

Health sector on the brink

By FAITH MUIRURI

Despite glaring needs, budgetary allocations for the ministries remain dismal

DESPITE the expansion of health facilities in the country, provision of health services remains uneven and continues to face a challenge on the basis of geographical distribution.

The scenario is likely to complicate matters for the County Governments that are expected to become operational after the next General Elections.

A report on the sector presented by the PS in the Public Health Ministry Mark Bor reveals that many health facilities in the country are not adequately equipped according to the recommended standards.

The PS cites the many dispensaries that have been constructed under CDF without the corresponding increase in human resource and medical supplies.

Further, the report states that about 108 model health centres have been completed under the Economic Stimulus Project (ESP) with very little to show of the investment.

The PS says that lack of an investment plan for infrastructural development poses challenges related to planning and hence mushrooming of unplanned health facilities.

The report reveals the fact that health spending has remained relatively low as a share of overall Government budget (4.6 percent) and as a proportion of the GDP (5percent) despite the many challenges.



Prof. Anyang' Nyong'o, Minister for Medical Services.

For instance, during the 2008/ 2009 financial year, resource requirement stood at over Kshs 72 billion. However, only Kshs 32 billion was allocated to the sector leaving out a deficit of Kshs40 billion. In the subsequent financial year, the sector had a

Why Ongeru banned forced repeating of classes

By HENRY OWINO

KENYA acumen in numeracy has been ranked highly by the Southern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ)

The country came second after Mauritius with a mean score of 557 out of the 15 SACMEQ countries. However the country's literacy level was ranked at number five with a mean score of 543 behind Tanzania, Seychelles, Mauritius and Swaziland.

The low ranking in literacy behind 4 countries including Tanzania that topped in literacy was largely blamed on the adulteration of basic language by the sheng slung which is common among the youth.

The Minister urged: "Our suspicion is however that adulteration of our Kiswahili and even English where even very senior members of our society including top politicians have turned to talk "Sheng" to endear themselves to the youth. While this has short gains in terms of popularity, it seems to translate itself in drop in quality of our children's performance in both Kiswahili and English. I therefore urge everyone to take note of this damaging effect and do something about it."

Education Minister Prof Sam Ongeru said the SACMEQ III results released in December 2011 however indicated that Kenyan pupils in standard six ranked among the top in literacy and numeracy in the 15 countries in Africa that participated in SACMEQ studies.

He reiterated that the ranking was evident that the quality of education

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projected budget of Kshs 73 billion but managed to get Kshs 43 billion.

During the 20/2011 financial year, the budget requirement was estimated at Kshs 79 billion but the sector only received Kshs 57,376. In the current financial year which ends in June this year, the sector had a projected budget of Kshs 92.6 billion but the government has only managed to allocate Kshs 64.1 billion.

Projections for the 2012/2013 financial year currently stand at Kshs 143 billion. "The overall inadequate funding of the sector has resulted in huge pending bills at the hospitals and compromised access to health services across the country," adds the PS, in a medium term report of the sector.

He says that poverty estimated at 46 percent remains a major access barrier to health services especially by the poor.

The report says that over dependency on donor assistance both in terms of amounts and disbursement had impacted negatively on the subsector, with about 90 percent of the projects in the sector pegging their survival on donors.

The PS says that the situation had hampered budgetary provisions for health products and technologies.

The report says that the situation has been aggravated by inadequacy of key health staff like doctors and nurses (17 doc-

tors per 100,000 population and 153 nurses per 100,000 population); compared to WHO recommended minimum staffing levels of 36 doctors and 356 nurses per 100,000 population.

He says that although 3,866 nurses and 4,800 health workers have been recruited under the ESP package and posted to health centres and dispensaries within the constituencies countrywide, the shortages are still glaring and require immediate attention as the country ushers in the devolved system of government.

He says that regional disparities in the distribution of the existing health workers has complicated the scenario with arid and semi arid areas being disadvantaged due to less staff and predominant urban bias.

The report at the same time points out that research funding has been relegated to the periphery and in some cases research findings have been ignored instead of being translated into policy.

The medium term report recommends that the implementation of the new health policy framework be fast tracked to delink the sector from service delivery.

"This will ensure the sector focuses only on policy, regulation and supervision in line with the new constitution," reads the report.

Health sector on the brink



Health facility in one of the hospitals in Nairobi.

The report also proposes the fast tracking of community health strategy by training more community based health workers on preventive and promotive health care.

It calls for the establishment of a Health Services Commission to allow the sector to focus on policy and regulation.

The report advocates for a review of the existing staffing and infrastructure norms and enforcement to ensure compliance.

The report underscores the need to strengthen the Kenya Medical Supply Agency (KEMSA) to transform it into a strategic procurement agency through automation that links KEMSA and

the facilities.

Further, the report recommends the hiring of additional health workers to cope with increased demand to health services arising from population growth.

It also calls for the training of more public health providers and provide incentives for their retention in public service.

Why Ongeru banned forced repeating of classes

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in Kenya is still above average despite the high enrolment figures registered since the introduction of the Free Primary Education.

Despite the impressive performance in SACMEQ III, the research findings also showed that repetition has had a negative effect on learning progression and

the minister therefore urged head teachers' to stop the practice because it is detrimental.

Prof Ongeru said teachers who forcefully make pupils to repeat classes do them harm than good as research had revealed that most pupils perform much better at younger age than when they are older. Prof Ongeru made the re-

marks when he released the 2011 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) results at the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) headquarters, Mithani House in Nairobi.

The Minister affirmed that through his ministry, the KNEC in collaboration with other stakeholders including donors carried out

several studies that identify learner achievement at the various formative stages so as to put in place interventions to enhance quality education.

Prof Ongeru cited the National Assessment for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) as one of the barometer used to monitor the quality of education.

Kenyan children have a right to education and should be allowed to go through the education cycle without any hindrance. Forcing children to repeat increases their age at the end of the cycle and research findings have shown that children perform poorer when they are older," Prof Ongeru directed.

The research evidence indicates that performance is affected negatively by old age. The older the candidate, the poorer the performance. In 2010 KCPE, the 13 and 14 year olds scored an average of 227.5 and 264.9 respectively while the over-age KCPE children of 19 and 20 years scored an average of 203.11 and 195.57 respectively.

Making children repeat classes and also taking them to school when they are over age (above 14 years) does not therefore add value.

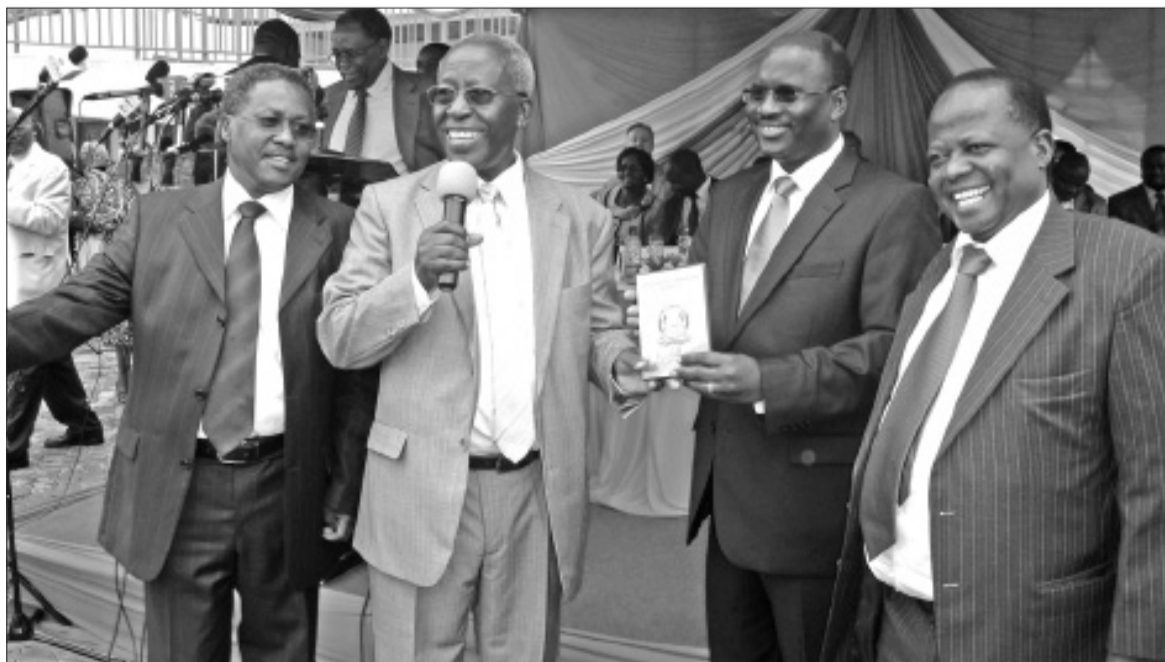
It only makes the performance of the child generally worse.

"I have directed this practice to cease but head teachers do not seem to have taken this seriously. I am therefore asking my Permanent Secretary to take urgent action," Education Minister, Prof Ongeru reiterated.

This fact was attested in some of the worst performing counties such as Tana River, Kwale, Taita Taveta and Kilifi. When the age profile of the 2011 KCPE candidates in the above mentioned counties was analysed, it emerged that they had the highest numbers of overage students at 19 years and above. KCPE candidates with Kilifi and Kwale led the pack with 2,766 and 1,453 over-age candidates respectively in the country.

Parents, teachers and other education stakeholders should therefore take the Ministry of Education directives seriously and stop forcing the children to repeat classes unless otherwise there is need for it and an agreement made between parties involved.

Eyes are now on the KCSE results which are set to be released late in February.



Education Minister Prof. Sam Ongeru and ministry officials shows the compact disc (CD) holding the 2011 KCPE. Photo/Henry Owino

Knut blames poor results on shortage of teacher

By BEKADZO TONDO
and BOB OMBATI

THE Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) in Kilifi County has blamed teacher shortages for the poor performance registered in the last Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams in the area.

The Kilifi County KNUT chairman, Mr. Patrick Rasi, who was flanked by a women's leader in the area Ms Naomi Sidi, accused the government of failing to deploy more teachers in the area despite the glaring shortages that continue to impact negatively on the standards of education.

Mr. Rasi who is also the executive secretary of KNUT Kilifi branch said Kilifi and Ganze districts alone had a shortage of about 1000 teachers in Primary Schools while the Secondary Schools face a shortage of about 130 teachers.

"Acute shortage of teachers in both primary and secondary schools in Kilifi County is to blame for the poor performance registered in Coast province" he adds.

Lamu, Tana Delta, Kilifi, Kwale and Taita Taveta counties were ranked as the lowest performing Counties in the country when Education Minister Prof Sam Ongeri released KCPE results. Ms Sidi however said lack of political support in the education sector had adversely affected the schools performance in the national examinations.

"Our political leaders have not shown their commitment in supporting the education of our children and thus the poor performance," said Sidi.

The leaders further complained that area education offices lacked enough personnel especially from the quality assurance and inspection departments. Mr. Rasi said some schools have been operating for a whole year without being inspected by the school inspectors from the ministry of education, saying this had hampered the better performance.

"The government ought to deploy more quality assurance officers and schools inspectors to intensify inspections and evaluation in the area to ensure that the children are well prepared for the national examinations," said Rasi. The official said frequent transfers of teachers had drastically affected performance and urged the ministry of education to give teachers time to do their work.

He argued that teachers are not given time to concentrate on their work in guiding children to doing better in the national examinations as they were frequently transferred from one station to another.

"The Teachers' Service Commission (TSC) should stop effecting transfers within shorter periods to enable teachers concentrate on their work so that the children can do better," said Rasi. The leaders further urged the government to ensure funds meant for the free primary education and the sub-subsidized secondary education are released on time to ensure smooth operations in schools.

Ms Sidi said delays in the disbursement of the free education funds had



Prof. Sam Ongeri addressing the public during the release of KCPE results last year.

disrupted operations in most schools and affected learning programs.

She said some school head teachers and principals are highly indebted by suppliers who sometimes withhold essential supplies due to outstanding bills.

"Funds to supplement the primary and secondary education are earmarked from the national budget and it beats logic when disbursements are not made on time," said Sidi

Meanwhile, KNUT wants the government to deal firmly with education officials whose areas performs dismally in national examinations.

Kisii South KNUT Executive Secretary, Charles Mokuia says it is unfair to continue blaming teachers for poor performance while sparing education officials who have been mandated to oversee curriculum delivery.

Mokuia notes that unlike before, supervision in schools is weak with majority of schools lacking enough teachers to deliver the curriculum adequately to boost education standards in the country.

The official, who talked to The Link challenged education stakeholders to commit themselves to uplifting education standards from Early childhood until they sit for their national examinations instead of waiting for the examination results to crucify teachers who play a small in the sector. He stressed poor ECD foundation and lack of supervision partly contributed to poor education standards and performance in national exams and urged the government to employ qualified ECD teachers to reverse the trend.

Mokuia noted that it was illogical to imagine that a child who had a poor foundation from nursery will all of a sudden improve and do well in national examinations amid weaknesses and challenges by various stakeholders, which, he stressed should be addressed first.

The unionists faulted parents who shut down schools and chased away teachers whenever their schools performed dismally, noting that it was a waste of time, aggravated the problem and demoralized teachers and strained their relationship with parents.

"You cannot solve a problem by creating another problem. Stakeholders should engage in dialogue and solve the problem instead of demonizing teachers and crucifying them for collective mistakes," stated Mokuia.

Mokuia urged parents to be closer to their children, monitor their education progress to know how they are taught instead of attacking teachers, assuming the role they have played in shaping the children morally and educationally.

The passing of exams, noted Mokuia should not be used to gauge the success of the child, stressing that talented children who fail in exams can be assisted to exploit their potential and lead better lives than even highly educated people.

Attributing exam cheating to poor supervision, he lamented that teachers have been condemned, roughed up, demoted, sacked and displaced by members of the public who ignored the role played by education officials in supervision and curriculum delivery.

He urged the government to punish education officers, whose areas were registering poor results in national examination, adding that it is unfair for them to continue earning huge salaries which they could not justify.

The country, noted the official had few Quality Assurance Standards officers (QASOS) who have been unable to cope with the huge workload in both secondary and primary schools, leading to low education standards and performance in national exams.

"The standards officers ensure that that the curriculum is implemented effectively and adequately. It is unfortu-

nate that the key officers in our education system are few. The government should increase their number to address the wanting education standards nationally," said Mokuia.

He asked the government to deploy QASOS away from their communities to avoid being compromised by lazy and lethargic teachers who have been spared at the expense of the children's education.

Mokuia recalled that previously, schools used to perform better in national exams when children were taught by teachers from other communities with close supervision by strict education officers, stressing that the system should be re-introduced to reclaim the crippling sector.

He deplored the existence of clan-based schools managed by incompetent and unqualified local personnel who enjoyed community protection while they ruined the future of the school children.

Some teachers noted Mokuia earned their promotions through corruption, saying they compromised education officers who recommended for their promotions while hard working and performing teachers remained stuck as classroom teachers.

"We want to embrace the culture of meritocracy where qualified, competent, honest and hardworking teachers are promoted on merit as opposed to corrupt individuals who acquired promotions through corruption," observed the unionist.

He underscored the need to introduce refresher courses for teachers to improve on their skills and adopt modern technology to enhance curriculum delivery education standards and performance in national exams.

The officials called for concerted efforts among stakeholders to address problems ailing education in Kenya instead of engaging in blame game once examination results were released.

Coast international varsity in the offing

By BEKADZO TONDO

PLANS are underway to put a multi-million higher learning facility in Kilifi County.

