing and Controlling (HTC), procurement of ARVs, expanding services for the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) and provision of services for most at risk population (MARPs) including Commercial Sex Workers (CSWs).

She said that KRCS has come up with a programme that ensures participation with the Ministry of Medical Services (MMS) at Regional and District level where meetings are held to evaluate the HIV / Aids initiative.

Nguni also said measures have been put in place to address emerging challenges in the use of the Global Fund

(GF) money. She named such measures as proper understanding of the GF procedures, reporting requirements, Co-ordination, documentation and submission of field reports.

"So far KRCS has procured 80 Million HIV/Aids testing kits," She observed adding that areas with high cases of Aids infection include Nyanza which has 13 per cent, Nairobi (7 per cent) while the national prevalence rate is 6.3 per cent.

Nguni said KRCS has been striving to ensure systems are in place and maintained in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the programme and appropriate managing and disbursement of funds and submission of monthly reports on funds expenditure.

Mau evictees slated for resettlement

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

Families evicted from Mau forest three years ago have a reason to smile following plans by the government to resettle them in Rongai area.

Roads Minister Franklin Bett recently revealed plans are underway to resettle 500 families in Majani farm in Rongai Constituency in a bid to jumpstart the resettlement programme.

Bett, who is the chairman of the ad hoc committee formed by Prime Minister Raila Odinga to spearhead the resettlement programme, said the Government has secured more than 3,000 acres of land to resettle the evictees.

The minister said another batch would be moved to The-salia farm in Ainamoi in Kericho County where the Government has acquired 600 acres of land for their resettlement.

At the same time, Bett who was accompanied by Energy Assistant minister Margerer Langat hit out at a Cabinet minister whom he did not name for scheming to block the Rongai resettlement.

The leaders made the remarks recently at Chemogoch Secondary School sports ground in Kuniyak areas in Kipkelion Constituency after attending a church service and inspecting roads in the constituency.

"Some of our colleagues (MPs) are said to be scheming to frustrate the resettlement programme. They have vowed not to allow Mau evictees to be allocated land in Majani Mingi," he said.

Bett described those behind the move as brutal, saying leaders from the South Rift will ensure that the evictees are resettled.

Recently, the premier announced that the more than 5,000 families who were kicked out of Mau forest to pave way for the rehabilitation of the country's water tower would be resettled as soon as possible. Other members of the committee include Home Affairs Assistant minister Beatrice Kones, Sotik MP Joyce Laboso and former Baringo Central MP Gideon Moi.

Recently, Bett said the resettlement has been a thorn in the flesh, adding that some people have been using it as a political weapon at the expense of the families.

"We will stand firm by our people kicked out of their farms in Mau forest and fight to see that they are resettled before next year's General Election and we want those politicizing the exercise to stop using them for their selfish political interests," he said.

He said the committee has identified several blocks of land to be purchased by the Government for the evictees within Nakuru and Kericho counties, which have been assessed by the Ministry of Agriculture for their suitability.

Health sector Bill defies constitutional requirements

By FAITH MUIRURI

EVEN as Kenyans wait for reforms in the health sector, it is emerging that the Bill earmarked to steer the process runs contrary to the Constitution and fails to capture the input of the public and other stakeholders.

The health Bill empties all contents of input received from the public and is not an accurate reflection of the demands that Kenyans made in terms of actualizing reproductive health rights including access to reproductive health care services.

The Bill does not provide for the respect, protection and promotion of reproductive health rights and fails to place obligations on the government to ensure that reproductive health services are widely accessible, available, acceptable and of sufficient quality.

Further, the Bill carries with it provisions that are unconstitutional and therefore open to challenge before the High Court.

According to Prof Joseph Karanja of University of Nairobi, the Bill is likely to be unconstitutional and above all shoddily done.

He cites the inclusion of abortion in the Bill which he says defeats the very purpose for which the proposed law seeks to address.

"The Bill seeks to consolidate health laws, to provide for the regulation of health care service providers, to provide for establishment of national regulatory institutions and coordinate relationships between the national and county governments and thus the inclusion of abortion undermines the broader and structural goals of the proposed law," he explains during a media briefing organized by the Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance (RHRA)

He says that the Bill reflects a clear intent to restrict access to safe and legal abortion services, rather than create an enabling environment as outlined in the Constitution.



A section of doctors on strike. Below: Prof. Anyang Nyong'o, minister for Medical Services.

Constitution

Prof Karanja says that this is in contravention of Article 26 (4) of the Constitution which permits abortion when in the opinion of a trained health professional; there is need for emergency treatment, or the life or health of the mother is in danger or if permitted by any other written law.

He argues that termination of pregnancy is best handled in separate legislation or guidelines and singles out the additional clause in the constitution which stipulates abortion is legal "if permitted by any other written law". This clause he says leaves open the possibility for further legislation but does not allow for a written law to further limit access to abortion.

Prof Karanja says the approach has been adopted by other countries such as South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe which address



abortion in legislations outside of their penal codes.

He further cites clause 6 of the bill that requires medical practitioners to have a valid license from the recognized regulatory authorities to carry out the procedure.

"The clause signals a clear intention to restrict access to abortion services under the law as there is no other medical procedure in the country that requires separate licensing for a particular procedure," he laments.

He says the provision as outlined in Article 26 (4) of the Constitution had inevitably sought to ensure meaningful access to the abortion procedure under the law by all women.

The bill has also failed to make explicit references to Article 43 (3) of the Constitution which provides a person shall not be denied emergency medical treatment.

Emergency care

Dr Carol Odula who is the chairperson of the Kenya Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society (KOGS) says that this provision places a strong obligation on the

government to ensure that all persons, including women seeking post abortion care or emergency abortion services, receive necessary medical treatment.

She says that the reference to "elective abortions" in section 6 (1) as a form of family planning is vague and likely to cause confusion as to the content of the law

Another contrast in the Bill is the provision that makes abortion a notifiable condition which ordinarily applies to cases of communicable diseases in order to prevent outbreaks and public health crisis.

"Safe and legal termination of pregnancy is not a communicable or infectious disease and does not require notification. This provision again reflects an intention to over regulate and restrict access to abortion services, in contravention of the Constitution's guarantee of access to abortion under certain conditions," she adds.

She says that trained health professionals can ensure proper record keeping in their provision of services without a requirement that these services be notifiable.

Dr John Nyamu who is the Executive Director Reproductive Health Services (RHS) says that the inclusion of abortion in the bill is an affront to Article 26 (4) of the Constitution and undermines access to safe abortion.

Dr Nyamu calls for a review of the Bill to reflect proposals by stakeholders before it is too late. "In its present form, the bill stands the risk of being declared unconstitutional," he adds.

He urges for more public consultations and participation and in particular engagement with the task force overseeing the bill to help identify gaps and propose amendments for consideration by the various entities in the Constitutional implementation legislation making chain.

Deaths

Unsafe abortion accounts for 2,600 of maternal deaths both in public and private health institutions.

It is estimated that the government spends Ksh 18 million annually, in Post Abortion Care given to women with complications arising from unsafe abortion by quacks or in an environment lacking minimal sanitary and medical standards.

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

Food insecurity increases sharply

NYONGESA Sitati, 70, from Matulo village of Webuye location who declined an offer by the government to supply him with farm inputs at a subsidized rate.

Sitati's move was driven by fear that his small plot of land will be auctioned, in case he fails to repay the loan.

"I cannot accept their offer for maize seed and fertilizer because I may end up losing my land when I fail to pay for them," he protested in May this year.

His neighbor Joseph

Waswa, with five children, took the farm inputs, given by the ministry of agriculture, but sold them immediately.

These are among poor farmers that the government targets through the Ministry of Agriculture under the National Agricultural Accelerated Input Access Programme (NAAIAP), every year.

NAAIAP was initiated in 2007 and approximately Ksh-18 billion is channeled to 2.5 million farmers every year.

But the farmers are still faced with challenges among them the stealing of mature crops which has forced them to harvest premature crop, especially in Matulo area in Bungoma County.

Stories now abound where children as young as 5 children are found stealing maize.

Webuye chief Misiko Barasa affirms that the issue of food stealing by residents is very serious and set to contribute to poor harvest of mostly maize and beans.

"I have received reports of children caught stealing beans and maize at night", he said.

He says the harvesting of premature crops by farmers will affect post harvesting preservation- which could lead to continued cycle of hunger.

The chief notes that most of the families are large, with no steady income, and thus majority opts to steal from other people's farms in order to survive.

Barasa blames the poor implementation of the NAAIAP

- project for increased food insecurity in his area.

The programme he says is good on paper, but the impact is yet to trickle down to farmers.

He explains that the implementation process has been marred by confusion and corruption as key stakeholders are not involved in identifying the beneficiaries.

Extension officers at the

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Food insecurity increases sharply

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Ministry of Agriculture, he added “come with a prepared list of beneficiaries who are not known to the administrators and at times not poor themselves.

Food insecure families have not benefited from the NAAIAP as they are not selected for the project.

“Most farmers are mostly not aware of this program which seeks to improve their livelihoods and thus can hardly support its implementation” says Barasa.

Evelyn Nakhungu, 54, a widow with 12 children and grand children is a case in point.

She claims that she has never received any assistance from the government, and she always plants maize seeds she prepares locally with manure.

“I prepare my own planting seeds with manure from cows, because I have no money to buy farm inputs”, Nakhungu says.

This year her one acre plot yielded 3 bags of maize, which she admits will not last up to December.

She maintains that no extension officer has ever paid a visit to her home or told her about programs run by the government assist small scale farmers.

This is despite the fact that the government has almost a dozen programmes, funded by International Food and Agricultural Development (IFAD).

This follows a reform process set in motion in the 1980s, funded by development partners which led to significant changes

in the Kenyan economy.

But the pace of progress slowed in the second half of the 1990s. Since then, population growth, degradation of natural resources, the changing global climate and the political crisis of early 2008 have all contributed to worsening poverty levels.

Kenya’s long-term development blueprint, Vision 2030, was launched in 2008. It aims to create a “globally competitive and prosperous country with a high quality of life by 2030”.

Vision 2030 is designed to guide the country towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and beyond, transforming Kenya into “a newly industrialized, middle-income country”.

Evidence shows that agriculture-led growth in Kenya is more than twice as effective in reducing poverty as growth led by industry.

Since 1979, IFAD has invested a total of US\$214.5 million in 15 loan-financed programmes.

Investments include US\$18.0 million in grants under the Belgian Survival Global leaders and the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF).

The AGRF 2012 has set the stage for African leaders to drive the initiative by promoting investments and policy support to increase agricultural productivity and income growth for African farmers.

The forum will focus on unlocking Africa’s agricultural potential by empowering small-holder farmers across the continent.

Sitati and hundreds or thousands of others like him in Bungoma County, are clear targets as households which require access to sufficient food and good nutrition.

Yet from what they go through on a daily basis, it is not clear how peasant farmers benefit from programmes run by the government. An analysis of their livelihood strategies provide a clear understanding of how they live and make a living.

Joram Wekesa a retired civic leader accuses the extension officers of driving powerful vehicles in villages while failing to connect with the target groups.

“I always see this vehicles roaming around, and if you asked me, what they are doing, I cannot tell you”, he complained.

Wekesa noted that the implementing agencies lack analytical tools to increase understanding of complex interactions that determine food security status at different levels.

During the planting season in the month of April, farmers in Webuye failed to access subsidized fertilizers provided by the government.

The farmers complained of the bureaucratic process involved before they can access the inputs, and the negative behaviour of those in charge.

At one time, they were told on a Friday, to collect the fertilizer on Monday, and when they turned up on Monday, they were told that the fertilizer had been exhausted.

Officials at the National cereals and produce board, denied

that they had promised the farmers to collect the inputs, because they had not received the supplies.

Eye witnesses claimed that the fertilizer had been loaded to trucks at night during the weekends, something the manager refuted.

Norrine Atieno the depot manager added, “ we have no problem with the distribution as farmers with vouchers are getting fertilizer,” she said then.

She however maintained that they do not operate on weekends, but she could not explain the circumstances under which the 5,000 bags of fertilizer disappeared.

Morton Juma a human rights defender in Bungoma County accused agricultural officers at the district of colluding with traders to divert fertilizer meant to benefit the poor farmers.

Juma complains that whereas the agricultural officials divert the fertilizers, they are the same people who compile reports about the food situation in their respective areas.

As at July 31, 2007, the food security situation analysis by the government was positive and steady.

“The National food security situation is currently steady as harvesting has commenced in many parts of the country”, said a report by the ministry of agriculture.

As this was being said, a viral mildew disease was reported in some parts of the country, which was said to have impact on maize harvest.

The country is likely to lose close to 200,000 bags of maize, out of the expected net surplus of 9,867,760 bags at the end of the year.

What concerns farmers now is whether the perpetual problems they face year in year out, will ever be presented to international forums the way they see them?

The AGRF forum, will bring together African Heads of State, ministers, private agribusiness firms, financial institutions, farmers, NGOs, civil society organizations and scientists to discuss and develop concrete investment plans for scaling up agricultural development.

Notable guests will include Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Co- Chair Melinda Gates, IFAD President Dr. Kanayo Nwanze, among others.



Conservation agriculture technology for food security. Weather men have warned of possible continued food insecurity in the country.

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By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

DAIRY farmers in Central province last year earned Ksh 21 billion from the sale of milk products.

A livestock production annual report from the region released by the Provincial Director of Livestock Production Mary Kanyi further showed that the earnings were as a result of sale of 829.3 million litres of milk produced in the same period.

The improved earnings by the farmers marked an 11 per cent increase from the previous year where Ksh 18.9 billion was realized from dairy farming.

"Dairy goats, which are also becoming popular in the region due to diminishing land sizes and ease in rearing, produced 11.5 million litres of the total amount of milk production," said the report.

Noting that dairy farming was currently the most important enterprise in the province, Kanyi attributed the improved earnings to good weather conditions, improved husbandry practices as a result of farmer trainings by her staff and stakeholders, upgrading of dairy cattle and improved marketing of milk produced.

The PDLP indicated in her report that a litre of milk sold for an average of Ksh 25 with 56 per cent of the total milk sold through formal markets such as dairy co-operative societies and dairy self help groups while the rest was sold informally mainly through

Dairy farmers earn Ksh 21 billion in sales

hawking in major urban centres. Goat milk however sold for an average of Ksh 50 per litre.

The PDLP attributed the increase in milk production in the area to stabilization of market

prices owing to stiff competition by different milk processors in the country who are trying to



Dairy cows at a private ranch in Kieni West District of Nyeri County.

Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

woo more farmers to sell them the commodity thus making dairy farming a viable commercial venture.

"Further the increased usage of Artificial Insemination (AI) in the region to improve dairy breeds has also resulted in good returns for local farmers since the AI services are readily available from private practitioners," she added.

However, inadequate fodder, unreliable rainfall, high cost of feeds for dairy animals and tick borne diseases remained a big challenge to the sector in the region as the factors contributed to a drastic reduction in milk production and thus less earnings by farmers.

"Poor road infrastructure in the region also played a key role in depressing dairy earnings as considerable amounts of milk went to waste or sold at unfavourable prices since farmers could not easily access lucrative markets in big towns such as Nairobi thus relying on middlemen who purchase the commodity at throw away prices due to its perishable nature," the PDLP added.

Kanyi however noted that her department, as a way of addressing the challenges, had embarked on training farmers on silage and hay making as well as preparation of homemade rations for the animals.

Farmers are also trained on value addition of the dairy products in order to fetch better market prices.

Poultry farming unexploited in Western Kenya

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

MARY Muhonje has been running Mama Sarah Hotel for almost 30 years. The hotel is just a single building which has been extended to cater for more customers with one popular delicacy, "chicken". Mama Sarah hotel patched on the river banks of Nzoia River on the Nairobi-Kampala road, within Webuye town, has a clientele of mostly drawn mainly from the working class. It stands out among other eating joints in Western Kenya in the way they specialize in preparing chicken and Ugali (mixed maize flour).

Muhonje who runs the joint with other family members says that apart from the unique way of preparing food, they only cook indigenous chicken. "Our local chicken meal is very delicious, and this is the reason why our customers come back to taste it again," she says. They are never short of the supply of indigenous chicken, because they are sourced from local farmers, who breed them using locally available resources. Poultry farmers in Western Kenya pay special attention when it comes to chicken farming which serves as a staple delicacy for the residents and thus the market is readily available.

Indigenous chicken farming in Kenya dominates poultry farming in the country, with an estimated 90 per cent of the population keeping small flocks. Commercialization of poultry farming in rural Kenya is likely to unlock poverty that is synonymous with most households. This type of farming is very flexible and requires very little space besides the readily available market.

The prices of eggs and chicken are

very affordable even to low income earners, with average production per each chicken being about 40 – 100 eggs per year. Each egg costs, 8-12 Kenya shillings, with chicken meat weighing 1.3 – 1.8 Kg for Kshs.500-600. Muhonje who has earned valuable experience in the business says, "Chicken is becoming expensive especially during festive seasons".

During holidays, and festive seasons, chicken prices shoot up, yet production of indigenous chickens is very low because of the genotype. Mr. Francis Lubumbu, the Livestock extension officer for Bungoma East district says farmers are to blame for the low production in the sector.

Currently he laments that the chickens are reared using indigenous knowledge leaving the birds on their own, to scavenge for food during the day, in addition to keeping them in very poor environment.

The chicken mainly feed on insects, grass, vegetation, scattered seeds either from maize, millet or sorghum, with owners hardly paying attention to the feeding program, he says. Indigenous chicken production in Kenya is a lucrative investment, but its potential has not been fully exploited both by farmers and policy makers.

Farmers only increase production during the months of May and June when there is plenty of food. "In the periods of May through to March, when there is plenty of food for majority of the households, grains are cheaply available, with kitchen leftovers, and thus chicken population do increase", he explained.

The production trend of poultry in Bungoma East district indicates that estimated 1.6million eggs of indig-

enous chicken were realized in 2011, which amounted to Kshs.10.6million.

Basing on the disruptive environment under which they operate, with lack of clear market information, the income could spiral if support becomes consistent," he adds.

Reach The Children, is one organization which has exploited the opportunity to provide communities in Western Kenya with chickens. Under the chicken rearing program, a few individuals are given five chickens each. The farmers then give out five chickens to the next group of beneficiaries after they hatch. Beneficiaries have to belong to a group, with the ultimate aim being that each member of the group is to benefit from the program.