The Coast International University, which has been funded to the tune of Kshs 4 billion by investors including Suleiman Shahbal foundation, the Gulf Energy, international banks among other institutions, is to be built on 158 acres of land.

"This project has followed all the legal channels that precede the establishment of a university befitting the standards of a public or international university and has been approved by the higher education board in the country," said Mar Shahbal.

Mr. Shahbal who is the chairman of the university board of trustees said the facility has capacity to admit 5,000 by September 2013.

He said the ground breaking ceremony has been earmarked for June at Ganda location in Malindi District.

"Plans to jumpstart the project are at an advanced stage and in six months time the ground breaking ceremony will take off," said Shahbal

Shahbal who spoke last month during the official launch of the project at the site, said the project will be carried out in phases with the first phase slated to cost Kshs 1 billion.

"This special education probation project in Coast Province will be carried out in phases where the first phase will cost Kshs1 billion," said Shahbal who plans to vie for the governor's seat in Mombasa county.

Scholars who addressed the gathering lamented that the Coast region had been marginalized since independence as none of the successive regimes had plans to put up a public university in the area.

Led by Prof Abdallah O. Bujira, the scholars said the former governments had channeled enormous resources to build universities in their political backyards and ignored other regions, among them Coast Province.

Prof Bujira said education was the key to development and wondered how the Coast region is expected to realize development when the area lacks the required human resource to steer the process.

"Am happy to witness the launching of the construction of the first fully fledged university in the Coast t region and I hope this is the beginning of a new life as people acquire higher education required by the developing countries like Kenya," added professor Bujira

Other prominent scholars' present included Professors Mohamed Haidar, David Koech, and two lecturers from Pwani University College Dr Najyah Mohamed and Dr Hassan Mwakimako

Malindi MP Gideon Munagaro welcomed the project saying it will give opportunity to youth in the area to acquire higher education as well as the aged to advance their education.

Mungaro thanked the founders of the first university in the area for offering 20 percent scholarship to bright students from poor families.

"Offering scholarships to needy student by the Coast International university will be a great boost to achievement of higher and quality education by our youth," said Mungaro.

Amiran launches youth enterprise fund

THE Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) and Amiran Kenya Ltd have partnered to support young farmers in acquiring a tailor made Amiran Farmers Kit (AFK) designed specifically for the AgriVijana Loan. The project seeks to help youth, who are in groups, to get involved in Agribusiness by purchasing the special AFK's each with two greenhouses and a large irrigated area.

This is the first Public Private Partnership that seeks to reduce youth unemployment. During the first phase, the AgriVijana Loan will benefit two groups each with 10 members in every constituency. Phase two of the loan, which will follow in several months, will offer the loan to youth throughout the country.

Speaking during the signing of the MoU between the two organizations attended by CEO YEDF, Juma Mwatata, Managing Director Amiran Kenya Pinhas Moskovich, Board and staff of the Youth Fund and Amiran, Mr. James Gitau Singh, Chairman of the Board of the Youth Enterprise Development Fund said, "Starting last year the Fund has focused on providing sector specific loan products to the youth, to enable them take advantage of their talents as well as resources in their locality.

To this end the Fund is actively exploring partnerships with likeminded institutions. "We are therefore glad to formalize this partnership with Amiran Kenya Limited". Under this arrangement the Youth Enterprise Development Fund has established a new loan

COMMENT

By CAROLYNE OYUGI

product, AgriVijana Loan. The loan will be provided to youth groups across the country to buy a complete farmers kit from Amiran Kenya.

In the first phase about Kshs. 150 million have been set aside to help purchase 420 Farmers Kits, two per constituency. Further, over 5,000 youth are targeted at the initial stage in a bid to create instant jobs for them. The project will also improve food security considerably. We expect that thousands of youth will be attracted to this cool farming concept and therefore be gainfully engaged. We shall be putting out adverts in the media to invite young people interested in this product to submit their applications"

The Amiran Farmers Kit (AFK), a tailor made kit designed to meet the farmers specific needs, was created with the aim of allowing small scale farmers affordable access to modern agricultural technologies, methods and inputs of the highest standards. The AgriVijana Amiran Farmer's Kit, contains 2 greenhouses, a drip irrigation system for the greenhouses and 400m of open field, a water tank, plant support system, Gold Medal seeds to be grown inside the greenhouses and in the open field, high quality fertilizers for one season, crop

protection products for one season, a farmer's sprayer, nursery set, health and safety protective gear, training, agro-support, and AFK insurance.

Most youth perceive farming as something one does to survive or when one retires. As part of the AgriVijana loan, YEDF and Amiran will embark on an advocacy campaign that aims to raise awareness among the youth to the financial opportunities that modern agribusiness offers.

Yariv Kedar, Amiran's Head of Agro Division underscored the need for the youth to engage in agribusiness, "The future of Kenya is in the youth who are the ones that have to meet the demand of creating and producing food. As it stands today, many people look at agriculture as something for the older generation which is not popular.

"In this partnership, we are introducing food security, teaching people how to produce, the possibility to generating income and to make agribusiness something that is sustainable and attractive. We also bring them modern technology and very high quality inputs," he adds.

The loan allocated by the YEDF to acquire an AgriVijana AFK is Kshs. 358,344. The group is expected to raise 10 percent of the loan amount. Repayment will start after a 4 month grace period, which is adjustable in the case that the crops planted by the group take longer to mature. The loan shall be repayable in three years. Each cycle of 12 months shall be as follows; the first four months

after installation of greenhouse shall be grace period, 5- 8 months is the high yielding season therefore, the group will pay Kshs.17,425 per month and 9-12 months is the lower yielding season in which the group will pay Kshs. 10,000 per month during this period.

To qualify for the loan, 70 percent of the group members must be youth (18-35 years) with the leader being youth and must be registered in the respective constituency. Other qualifications include access to land and water and knowledge or experience in agriculture. The groups must also show evidence of ability to raise the 10 percent of the investment outlay and be registered with the relevant government ministry. Groups with sponsors / guarantors will have an added advantage

The Youth Enterprise Development Fund was established in year 2006 with the sole purpose of reducing unemployment among the youth who account for over 61percent of the unemployment in the country. The target of the fund is young people within the age bracket of 18 to 35 years who number 13 million. The fund was then transformed into a State Corporation on May 11, 2007.

The Fund's strategic focus is on enterprise development as a key strategy that will increase economic opportunities for, and participation by Kenyan youth in nation building. The government has so far released Kshs. 1.75 billion to the fund.

Since its inception in 1963, Amiran

Kenya Ltd has played the role of pioneer in the Kenyan agricultural sector, being the first company to introduce large scale green houses in the late 1980's. Amiran has also introduced the first drip irrigation systems to Kenya in the mid 1970's and has continued to drive the incorporation of modern agricultural inputs into the country's agricultural sector throughout the years. Amiran continues to provide innovative agribusiness solutions to the Kenyan market for large and small scale growers.

In recent years Amiran has changed the face of small scale farming in Kenya and East Africa through the introduction of the Amiran Farmers Kit (AFK) which has been recognized with the Millennium Development Goal Trust Fund Award for MDG-1, the Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger in 2010 and again in 2011, receiving the MDG Award for Youth Empowerment. This recognition follows several initiatives taken by the company with its various partners such as the "Amiran Next Generation Farmers Youth Polytechnics" in partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, and the "Amiran Next Generation Farmers Initiative" together with the Kenya Red Cross Society, which has placed the AFK in over 500 schools exposing the technology to over 100,000 Kenyan students and the "Farming is Cool" initiative, which has brought agribusiness to the attention of youth all over Kenya.

Amiran was also the first agricultural company to take its revolution to Facebook opening up the agribusiness discussion to thousands of Kenyan youth engaged in the social media network.

By BEKADZO TONDO

THE Government's failure to support the early childhood program has been blamed on the poor performance registered in Coast province in last year's Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations.

Leaders complained that most parents have been unable to enroll their children for the pre-primary school program due to poverty, thus missing the educational foundation which could help pupils do better in national examinations.

Engineer John Lenga from Kaloleni in Kilifi County said it was disheartening to note local schools register poor performance in national examinations and urged the government to establish the underlying factors that had resulted in poor performance in Kilifi, Kwale, Tana River, Lamu and Taita Taveta counties.

Speaking to The Link at Kaloleni Junior academy, Engineer Lenga said area children had the capacity to do better but they lacked the necessary support.

"Most schools in Coast Province especially those from the public sector are faced with many challenges including an acute shortage of teachers, poor infrastructure and learning materials, which made the children do badly in national examinations," said Lenga.

Lenga urged voters in the Coast counties to elect visionary leaders in the next year general Elections who could give education a priority.

He argued that the current political

Coast leaders blame state for poor KCPE results

leaders have not taken education as an important component in supplementing development programs and had left it entirely in the hands of the electorate, majority of whom wallow in poverty.

"Education is the baseline of all sorts of development but our leaders especially those in the political wing have not been bothered to find the best ways of empowering the local people academically," said Lenga.

Lenga who has declared his candidature for the position of a governor in Kilifi County vowed to allocate bigger percentages of the county finances to the education sector to improve the academic standards if elected.

"Those to be elected in the counties in Coast Province have to sit and redefine the childhood education program by allocating the sector enough finances to equip the pre-schools with enough and qualified teachers and better infrastructure to make the children perform better," said Lenga.

Mitangani ward councilor Daniel Mangi accused politicians in the area of failing to provide leadership in education matters and concentrating their energies on matters that were not beneficial to the community.



Pupils taking an exam.

Photo/File

Kisumu East to get more teachers

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

ABOUT nine primary and nine secondary school teachers will be recruited in Kisumu East District along with 10 Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers at the municipality level

Kisumu East District Education Officer (DEO) Ms. Jane Mtange at the same time reveals that the Kibos Centre

of Excellence, which is also a secondary school, in Kisumu County is almost complete and will soon open its doors to interested learners. She says that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) will soon deploy a school head at the school to make it operational as plans to launch the school's board are finalised.

Kisumu Town East Member of Parliament, Mr. Sharkil Shabii, told a

District Development Committee meeting, that the board will hire people to officer services and not politicize operations. Some of the challenges facing the school include lack of furniture, equipment and a security fence. Mr. Shabii pledged to ensure the sanitation services are adequate by supplying water. He said specific criteria should be put in place to filter those who will join the

centre of excellence. The Kisumu Town East Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Fund Manager, Mr. Kipng'etich Lang'at, said the school was allocated Kshs.30 million under the Economic Stimulus Package of the Ministry of Education. The DEO said the school's location was identified after consultations between the District Education Board, the MP and other leaders. She said a di-

rective from the Ministry of Education was to have a centre of excellence in each district across the country.

The directive said there would be two primary schools, one of which must be rural and the other urban as well as a secondary school. The identification was to be done after consultations and a needs assessment by local leaders to identify the academic needs of a district.

Irate parents storm school to protest transfer of head teacher

By MORRIS GITHENYA

LEARNING at Ndikwe Primary School in Murang'a East District was paralysed after irate parents stormed the school to protest against the transfer of the headmistress.

Over 100 parents forcibly ejected pupils from classrooms as teachers scammed for safety in fear of attacks.

The parents vowed to destabilize learning at the school until the government revokes the move to transfer Mrs Grace Kabiru to the nearby Rurii primary school.

The protesting parents said they had no confidence with the incoming headmaster as they had fostered better working relationship with the outgoing head teacher owing to her administration.

Murang'a East Education Officer Mr Kaugi Micheni confirmed parents protest.

"The changes were effected with a view of improving education standards without other intentions," said Micheni.

Last year, Ndikwe primary school parents blocked a move by the Ministry of Education to transfer the headmistress to St Mary Primary School saying she had demonstrated commitment on improvement of infrastructures.

Equity offers help to needy students

By MALACHI MOTANO

ABOUT 2,140 needy students are set to enjoy fully paid secondary school scholarships courtesy of the Equity Bank Group Foundation.

Under the Wings to Fly program launched earlier this year by President Mwai Kibaki, Equity Bank, Equity Group Foundation and The MasterCard Foundation with support from USAID will offer comprehensive scholarships across the country to children from needy backgrounds who have attained 350 marks and above in this year's KCPE examinations.

Equity Bank Group Managing Director James Mwangi confirmed that deserving students from needy family backgrounds nationwide are encouraged to apply for the scholarships.

Equity Bank boss who also chairs the Equity Group Foundation appealed to members of the public to widely share this information to ensure that all deserving and eligible children get the chance to apply for the comprehensive secondary school scholarships.

The Wings to Fly education scholarship and leadership development program, Mwangi explained covers tuition, books, uniforms and pocket money for students who are academically gifted yet economically and socially marginalised.

"Needy candidates, who have scored 350 marks and above in this year's KCPE are invited to present themselves to the nearest Equity



Equity Bank. Inset: Mr. James Mwangi, the Bank CEO



More than 1200 students who sat for their KCPE in 2010 managed to access the comprehensive scholarships. Of the current 1200 Wings to Fly scholars, 400 attend national schools while more than 800 attend provincial schools nationwide.

"This is part of our scholarship initiative to assist 10,000 deserving students to go through secondary school education. We appeal to all members of the public to share this information widely to ensure that all deserving and eligible children get the chance to apply for these scholarships," said Dr. Mwangi.

The Wings to Fly Program is an initiative of Equity Group Foundation and The MasterCard Foundation with support of UKaid and USAID.

Bank branch or Equity Bank Agents where they will collect application forms," Mwangi explained.

"Students should carry their results slips or a letter from their head teacher as evidence of their score in order to be issued with the application forms. Only very needy children who will score 350 marks and above, and who, without the scholarship would not be able to join form one will be eligible to apply."

Upon application, shortlisted students will subsequently be invited for oral interviews that will be conducted by the Equity Group Foundation District Scholarship Selection Board.

This year, the Wings to Fly program will offer 2,140 scholarships that will cater for school fees, pocket money, personal retail products shopping, books, and uniforms throughout the secondary education.

Study reports little learning in schools

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

THE retention levels of pupils in primary schools in Bungoma County are very low, with more children opting out of classroom to work as casual labourers.

Absenteeism is high in the County, with only half of those going to school attending classes at any given time.

Mt. Elgon district leads in the county with most teachers missing classes daily due to conflict and laxity.

In Busia County, four out of ten children aged between 3-5 years are not attending pre-school notably in Busia and Samia districts.

This is according to a report by Uwezo Kenya on the status of learning in the country.

The 2011 report which covers 123 out of the total 158 districts in the country, notes that nationally seven out of 10 children in class three cannot do class two work, with poorest levels of learning being in arid districts and Western province.

This was revealed during the launching of the report in western region, which was attended by Mount Elgon Resident (MERA), coordinator Peter Chem. Mera has partnered with Uwezo Kenya, on educational issues in Mt. Elgon.

MERA coordinator observed that the area had continued to register poor performance in national examinations due to high levels of absenteeism by teachers.

Learning levels in Western province are 28 percent lower than in Central province, and 12 percent lower than the National average.

The findings reveal that as much as children are going to school, they are not learning.

For example one out of five children in class four cannot read a paragraph.

And nine out of 100 children in class eight cannot do class two mathematics

The report attributes the scenario to absenteeism by both teachers and pupils, teacher shortages with the findings indicating that in every primary school, there

is a shortage of 4 teachers while the teacher pupil ration stands at a high of 1:52.

Western province has the highest teacher deficit with the teacher pupil ratio standing at 1:64 while Central province has the lowest ratio.

One out of five teachers is employed by parents, in a situation where 13 out of 100 teachers are not in school at any given day, nationally.

About eight out of ten Children aged between six and 13 years respectively are attending public schools, while four out of 100 are out of school, nationwide.