The advantages of the program is that chicken rearing plays a big role in poverty eradication at the community level, opens opportunity for self-employment, as beneficiaries become self-reliant and responsible people.

The organisation says the project has reduced cases of social ills, especially theft, because members of the community join groups for benefit.

Beneficiaries now lead quality life for and are able to produce organic food and earn income. The project has helped to promote harmony among the members who interact in group meetings and share farm inputs in a rotational manner. Phillip Akondo, a member of SHIEBU community based organization is a beneficiary of the program. Reach The Children gave his group 100 chicken in 2008, which were given to 20 families.

Akondo says, "people earn a better living as they increase the number of chicken they own and find a bigger market for the sale of their chicken



products". He is of the opinion that, income from chicken rearing is enough only when farmers supplement their income with other sources.

Most of the people he adds practice mixed farming, which means that they keep several animals and plant crops besides chicken farming.

Lubumbu on his part has reservation on the project, saying, "We meet this people in conferences where they claim to be reaching out to farmers, yet they do not have any measurable indicator of their impact", he complains. He says key players in the promotion of improved chicken production have to develop a meaningful working relationship.

He admits that as much as donors fund such organizations, the impact is very little and requires government intervention. The greater problem, Lubumbu laments is when it comes to implementation of such projects, without measurable indicators to justify the funding. Poultry farming at large requires skills and knowledge, for it to be undertaken, where it in-

volves commercialization.

Farmers need to understand the importance of providing better housing for their chickens and adequate infrastructure and veterinary services.

They also have to acquire basic training and experience in broiler/layer keeping, management of poultry diseases, prevention and control and marketing. Cost implications of facilities also can affect as they have to identify immediate requirements of poultry farming, long term expansion plans and contacting relevant suppliers on time. Lubumbu at the same times calls on key players to assist small scale famers to get the requirements for poultry farming at cheaper rates. The middlemen he says, demoralizes farmers, as they deliver feeds, incubators or any equipment's at higher prices and buy the chicken at lower prices, in effect robbing them.

He admits that there is need to encourage and facilitate capacity building among farmers organizations to take up regulatory roles, which should include inspection and quality.

NIB funds Sisenye irrigation scheme in Bunyala

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE National Irrigation Board has earmarked a total of Ksh80 million to oversee the construction of Sisenye Irrigation Scheme in Bunyala.

The project seeks to harness the waters of Lake Victoria in order to promote farming activities in the region.

Addressing stakeholders at Sisenye village after the official launch of the project recently, a senior official from the National Irrigation Board, Daniel Atula who represented the General Manager, Eng Daniel Baraza said the project is a great relief to the people of Sisenye and Budalangi at large.

"The project when completed will go a long way in ensuring the availability of adequate food both for local consumption and marketing hence generating a lot of income to the local community," said the regional manager, adding that the project is long overdue. He said Bunyala district is the first district nationally to draw water directly from Lake Victoria for irrigation.

The project component include the installation of four water pumps with a capacity of 300 litres each, the construction of a 1.2kilometre main and branch pipeline, the construction and lining of a 4.75kilometre main secondary canals and the construction of water control and distribution structures.

The project will cover an area of 600hectares and will serve a hundred household with an average farm area of 2.5hectares.

The board's regional manager in charge of Western Province Laban Kiplagat on his part said the board's main objective is to ensure the region becomes food secure by 2030.

We want to ensure there is adequate food in the region by 2030," said the regional officer, adding that western province has a lot of potential.

He however assured the residents of Sisenye that the project will not interfere with any human settlement.

The area Member of Parliament Ababu Namwamba who launched the project officially on his part lauded the board for funding the project which was initiated 31 years ago by the former area MP the late Peter Habenga Okondo but never saw light of day.

Ababu added that the project will help transform people's livelihoods in Bunyala who he noted have suffered a lot due to perennial flooding of River



Irrigation scheme: A total of Ksh80 million is earmarked to oversee the construction of Sisenye Irrigation Scheme in Bunyala. Photo/File

Nzoia.

"The irrigation project will empower the people of Budalangi to be self reliant in food production and also save them from perennial flooding from River Nzoia," he said, adding that it will address high level of poverty in the area.

The area MP at the same time said Agricultural Finance Corporation will open a branch office at Port Victoria with the aim of helping the farmers to acquire loan facilities that will enable them to actively participate in farming activities.

Addressing stakeholders as well as local leaders at the same function, the Managing Director of Agricultural Finance Corporation Lucas Messo said the corporation is ready to work closely with rice farmers in the area to help address food insecurity hence making them self-reliant.

Messo said Agricultural Finance Corporation will give rice farmers from Bunyala District a total of Ksh-10million loan to aid in the construc-

tion of a small rice milling plant.

He urged the residents of Budalangi especially the farmers to form and register their groups so that they can be able to apply for loan facilities to promote farming activities in the region.

"I am surprised to note that no farmer from the entire Bunyala district has applied for loan from the Agricultural Finance Corporation. There is no need at all to fear taking loan because no development can take place without a loan," said managing director, adding that those who own big businesses have succeeded due to the loan they had taken from financial institutions.

He added that Budalangi has the potential to feed the entire Western Province due to its proximity to River Nzoia where water can be sourced for irrigation.

The Managing Director at the same time said Budalangi Constituency Development Fund (CDF) committee has agreed to provide them with an of-

fice at the CDF offices where they will be able to process the loan application forms from rice farmers.

"The CDF committee has agreed to give us an office at the Budalangi CDF premises from where we can receive and process loan application forms from rice farmers in the area," said Messo, adding that rice farmers and other traders should take advantage of the gesture and apply for loan.

The area Member of Parliament lauded the agricultural finance corporation for agreeing to open a branch office at Port Victoria town that will serve farmers and other traders from the entire Busia County.

The legislator however appealed to rice farmers who benefit from the loans to repay them promptly to enable them benefit from more loan facilities to promote rice farming.

"I am appealing to you to create a bridge of trust between you and the agricultural finance corporation so that the corporation can continue to provide you with loan," said Ababu.

AFC to fund new rice milling plant in Bunyala

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

AGRICULTURAL Finance Corporation has pledged to give rice farmers from Bunyala District a total of Ksh-10million loan to facilitate the construction of a small rice milling plant.

Addressing stakeholders as well as local leaders at Bumadeya after the official launch of the construction of a grain store in Bunyala recently, the Managing Director of Agricultural Finance Corporation Lucas Messo said the corporation is ready to work closely with rice farmers in the area to help address food insecurity hence making them self-reliant. Messo urged the residents of Budalangi especially

the farmers to form and register their groups so that they can be able to apply for loan facilities to promote farming activities in the region.

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irrigation. The managing director at the same time said Budalangi Constituency Development Fund [CDF] committee has agreed to provide them with an office at the CDF offices in Budalangi where they will be able to process the loan application forms from rice farmers.

"The CDF committee has agreed to give us an office at the Budalangi CDF premises from where we shall be receiving and processing loan application forms from rice farmers in the area," said Messo, adding that rice farmers and other traders should take advantage of the gesture and apply for loan. The area Member of Parliament who also attended the ground

breaking ceremony for the grain depot lauded the agricultural finance corporation for agreeing to open a branch office at Port Victoria town that will serve farmers and other traders from the entire Busia County.

The legislator however appealed to rice farmers who will be given loan to support the corporation by repaying the loan promptly in order to give the corporation the impetus to continue giving them more loan facilities to promote rice farming.

"I am appealing to you to create a bridge of trust between you and the Agricultural Finance Corporation so that the corporation can continue to provide you with loan," said Ababu.

Food prices spike as livestock ones dip in Mbeere

By PETER MUTUKU

FOOD prices have gone up in Mbeere North and Mbeere South districts due to poor harvest during the last season.

Livestock prices on the other hand are going down due to influx of cattle from the neighbouring districts with the price of a three year old bull selling at Ksh9, 000 compared to Sh10, 300 in June.

Cattle prices within mixed farming zones are highest with an average of Ksh11, 500 while marginal mixed livelihood zones have the lowest prices of Ksh7, 500.

The District Steering Group (DSG) attributes the high prices in mixed livelihood zones to the good body condition of cattle in the regions. Goat prices at the Ishiara and Siakago markets have remained constant since June with a medium size goat being going at Ksh2, 900.

An assessment done by the DSG shows that the food prices are increasing by a shilling each month and that the prices might escalate.

A kilogram of maize has increased from Ksh40.5 last month to Ksh41.5 as the demand for the grain increases against a shortage in supply.

The highest prices are being experienced in Gachoka and Siakago divisions where a kilogram is selling at Ksh43 while Mwea Division has the lowest prices at Ksh38 per kilogram. The DSG says that a kilogram of maize normally sells at Ksh28 in August after the farmers have harvested their grains.

Gachoka division has the highest prices with a kilogram selling at Ksh76 while the same is selling at Ksh65 at Evurore division. The beans sell at Ksh63 after harvest during normal years.

Greens grams are fetching the highest price of Ksh60 per kilogram in Gachoka division while and the lowest is Ksh30 in Evurore. Sorghum prices have gone up by Ksh 2 retailing at Ksh40 from Ksh38 per kilogram last month. "The increase in sorghum prices is attributed to poor harvest of the crop experienced within the District. Gachoka and Mwea Divisions have the highest prices with a kilo of sorghum selling at Ksh41 per kilogram," reads part of the report. The prices are the lowest in Evurore where they are selling Ksh36.

Income from crop sales however increased by two percent from 11 to 13 per cent which has been attributed to the impressive sales of green grams which is a major cash crop in the area. The income is however lower than in normal years where it accounts to 25 per cent of the total household income. Livestock income has not varied in two months and it is accounting for two per cent of household income.

Casual labour which has been the main source of income in the two districts fell to 58 per cent of all household incomes compared to last month when it stood at 68 per cent.

"The decline in casual labour income is attributed to the poor or low harvesting experienced in the districts. In a normal year the income accounts for 70 per cent," says the group.

Nyeri institute set to start dairy farming

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

NYERI District Institute on early childhood teachers plans to start dairy farming business.

The college based in Othaya town will start keeping dairy animals for commercial purposes.

Speaking during the 25th graduation ceremony held at Approved School grounds in Othaya town, the college programme officer S.K. Kimani said the institute also plans to engage in poultry and pig rearing.

He said the institute is planning to expand and will hence seek allotment of the adjacent land next to the centre from the Nyeri County Council.

"The institute will start a kitchen garden to help cut on food costs and direct resources to areas that require attention. We shall also develop recreational activities for sports and athletics," he added.

Other proposed projects include the start of internet, printing and photocopy services and the income will assist in maintaining the machines and buying raw materials for the institute.

"We spend a lot of money on salaries for non-teaching staff, maintenance and water bills, consumables, teaching



Some of the granduads during the 25th Nyeri Diocese graduation ceremony in Othaya.
Photo/ Joseph Mukubwa

materials and municipal rates. To reduce these expenses on the above, the institute will start income generating projects," he said.

During the graduation ceremony, 135 granduads were

awarded with certificates and diplomas.

Nyeri South DEO Jackson Kaberia was the chief guest during the occasion.

The institute which was started 25 years ago has suc-

cessfully trained pre - school teachers for the last 25 years and over 5,000 teachers have been awarded certificates in Early Childhood Education from the ministry of Education and KNEC.

Western leaders protest over rampant cane poaching

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

LEADERS from Western province are up in arms against West Kenya Sugar Company over its alleged involvement in sugarcane poaching in the region.

The leaders say the vice has triggered widespread anger among local residents who recently gave the government a seven day ultimatum to resolve the crisis.

The leaders led by Orange Democratic Movement youth leader, Rashid Mohammed, say that the sugar industry is faced with imminent collapse unless the government intervenes to stop West Kenya from poaching sugarcane belonging to the farmers who had been contracted by other sugar companies in the region.

The leaders said cane poaching has completely crippled investments in cane development in the province since most sugar companies are now unwilling to invest in sugarcane development.

"We are very much aware that out of the three companies whose sugarcane is being poached, Mumias Sugar Company is being targeted deliberately to ensure its collapse despite the fact it is the only successful sugar company in the country since its inception in 1976," said the leaders.

"We are not going to sit down and watch as strong companies like Mumias Sugar, Nzoia Sugar, Pan Paper Mills in Webuye and Butali sugar companies collapse due to cane poaching by West Kenya Sugar Company," said Mohammed.

The leaders from Kakamega, Busia and Bungoma Counties had earlier given West Kenya Sugar a notice to stop cane poaching or else they would mobilize people from the entire province to destabilize its operations in the area.

"We are not only going to block these key transport routes, but we are also going to block any entry or exit points to its factory. We are going to

completely paralyze its operations. It will not be business as usual for West Kenya Sugar Company," said the leaders, adding that cane farmers in the region have invested heavily in cane farming as their only source livelihood.

The leaders at the same time warned that they will paralyze West Kenya Sugar company's weighbridge based at Tangakona in Nambale which they alleged is playing key role in poaching cane from farmers who had been contracted to supply their cane to Mumias Sugar Company. "Unless West Kenya Sugar Company ceases to poach our cane, we will have no alternative but to paralyze the company's weighbridge based at Tangakona completely which they use to poach our cane," they warned.

Western Development Initiative Association Vice Chairman Joseph Barasa said Busia County alone has about 15,000 hectares of viable land that is not yet under cane which he noted

required heavy investments in sugarcane development to increase production.

"If West Kenya Sugar Company is serious in investing in sugarcane, why has it failed to invest in cane development in this area instead of poaching cane belonging to Mumias Sugar Company?" he asked. Hundreds of Busia county residents recently staged peaceful demonstrations to protest against cane poaching. They were attacked by hired goons armed with crude weapons as police stood watching without intervening.

Following the incident Barasa escaped death narrowly when his hotel room was attacked at night by unknown people believed to have been hired to kill him but fortunately the attackers missed him since he was not in his hotel room at the time of the attack. However, police confirmed the incident saying they had already launched investigations to arrest those behind the attack.

Water projects provides reprieve to Kieni farmers

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

RESIDENTS of Kieni East District are all smiles following the completion of Ksh11.3 million irrigation project, which now supplies them with piped water for irrigation and domestic purposes.

The residents of Thirigitu location have access to water all year round following the construction of water tank within the project area with capacity to hold 225,000 litres of water.

However, the residents want the government to construct a dam across River Nairobi to provide them with enough water for irrigation.

Ngogithi water project chairman Yustus Matu asked the government to construct a water storage facility at the River Nairobi to ensure sustainability of the venture.

"The government should construct mega dams to harvest rain water so that we can continue irrigating our farms during the dry weather," he said.

Farmers also want the project commercialized by distributing water to neighboring sub locations to earn them income. "We now irrigate our farms and this has improved food and pasture security and we now sell our surplus food to the local market," said Zavelia Gachambi.

They said they need more water for fish farming where the 20 members of Mathina Cross Section Self-help group have set a pond as a pilot project.

The Safaricom foundation and ActionAid funded the project to the tune of Ksh8.1 and Ksh2 million respectively with the Nyeri constituency development Fund and municipal council giving less than a million each.

"A few years ago there was sheer poverty in this dry area which had been forgotten because it is in the middle of a productive region," said ActionAid head of programs Evelyn Samba.

She called on the government to come up with a comprehensive way of resolving food security saying that it should look for right investments to change the lives of the poor.

About 300 households benefited from the project and they are able to access clean piped water for domestic use. "We have been able to access quality water at our doorsteps in the last one year and we do not have to travel long distances in search of water," said Ms Gachambi.

The farmers have been able to convert the once dry region into an agriculturally productive zone where they grow various kinds of foodstuffs.

Ms Gachambi said cases of domestic violence have gone down due to economic empowerment through agriculture.

ASALs targeted for large scale farming

By HENRY OWINO

THE best way to ensure food security in the country is to have more farmers in rural areas engage in large scale, mechanized agriculture and to promote resilience to drought in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs).

This could be achieved through application of modern farming technologies to supplement the production of crops that greatly rely on rainfall with emphasis on crops that can withstand prolonged periods of dry spells.

Agriculture PS Romano Kiome cautioned that relying on relief food is counterproductive and leads to food insecurity and hunger.

Kiome said in Kenya, most farming activities take place in the rural areas especially Rift Valley and Western regions with majority of the farmers depending on rain-fed system of agriculture. He explained that in dry areas such as parts of Eastern and North Eastern provinces, agriculture is seen as impossible and the residents are left to depend on relief foods from government, well wishers and donors.

The PS made the remarks at the KARI, Kiboko Station in Makueni County during the launch of the Kenya Rural Development Programme in the region under the Ministry of Northern Kenya and Arid regions. This initiative seeks to revive the drought management initiative which is also instrumental in ensuring food security in the country.

Kiome stated that today things are changing and it is surprising to see places like Turkana leading in irrigated food production and other dry areas which were perceived as dependant of relief food.

“Depending on relief foods cannot sustain any population but continues to hamper the economy of a country as government spends thousands of its resources to feed its people,” Romano advised adding that the resources could be channeled towards the development of infrastructure to ease transportation of agricultural products, training of more agricultural extension officers among others,” he added.

He said that the European Union under the Kenya Rural Development Programme (KRDP) plans to support Kenyan farmers through the Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands (MDNKOAL).

“The main aim of this project is to strengthen agricultural institutions’ capacity to manage crops grown in drought stricken areas and improve food security and livelihoods in the ASAL regions. The programme was rolled out during the 2011/2012



Maize plantation: To ensure food security in the country is to have more farmers in rural areas engage in large scale.

financial year with a budget of Euro 11million,” Kiome revealed.

The project activities are a continuation of the former European Commission project which is jointly funded by the Government and the European Union under the Kenya Rural Development Programme (KRDP) ASAL Agricultural Productivity Research Project (APRP).

The project is also supporting the institutional building of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), which was established under the State Corporations Act Cap 446 in November 2011.

The NDMA is therefore responsible for general supervision and coordination over matters relating to drought management. It will be the principal instrument of government in the implementation of policies relating to drought management.

According to Mohamed Elmi, the Minister for Northern Kenya and Arid regions, the overall objective of the KRDP will be to contribute to improved food security in Kenya, with the purpose being, to increase productivity and efficiency of food systems.

He added that the results will be built on lessons learnt from previous projects and will integrate specific actions aimed at increasing the connection of farmers to commercial services.