There are more boys out of school than girls within this age bracket, with those from North Eastern province being 16 times more likely to be out of school than those from Central and Nairobi provinces.

On enrolment, the report reveals that half of the children aged 3-5 years are attending pre-school, with one out of five children aged 5 years in primary, contrary to the government policy, which stipu-

lates that children enter class one at the age of 6.

The general enrolment decreases progressively from class 1 to class 7, then drops drastically in class eight.

The drastic drop in class eight is attributed to class repetition and absenteeism.

Despite the government ban on extra tuition, the practice still persists, with two out of ten children in public schools and 6 out of 10 in private schools being subjected to extra tuition.

It adds that the higher the class the more likely it is for the child will pay for extra tuition.

It is also interesting that the higher the level of education of the parent, the more likely that they will pay for extra tuition.

Nairobi has the best learning environment for children as there is no child found seating on the floor, as compared to North Eastern province where 43 out of 100 seat on the floor in the classrooms.

Half of class two teachers in Nyanza province do not follow the time table, and one out of four

class two learners cannot access supplementary learning materials.

The findings, according to Uwezo have demonstrated that schooling is not translating into learning.

It notes that billions of shillings are being wasted each year and aspirations of parents and students dashed.

It warns that as a Nation we are at risk of losing the gains registered in social development and economic progress due to regional disparities which may jeopardize the future of children in marginalized areas.

The report recommends that as a Nation, we need to shed the obsession with counting schooling inputs and focus on learning outcomes.

Stakeholders are advised to consider a few things which make a difference in learning such as motivating teachers and holding them accountable, creating an environment for children that is engaging and interactive.

Kilifi parents demand release of KCPE results

By BEKADZO TONDO

PARENTS from five primary schools in Kilifi want the Kenya National Examination Council to release KCPE results for their children after they were cancelled over alleged cheating.

Mr. Josphat Chiro who led other parents in protesting the cancellation of the results demanded that the Ministry of Education launches investigations to clear their children from the cheating allegations.

"Cases of examinations cheating are mostly found in the urban centers where children are exposed the modern communication technology and it is unfortunate that children in some rural based schools were listed to have participated in the examina-

tions cheating' said Mr. Chiro.

Kilifi District Education Officer Mr Dickson Ole Keis confirmed that cases of cheating had been registered in some of the local schools.

Mr. Keis identified the schools as Dzitsoni, Bungu, Mbomboni and Majaoni public primary schools and one private school he mentioned as Bahari parents academy.

"It is true results for some pupils from four public primary schools and others from a private school in Kilifi had their results cancelled after they were found to have participated in cheating," said Mr Keis.

The District Education boss said the children colluded to cheat in the exams but it has not been established how they colluded.

"The nature of cheating from the

affected schools was that of collusion but investigations are yet to be done to clearly establish the nature of collusion and whether it was between pupils to pupils, pupils to invigilators and other things of that kind," said Keis.

According to KNEC, the pupils are said to have been affected in different subjects' cheating mostly in the English, Kiswahili and social/religious studies

Mr. Keis stated that majority of pupils at Majaoni primary had their results canceled for cheating in the English subject while majority of pupils at Bungu are said to have cheated in English and Kiswahili subjects.

Bahari Parents Academy pupils cheated in social and religious stud-

ies, same to those of Mbomboni primary while those at Dzitsoni cheated in English and Kiswahili subjects.

"The ministry of education has launched thorough investigations on the alleged cheating incidents in Kilifi schools so as to get the root cause of the irregularities" said Mr. Keis.

Magarini Constituency MP David Kombe termed the poor ratings of schools in the area as political and called on local leaders to stand firm and demand a through analysis from the Ministry to justify the rating.

"As a leader, I can see some political hand in the poor ranking of schools in Coast region in the KCPE results and Education Minister Prof Sam Ongeru must unveil clear indicators for the performance," said Kombe.

Don donates computers to Gusii schools

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

TEN Secondary schools in Gucha district have benefitted from a donation of 80 computers.

The computers donated by Organisation Information Technology Awareness (OITA) will go a long way in equipping schools in Western and Nyanza provinces with computers for learning.

The programme was initiated by Prof. Kennedy Nyabuto, a scholar from Bobasi constituency as he studied in Germany for his PhD programme. Prof. Nyabuto, a lecturer at Masinde Muliro University, says the programme will help empower the youth in ICT before they complete their fourth year in secondary school.

The don spoke at Riobara Secondary School where 10 schools received computers valued at Kshs 700,000 at an event attended by other stakeholders.

Prof. Nyabuto said plans are underway to replicate the programme to Primary schools to ensure that youth acquire computer skills at an early stage.

Prof. Nyabuto said ICT is key to development and cited sectors, including banking, transportation, communication and medical services which had embraced technology.

He said the National Council for Science and Technology initiative on computer use in Kenya classrooms is still in its earlier phases, and concluded that the perception and experience play an important role in the use of computers in Kenyan classrooms.

The Gucha Kenya Secondary School Heads Association chairman, Mr. David Ogega, said Gucha faces numerous challenges in ICT education caused by the lack of financial resources.

He claimed the Government has not been able to employ enough ICT teachers, and provide resources to keep up with the demand.

KNUT opposes demotion of teachers

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

THE Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) Busia branch has strongly opposed the move to demote head teachers whose schools performed dismally in last year's Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination.

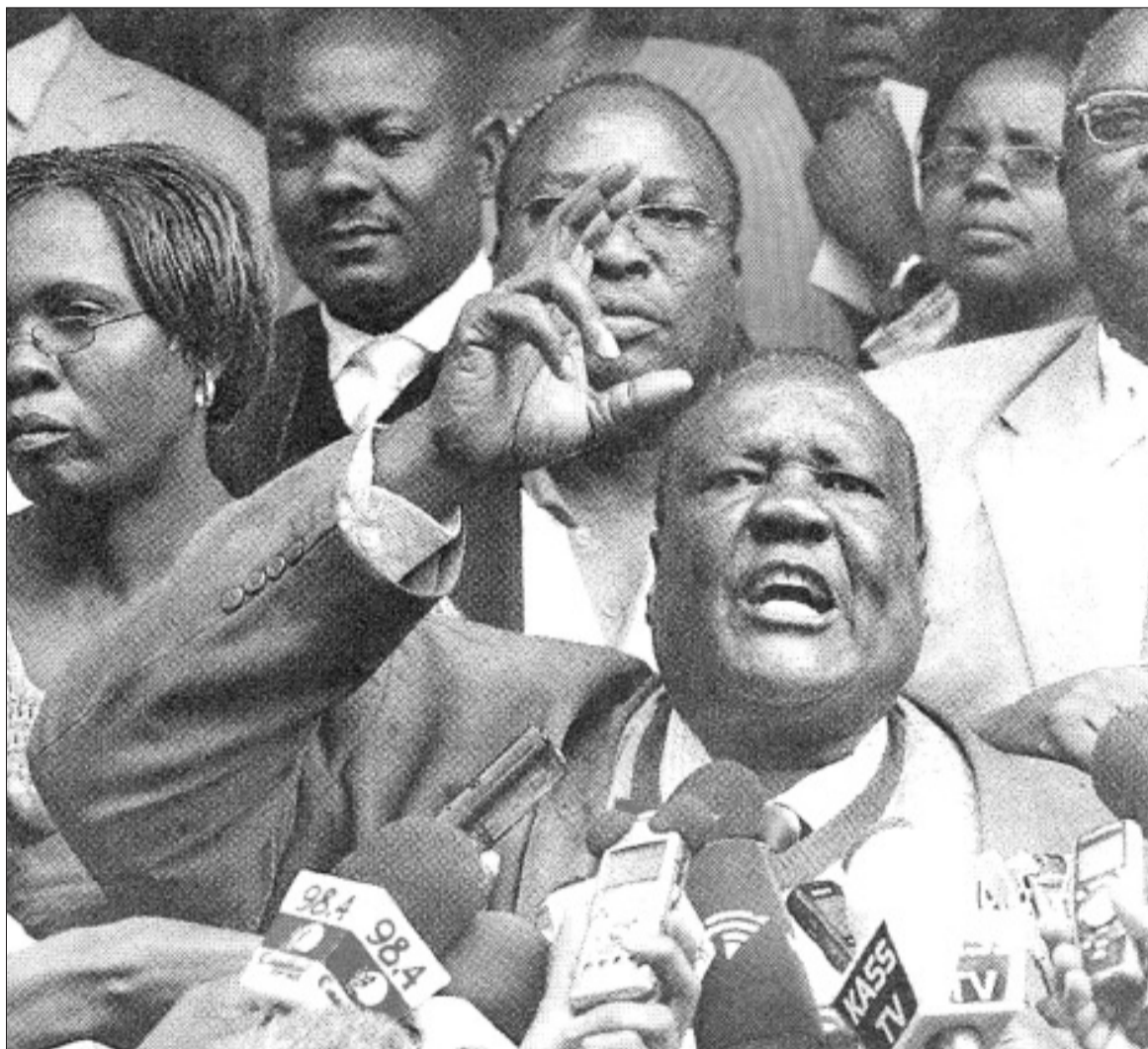
The Busia branch KNUT executive secretary Mark Oseno termed the actions as counterproductive because it was likely to demoralize head teachers who had worked tirelessly to have the County ranked in the fifth position nationally.

"Busia County was among the best after scooping fifth position nationally, but I am surprised to note that instead of the district education office congratulating head teachers for a job well-done, they are doing the opposite," said Oseno, adding that the move, unless reversed was likely to affect academic performance.

The KNUT executive secretary singled out the head teacher of Nasira R.C Primary school William Wesonga who has been demoted by the District education office despite his school having registered an improvement of 20percent compared to the previous year's performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations.

The KNUT official however appealed to parents and all the education stakeholders in the county to embrace dialogue to resolve issues regarding dismal academic performance in national examinations instead of attacking head teachers whose schools register poor results, adding that good academic performance requires joint effort by all stakeholders.

Another school head, Titus Matioli



KNUT Secretary-General Mr. David Okuta addresses teachers outside Knut house in Nairobi.

Photo/File

of Nabalaki Primary school in Samia District sustained serious body injuries after being attacked by irate parents over dismal results.

Busia District Education Officer

John Owino however said that the teachers who have been demoted lacked commitment towards their duties in order to improve on their academic performance.

"No teacher can be demoted just for the sake of demotion. One is rewarded based on their commitment to duty and non-performing teachers will not be spared," he said.

Nakumatt school fees redemption plan on

By MALACHI MOTANO

NAKUMATT Holdings has announced the commencement of its unique smart points redemption program for school fees cheques.

The redemption program is one of the numerous benefits extended to loyal Nakumatt Smart cardholders who can now redeem their accumulated smart points for school

fees cheques drawn in favour of the shopper's school of choice.

Going by previous experiences, Nakumatt Holdings will in the next few weeks draw out school fees cheques valued at more than Sh40million to more than 4,500 public and private schools country-wide.

Speaking in Nairobi, Nakumatt Holdings Managing Director Atul

Shah confirmed that the firm has embarked on the project to assist their loyal customers.

While commenting on the redemption plan for school fees program, Shah explained that the program is open to all shoppers including those who may not necessarily have school going children.

"The Nakumatt smart points for school fees redemption programme

is an effective avenue to extend your gratitude to your neighbour, domestic staff, or even colleague and will go a long way in relieving them of their school fees burden," Shah noted.

And added: "All Nakumatt Smart Card holders are encouraged to routinely redeem their accumulated points at every start of a school term as part of their value added

benefits for shopping at Nakumatt."

Nakumatt Smart Card holders enjoy various benefits, which include discounts, earning extra points on purchase of products and higher redemption value for products during specific offer periods. In addition, with Nakumatt Visa Credit card, customers can now earn points whenever they use their credit cards worldwide.

Mwingi residents reject Ligale report

By KAVYU-KURA

AN aspirant for the Mwingi South parliamentary seat Philip Nguli has accused the defunct Andrew Ligale-led IIBRC of ignoring the views of locals as it prepared the report on creation of new electoral units.

Nguli said the report that was adopted by the new Independent Election and Boundary Commission (IEBC) did not adequately reflect the wishes of the local people during their sitting in Mwingi but "they only came up with their own things."

"The IIBRC commissioners came here. They wasted tax payers' money but they did not factor our views when developing the report on the new constituencies and electoral wards in Mwingi," Nguli said of the Ligale Commission.

The politician was speaking when he gave his presentation during an IEBC forum held at the Mwingi County hall. Leaders from Mwingi South and proposed Mwingi Central constituency gave their views of the reports of the new 80 constituencies and wards released by the IEBC.

The IEBC has adopted a report prepared by the Interim Independent Boundaries Review Commission (IIBRC) and presented it as its own for public hearings.

He said this time round the IEBC should listen and factor the concerns of the locals before the proposals were gazetted. He said there was need to redraw the proposed boundaries as reflected by geographical and communication factors as per the wish of the Mwingi residents.

Nguli was joined by fellow aspirants Jonathan Mutambu, Koki Musau and a number of several civic leaders in protesting against the use of exotic names for proposed county assembly wards. The leaders said that local names were more appealing and acceptable.

They also proposed the re-alignment of boundaries to ensure that some wards that they claimed were missing or had been misplaced in the Ligale reports were placed in their ideal areas. Mutambu gave the exam-

ple of Kyome while councillor Patricia Kisio cited Enziu.

A presentation by councillor Cosmas Merete on behalf of fellow civic leaders from Migwani district with the endorsement of the Mwingi South MP David Musila, proposes to have Mui and Nuu divisions of Mwingi East district in Mwingi south constituency rebuffed.

Merete suggested that both Mui and Nuu division be removed from Mwingi south Constituency as proposed in the Ligale report and placed

in the proposed Mwingi central constituency for better representation.

He argued that if the two areas remained in Mwingi south, the electorates would be disenfranchised and disadvantaged.

The Mwingi South IEBC coordinator Linah Kilonzi who had convened the meeting said that all their views would be given due consideration and factored where feasible. She advised the locals to refine their views and present them to IEBC in writing before the lapse of 21 days.



Mwingi South parliamentary aspirant Philip Nguli making his presentation at the Mwingi County Hall. Photo/Jose Kavyu-Kura

TSC plot strong presence in Counties

By PETER MUTUKU

THE Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has proposed to increase senior staff at the County level to handle disciplinary cases and promotion ahead of the formation of County Governments after the next General Elections

Communication from TSC indicates that the commission plans to recruit about 702 staff at senior level in a bid to realign its operations to conform with the new constitutional dispensation which transfers most functions to the County level with the headquarters playing a supervisory role.

"TSC has proposed a county structure with 76 staff members per county, bringing to 3,572 the number required in all the counties," read the communication from the commission.

The communication came as it emerged that TSC has conducted interviews to replace Provincial Directors of Education (PDEs) with County Directors in line with the constitution.

The interviews were conducted as the Kenya National Union of Teachers questioned the delays in deploying officers to the county.

However, TSC blamed the delays to the large number of applicants who had shown interest in the positions. "We only need 47 directors but about 1,200 candidates have applied for the positions," said a source at the TSC headquarters.

Information available at the TSC indicates that the exercise targets to recruit 20 teacher management county directors in Job group R while another 15 officers are to be recruited in job group Q and the remaining 12 officers recruited in job group P in an attempt to deploy staff in the counties.

Bad governance blamed for Africa's woes

By AGGERY BUCHUNJU

CONFLICTS, genocide suppression, torture and political instability in Africa have been attributed to the high rate of bad governance on the continent.