“The KRDP is an agricultural sector-wide programme which will complement and integrate into other actions financed by Government and Development

Partners within the framework of Agricultural Sector Development Strategy (ASDS)”, the Minister explained.

Hon Elmi revealed that the European Union has funded KRDP to the tune of 66 million Euros for projects set for implementation over the next four years thus 2012-2016.

“I would like to thank the delegation for attending the launch and the funds provided by European Union to our institutions to expand agriculture sector. I believe in Kenyan’s growth and development, as outlined in Vision 2030,” Elmi

said.

The Minister revealed that the project is being implemented jointly by Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Livestock Development, Ministry of State for Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands, in conjunction with national organizations such as Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Coffee Research Foundation and international organizations such as Food and Agriculture Organization and International Livestock Research Institute.

Hon Elmi emphasized that

Agriculture is the economic backbone of the country and dryland farming and pastoralism both have much to offer. He however noted that arid areas lag behind compared to other parts of the country due to lack of basic building blocks for the drought affected communities.

“If there are no roads, pastoralists cannot bring their livestock to market in a healthy condition. Again if there is no literacy, farmers cannot make best use of the training or credit on offer and if there is no peace, nothing will flourish,” the Minister noted.



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Toxic chemicals threat to health, environment

By HENRY OWINO

THE emission of toxic chemicals into the environment continues to affect the atmosphere, water, soil and wildlife.

Chemical released to the air can act as air pollutants as well as greenhouse gases which deplete the ozone layer and contribute to acid rain formation. Chemicals can contaminate water resources through direct discharges to water bodies, or via deposition of air contaminants to water.

This contamination can have adverse effects on aquatic organisms, including fish, and on the availability of water resources for drinking, bathing and other activities.

Dumping of waste, spills from industrial or waste facilities, mining activities, contaminated water, or pesticides can lead to soil pollution.

This in turn causes loss of ag-

ricultural productivity, contamination of food crops grown on polluted soil, adverse effects on soil microorganisms, and human exposure either through food or through direct exposure to contaminated soil or dust.

Persistent and bio-accumulative chemicals are found as widespread contaminants in wildlife, especially those that are high in the food chain. Some of these chemicals cause cancers, leads to a dysfunctional immune system and reproductive disorders in wildlife.

These sentiments were made by Moukaila Goumandakoye, the Director, UNEP Regional Office for Africa during the United Nations Environment Programme Conference held at UN headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

Mr. Moukaila pointed out that Dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are among the



Hip of garbage in one of the dumping sites in Nairobi.

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Suspicion rife ahead of the Elections

By FAITH MUIRURI

MARCH 4, 2013 offers another exciting opportunity for Kenyans to exercise their democratic rights by casting their votes to pick new crop of leaders.

But for Pastor Sammy Mbugua, it is a cause for worry because most political contests in the country have culminated in violence, which leave behind a trail of deaths and destruction of property.

Most notably, the disputed 2007 presidential elections led to two months of widespread violence during which approximately 1,000 Kenyans died and 350,000 were internally displaced. These two months also dispelled the long-standing image of Kenya as a bastion of stability in a regional sea of volatility.

Pastor Mbugua who is currently engaged in peace initiatives under the Shalom Relief Organization in Uasin Gishu County says that suspicion still remains rife in hotspot areas as communities rush to lay their stake ahead of the elections.

The cleric cites unresolved historical injustices among factors that are likely to revolt into conflict ahead of the elections. He says that the warring communities have continued to grapple with the question of land injustices, inequitable distribution of resources and devolution.

"At the moment, devolution presents a major challenge with dominant communities insisting that they will not allow minorities to vie for leadership positions," he explains during a National Conference on peaceful elections held at the Bomas of Kenya recently.

He says that although leaders in Nakuru County have agreed to share positions amongst all ethnic communities represented in the area, their counterparts in Uasin Gishu County are still engrained in political posturing with clear indications to lock out minority tribes.



Post election violence: Kenyans should exercise their democratic rights by casting their votes to pick new leaders. Photo/File

Gaps

He further says that the Government has not been very keen on peace initiatives at the grassroots level and has concentrated mainly on conflict management and failed to incorporate a scenario where they ensure people live harmoniously.

"People have not integrated well," he says adding that perpetrators of many crimes committed during the 2007 Post Election Violence (PEV) have not been brought to account. Indeed, a recent Human Rights Watch report indicated that only two convictions have resulted from the more than 1,000 killings committed during the PEV.

He says the resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) has been characterised by corruption and a general lack of transparency. He says the Kalenjien community feels that the exercise only favoured their rivals while they were left out in compensation packages because they had been

integrated in the community.

"There is feeling that the government has imported IDPs from outside the County to come and occupy their farms," he reveals adding that much more work and support for victims is needed as many of the IDPs remain in temporary camps.

Conflict triggers

The International Criminal Court's (ICC) interventions are also bound to trigger conflict in the area. Two of the four Kenyans charged with responsibility for the PEV are presidential aspirants and come from ethnic groups that have dominated this highest office – Uhuru Kenyatta, Deputy Prime Minister and son of Kenya's first President, and a former Cabinet minister, William Ruto.

Pastor Mbugua says that the ICC's intervention has become highly politicised, with some local leaders terming the prosecutions as attacks on their own communities, and attempts

to eliminate specific candidates from the presidential election. "These seeds of discontent, if not carefully managed, could erupt into violence," he explains.

Insecurity, he notes, also presents a challenge. "Some prominent people in the County have been victims of criminal attacks with some being killed in what police have termed as acts of thuggery but which in some quotas have taken an ethnic inclination.

Clashes

Pastor Mbugua recounts that in 1992 he was uprooted from his farm just two months before the elections. "I lost everything during the 1992 land clashes in Rift Valley. Our houses were burnt and property destroyed," he adds.

During the 2007 he says he was lucky that he had relocated to Huruma estate in Eldoret East Constituency when the violence erupted. "I was

however forced to seek refuge at the nearby police station until calm was restored in the area.

The peace crusader says that all his relatives who were residing in Ng'arua forest lost everything during the violence. "They were rendered homeless after their houses were flattened at the height of skirmishes," he adds.

Moved by their plight, he started mobilizing resources from well wishers to help people who had been ejected from their farms.

Breakthrough

"I found myself offering psychosocial support to people who had lost their relatives and children missing as they fled from the volatile area.

This served as a platform to hone my skills as a peace crusader, which culminated in the formation of peace committees. "The counseling sessions served as my stepping stone and I played a critical role in the formation of peace committees which helped to end hostilities in the area," he explains. Under the peace committees, the affected people were urged to forget the past, forgive their neighbours and soldier on.

He was also instrumental to the formation of Kalenjien Council of Elders chaired by Major John Seii and the Kikuyu Elders for Peace Initiative led by Albert Githuka which helped to reconcile the warring communities.

Resettlement

Pastor Mbugua also played a pertinent role in prevailing upon the residents to go back to their farms during the government sponsored "Operation Rudi Nyumbani" in 2008.

"With support from IOM, USAID and Red Cross we encouraged people to go back to their farms. This led to cessation of hostilities and people eventually started interacting and agreed to go back to their farms despite earlier resistant.

He currently seats as a member of the County Peace Committee.

By BOB OMBATI

KISII level five Medical superintendents, Dr. Geoffrey Otomu has decried the high rates of fistula disease among women in the region, saying that majority arise from complications at childbirth.

He says that 100 percent of fistula cases were caused by prolonged labour pains, stressing that the hospital management was collaborating with community health workers to create awareness to help reduce cases of fistula.

Dr Otomu notes that cases of fistula were rampant because victims suffered silently, adding that in some cases, women were chased away from their matrimonial homes thus lowering their dignity.

The medical superintendent at the same time urged women to deliver in hospitals to enable them access proper medication in case of complications that arise at childbirth.

He says that some women shy away from hospitals and prefer delivering at home in unhygienic conditions citing prohibitive costs.

Otomu who spoke during a free medical camp urged affected women to seek early treatment to avoid complications.

He lauded Africa Medical Research Foundation (Amref) Medical team and the hospital's management for screening and treating the patients drawn from Western, Rift valley and Nyanza regions, noting it had helped restore the dignity of the women.

The medical superintendent said the exercise was jointly funded by the Foundation and the Hospital to the tune Ksh. 0.5 million, adding that since 2009, over 200 patients had been treated and their dignity restored.

Kisii records high fistula cases

Otomu, who was flanked by Amref's team leader, Dr. Khisa Wakasiaka said that the hospital had intensified screening for cervical, breast and prostate cancer to help in early detection and prompt intervention.

He challenged residents to acquire the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) Cards to enable them enjoy subsidized medical care in case they fall ill.

"Pregnant women can get the NHIF Cards and deliver at the hospital at a minimum cost. It is risky to deliver at home since there are no experts to handle complications that may arise at childbirth," said Otomu.

He said the facility has embraced a five year strategic plan that is estimated to cost of Ksh. 0.9 billion. Among activities earmarked during the five years include awareness campaigns on various diseases, treatment and service delivery, noting that all stakeholders have been brought on board.

Rebecca Wanjiku, aged 62 was among the women who benefitted from the treatment. She said she has been suffering since 1967, adding she had bore 10 children and all died at birth due to complications.

Wanjiku, a resident of Busia told The Link lauded Amref

and Kisii level five hospital for the treatment, adding that it had restored her dignity and confidence in life.