The coordinator of torture survivors' organization Mr. Taiga Wanyanja said that poor governance in Africa needs to be confronted so as to heal the continent of the five ills.

Wanyanja challenged African

countries to stop talking about torture and instead start to look for healing interventions within the context of democracy and rule of law.

Speaking in Thiers town, 70 kms from Dakar in Senegal, Wanyanja said that in Kenya many people were tortured during the post election violence and emergence of militia groups.

Wanyanja made the remarks in his presentation during a regional meeting of sub-Saharan region, dealing with victims of tortures in the whole conti-

ment of Africa.

The meeting whose theme was, how to empower victims of torture as a form normal rehabilitation was organized under the umbrella of International Rehabilitation Council of Torture Victims.

In the whole continent of Africa there are 25 centres that participate in this regional meeting held every year on rotational basis.

The Senegal meeting was hosted by Vivre Caprec centre and attended by

25 persons; one (1) person from each centre a cross the continent.

Kenya has two (2) centres; torture survivor organization and Independent Medical Legal Unit (IMLU) hence had two participants in the Senegal meeting.

During the five (5) day meeting participants resolved that all centres should be encouraged to source for funds to assist victims of torture in terms of loan so they can start income generating activities.

Mahiga girls praised for discipline

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

STUDENTS of Mahiga Girls Secondary School have been commended for upholding high standards of discipline in the last one decade.

Mr. Esau Kioni, a board member of the school, noted that the school which is in Othaya, Nyeri County, has continued to post impressive performance in the KCSE exams over the last four years with a mean grade of over B minus because of the high standards of discipline.

At the same time, he urged the Teachers Service Commission to post at least five teachers in the school to address the shortage at the institution.

He was speaking at the school recently where he donated a state-of-the-art Television set which will help them to watch educative programmes.

"I have been much attracted by the good discipline of these students and therefore I decided to donate this TV to help them. It will go along way in improving their education standards," said Kioni.

The TV which has been connected to the DStv can be able to show over 30 channels.

The school Principal Mary Wang'ombe said she was very happy for the generous donation saying it has come at the right time when students can be able to watch educative programmes.

Wang'ombe and the students received the TV set.

"The hard work and discipline has led to the good performance of the students. We hope to improve even more in future," the principal added.

The school has a population of 750 students.



Mahiga Girls BoG member Esau Kioni (left) donates a state of the art TV set to the principal Mary Wang'ombe and students of the school recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

The Link

Enhancing governance for all

We must stand up to the dogs of impunity

IT was Phyllis Schlafly who famously said: Bite us once, shame on the dog; bite us repeatedly, shame on us for allowing it. Are Kenya's allowing the lords of impunity to steal or stall their revolution. In our view, it was never meant to be this way. After the enactment of the new constitution, Kenya glimmered with hope. We envisioned accountability and integrity at all levels of the government. But, reality is dawning fast, the script might have changed but the cast remains all the same.

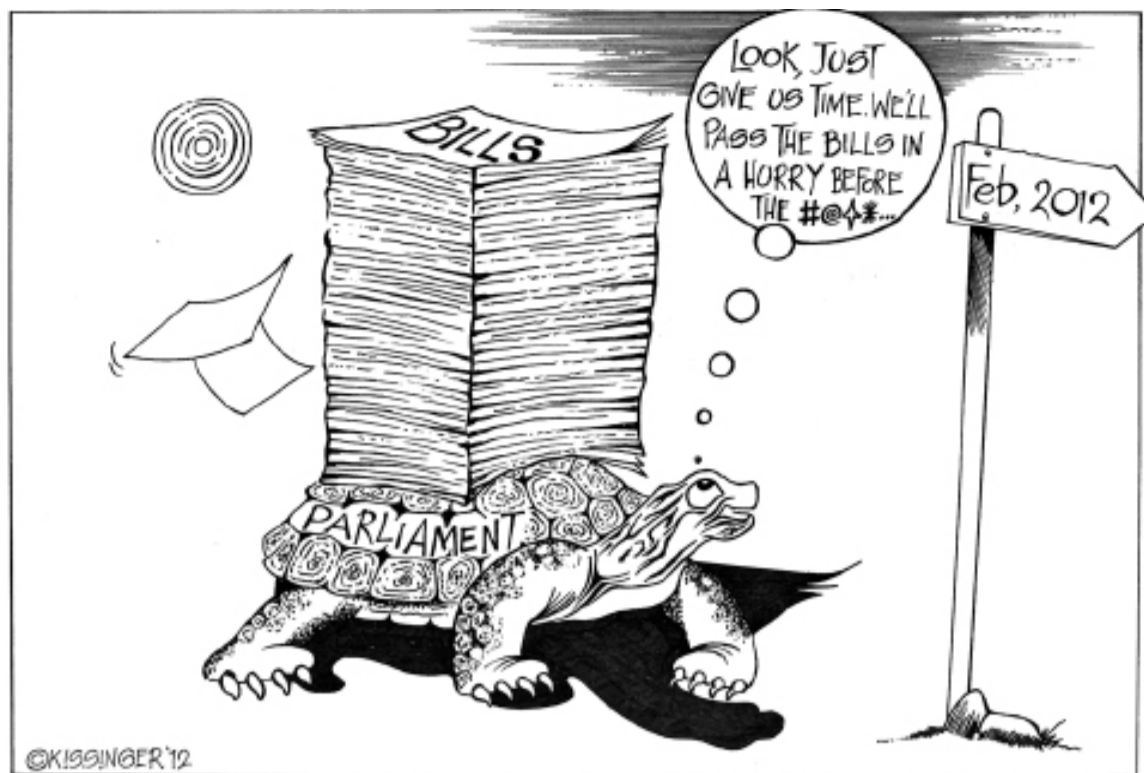
The deputy chief justice saga and the reactions from the government on the confirmation of charges on the ICC suspects are a clear indication that the more things change, the more they stay the same. I believe it's time for Kenyans to evoke the spirit of the constitution. We need to keep the government accountable or otherwise someone will continue playing Russian roulette on us.

The government through the advice of Githu Muigai, the AG, has decided that "The suspects are appearing in their individual capacity. The government cannot speak on their behalf on what to do and what not to do." If that's the case, why is the government forming commissions to advise it on the ICC cases?

Why did William Ruto and Henry Kosgey resign when they were charged in court or is the ICC a lesser court? Why are people holding public office being allowed to treat those offices as private entities? Why is Uhuru still holding on to the DPM's post despite public outrage?

It's not easy to get answers to these questions. We are in a maze created by the leaders of this nation. They will act the way they do as long as it's convenient for their power struggles. They have taught us to tolerate bad leadership, bad roads. Sadly, we have learnt to reconcile easily with bad governance. We keep re-electing corrupt politicians because of their looted wealth – and spend all the time whining about how bad they are.

We are in an election year. We can choose to whine for the next five years, or we can decide today to make a difference. If we don't, we will forever blame ourselves for allowing the same dogs of impunity to bite us repeatedly.



COMMENTARY

Reforms needed to change police image

COMMENT

By MWANGI KIBATHI

THE Kenya Police has been ranked by Transparency International-Kenya as the most bribery prone institution in Kenya yet again. It is topping the annual bribery index for the tenth year in a row. According to the 2011 East African Bribery Index, there was a 67% chance that you would be expected to pay a bribe every time you interacted with the police. This means that out of every ten interactions with the police, seven will be tainted with bribery demands. Sampled Kenyans reported that more than a quarter of all petty bribes in the last twelve months were paid to the police.

The adverse ranking has now become the norm. There must be talk on whether it is necessary to keep reminding the police of this rather dubious distinction. Are audits not done to strengthen the adversely mentioned institutions?

The million dollar question that the civil society and the general public ought to focus on is whether the police view the surveys as objective. Without this, more and even worse rankings will be churned out without causing as little as a flip of an eye lid at Vigilance House (Police Headquarters). The Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC, formerly the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission) and the Ombudsman's office, both government institutions, have also adversely ranked the police in similar surveys. Public service vehicle operators are always up in arms complaining of police extortion.

But what exactly places the police force as a fertile ground for bribes and extortion? The police enjoy an advantage reserved to only a few public bodies. They have coercive power on demand. The most feared form of such manifestation is arrest. In Nairobi, it is rumoured the most 'expensive' day to be arrested is Friday. The threat of being in a stinking cell with drunkards and street boys is chilling. When you imagine three such nights while awaiting a Monday morning court appearance, rational beings will respond irrationally. Add a skeptical spouse and employer in the picture and you might

fall to the temptation to bribe your way out. The system simply does not support any genuine desire to establish ones guilt or innocence.

The Kenya Police is also an institution on the move. You do not have to visit their offices to find yourself in a bribery situation. They are all over the streets, alleys, roadblocks and other public places 'enforcing the law'. The survey does not ask exactly where the bribe was paid or demanded. It might be interesting to measure what proportion was paid or received outside the precincts of a police station. This requires a study focused more on the police force and geared specifically for that purpose.

The police are also involved in agency arrangements with government ministries, parastatals and weighbridges. One is most likely to encounter the police providing security and order at any public institution of note. Many Kenyans are likely to be duped into paying bribes to these auxiliary service staff believing they can intercede on their behalf to get a service.

The slow pace of judicial proceedings also places police in a precarious situation. Most of the criminal cases in the local courts are petty in nature. The courts, even with the current and past reform efforts still find it hard to dispense with the cases fast enough. With the high poverty levels, bail payments are out of reach for ordinary Kenyans. The courts, unable to compel a speedy hearing resort to issuing remand orders in doses of two weeks. Sharing a roof with suspected murderers and robbers when a couple of hundreds of shillings can wipe out the possibility immensely taxes the resolve to resist corruption for many citizens.

The police salaries, working conditions and benefits while not an excuse for corruption are a push factor to make an extra set of coins. The Kenyan soci-

ety has not invested enough in the official security sector. The salaries are low and working conditions wanting. We therefore may be getting just what we pay for. Some conspiracy theorists could even argue that the police management and the government at large perhaps overlook bribery to either allow the police to take care of the pay shortfall or to avoid internal discontent. Whether this is true or not, it does not take away from the fact that the average policeman is a rational being with impulses to survive. The police have needs just like all of us do – families to feed, health matters to take care of etc.

Whenever reports unfavourable to the police come out, my tears fall for the lone guy standing in the rain at road junctions every evening ensuring we get home on time. I feel for the police officers whose lives are perpetually on the line in the dark alleys in the deep of the night. Majority of the police officers are surely selfless and honest Kenyans. It is for their sake that the top police management must root out the dishonest lot and have a serious introspection on their own efficacy as managers. Unless that happens, the morale of the upright police officers will remain forever pricked by negative rankings. The tipping point will be when this majority comes to doubt the wisdom of being selfless and honest to a seemingly ungrateful society. Failure to address integrity lapses in any institution must be the responsibility of the managers and is grave enough to require change of guard.

The National Police Service Commission Act and the yet to be enacted Independent Police Oversight Authority Bill propose far-reaching reforms to strengthen the police service. It is hoped that all actors involved in the police reform process will move with speed to support this very important institution to reinvent itself and live to the immortal spirit of 'utumishi kwa wote' (service to all).

The writer is a Research Officer with Transparency International-Kenya.

The opinions raised in this article do not necessarily reflect TI-Kenya's views.



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The Link

Enhancing governance for all

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Land under irrigation farm set for expansion

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government has earmarked Kshs 8.3 billion for the expansion of land under irrigation at the rate of 40,000 hectares per year during the current financial year.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Water David Stower says the initiative is part of government plans to scale up investment in water storage in order to address the recurrent water scarcity caused by climate change.

Said he "Changing weather patterns have made a significant portion of the country to experience drought, so we hope to build reservoirs to make water available throughout the year," said Mr Stower.

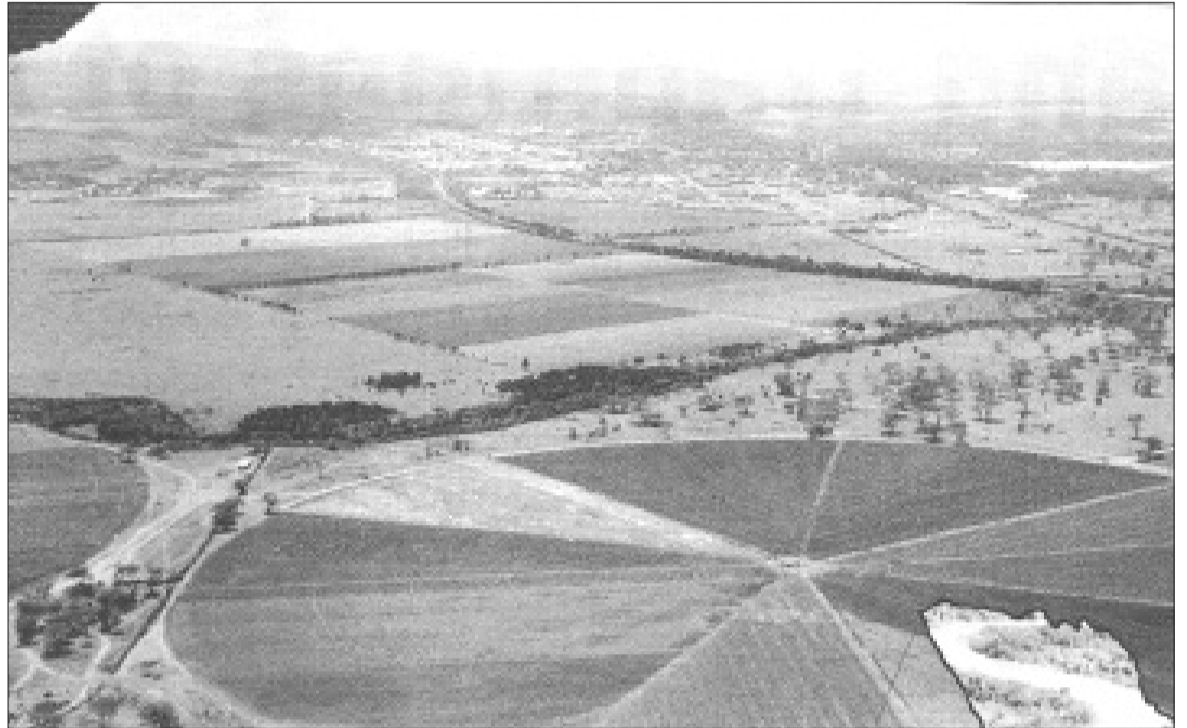
In early 2011, the country experienced devastating drought that exposed over 3.5 million people to starvation, forcing the government to divert over Kshs10 billion of development resources to famine relief responses. But when the rains came later in the year, they were so heavy that they left more than 40,000 people affected by heavy flooding, destroying homes and crops.

Kenya Red Cross Society Communications Officer Nelly Muluka warned that many of the areas affected by floods were in danger of water borne diseases caused by submerged latrines that discharge refuse into water sources. As the government rolls out short term emergency measures in the form of relief aid such as food, mosquito nets, tents and medicine, it must also embark on strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change.

The PS revelations came as it is emerged that the government plans to build 30 large dams to harness rainy water in areas affected by both floods and drought.

Water and Irrigation Minister Charity Ngilu says that plan will entail the use of modern technology to exploit the enormous water resources in the country to help forestall the devastation caused by drought and flooding.

The Minister regretted that many



An irrigated land: Lands under irrigation set for expansion.

Kenyan usually find themselves on the receiving end in situations of both plenty of rain and drought yet there is plenty of technology on sustainable use of water resources.

She says that already the government is looking for over \$1 billion over the next decade to build over 30 dams as part of a marshal plan to develop water storage facilities that will provide water security for Kenyans in times of drought caused by the effects of Climate change," said Ngilu

Speaking at the opening ceremony of an international conference on future management and development of the water sector in Kenya, Ngilu said that climate change is a reality that Kenyans cannot afford to ignore, pointing out that it is responsible for the erratic weather patterns that result in drought and flooding.

The conference brought together over 100 stakeholders in the water

sector to among other things, discuss strategies to assist Kenya develop laws and policies on sustainable use of water resources in line with provisions of the new constitution.

Kenya hopes to learn from the experiences of South Africa and Brazil, which have successfully devolved water delivery services to the grassroots.

Ms Ngilu said water storage programme will aim at raising Kenya's water availability from the current 600 cubic meters per capita to over 1,000 before the year 2030, adding that the government hopes to avoid the scenes that were witnessed during this year's drought where water had to be delivered via trucks to semi and arid areas.

"The dams will be strategically placed throughout the country in order to eliminate the need for short term emergency interventions to fight drought which are very costly," she said.

Split Kiharu constituency, leaders demand

By MORRIS GITHENYA

LEADERS from Murang'a County want Kiharu Constituency split into two saying the report by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) did not address their concerns.

Led by Gatanga MP Peter Kenneth, leaders however warned the commission that they will not accept any bid to hive off parts of Kandara to Kigumo and Kiharu to Mathioya and Kangema constituencies.

The leaders spoke as residents protested at proposals to include sections of Murarandia and Gaturi to Kangema and Mathioya districts respectively.

Kangema residents led by Kennedy Wanjohi said they will reject any bid to include Murarandia in the area as the proposal was not reflective of their wishes.

Kangema residents exonerated Cabinet Minister John Michuki against accusations that he was responsible for the inclusion of Murarandia to Kangema in order to undermine Kiharu Division.

In Mathioya leaders petitioned IEBC to exclude Gaturi within their constituency boundary.

Leaders who included Kiharu MP Muturi Mwangi, Elias Mbau (Maragua), Clement Wambugu (Mathioya), Maina Kamau (Kandara) and Jamleck Kamau (Kigumo) united in their calls to have Kiharu split into two.

Former Members of Parliament led by Joseph Kamotho (Mathioya) Ngenye Kariuki (Kiharu and Ambassador Kembi Gitura also expressed similar sentiments saying the split of Kiharu Constituency was long overdue.

Kilifi leaders press for county land offices

By BEKADZO TONDO

LEADERS in Kilifi County plan to press for the establishment of land commissions in each of the 47 counties to augment services offered by the national land commission and find lasting solutions to the land ownership problems in the country.

The leaders intend to file a petition with the government to push for the formation of the land commissions at the county level. They argue that allowing land transactions and allocations to be handled from the central government through the national land commission will leave gaps open for abuse by influential people.

Led by Mr. Henry Kalinga from Malindi, the leaders say that people at the county level are better placed to articulate their land problems and therefore must be allowed to handle land issues within their jurisdiction.

"Counties must be allowed to establish their land commissions if the government is to amicably address

the perennial land ownership problem which has seen buildings worth billions of shillings being demolished for lack of genuine title deeds," adds Mr. Kalinga.

The leaders made the remarks at Mnarani club in Kilifi where they had converged to discuss issues of good governance and how to audit individuals aspiring for leadership positions.

Mr. Kalinga laments that about 2 million people in Coast region were living as squatters in their own land as title deeds are being held by other people who have irregularly acquired the vital documents.

"The squatter problem in Kilifi county and Coast province in general will be something of the past if the county governments form their own land commissions to supplement the work of the national land commission," said Kalinga.

The director of Community Aid International Mr. Joseph Kwaka said members of the public have the constitutional right to question the gov-

ernment on critical issues such as land which is widely regarded as a source of wealth.

Mr. Kwaka said land is a thorny issue not only in Coast Province but also in the entire nation and supported the leaders in Kilifi County for advocating for the creation of land commission in each county.

"The Constitution has empowered Kenyans to petition the government on matters they feel aggrieved about and I strongly support the move by the leaders in Kilifi county to press for the creation of land commissions to directly deal with land matters at the grassroots" said Mr. Kwaka.

He said the residents have the rights to carry social audits on their political leaders to ensure they do not misuse their powers to enrich themselves and leave them poor as has been the case since independence.

"Our politicians can only commit to serving their people better if the residents audit their performance on a regular basis," said Mr. Kwaka.

NEMA threatens to shut down Kilifi hospital

By **BEKADZO TONDO**

THE National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) has threatened to shut down Kilifi District hospital to pave way for repairs of the dilapidated sewerage tanks.

The officer in charge of NEMA in Kilifi district Mr. Bashir Salim says the hospital's sewerage tank has burst and thus the raw waste from the facility has been draining to water pipes serving the neighbouring areas inhabited by human beings.

Mr. Salim said the spillage posed health risks to the residents living adjacent to the hospital and must be repaired immediately.

"A spot by our office on the hospital sewerage system and its tanks exposed the deplorable conditions which must be addressed without delay. We have instructed the hospital management to repair the burst sewer or face closure," said Mr Salim.

Kilifi District Medical Officer of health Dr David Mulewa confirmed that the sewerage tanks at the hospital were in bad shape and required repairs.

"The sewerage tanks and its drainage system are in horrible conditions and require urgent repairs to avoid outbreak of waterborne diseases to the residents living around the hospital," said Dr Mulewa.

Speaking to The Link in his office, Dr Mulewa said the hospital sewerage tank and its general system had worn out as it was built many years ago.

"Our hospital sewerage tanks and its drainage system is old as it was built many years ago and therefore needed urgent repairs or new ones built immediately to avoid its fre-

quent breaks ups," said Dr Mulewa.

The MOH further said the capacity of the tank was small as it was designed to serve small quantity of both human and general wastes generated from the hospital and said since the hospital was expanded a few years ago, it needs bigger sewerage tanks and improved drainage system.

"The sewerage tank has been overstretched as it had been designed to accommodate little waste both from the human and effluent generated from the hospital operations and therefore it lacks the ca-

capacity to hold the current waste from the quick growing health center," said Dr.Mulewa.

Dr Mulewa said the hospital requires at least Kshs.300, 000 to re empty the sewerage tanks in every two weeks.

"The hospital has been spending about Kshs 300,000 in every two weeks to re empty the sewerage tank and that is a lot of money which the hospital is finding too hard to raise all the time," said Dr Mulewa

Mr. Salim feared that residents living adjacent to the hospital could contract diseases like cholera as the

wastes spills freely to their residing areas.

He further said the residents have been using effluent from the burst sewer to irrigate their crops like vegetable and paw paws saying such food from such plants could be hazardous to health.

Dr Mulewa said lack of a works officer at the hospital has made it difficult to repair the sewer and keep it in good conditions all the time.

He noted that the tank's water level has become saturated and therefore it could not hold more wastes thus the frequent overflows.



One of the sewerage tanks to be repaired.

Kitui leaders oppose boundaries report

By **PETER MUTUKU**

LEADERS in Kitui County are strongly opposed to the just released report by the Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC) on the delimitation of constituencies and wards in the area.

The leaders say that boundaries of proposed Mwingi Central and Kitui Rural are not reflective of their recommendations to the disbanded Ligale led Interim Independent Boundary Review Commission (IIBRC) and therefore was likely to alienate the community in terms of representation and resource redistribution.

Speaking during public hearings on electoral boundaries at the Kitui Multi Purpose Training centre, the leaders told Commissioner Albert Bwire that the area has been given a raw deal and required two more constituencies to guarantee proper representation envisaged in the constitution.

The leaders spoke as Water Minister Charity Ngilu, Defence Assistant Minister David Musila, MPs Charles Nyamai (Kitui West), Isaac Muoki (Kitui South) and Kiema Kilonzo (Mutito) supported the creation of additional constituencies in the area saying they will ensure increased representation of the local residents.

The MPs however protested at the proposed 39 county assembly wards which they insisted had contravened Article 188 (2) of the constitution on representation and did not reflect aspirations of the people.

Cabinet Minister Ngilu however said that the boundaries of the proposed Kitui Rural Constituency should be retained as proposed.

However, other leaders who included Kitui South MP strongly differed with the proposal saying that the boundaries should be reviewed in a way that is sensitive to the aspirations of the people in order to address historical injustices.

"My constituents have been marginalized by successive regimes since independence and thus the need to correct the injustices once and for all," said the said.

Musila on other hand demanded that the IEBC reviews the boundaries to reflect wishes of the people.

Mr Bwire assured the residents that their petitions will be considered during the compilation of the final report.

Taita youth trained in business skills

By **BRIGHTON KAZUNGU**

MORE than 30 youth groups in Taita district, Taita Taveta County, have been trained by the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs (MOYAS) on prudent management of their business enterprises.

The training held at Wundanyi County Council Hall focused on capital dynamics, book keeping, business planning and revenue projection to ensure success of the projects.

Most group members admitted they had had limited knowledge on business and project management and termed the training as a gift. Mr. Jacob Mwambela, the secretary of Mwanda Youth Bunge, said he was confident he would manage his business better as the training opened eyes to opportunities he had been missing.

"It was a momentous event for me as I have realized what it means to run a business. I will implement the lessons and hope to start seeing the outcome soon," he said.

Mwatate District Youth Officer, Mr. Alex Ojango, urged the groups to put into practice skills they had acquired at the workshop.

"The knowledge that has been passed will be the best tool to empower you. Put it into application and spread it to the others to benefit more youth in this county," he said.

Officials from the Youth Enterprise Development Fund (YEDF) appealed to the groups to apply for loans from

the funds and initiate projects for their self betterment. Youth groups from the area have been criticized for not being proactive in soliciting for loans.

A trainer, Mr. Julius Mwangi, urged the groups to aspire for innovation and creativity. "Be aggressive and pursue the goals you have set out with determination. This training has been about equipping you with what you need to become better people," he said.

Meanwhile, fishermen in Lamu are poised to triple their production from the current 2,500 to over 8,000 metric tonnes annually once the Government completes the construction of Kshs 14 million cold storage plant at Faza in Lamu East.

Fish farmers are optimistic that the completion of the Faza Fish Processing Plant will boost their earnings from Kshs 8 million to Kshs 40 million per annum.

The plant has capacity to process 8 tonnes of fish daily once it becomes operational besides increasing the fishermen's bargaining power by cooling their products thus increasing the shelf life and value of the catch.

Lamu County Fisheries Officer, Mr Simon Komu says that fishermen in the area will reap highly as the plant has been equipped with storage facilities and farmers will no longer be forced to sell their produce at throw away prices to agents who have been exploiting them.

He says that the completion of the facility will ensure ice preservation



Dr. Paul Otuoma, Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports

leading to improved prices that are expected to improve fortunes for the fishermen, majority of whom have suffered high poverty levels.

Faza Fish plant will produce both flake and block ice which will enable fishermen to preserve thousands of kilogrammes of fish for value addition," he said.

The two types of ice are sourced from Mombasa which is hundreds of kilometers away hindering many fishermen from actively engaging in activities due to prohibitive costs.

The fisheries officer said the new contractor has been installing ice processing machines to replace faulty ones that were installed by another contractor during the 2008/2009 financial year when construction work

started.

The Faza Fishermen Cooperative society which will manage the plant will put in place an organized marketing structure for the catch and improve fishermen's way of life through value addition.

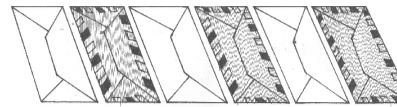
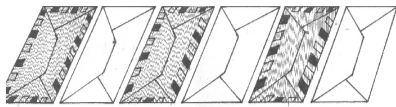
Elsewhere Tana River County Drought Management Officer, Mr. Omar Morowa, wants residents living in flood-prone areas along river Tana to move to the highland areas to avoid being swept by flooding waters.

Speaking at Hola DC's office recently during the District Environment Committee meeting, Mr. Morowa said he had received emergency calls from the KENGEN Communication Officer indicating that the power generating company will open gates for Masinga and Kiambere dams due to over-accumulation of the dams following the heavy rains that have pounded the Country.

He appealed to chiefs, assistant chiefs and village elders to ensure all residents immediately move to safer areas.

Mr. Morowa identified the highlands areas as Minjila in Garsen, Bilbil in Bura division, Chewani, Laimi and Wachakone areas, in Galole Division. Those who are unable to reach the safer areas should move to the nearest chief's camp for assistance.

He said about 150 hectares of maize, green grams, tomatoes have been washed away in Shirikisho and Mwina locations.



Special treatment to public school pupils depraved

THE Government discriminatory criterion used in selecting pupils to join national secondary schools is creating the impression that academies perform very well in the national exams because they admit bright pupils.

I work in a private academy where we admit pupils in beginner class (pre-primary) just like in public primary schools. These learners enroll in this class when they are barely three years. At this age there are no interviews to ascertain the entry behaviour of the child. We just admit the little baby. The little child undergo the normal KIE curriculum as is clearly stipulated in the syllabus.

As the child grows it is thoroughly prepared for KCPE that comes after eight years of primary education. At the end of the primary course, the pupil in an academy outshines his counterpart at public primary school. The teachers in both schools trained in the same colleges. So, what happens between the two schools?

As a school policy serious academies demand that each teacher buys own copies of syllabus books — they do not just use the library copies, unlike the situation in most public schools, where the library copy is even sometimes hard to come by. The library copies are only used as reference materials never to leave the library!

Teachers in public schools should borrow a leaf from their colleagues in academies — after all they take their kids to these academies because they expect the to excel.

Most academies have invested heavily in systems and structures that enable us remain on target especially as far as the syllabus coverage is concerned. There is a template specifically designed to track weekly syllabus coverage. Our colleagues in public schools hardly complete the syllabus by the time KCPE comes.

Learners in these schools are, therefore, forever affected by learning gaps as a result of failure to cover the syllabus in their lower classes. They are simply 'pushed' to the next classes because the year has ended. To them the end of a year marks 'completion' of the syllabus.

I do not think pupils in public primary schools deserve preferential treatment at the expense of their colleagues at academies. This encourages laziness and makes the hard working teachers in academies feel shortchanged. Kneec should strive to make KCPE a fair game. Pupils deserve same treatment regardless of the schools they go to.

Ashford Kimani,
via e-mail

Miserably, it's no longer a crime to insult the modesty of a woman in Kenya

UP to about five years ago, it was a crime to insult the modesty of any woman under the Penal Code introduced in 1930, and even under the Indian Penal Code which it replaced.

The crime, punishable by a year in jail, was supplanted by the Sexual Offences Act in 2006, leaving a regrettable void.

The Act repealed section 144(3) of the Penal Code which made it a misdemeanour "to insult the modesty of any woman or girl". It was based on the morality of Victorian England but it served Kenyan women well.

Section 144(3) criminalised sexually insulting, harassing or tormenting a woman. For example, you could not call a woman a prostitute or loose or make obscene gestures and catcalls, or pester her for sex, without legal consequences. It would have been a misdemeanour, a crime that is legally less serious than a felony such as murder and arson.

All the same, for the women victims, psychologically and emotionally, the sexual insults were, and still are, no "less serious" than a felony as they touch on their very dignity and violate their rights.

The Sexual Offences Act falls short of the provisions of section 144(3). It leaves women helpless in a patriarchal culture which holds that the body of a woman belongs to man.

The Act, modern as it is, only criminalises sexual harassment by a person "in a position of authority or holding public office", and then only if that person makes the sexual advances or requests "persistently", and if he knows, or has reasonable grounds to know, the advances or requests are unwelcome.