Norah Nyaboke, an orphan aged 23 and a mother of three said she was diagnosed with the condition after she gave birth to her third born child.

Nyaboke who hails from Nyamarambe in Kisii county says she has had to contend with ridicule by her peers but she is now happy following the corrective surgery.

Dr. Wakasiaka says that fistula occurs when vaginal and surrounding tissues are damaged at childbirth.



A fistula patient in a hospital bed. The disease arise from complications at childbirth.

Hawkers arrested for flouting Public Health Act

By PETER MUTUKU

MORE than 20 hawkers have been arrested for flouting a ban to sell unchecked foodstuff in Embu town.

The hawkers were arrested in the streets where they had been operating illegally and in unhygienic conditions.

The acting DC Daniel Obudo says the ban on selling unchecked foodstuff within the town still stands as it exposes residents to diseases.

"The 22 hawkers were arrested by public health officers for preparing and selling unchecked foodstuffs contrary to Caps 242 and 252 of the public health Act," said the DC.

Mr Obudo said the vendors will be charged in court adding that food hawking in the streets remains banned and that those selling it are contravening the law adding that they are not trained to handle food.

Residents have been complaining that hawkers sell cooked rice packed in plastic paper bags which they sell for as little as Ksh10 adding that hotel owners collude with the hawkers to sell their leftovers.

"The hawkers have been getting leftover foodstuffs from hotels, wrapping it in polythene bags and selling it to unsuspecting residents," said the DC.

The administrator said hawkers must follow public health regulations when handling food and any other eateries.

Boiled egg sellers have been the most notorious and have been collecting rejected tomatoes from the market which they offer to their customers as Kachumbari after lacing it with pepper.

The DC called on the residents to be more careful when buying foodstuff from peddlers adding that the ministry will revoke licenses of hotels that colude to sell their left over foods.

"We will not allow this trade to continue as we fear it could lead to an outbreak of cholera or typhoid as the foodstuffs are prepared in unhygienic conditions," said Mr Obudo.

Food hawking has mushroomed in the town with peddlers trading in boiled eggs, milk, yoghurt, samosas and milk.

Recently public health officers outlawed selling of milk in plastic paper bags after traders started recycling the papers.

The district public health officer said it was a recipe for communicable diseases adding that it would not be allowed.

The peddlers were also accused of adding water to their milk hence fleecing unsuspecting customers.

Use of jerry cans to transport the commodity was banned and the traders use aluminum jars which are easy to clean.

Nema reads riots Act to towns over sewers

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

THE environment watchdog has raised concern over the deplorable state of sewerage systems in major towns saying raw waste is being discharged into the environment.

The National Environment Management Authority (Nema) says most towns do not have proper sewerage systems and that residents are exposed to raw effluent.

The director in charge of environment education and public awareness Ayub Macharia said some towns do not have sewerage systems and others lack infrastructure.

"Some towns like Othaya do not have sewerage infrastructure and residents are not connected to the system while others like Karatina pump the waste into rivers," said Mr Macharia.

Karatina residents have been complaining to Nema that they cannot use the water from

nearby rivers because they are contaminated with raw sewage where the Karatina Water and Sewerage Company discharges raw waste.

Speaking to The Link on the sidelines of a meeting between Nema and water and sewerage providers from central region Mr Macharia said most companies do not have waste discharge licenses.

The environment watchdog issues waste discharge licenses to sewerage companies that clean their wastes in ponds before discharging to the environment to avoid pollution.

"We want the water companies to have a single discharge point and not scatter them to allow us to monitor them," said the director adding that some towns use exhausters to pick the wastes and pour it into farms.

The Nyeri Water and Sewerage Company's is compensating fish farmers who suffered losses after its sewerage pipe burst dis-

charging effluent into six ponds.

Mr Macharia said water and sewerage companies that allow industries to discharge into their system can cause serious poisoning when it ends up in farms.

Nema fines Ksh350, 000 to companies that discharge industrial waste into the environment but the director said the companies lack capacity to restore the poisoned ecosystem.

He said Nema is conducting surveillance and warned companies that discharge their waste into the environment of prosecution.

"If we or a member of the public decides to take to court a company discharging industrial wastes into the environment, the said company will now be forced to import experts on environmental restoration because we do not have them in the country," he said

Mr Macharia noted that the exercise would cost the company a lot of money saying that

environmental restoration after industrial poisoning takes a long time.

The Tana Water Services Board recently said it has secured some cash to put up new sewerage systems in some towns. The director said Eldoret town which is expanding its infrastructure has the best managed sewerage system in the country.

"The water and sewerage companies must ensure they comply with the law and audit their old systems so that Nema can understand how they are faring," he said.

Companies wishing to install new sewerage systems are required to conduct an Environment Impact Assessment first.

The environment watchdog is meeting water service providers from Central, Nairobi and Eastern provinces this year after conducting similar meetings in Nyanza, Coast, Western, North and South Rift last year.

Clerics call for revival of Ufungamano Peace talks

By HENRY OWINO

THE Inter-religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) wants the government to reconvene the Ufungamano initiative to discuss viable options to restore peace in the country.

They said the first Ufungamano initiative bore much fruit and cited the promulgation of the constitution.

The religious leaders cautioned that if the violence being experienced in some parts of the country is not contained now, it is likely to spill over to other regions during and after general elections.

The religious leaders said that the country is likely to witness conflicts as the highly anticipated county governments take shape in different parts of the country. They said some politicians are focusing on resources in their respective areas and thus are unhappy with the new boundaries created by Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC).

The clerics further blame the violence in Tana Delta to incitement by local leaders fighting for supremacy over the county.

The clerics expressed the sentiments at a consultative meeting in Nairobi where they met civil society leaders to gear up for peace initiative ahead of 2013 general elections and beyond. The aim of the meeting was to combine efforts and ideas that could lead to a lasting solution to peaceful Kenya now and beyond elections.

Regions which have experienced violence in the recent past include Mandera, Isiolo, Mombasa, Garissa and Tana Delta which had a shocking sequential of attacks followed by massacres.

They refuted claims that the violence is between Christians and

Muslims and denounced any bad blood between the two religious groupings saying the past few conflicts should not divide them.

According to Francis Kuria, the acts violence must be dealt with urgently before we can even talk about the general elections. He said the country is likely to polarize as elections draw nearer and different ethnic groups mobilize support for their tribal chieftains.

Kuria at the same time called on the government to lift the ban on the issuance of national identification cards (IDs) in North Eastern region by the Minister of Immigration.

He says the move was seen as discrimination against the Muslim

community who are the majority residents. He added that the suspension of IDs did not auger well for Muslims community in the country and it might be the genesis of the Christians and Muslims conflicts in Garissa.

"Religious leaders should be in the forefront of putting sanity in the country since 95 per cent of the population is religious. Why then should we witness such acts of violence in the country?" Kuria posed.

Mustafa Ali noted that there are some factual accounts of extra-judicial killings by police and forced disappearances during 2007/2008 post election violence which now make the police force reluctant to

act, in fear that they may dragged to Hague as happened to the former Police Commissioner Mohammed Ali.

"For instance most police officers exercised restraint in Tana Delta where innocent civilians were massacred together with eight policemen," observed Mustafa.

Archbishop David M. Gitari said that the credibility of religious leaders has also come under scrutiny owing to the unpopular stand they took during the 2010 Referendum on Constitution of Kenya.

Archbishop Gitari said religious leaders are not regarded anymore adding that it is wrong to expect them to accept everything that is proposed or suggested by the State.

"Religious leaders have their rights too and can either accept or oppose proposals brought before them. They are also Kenyans just like political leaders are Kenyans," Gitari said.

The Archbishop supported the idea of reviving the Ufungamano consultative meetings terming them as proactive proceedings where different groups of people interact with each other.

According to Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome, there is a breakdown in communication where religious leaders appear to speak at each other rather than speaking to each other as recommended. He suggested that there is a need to bring back the Ufungamano meetings and engage Prof Kibutha Kibwana, Mutava Musyimi among others.

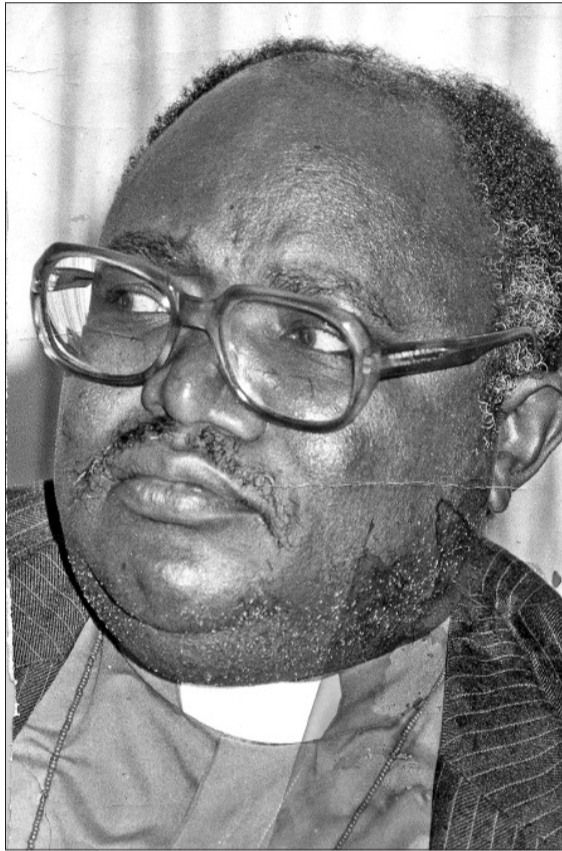
Sheikh Lethome said as Muslims leaders, they do talk to each other to understand what other religions think about them and this has helped to resolve several religious disputes.