The Act also criminalises "indecent act", defined as "an unlawful intentional act which causes any contact between any part of the body of a person with the genital organs, breasts or buttocks of another, or exposure or display of any pornographic material



Courts: The Sexual Offences Act sometimes hinders courts from punishing sex pests despite their obnoxious behaviour.

to any person against his or her will."

It is punishable by imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or a fine not exceeding Kshs.50,000, or both, if committed with an adult.

Though section 144(3) did not define what it means to "insult the modesty of any woman", courts punished such acts as obscene catcalls, calling a woman a harlot, exposing one's genitals to a woman, writing letters making indecent overtures and displaying pornographic material to a woman.

Today, courts can only take on such acts if they amount to a breach of public peace, or if they are said to defame the woman, as in the case of Anisia Kagwiria Mungania vs Lucy Gakanyi Kirema.

Ms. Mungania claimed Ms. Kirema called her, in Kimeru, a prostitute and uncircumcised. The words, she said, were uttered in the presence of other people, including children, and her reputation was injured and, as a result, children disrespected her. Tigania district magistrate D.J. Nyaga awarded Ms. Mungania Kshs.10,000 in general damages. However, Ms. Kirema appealed to the High Court in Meru and Justice Mary Kasango

quashed the award and conviction on May 7, 2010.

Many people are now unhappy that anybody can sexually pester, harass, bait, torment, tease, taunt and bug women, without legal consequences. One of them is chief magistrate Kiarie Waweru Kiarie. In an article, "The Sexual Offences Act: Omissions and Ambiguities", in the current issue of the *Kenya Law Review Journal*, he says section 144(3) played "a very central role" in checking conduct that is not covered in the definition of "indecent act" in the sexual Offences Act.

He says he recently tried a case where a man harassed a 12-year-old by pestering her to have sex with him until she ran away from home. Since the Sexual Offences Act does not cater for such acts, he says he had no option but to acquit the man "in spite of his obnoxious conduct," Mr. Kiarie concludes, rightly, that the Sexual Offences Act should be amended to incorporate the provisions of the revoked Section 144(3) of the Penal Code.

Peter Mwaura,
via e-mail

Sudan should be given chance to defend itself

I REFER the article by Mr. Mutuma Mathiu regarding the case against Sudan in the US. I followed the case in which Sudan was asked to pay Nairobi bomb blast victims.

This is the second time the Sudanese Government is on trial. It comes after the case of the American warship, the *USS Cole*.

I wonder how Mr. Mathiu judges a case without giving the accused a chance to defend himself. It seems funny the prosecutor recited his allegations against an innocent state that does not even know what the American court was talking about.

I am sure there are many people playing this game and fabricated these allegations against Iran and Sudan.

They want to find a scapegoat to appease their voters before the presidential election in 2012.

You remember the case of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and many other similar cases raised by the Western media. They had no ground to be based on let alone to be believed. They are politically motivated agenda.

The Security Council adopted a resolution against Iraq but ultimately the truth prevailed. All these allegations were false and fabricated by the CIA. Fortunately Sudan has no assets in USA to be blocked to compensate those US victims.

As a Sudanese, I denounce terrorism and consider peace and good neighbourliness with our friends in Kenya as essential. Let us spread these values among our people.

Hassan Ali Osman,
Sudan Embassy,
Via e-mail.





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

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Nyeri, Kieni leaders demand more constituencies

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

NYERI County leaders have rejected the report by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) on delimitation of constituencies and wards and called for the creation of additional two new constituencies.

The MPs who included Kabando wa Kabando (Mukurwe-ini), Francis Nyammo (Tetu), Esther Murugi (Nyeri Town), Ephraim Maina (Mathira) and Nemesyus Warugongo (Kieni) told IEBC that Kieni and Mathira constituencies must be split into two each.

The leaders united in their grievances and produced one memorandum which was read by Special Programmes Minister who is also the Nyeri Town MP Esther Murugi.

She said the memorandum had the blessing of Othaya MP who is President Mwai Kibaki.

She told Commissioner Thomas Letangule who headed the IEBC team at Information Hall that the county needs two extra constituencies to make them eight from the current six.

The five MPs who were present during the presentation however asked IEBC to take their plea seriously and ignore proposals by the Ligale team which visited Nyeri last year.

"We are in dire need of the two constituencies. The year 2009 census report was erroneous since our population is big than what was indicated in the report. The two constituencies qualify for delimitation," said Murugi.

She argued that Kieni Constituency is bigger than the entire Kirinyaga County, Maragua district and Kiambu district.

"Kieni is more than twice the size of Nairobi County. It is also bigger than Kakamega County, Kisumu County, Nithi County, Embu County, Trans Nzoia County, Bomet County and all the districts in Kisii.

However, the MPs hoped that the public hearing was not just a gimmick to hoodwink the public adding that the Ligale report and Oparanya census report should be ignored as

they do not give a clear picture of the scenario on the ground.

Commissioner Letangule said they will collect all the views from around the country to come up with a report so that they can make necessary changes.

"We are not here for a Public Relations exercise. We are not here to rubber stamp the Ligale report," he added. He said they have powers to propose for more constituencies and the Ligale report was just a primary report to guide them.

The leaders vowed to move to court and stage demonstrations if they are denied two extra constituencies.

At the same time Kieni leaders have vowed to move to court if their expansive constituency is not split into two by the commission on boundaries.

The leaders who met at Chaka trading centre recently said that since the Independent Electoral Boundaries Commission (IEBC) collected views from the wananchi

last year and denied them another constituency, they will look for a team of lawyers to move to court soon.

They said they will not rest until 'justice is done.'

The leaders who included area MP Nemesyus Warugongo said it was very much unfair to deny them a new constituency despite their land mass being 52 per cent of the Nyeri County.

"The IEBC say we have a deficit of 10,000 people and yet Solio Settlement Scheme has over 20,000 who were counted on the side of Laikipia County and yet they belong to us administratively," said Warugongo.

Kieni Parliamentary Aspirant Mathenge wa Simon said the IEBC relied on wrong information from the word go since the area is a semi arid area.

"The whole report is based on provinces instead of regions as per the new constitution. Definitely we shall have to move to court before

the expiry of 30 days," said Keega.

A local leader Machira Gichohi noted that they have over 175,000 people and yet they needed 186,000 people population adding that those remaining were those in Solio Ranch Settlement Scheme.

Nyeri County Council chairman Wachira Maina lamented that it was unfair and unjust since Kieni has over 200,000 people but has since migrated to other areas for greener pastures.

Njoroge Wainaina wondered what protected constituencies meant adding that Kieni badly deserves an extra constituency

They were speaking during a public hearing meeting at Chaka grounds which was chaired by Kieni Constituency elections coordinator James Maingi Mwangi.

A resident of Solio Settlement Scheme, Samuel Muhoro expressed his shock that all the views they suggested to the commission when they visited Nyeri were never reflected in the report.



Nyeri County MPs from left Kabando wa Kabando (Mukurwe-ini), Francis Nyammo (Tetu), Esther Murugi (Nyeri Town), Ephraim Maina (Mathira) and Nemesyus Warugongo (Kieni) during the IEBC public hearing at Nyeri town recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

By BEKADZO TONDO

CIVIL society organizations in Kilifi County plan to come up with criteria to vet leaders aspiring for elective positions in the area.

The organizations working under the Kilifi civil society network intend to establish a panel comprising of experts to vet individuals aspiring for leadership positions.

The experts who are to include academicians and political experts are to come up with a team that is ready to work with local people to bring development in the region.

The network says that aspirants who fail to appear before the panel will be blacklisted and voters urged to reject them at the ballot.

The organizations vowed to em-

bark on elaborate civic education campaigns at the ward level to sensitize the electorate on virtues of good leadership that must be inculcated in the yet to be formed county governments.

The CSOs made the resolution moments after they launched a strategic plan to guide in the development of the county ahead of the next General Elections. Mr. Mzungu Ngoma who is the director of Integrated for Participatory Development (IPD), a local Non Governmental Organization (NGO), expressed the need to put in place structures that will accelerate development in the county.

"The County Government is ex-

pected to become operational if the General Elections are held this year and it will be devastating for us in Kilifi County if we will not have structures in place to guide leaders in the development of our region," said Mr. Ngoma.

Mr. Ngoma encouraged the locals to identify the untapped resources within the county to ensure their full exploitation.

He said the Kilifi County and the entire coast region had lagged behind in development since independence as local leaders lacked any plans to guide them in the development of the area.

"Kilifi County must be careful not

to repeat past mistakes by identifying key areas that require immediate intervention to transform the area into an economic hub," said Mr. Ngoma.

Another leader Mr. Daniel Mwayaya said Kilifi County cited the tarmacking of the Mariakani-Mavueni road and Mariakani-Bamba road to Kilifi as some of the priority areas that must be addressed to open up the county for business.

"The road network is in a deplorable state and therefore we need leaders who can come up with viable solutions to our problems," said Mr. Mwayaya.

Bahari leaders happy with proposed split

By BEKADZO TONDO

POLITICAL aspirants in Bahari Constituency have welcomed a report by Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) proposing the delimitation of the electoral unit into two.

The aspirants said the proposal has given them an impetus to launch their political campaigns ahead of the General Elections.

According to the IEBC report, Bahari Constituency currently held by Mr. Benedict Gunda is to be split into two.

The report appears to support a proposal by the defunct Interim independent Boundaries Review Commission (IIBRC) headed by Mr. Andrew Ligale which recommended the creation of Kilifi South and Kilifi North constituencies.

Aspirants lined up for the Kilifi South seat include the incumbent MP Gunda, former permanent secretary Rachael Dzombo and a former administrator Mr. Ken Chomga among many others.

Those gunning up for Kilifi North seat include a former loser of the Bahari seat Mr. Joe Tete and a former senior officer at Kenya Ferry Service Mr. Deche Kashero among others.

Speaking to The Link, Mr. Chonga welcomed the IEBC report saying that aspirants now have ample time to prepare for the campaigns.

Mr. Chonga who has been campaigning for the seat for the last four years appealed to voters in Kilifi South constituencies to elect leaders who will steer the constituency into greater heights of development.

"The new constituencies are now official according to the latest reports given by IEBC but the major work now rests on the voters themselves," said Chonga.

The area MP Benedict Gunda played a key role in pushing for the split of the constituency saying it had a big population and the poverty index was high.

Gunda had argued that the high poverty index could be addressed if the current constituency was split adding that leaders could be brought closer to the people.

"The current Bahari constituency is big in size and has a high poverty index which can only be managed by splitting the electoral unit to bring leadership closer to the people and address the poverty problems," said Gunda

Further leaders in Kaloleni constituency also praised IEBC for dividing the constituency into two to create Kaloleni and Rabai constituencies.

Mrs. Patience Chome said the creation of the new constituency will make the area develop faster as government resources budgeted for the area will go up.

Mrs. Chome who has declared her interest to vie for the position of a governor in Kilifi county urged voters to change their tactic of elections and give women powers.

A senate aspirant Naomi Sidi urged the electorate to vote wisely and elect women as men had failed to deliver in the past 40 years.

Angry parents storm school, eject teachers

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

HUNDREDS of parents of Muruguru Primary School in Nyeri County recently stormed the school and ejected the school head over poor performance in the KCPE results.

The irate parents who held demonstration at the school after they were called for a parents meeting rejected the call from the area District Education Officer Wilfred Gaichu to allow dialogue between them and the head teacher and instead insisted that he must leave the school immediately.

"We are here for one reason to eject the head teacher and allow our children to continue learning, we are not here for any dialogue since the teacher has not been respecting us", said a parent Jacob Wandere.

They claimed that the nursery school was closed due to poor management during the tenure of the current head teacher Fredrick Mathangani adding that "We are worried that even the nursery school teachers were not paid their dues thus paralyzing operations at the facility."

They protested that they are fed up with the head teacher urging the DEO to transfer him immediately.

Armed police officers were called to beef up security as the teacher got exit.

The parents claimed that since Mathangani was posted into the school several operations have stalled.

They said school water and some of the board teachers have not been paid.

They claimed that the head teacher has not convened a meeting to deliberate on the issue over the past one year adding that performance of the school has dropped compared to other years.

Nyeri KNUT Executive Secretary Mutahi Kahiga who tried to calm down irked parents accused the government for hiring teachers with no experience.

Kahiga said several teachers who have been sent in several schools in the area have no skills of learning the school adding that his colleague in the school was a financial manager.

"We urge parents to calm down and deliberate on the issues that are affecting them in the school for the sake of their children," said Kahiga.

The irate parents also accused the

head teacher of exaggerating some of the exam fees many saying that the teacher does not give receipt after they make payments.

After the exit of the head teacher, parents latter cooled down where they were addressed by local district education officer Wilfred Gaichu who promised to call another meeting soon to discuss the way forward.



Angry parents of Muruguru Primary school in Nyeri County after they stormed the school recently over poor performances. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Councilors accused of sabotaging sugar factory

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

A SECTION of leaders from Busia are opposed to plans by West Kenya Sugar Company to set up a weighbridge in the area saying this could destabilize cane farming.

The sugar zone leaders led by the vice-chairman of Western Development Initiative Association Joseph Barasa, cane growers spokesman Venshwa Okwara and area councillor Lucas Wakuloba have vowed to mobilize farmers into rejecting the project.

Barasa says the move by West Kenya Sugar Company is highly suspicious and meant to create serious rifts between cane farmers and the giant Mumias sugar company which has contracted local farmers.

The sugar zone leaders argue that the construction of the weighbridge at Tangakona area beats logic since the miller is based in Kakamega County which is more than triple the distance from Mumias Sugar factory.

"If the plan succeeds, West Kenya Sugar Company will be transporting sugarcane right through the Mumias Sugar belt zone in Busia and this could result in poaching of farmers contracted to supply cane to Mumias sugar factory from Busia sugar zone

where the company has invested heavily over the years in the development of cane," said the sugar zone leaders.

The other issue that raises concern is how the sugar company intends to gain from the venture when transportation cost alone is likely to eat up on all the proceeds accruing from the long distance involved and the higher prices the company is purportedly going to pay sugar cane farmers per tonne of cane delivered at the buying centre.

"What the sugarcane farmers in the county want at the moment is non other than the eagerly awaited sugar factory, not a weighbridge," they said, adding that West Kenya Sugar Company is trailing in the list of companies who had applied to the Kenya Sugar Board for a license to construct a sugar factory.

The sugar zone leaders at the same time said that for nearly two years, West Kenya Sugar Company has been embroiled in bitter rivalry with Butali Sugar Company over market share after farmers ditched the former after decades of neglect in undertaking cane development.

They added that sugarcane farmers in the area will continue to be served by the existing weighbridge built by



PM Raila Odinga

Mumias Sugar Company which they said is ready to leave once farmers build their own factory.

The Sugar Cane Zone leaders spokesman on the other hand urged cane farmers in the region not to allow themselves to be misled by people out to destroy cane farming in the region.

"As stakeholders in the sugar in-

dustry, we are appealing to the Prime Minister Raila Odinga through the Ministry of Agriculture and the Kenya Sugar Board to intervene as a matter of urgency and order West Kenya Sugar Company to halt the planned construction of a weighbridge in Busia because the move is likely to cause a lot of confusion," they said.

Police obtains eviction orders against squatters

By BEKADZO TONDO

SQUATTERS residing on land earmarked for the construction of the Kilifi police headquarters are set for eviction after the police obtained a letter of allotment.

Kilifi OCPD Mr. Clement Wangai confirmed that the ministry of lands had issued a letter of allotment on the 1.66 hectares of land situated at the junction to Kilifi town a few meters from the Kilifi Bridge. "We have obtained the letter of offer for the piece of land which had been earmarked for the construction of the police headquarters and we are soon going to obtain a title deed," said Mr. Wangai.