He underscored the need to revive Ufungamano peace talk initiative before the next general elections.

"We need to bring back Ufungamano and call it Ufungamano II for peace and cohesion. It was during consultative meetings that we managed to agree on contentious issues in the drafted this Constitution and today we have the second best Constitution in the world after the American one," suggested Sheikh Lethome.

Sheikh Abdullah Ali was mandated with responsibility of coordinating peace talks between Muslims and Christians.

Abdullah said that the clergy must move swiftly to stem any religious conflicts and promote peaceful coexistence among their faithful.



Archbishop Gitari



Mr. Mutava Musyimi

Toxic chemicals threat to health, environment

From Page 28

chemicals that have been taken to reduce the presence of these contaminants in the environment, others have taken their place. For example, he explained while levels of dioxins and PCBs in wildlife have gradually decreased in most areas, levels of brominated flame retardants and perfluorinated compounds have increased.

"Some halogenated organic compounds have been identified as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants," Moukaila said. "For instance; the first chemicals listed as POPs under the Stockholm Convention were; aldrin, chlordane and DDT among others."

"I would like to let you know that environmental effects of the chemical intensification of the national economies are further compounded by the trans-boundary movement of chemicals through air or water," stated Mr. Moukaila, the Director, UNEP Regional Of-

fice for Africa.

"Throughout the globe, atmospheric air currents deliver chemicals pollutants which originate from sources some thousands of kilometres away. As this chemicals intensity increases, the prospects for widespread and multifaceted exposures of humans and the environment to chemicals of high and unknown concern also arise," he said.

The Director, UNEP Regional Office for Africa observed that each chemicals intensification factor contributes to a small share of the environmental burden of each country and nation state. He cautioned if combined, these together can form an increasingly significant and complex overall mix of chemicals which were not present fifty years ago.

The conference noted that out of the thousands of chemicals in the market, only a fraction has been evaluated thoroughly to determine their effects on human health and environment. Real life expo-

sures are rarely limited to a single chemical and very little information is available on the health and environmental effects of chemical mixtures.

Nevertheless, many of these chemicals in widespread use have been associated with well-established risks to human health and the environment. For instance, exposure to toxic chemicals can cause or contribute to a broad range of health outcomes.

Some of these health hazards include: eye, skin and respiratory irritation; damage to vital body organs such as the brain, lungs, liver or kidneys; damage to the immune, respiratory, cardiovascular, nervous, reproductive or endocrine systems; and birth defects and chronic diseases, such as cancer, asthma, or diabetes.

The vulnerability and effects of exposure are much greater for children, pregnant women and other vulnerable groups. Workers in industries using chemicals are especially vulnerable through ex-

posure to toxic chemicals and related health effects.

The diseases include: increased cancer rates in workers in electronics facilities; high blood lead levels among workers at lead-acid battery manufacturing and recycling plants; flame retardant exposures among workers in electronic waste recycling; mercury poisoning in small-scale gold miners; asbestosis among workers employed in asbestos mining and milling; and acute and chronic pesticide poisoning among workers in agriculture in many countries.

Individuals living in poverty are particularly vulnerable, both because their exposures may be particularly high, and because poor nutrition and other risk factors can increase susceptibility to the effects of toxic exposures. Due to their size, children's responses to small doses of toxic chemicals are disproportionately large compared to adults.

Because their metabolic pathways are immature, children are

also slower to detoxify and excrete many environmental chemicals and thus toxins may remain active in their bodies for longer periods of time.

Research has also made clear that the elderly are among those particularly susceptible to health effects from a range of chemical contaminants. The research undertaken recently in developed countries has indeed led to some detailed information concerning the presence of industrial chemicals in the human body.

While in Sudan especially central Sudan, hospital and community-based control studies revealed a consistent and significant two-fold elevated risk of perinatal mortality associated with pesticide exposure. The risk was over three-fold among women engaged in farming.

Study carried out in 2009 by United States for Disease Control (CDC) found that of 212 chemicals studied, all were detected in some portion of the US population.

Nyaga seeks cheap loans for Saccos

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

COOPERATIVES Minister Joe Nyaga has said that the Ministry of Cooperative Development is seeking international donor agency to provide cheap financial lending to Saccos in the country following high interest rates being charged by banks locally.

He said that the Ministry has decided to seek support from donor agencies to ensure that Saccos access credit at low interest rates for onward lending to members.

"The Cooperatives Ministry will hold an international financial lending next month which is geared towards convincing the donor to lend money to Sacco's whose membership is growing at alarming rate," he added.

He said that although the Sacco's has increased lending rates to members from low of six per cent to 13 per cent they still need cheap financial lending from donors to cope with high demand for loans by Kenyans who have joined Sacco's in order to save.

At the same time, he urged farmers of Central region to stamp out coffee theft menace which has become rampant in the region.

Nyaga said that it is essential for coffee farmers to co-operate with

security forces to stamp out the vice which he said has led to loss of coffee worth millions of shillings in the past one year.

This comes in the wake of rampant

cases of thugs raiding coffee factories where they have stolen coffee berries worth millions of shillings from farms and parchment coffee ready for milling.

He was speaking during this year's

Central Kenya ASK held at Kabiru-ini grounds in Nyeri County.

This year's theme was 'Enhancing Technology in Agriculture and Industry for Food Security and National Growth.'



Cooperatives Minister Joe Nyaga (right) with chairman of Central Kenya ASK show Francis Waithaka during a visit to the show at Kabiru-ini grounds. Photo/ Joseph Mukubwa

Mungiki rise instill fear in matatu operators

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

MATATU operators in Nyeri town have expressed fears over the resurgence of the outlawed Mungiki sect. The operators are now calling upon the police to protect them from the sect members after they started taking over the matatu stages in the evening as from 6 p.m daily especially targeting mostly matatus plying along the Nyeri-Kiganjo - Chaka (Nyekicha) route.

And recently officials of the Nyekicha Sacco led by the chairman Dickson Maina alias Wakabira raised a red flag saying the sect members have been taking over matatu termini as from 6p.m up to late in the night and demanding Ksh 200 per vehicle.

"This utter robbery because as owners of public service vehicles there is nothing left since from Nyeri town to Chaka town the vehicle collects Ksh 500 per trip of which Ksh 200 is for the petrol, after they take the Ksh 200, only Ksh 100 is left which is not even enough to pay the owner, driver and tout," explained the chairman. The Sacco officials are now complaining of harassment by the sect members who are creating fear and despondency. The sect members have started retaliating after the police started controlling them recently.

They have now issued death threats to two top Sacco officials for reporting the matter to the police. One matatu was recently stoned by sect members and its windscreen shattered after they stormed the owner's home and failed to get him in the house.

The official did not sleep at the home after he received warnings during the day that he will be killed. Another official's son was waylaid on the way home and badly beaten after they failed to get him.

And recently, the members overturned the metal made kiosk which is used as an office in the stage in a display of anger.

The officials now want the Government to arrest and charge the group that comprises of eight young men.

Amollo shell-shocked by behavior of civil servants

By LINK CORRESPONDENT

OFFICE of the Ombudsman was recently shocked to find that several government offices in Nyeri town open at 9am.

The commission led by the Chairman Otiende Amollo said that the spot check had established that several government offices do not open at the usual 8a.m in accordance with the Government rules but opens an hour later.

Amollo while accompanied by other commissioners including vice chairperson Saadia Mohamed said that they visited the Lands office in Nyeri which was not opened by 9.30am and the officers were using vernacular language which is discourteous.

"There was misleading notice which

was pinned there two years ago which stated that the office operates from 10 am to 1pm. We were very shocked when the staff told us that they had forgotten to remove the notice two years down the line," said the chairman.

He said some public institutions are characterized by delays, abuse of authority, discourtesy, inefficiency,

corruption, ineptitude, manifest injustice and misbehaviors among others.

He added that the gate of the Nyeri law courts should be opened by 8a.m since those involved must know which court to go to by 9a.m.

The commission has since rolled out the first phase of its nationwide campaign that will see it visiting 11 counties including Garrisa, Ny-

eri, Lodwar, Eldoret, Kisii, Kisumu, Kakamega, Nakuru, Machakos, Mombasa and Kilifi.

The commission was however happy that the provincial police headquarters was acting efficiently and on time. The county visits are aimed at enabling Kenyans to actively participate in democratic and good governance in pursuit of social goods and services.

"Kenyans at the grassroots should demand integrity, responsiveness, transparency, accountability and efficiency from people who have been given an opportunity to serve," said the chairman.

The establishment of the commission was borne out of the endemic institutional and systematic failures in the Kenyan public sector.

Central deputy PC Francis Sila who was present during the visit urged the commission to decentralize their offices since there are many cases in the area mostly land cases.

Sila said lateness and insecurity should not be entertained in the public offices.



From left Commission on Administrative Justice chairman Otiende Amollo, Central Deputy PC Francis Sila and vice chairperson commissioner Saadia Mohamed during the county visit in Nyeri town recently.

Clerics, MPs differ sharply over education Bill

By HENRY OWINO

A GROUP of church leaders have strongly opposed the Basic Education Bill arguing that it does not recognize the role of the clergy in education.

The collar-men said if enacted in its current form, the church was bound to lose their investments in various schools. The leaders said that most schools were situated in land owned by the churches and thus their stake in the education sector cannot be disregarded.

The team of Spiritual leaders was led by Kenya Episcopal Conference chairman John Njue who said the churches are unhappy especially with the composition of the National Education Board and land ownership of schools as contained in Basic Education Bill.

"As sponsors of about a third of schools in Kenya, the churches said they should have fair representation in the selection panel," demanded Cardinal Njue.

Cardinal Njue further claimed that church leaders are not included in the county's education boards. He stated it makes unclear reference to representation of the religious sponsors.

"The Church shall continue to assert its rightful position with all that it appertains to her responsibility as sponsors in various schools," Cardinal Njue emphasized.

Anglican Church of Kenya Archbishop Eliud Wabukhala said the Bill should ensure ownership rights of religious sponsors are recognized and respected as per the Constitution.

Archbishop Wabukhala wondered

why the board does not take into account the church's massive investment in education. He added that most of the church-sponsored schools are on land owned by the church or held in trust by the church for the community.

"Let me make clear here that the church will not surrender its land on which our schools are built to the government under any condition," Anglican Church of Kenya Archbishop Eliud Wabukhala said.

They called upon MPs to uphold the Constitution to the letter and spirit while debating on the Bills.

Rev Stephen Kanyaru, the Presiding Bishop of Methodist Church in Kenya said the church should not be victimized for rejecting the Constitution during the referendum.

Agitated Rev Kanyaru said church

leaders were within their rights to oppose the Constitution and besides the supreme law received overwhelming endorsement from their flock.

He urged the MPs to implement it wisely by taking their time to read and understand respective laws rather than hurrying to beat deadlines.

"We are worried with the way in which the new Constitution is being implemented by the current members of parliament. The wish of Kenyans was to have a new Constitution that would ensure the common man is protected and their rights are upheld," Rev Kanyaru said.

Among other church leaders who were present and signed the statement were; the Rt Rev David Riitho Gathanjui who is the moderator of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church

of East African and National Council of Churches of Kenya representative, Rev Charles Kibicho.

The church leaders further urged the government to implement a workable formula for teachers, lecturers and doctors to ensure that the basic right of children to education is not compromised.

Clerics also asked ministries of health and labour to ensure a fair wage for doctors and other workers. The leaders said Kenyans have right to basic health care and should not in any way be violated by strikes.

The leaders urged the government to negotiate with the Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) to avert another strike of workers over the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF) new rates.

Amiran gives hope to Makueni residents

By HENRY OWINO

A HEALTHY family signifies the wellbeing of the entire community in terms of diet and economic status of that particular home mainly reflected in the standards of living.

Poor families tend to suffer from diseases such as marasmus and kwashiorkor while rich families might suffer from obesity or overweight.

The need to address nutritional needs of families is mandatory for proper growth and development. Nutritional research recommends that growing children should eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day that will help protect them from cancer, obesity and various chronic diseases. Unique package of nutrients in plant compounds, found mostly in horticultural crops, contains what the body requires.

Amiran Kenya Limited whose tools are popularly known as Amiran Farmer's Kit (AFK) are now reliable source of such food stuff for most people residing in dry areas. Kathozweni which is situated in Makueni County and considered to be a dusty, dry, deserted land where nothing productive is anticipated, now benefits from the Amiran's projects.

Kathozweni is now leading in production of fresh and healthy agricultural yields thus demystifying the notion that the residents of Makueni County cannot take part in any serious farming. The African Inland Church Children's Homes Department (AIC CHD) of Kathozweni, Makueni County has partnered up with Amiran to boost food production.

The partnership is known as Amiran- AIC Next Generation Farmers Initiative. The aim is to place an Amiran Farmer's Kit in every AIC Child's home across the country. Currently, AIC CHD at Kathozweni hosts a capacity of 300 orphaned children who are taken care of by Amiran.

According to Yariv Kedar, the Amiran Deputy Managing Director, the main aspects of the organization include; provision of educational tools, practical classrooms where the



Yariv Kedar, deputy managing director, Amiran shows Bishop Silas Yego (left) a sample of tomatoe grown under greenhouse. Photo/Henry Owino

children can study greenhouse farming, lessons on drip irrigation, proper seed selection, modern fertigation techniques and agribusiness approach that ends up when the farmers have some money in their pockets.

Additionally, Kedar said the AIC children homes serve as community centers where informative field days are held for the larger communities. Amiran educates them on the business opportunities available through the Amiran Farmer's Kit model.

"Amiran Farmer's Kit (AFK) model has proven already that it is a sustainable way of practicing agribusiness with farmers making an income far higher than their original investment in the AFK and thus makes the

organization real," Kedar asserted.

Kedar explained it is anchored on gravity based drip irrigation system and composed of Global GAP compliant components. He added that the AFK is also green technology which is environmentally friendly and positively impacts global efforts to conserve soil and water.

"The AFK is composed of green house measuring 8 by 15 metres, drip irrigation system covering 1/8 of an acre, water tank, knapsack sprayer of 16 litres, seeds, fertilizers, agro-chemical for one season of crops, personal protective equipment (overall, catridged mask and gloves), training by agriculture teachers and farm managers finally renewable agronomic sup-

port thus Amiran Agronomist visiting farmers projects," Kedar explained.

Amiran deputy managing director emphasized that the company also offers a large and small scale agro-projects using state of the art technology in powering modern irrigation system, climate control and water measuring technologies.

Rev Matthew Okeyo, the Chief Executive Officer, AIC CHD said their mandate has been to provide services to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). He disclosed that the department was initiated in 1975 and opened doors to children in 1976.

Rev Okeyo stated that over the years, the department has provided services to children within two main

programs; institutional childcare (children homes) and the community-based OVC program.

"The program currently supports up to 4000 children in different children homes and 2260 in the community based programs. We have Kathozweni, one at Narok and two at Achege in Muhoroni. We are planning to extend to other parts of the country," said Rev Okeyo. Rev Okeyo said he was excited that the project has continually produced food to meet the nutritional requirements of the children in the residential program.

He however, regretted that the ever rising food prices have made it expensive to provide the required nutrition for all children throughout the year.

Bishop Dr Silas Yego on the other hand, observed that it is possible for agriculture to thrive in arid and semi arid areas like Ukambani region. He said if anybody was in doubt, then they need to visit Amiran projects in Eastern Province especially Makueni County to prove it.

Bishop Yego noted that Amiran Kenya is gradually becoming the preferable agriculture company for many farmers due to its advanced technology. He encouraged farmers in dry areas to embrace the company's modern technology since it offers a wide range of pocket friendly products which include chemicals, fertilizers and seeds.

To add up, the AIC Bishop urged the next government to prioritize food security for the country by adapting to modern agricultural practices.

Mary Katiwa Job is one of the students' beneficiaries at AIC CHD who acknowledges Amiran Kenya Ltd projects. She admits there are plenty of knowledge gains apart from horticulture skills. Currently she is taking Secretarial Course at Wote Technical Training Institute and much of her college fee comes from the AIC-Amiran Initiative Projects.

"It is better to learn how to fish rather than relying on handouts on a daily basis. If the fisherman- teacher dies, no more fish for you. So, Amiran has given us the necessary skills to apply anywhere we go than providing donations which lasts for a short time," Katiwa suggested.

Katiwa said after completing her studies, she would pursue farming as an additional profession since it has a lot of income compared to others careers she has ever thought of in life. She is challenging farmers who use old technology, to embrace Amiran to ensure food security for their families and the country as a whole.

By BOB OMBATI

UNEMPLOYED youths in Kisii County have been challenged to engage in income generating activities to enable them become self reliant.

Gucha South District Youth officer, Charles Ayako laments that most youths in the area rely on their parents for upkeep despite having acquired technical skills from colleges and universities.

Ayako challenges to venture into income generating activities to

Kisii youth tipped on self-reliance

eke out a living instead of remaining idle as they wait to be absorbed in formal employment. The officer lauded their peers who are currently engaging in sugar cane farming but urged them to process molasses and other agricultural products to enable them reap highly from their initiatives.

Addressing youths at Nyamrambe grounds during a workshop to train them on business skills, he noted that

over-reliance on sugarcane had exhausted the soil, reduced cane production and household incomes.

"You should not grow sugarcane in your lifetime. Try to intercrop them with other crops to enrich the soil with nutrients in a bid to boost production" stated Ayako during the training dubbed 'Enhancement, Way forward and harmonization programme'.

He urged the youths to take advan-

tage of soapstone at Tabaka, groundnuts at Etago and sugarcane at Nyamrambe to generate wealth instead of waiting for handouts from politicians in every electioneering year.

The officer noted that majority of youths wallowed in poverty because they lacked skills on modern farming techniques while others were lazy and unwilling to exploit resources within their disposal to generate income.

The youths who were taken through entrepreneurship vowed to venture into alternative farming and business to improve their welfare.

They noted that the devolved system of government offered many opportunities for the youths and thus the need exploit the enormous potential to help hasten economic development.