He further said they have received the plot development plan following an approval by the Ministry of Land which has allocated them plan number 126 and the land allotment letter number 209163\8\56.

The police boos said they will embark on the development once they get the land title deed and funds. Mr. Wangai said according to the past national census about 23 household reside on the land which by then had 101 building structures.

However the planned eviction has been opposed by local leaders who have demanded that the government looks for an alternative price of land to build the police headquarters. The leaders led by Bahari MP Mr. Benedict Gunda said it was not fair for the government to evict the squatters who have lived on the piece of land for many years. "My people have been living on this piece of land for many years and it will be unfair if they will be evicted from the land to pave way for the construction of a police headquarters," Gunda. The MP suggested that the government identify another piece of land to put up the police headquarters and leave the squatters on the current plot.

But, the OCPD said the only way to address the problem was for the leaders to get another piece of land and resettle the squatters and not the other way round.

Meanwhile, the chairlady of Kilifi town council Esther Kache and local councilors have vowed to reclaim irregularly acquired land and revert the plots for public use.

Mrs. Kache claimed that most of the public utility plots in Kilifi have been grabbed by prominent people who she said have 14 days to surrender them or face forceful eviction.

"Most of public utility plots in Kilifi have been grabbed by prominent people in the government whom we know and we are kindly urging them to return the plots," said Kache. Last year, the chairlady clashed with an Asian businessman over a 3 acre piece of land at the Kilifi creek near the Kilifi district headquarters which he claimed to have bought in 2009.

However, Mrs. Kache claimed that the piece of land belonged to the council and it had officially allocated the plot to a youth group in Kilifi which established recreational facility at the site. "This piece of land officially belongs to Kilifi town council and we recently allocated to a group of youth in Kilifi who have since developed a recreational center and the information you are giving me is misleading," she asserted.

The area OCPD had to intervene by asking both the Asian businessman and the Kilifi town council to produce papers to justify their ownership to the plot.

PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

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Use media reports with caution

ITRAVEL extensively in Kenya both in my professional and private capacities. Hence I can tell you that even if the traffic can be sinister, the beautiful scenery keeps your mind at peace and the colourful painted houses along the way, covered with commercials from different products, make the trips very informative and interesting. For instance, a commercial that has always amazed me is from one of Kenya's leading national newspapers. The amazement is not because I think it is innovative or funny, I am amazed because the newspaper claims to be "The truth". In my opinion no newspaper can claim to report the truth. Truth is very subjective. If I would write an article about an event, I would report my subjective observation of what took place. To make my article more objective, I could ask other people who took part in the event how their experiences were, and add that to my article. How-

MANAGER'S COLUMN



By
**HANNA
CARLSSON**

ever, still, I cannot with certainty tell the reader that this is the truth. In most offices in Kenya, with more than four employees, you will find both leading national newspapers. The reason may be that the employees have different preferences, also that historically one of the newspapers would be pro-government while the other one would be more critical. Also, the owners of the newspaper influence the content. In Europe, depending on the editor or the owners, newspapers can among others be conservative, liberal, social or non-political. They will still report about the same events but write with their ideological lenses. In Kenya, I believe that the main reason to have both newspapers in an organization

working in fields closely connected to human rights or an academic institution are that the newspapers capture different perspectives on the same issue. Also the journalists are influenced by their subjective opinion when writing and trying to find biases which will attract the reader. For some of us, this is basic knowledge, for others it's not. If I was brought up in an area where the national newspaper reached two days after publication, I would most probably believe that everything written in the newspaper was the gospel truth.

The year 2012 is a very important year for Kenya and the newspapers will have many vital topics to report about. The main topics in the month of January was the confirmation of the ICC hearings, the ruling from the supreme court on the election day, and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commissions' preliminary report on the first review relating to the delimitation of constituency boundaries and wards. I believe that these topics will be fur-

ther deliberated upon in both print and electronic media in the next coming months. Based on what I have written above, I want to encourage you as a reader to read newspapers with a critical eye. Also, when friends retell stories that they have either read or heard, I ask you to be vigilant, use your critical thinking and try to find other sources that are sharing the same information before you embrace and further retell what you have heard. By being observant with the so called news we share, we can prevent unnecessary tension and subsequently violence.

Meanwhile, I am pleased to inform you that the Partnership for Peace Project was granted a six month extension which means that we will have further activities on the ground starting in February. We will continue to strengthen our regional peace-building networks and in hot-spot areas organize community dialogues to discuss preventive measures but also find solutions to brewing tension.

The writer is the International Project Manager of the Partnership for Peace Project. For comments or suggestions write to:
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Youth told to use social networks for their rights

BY **JANE MURUTU**

IT was awe and joy as the youth gathered at the Kenya Red Cross hall on 14th January 2012 for the first regional human rights youth parliament in Rift Valley. The parliament brought 80 youths organized by the Kenya Muslim Youth Alliance. A host of other stakeholders were in attendance. They included representatives of the Provincial Administration, Police, Provincial Peace Forum, Center for Democracy and Good Governance (CEDGG), Nakuru Youth Forum, Mid Rift Human Rights Network and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. The ob-

jective of the parliament was to discuss emerging human rights issues, challenges and strategies for enhancing respect of human rights in Rift Valley.

The meeting commenced with the national anthem and then hinged on the topic on human rights as enshrined in the Constitution. Mr. Joseph Omondio of Mid Rift Human Rights Network talked about article 55 of the constitution that says that the state shall take measure, like affirmative action to ensure that the youth get opportunities to be represented and participate in among others the political sphere of life. He also cited article 177 (1) that captures the representation of different groups in a county assembly and particular people

with disability and the youth.

The facilitator elaborated about article 27 of the constitution, which deals with Equality and Freedom from discrimination, commenting that nobody should be discriminated which includes the youth. The participants were urged to be very vocal for their rights to be respected and upheld.

The participants were also taken through article 43 of the constitution, which talks about Economic and Social rights. They lamented that the lords of impunity had turned majority of this country's citizens to beggars yet with the vast resources that the country has, a lot can be achieved and

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Borabu-Sotik border residents preach peace

By **BOB OMBATI**

POLITICIANS and other peace groups along Borabu-Sotik border have vowed to spearhead peace talks and campaigns ahead of this year's general election to enhance peaceful co-existence among border communities.

The leaders who attended a peace meeting at Chepilat shopping centre along the common border asked the provincial administration to curb periodic cross border cattle rustling that creates conflicts and inflames intertribal tension and clashes.

Leaders from Gusii and Kipsigis communities, led by Abagusii Cultural and development council chairman, James Araka Matundura and his Kipsigis counterpart, Josiah arap Sang said they will never incite their communities against each other over politics.

Eldoret North Member of Parliament, William Ruto and his NyaribariMasaba counterpart, Prof. Sam Ongeru decried the events that characterised the disputed 2007 presidential poll results.

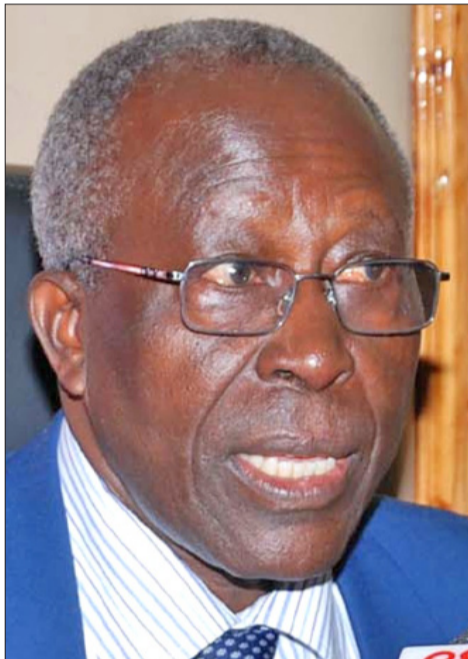
They noted that the Gusii and Kalenjin communities have co-existed peacefully for a long time and had a common ancestry, saying unity and peace should be restored and fostered to enhance national cohesion.

Sang said the council of elders from both communities had embarked on peace meetings to reunite the communities torn apart after the clashes, stressing that peace was imperative for any nation to realize any meaningful social, economic and political development.

Sang said they wanted Kenyans along the common borders to go the polls united and continue partnering in businesses, education, cultural and other social activities to cement their relationships.

He said the peace initiative was not a political process and the elders were not aligned to any political party and politicians and urged politicians to stop politicizing activities spearheaded by elders, saying such acts may derail the process.

"Individual council members can be-



Prof. Ongeru

long to various political parties and support various politicians but they cannot mix it with the peace initiative meant to heal and reconcile tribes after the chaotic 2007 polls," said Sang.

Matundura said God had chosen the two tribes to share a common border, adding that it was necessary for them to co-exist peacefully since they were bonded through marriages, businesses, education and shared churches along the border.

He said the council of elders had been mandated by the communities to initiate and spearhead peace talks which, he noted will culminate in the sharing of a common meal along the border and sporting activities to seal the peace deal.

Matundura lamented that some individuals were grumbling over the boundary between the Kipsigis and the Kisii, saying the colonialists marked it and therefore it should be respected by members of both communities.

"We have today agreed to jointly support the peace talks, end cattle rustling and respect our tribal boundaries to enhance healing, reconciliation, peace and unity between the two communities,"



Mr. Ruto

said Matundura.

Women and youth leaders from two communities said they will preach peace and expose anybody involved in cattle rustling to curb the vice which has impoverished border residents.

Former MaendeleoYaWanawake chairperson, Wilkista Onsando and Kalenjin elder Rebecca Laboso urged parents to inculcate moral values among their children and discourage them from engaging in cattle rustling which sparked tensions and violence along the common border.

The leaders, who addressed the peace meeting urged parents to teach their children about patriotism at a tender age to promote national unity, adding cattle rustlers should be cursed, arrested and prosecuted as criminals.

"This is a new beginning. We cannot change history. We have to co-exist peacefully said Onsando, adding that women were peace makers and would not allow their children and husbands to be involved in clashes which subjected women and children to much suffering.

He called for the promotion of joint social activities to enhance harmony.

Sotik district youth leader, RaelMuta-

hi, and her Borabu counterpart, Leonard Okari said they will mobilize youths not to be misused by politicians during the electioneering year to cause violence.

They said they were ready to be involved in peace building and not to be wasted by unscrupulous politicians as agents of violence, as this led to bloodshed and bad relationship between communities.

Okari said that youths will vote in the 2012 general poll, return home and wait for the results adding that they will not go to the streets to cause chaos over the outcome.

"Youths will not be incited to violence by throwing stones at each other. That is history as we mark the new era of peace, responsible and accountable leadership," said Okari, stressing peace was an engine for development.

Mutahi urged the leaders to help set up a talent academy along the common border to help youths from the two communities interact and exploit their talent to improve their welfare.

She said youths will follow the footsteps of the council of elders in enhancing peace and unity between the two communities, which, she noted have co-existed peacefully since independence.

The youth asked leaders to set up industries and factories along the border and in their communities to add value to the agricultural produce and create jobs to enable them eke out a living.

MPs Dr. Robert Monda (NyaribariChache), Wilfred Ombui (North Mugirango Borabu), Richard Onyonka (KitutuChache), Dr. Joyce Laboso (Sotik), Kazungu Kambi (Kaloleni), Walter Nyambati (KitutuMasaba), George Nyamweya (nominated) and Franklin Bett (Buret) joined hands and echoed peace messages.

Others were David Koech (Mosop), Benjamin Langat (Ainamoi), Joshua Kuttuny (Cherangany), Charles Keter (Belgut), Beatrice Kones (Bomet) Isaac Ruto (Chepalungu), and former MPs, OmweriKebwage (former Wanjare South), Omingo Magara (South Mugirango), NyarangiMoturi (North Mugirango/Borabu).

Youth told to use social networks for their rights

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many rights mentioned in the constitution can be realized. The participants were asked to use the technology at their disposal to post articles that can help fellow youths to learn more about the constitu-

tion, especially on the social networks like Facebook and Twitter. The participants were asked to rethink on economic empowerment and look at ways that benefit them and to avoid being misused by the politicians. He said that the

youths have not strongly come out to demand to know why the government is not employing them yet economic empowerment is part of the agenda 4 of the national accord.

The participants were also taken

through the ICC process. The moderator said that it was important for the participants to know the process of the ICC, especially now that charges of crimes against humanity have been confirmed against four prominent Kenyans.



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The untold story of Rongo politically instigated massacre

By **NANCY AKINYI** and **GEORGE CHACHA**

THE Rongo ODM politically instigated bizarre and grotesque murders were a grim reminder to the deadly post-election violence of 2007/8. It was a scene like from hell; one that nobody wants to see in his or her life. As part of our peace building efforts we felt duty bound to dig out the real reasons behind the deaths.

Hence, on December 26, a very chilly morning; while families in the Migori County were counting and opening Christmas boxes, we decided to visit the affected families to find out the truth. This is the story.

We started off at local hotel in Rongo town. We hurriedly sipped our tea as we went over our plan of action, and immediately boarded a motor bike which we had assigned to ferry us to some distant land which held answers to the numerous questions which must have crossed the minds



Lucas and his 2 wives during the happy days. Inset: Slain Lucas' grave; in his homestead, buried on 24/12/2011

The victims-to-have been, immediately regrouped and came back with vengeance; armed with all sort of weapons they could lay their hands on.

They repulsed the attackers, chasing them back, into sugarcane plantations, cornering them, hacking them, burning them with plastic materials

go district hospital. The body had 4 cuts, and was burnt in several parts.

Asked what message she wishes to send out there both to the government and youths. Margaret, the first wife had this to say, amid tears, "The government owes me an explanation; they have what it takes to detect and prevent such beastly acts before they happen. It is my hope that severe action will be taken against those involved.

But unfortunately prisons are for the poor; politicians are above the law. As a-nobody and a wife to a-nobody, I don't expect anything from the government." The second wife Helen simply said; "I hate politics, I hate politicians".

The need

Kitere area is very tense; with some residents having deserted their homes for fear of arrests and revenge. They feel frustrated that the forthcoming general elections may bear worse consequences to the residents. There is general feeling that the residents both in Asumbi and Rongo-Migori County need dialogue and civic education.

The response

The area residents from both regions are still fresh with reality of "politics of ownership"; whereby individuals want to own an aspirant for personal gains. As such they themselves would be ready to share the pains and loses of the same.

The popular *boda-boda* service in the area reaches so many people per day. Noting that their livelihood depends on this, with some rally, T-shirts/reflectors with message

whispers could be seen amongst the locals; many, with hidden treasure of information we were looking for.

We entered a typical homestead with four grass-thatched houses and one simple tin-roofed. Sitting arrangement common to burials was still evident. Behind one of the grass-thatched was a fresh grave. Together with our "chauffer" we went straight to pay



and the whole area was engulfed in anger, vengeance and death.

By 10 pm word was going around in Nguta's village that the youths who had been ferried from Sinema to Rongo had been killed. Since Nguta had not yet come back by that time, the family claims they decided to call his mobile number using a neighbor's phone. The person who received the call rudely answered: "We have killed him and cut him up; come for your person," and hanged up.

Asked what message she has to the nation, she had this to say, "Every parent invests in her children. The government has failed to protect my investment. I am at a loss."

A brother says that he hopes the government will leave no stone unturned until the mobilizers are apprehended.

The Second homestead

We walked into a modest homestead in Gem Central, Kajulu Sub-Location where yet another victim of political intolerance, Lucas Opana, born in 1961, a father of 12 children from two wives, had just been laid to rest.

According to his family, Lucas had left for church. Then he realized that he was very late and decided to come back home. Shortly after, a caller invited him for the fateful meeting at Sinema.

At 4 pm, a call came in from Rongo to the effect that Lucas has been hacked by machetes and is in critical condition, in Ron-



our respect and prayers by the grave side; with wilting flowers on the grave.

Deceased: Peter Oluoch Nguta, 38, married, and father of three children aged 18 months, 4 and 7 years. Nguta was a charcoal dealer; he left home at 9.00 am on bicycle to collect some debt from a client at the trading center, Sinema in Asumbi, we are told. On the way someone allegedly called on him so that he can join a delegation to meet a politician in Rongo. There were vehicles already assigned to ferry them to Rongo: three Nissan matatus and a red pick-up.

On reaching Kitere Centre, a scuffle for supremacy ensued and there was stampede, fighting and hail of stones from nowhere fell in Kitere.



Mother to deceased, Mama Jenifer Ojwan. Right Wife of the deceased, Jackline and two children, by the Graveside.

of many democratic peace loving Kenyans.

It took us one hour 15 minutes to reach the first destination; Gem Central Location, Genge Sub-Location, Konguenya Village, Homabay District. All heads turned as we snaked along the village road and signs of



The 2 wives (seated) of Lucas Opana, sons and brothers



Lucas' family of 12 children outside his house.

these operators could be crucial resource for the spreading the cohesion message with ease; even as they go about their jobs, which they want to sustain in peace.

The writers report on behalf of Nyanza Peace Partners Alliance.



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PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE

Reforms and transition: Lessons learnt

By **MANASSEH WEPUNDI**

IN December 2011, Saferworld finalized a study titled "Transition and Reform: People's Peacemaking Perspectives on Kenya's Post-2008 Political Crisis and Lessons for the Future," authored by James Ndung'u and Manasseh Wepundi. The study analysed the public's present (or post-2007) conflict concerns and generated scenarios around that.

The findings of the study point to citizens' concerns about the pace of constitutional and institutional reforms. Under the new constitution, the parliament is expected to pass about 50 new laws within a pre-defined timeframe. The fear is that the executive and legislature are bent on weakening the force of the new constitution. Examples that were cited include the inability of the Constitution Implementation Commission (CIC) to ensure full compliance in the formulation of the bill on the Ethics and Anti-Corruption and the Political Parties Act.

A second concern was about the divisive nature of national politics. "Statements made at the national level by politicians from our area have a big impact on relations among the communities on the ground," observed one citizen. People felt that politicians divide communities for their selfish interests. An example that was given was the formation of alliances based on ethnic considerations (e.g. the KKK alliance).

A NOTE FROM THE DESK OF CO-MANAGER

Dear all,
Last year, I got the great news that I had received a Rotary Peace Scholarship; professional certificate option, to study at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, for three months. It is an intensive and practical peace study course where we will have two field trips, one being in Thailand and ten days in Nepal, a small country north of Thailand and the host of the world's highest peak, Mount Everest. Therefore, I wish to inform all our partners and stakeholders that I will be away from 13th February through the 6th May, 2012. When I am back, I hope to share my experiences with you so that my personal professional development can benefit Kenya as a country. More information on how you can become a Rotary peace fellow can be obtained from www.rotary.org.rotarycenters. The application deadline is **1 JULY 2012**.

-Jane Murutu

The on-going ICC proceedings in the absence of a local tribunal to handle middle to lower level perpetrators were cited as a potential cause of future revenge missions. This becomes more real considering the ethnic polarization that has fed the rise of organized gangs like the Mombasa Republican Council.

A third issue regards high unemployment and poverty rates and harsh economic conditions. This fact especially tempts the youth to join organized gangs, which are used to spread political violence.

Fourthly, devolution was seen as having both positive and negative effects. People are concerned about how counties will relate to the central government, especially about the fate of the provincial administration. Questions about how counties will be managed are also sources of tensions. Communities are interested in issues of location of county headquarters, county boundaries, and the relationship between governors and the provincial administration. The public would not want counties governed as isolated units. "We get maize from Nandi while Nandi receives fish and rice from Kisumu. We rely on each other. There is no way we can survive alone," noted a member of the public.

Fifthly, the public wants sufficient focus in analysing the role of politicians and the provincial administration in creating the land problem in Kenya. Beyond making it a campaign issue, politicians are seen to have directly or indirectly contributed to the land crisis.

A sixth concern is the problem of organized gangs, some of which have grown to have secessionist ambitions. Alongside gangs, there



President Kibaki during Promulgation of new Constitution.

is the challenge of the availability of illegal small arms. "The threat of militia and gangs is real. Apart from the bulging numbers of unemployed youth easily getting persuaded to join these groups, the inability of the government to provide security to citizens in some areas of the country, including in the towns is creating an alternative informal security led by militia. Sometimes we rely on these groups to provide security at a fee," said one person.

Last but not least, people are concerned about porous borders, which have contributed to the insecurity in the country. Insecure borders have led to easy access of firearms. If the problem is not controlled, the public is afraid that armed crime will grow in urban areas while rural areas will be subject to more intense inter-communal violence.

According to the study, whatever peace and conflict scenarios play out in future depends on three main issues:

- That the country's future peace and conflict dynamics will be influenced by the strides made in aligning the country's legal, political and economic systems to the new constitutional provisions. The extent to which the country adheres to the new laws and the level of commitment to a just, fair, and democratic system of governance will largely determine how cohesive and progressive Kenyan society becomes.

- Considering that all post-1990 elections have been marred by violence, peaking in 2007/2008, any future build-up to conflict will be slow and discernible provided key indicators are monitored. For example persistent hate speech, clearly ethnicised politics, political elites' conflicts, and exclusionary leadership behaviour would all serve to gradually escalate conflict.

- That national stability will allow further de-escalation of political conflict from a 2007/8 peak. To sustain the conflict de-escalation process however, there is need for stability of the country's legal, governance and economic systems. This will guarantee the requisite environment for enhancing social cohesion without which peace cannot be guaranteed. This would in turn create a strenuous environment for reform and development efforts. And unless Kenya can move beyond mere conflict management towards genuine conflict transformation through inter-group reconciliation and building greater social cohesion, efforts to implement the new constitution will be strained.

The full version of the report can be downloaded from www.partnershipforpeace.eu. It is also possible to contact Saferworld, James Ndung'u on +254 (0) 20 273 3250, and inquire about a hardcopy.

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Bogus orphanage closed in Matuu

By KAVYU-KURA

AN orphanage in Matuu town in Yatta District of Machakos County allegedly owned by a traditional healer was in January shut down and all the 347 pupils sent home.

The private children home that doubled up as an academy was ordered closed by Yatta DO Margaret Thuo only days after its initial admissions. The lady owner is said to have gone underground after she got wind of the imminent closure of the institution.

Matuu OCS William Kaptich said although some people including the manager Philip Munguti, cooks and some parents were initially arrested when the authorities moved to close down the facility, they were not found directly culpable and were thus released. "We have released them but we are pursuing the proprietor who is said to be hiding in Kitui," Kaptich.

The institution that had admitted the over 300 children under the guise that their education and upkeep would be financed by a generous donor had allegedly exposed them to dehumanizing and debilitating conditions for lack of adequate food, water, beddings and shelter.

The Yatta DO and the District Children officer Jackson Mogaka stormed the congested hired premise in Matuu town where the children were housed and rescued them. The children were taken to the Matuu HGM Memorial girls' school where they were held overnight as their parents and guardians were sought.

According to the Yatta district Chil-

dren Josphat Mogaka, the plight of the children was brought to the attention of the authorities by law abiding Kenyans. He said the rescued children variously hailed from Nairobi, Machakos, Kitui and Mwingi.

Mogaka whom we met at the Matuu Memorial School as he supervised the handing over of the rescued children to their parents and guardians said that the phony school's management had duped gullible parents that

their children would be educated for free.

He said the institution was illegal as it had not been licensed and its manager and six other persons had been arrested. He said parents and guardians need to establish the authenticity of institution passing as orphanages before handing in their children.

Assistant chief Peter Kilili dismissed the institution as a bogus school since there were no records

on its registration at the District Education Office. "This is not really a school. It is just a bogus facility," Kilili told The Link as he released the children to their parents.

Parent, Alice Pius, who had come to pick her child said that contrary to assertion that the institution would offer free tuition, meals and accommodation, she had coughed up to Kshs 3,000 to have her child admitted in the troubled school.



Parents and children leave for their homes after their orphanage in Matuu was closed only days after they were admitted. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

CDF board sued over alleged graft

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

MEMBERS of the Budalangi Constituency Community Development Forum have moved to court to recover Kshs 147 million allegedly stolen from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) kitty between 2007 and 2011 respectively.

According to the community chairman Mbagga Gero, the forum has sued the CDF board while four community representatives namely Peter Araba, Pantaleo Bwire Ouma, Margaret Achieno Jacton and Bethwel Mango have been named as plaintiffs in the case filed late last year.

The residents say they suspected mischief after they were sidelined at all stages of project implementation contrary to guidelines outlined in the CDF (Amendment) Act of 2007.

Among the complaints lodged before the court include the closure of a CDF account held at the National Bank of Kenya, Busia branch by the CDF Committee chairman under unexplained circumstances during the 2007/2008 financial year and that he has to date yet to account for the bank balance of Kshs9.2million.

Further, the community alleges that within the period under review, a total of 14 projects have been inflated by the CDF committee to the tune of Kshs84.7million while 28 projects valued at Kshs 49.5 million had been done without the Bill of Quantity.

The community also accuses the CDF board of flouting provisions in the CDF Act which outline that ongoing CDF projects must be completed before any other new projects are started. "If there is a change in the membership of CDFC, then the incoming committee has a duty to complete all the existing projects before initiating and funding new ones," adds the community chairman.

The complainants now want the court to compel the defendants, Budalangi Constituency Development Fund board and the CDF chairman to give a detailed account as to how the Kshs147million disbursed during the 2007/2008/2009/2010 and 2010/2011 financial years was spent.

"We are also calling on the Ministry of Finance to withhold any additional funding earmarked for the Constituency in the current financial year until the matter in court is finalized," they said in their sworn statement.

Meanwhile, a former MP Raphael Wanjala has welcomed the move by the residents of Budalangi constituency to take the CDF committee to court for failing to exercise transparency and accountability in the implementation and utilization of the fund.

"The decision of Budalangi constituents to take on the CDF committee is timely because since they took over the office, most projects initiated during my tenure have been sidelined instead of being completed so that the community can benefit from the same," said the former legislator, who cited Busagwa dispensary which has stalled yet it was 80percent complete, a situation that has forced the area residents to seek medical services to as far as Port Victoria district hospital.

The case filed before High Court judge Florence Mucheni is slated for hearing on February 16, 2012. The community of Budalangi is being represented by lawyer Aggrey Etyang.

Busia residents happy with boundaries report

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

LEADERS and residents of Busia County have commended the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission for creating two more constituencies in Teso South District and Matayos in Busia District.

Led by Sports Minister Dr Paul Otuoma, Budalangi MP Ababu Namwamba and Amagoro MP Sospeter Ojaamong who is labour assistant minister, the residents said the newly created constituencies that have been hived from Amagoro and Nambale constituencies will ensure equal representation in line with the requirements of the new constitution.

The leaders and residents who had attended a forum convened by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) at the Busia County Council hall on the delimitation of constituencies appealed to IEBC not to interfere with the newly established constituencies as they guarantee effective service delivery to the residents.

"We are appealing to you to leave the newly created constituencies as they are so that we can be able to serve our people better," said the MPs.

Budalangi MP Ababu Namwamba on his part urged the IEBC led by Commissioner Muthoni Wango to ignore any differ-

ing opinions that may interfere with the compilation of the final report, adding that as chairman of the parliamentary select committee on Elections and Constitution, he will ensure the report is adopted by parliament.

Ababu at the same time urged the IEBC to consider creating more wards in Busia County especially in Budalangi adding that the commission should adhere to the rules and regulations stipulated in the new constitution while creating the said wards.

At the same time the leaders and residents from Amagoro, Funyula, Butula and Budalangi have unanimously agreed that IEBC makes changes in the final report regarding

the newly established wards. However, the leaders and residents of Nambale opposed the move.

In a joint report presented to the IEBC, the residents of Funyula suggested to the Commission that the name Funyula be replaced with Samia and urged the commission to give them an additional ward. Their counterparts from Budalangi, Amagoro and Butula similarly requested for additional wards.

Commissioner Muthoni however assured the residents of Busia County that their opinions and proposals would be taken into consideration, adding that they should agree on important issues before they submit their final report to the commission.

Coast MPs told to leave PC alone

By BEKADZO TONDO

COAST MPs have been accused of pushing for the removal of the Coast Province Commissioner Mr. Ernest Munyi to cover up their underhand dealings in drugs businesses has claimed that a section of

Mr. Suleiman Shahbal, a Mombasa businessman, said the politicians were using the squatter problem facing Coast people and ongoing demolitions as a pretext to fight the administrator but the real problem is that Mr. Munyi has vowed to fight people involved in

the drug business.

"The war launched by some MPs from Coast region to push for the transfer of the P.C Mr. Munyi on grounds that he had contributed to the land ownership problem in the area was meant to shield them from the drug business," said Mr. Shahbal.

Mr. Shahbal who has declared his interest for the governorship of Mombasa said leaders have a duty to help the people in development programs and not to wage war on others for political reason.

"I would like to appeal to our

politicians in Coast Province to concentrate on development matters and not to fight other leaders simply to gain political mileage out of it," said Shahbal.

Speaking during an interview with the press in Malindi soon after he launched the establishment of the first fully fledged Coast International University at Ganda in Malindi, Mr. Shahbal urged the MPs to concentrate on the development of their respective constituencies instead fighting the PC.

A section of MPs from Coast province led by the minister for

fisheries development Mr. Amason Kingi ganged up and demanded for the immediate transfer of My Munyi.

The legislators accused the administrator for perpetrating land grabbing by enforcing court orders to evict squatters from their land.

However, the PC later convened a press conference at his office and distanced himself from the claims.

"As a Provincial Commissioner, mine is just to implement the government policies and eviction are enforced in compliance with court orders," he said.

Ligale commission under fire

By **AGREY BUCHUNJU**

PREVIOUS commissions tasked to delimitate units for political representation have been accused by Bungoma County residents of having created constituencies that suit the whims of the ruling elites.

Speaking recently at Bungoma County hall during a public hearing on boundaries review, the residents told the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) that the county is under-represented due to its political affiliation.

Led by the western Kenya Human Rights watch executive director Mr. Job Bwonya, the residents asserted that Bungoma County was denied its rightful number of constituencies because the previous electoral commissions including the Andrew Ligale commission were politically guided/party affiliated.

Bwonya argued that since constituencies are units of employment and re-distribution of the national cake, Bungoma County has not gotten its rightful share of devolved funds and recruitment of the youths in the public sector. To demonstrate how extreme disparities in representation affect re-distribution of national resources, Bwonya tabled CDF allocations and populations for Saboti constituency in Transoia County versus the combined four constituencies of Elgeyo/Marakwet county; Marakwet East, Marakwet West, Keiyo North and Keiyo South.

Between 2003 and 2010, Bwonya said that Saboti constituency with a population of 387,366 people was allocated a total of Kshs. 251,169,133 as CDF while the four (4) constituencies in Elgeyo/ Marakwet County with a combined population of 369,998 people were allocated a total of Kshs. 752,867,734.

Consequently, Bwonya asserted that for constituents to get good value of their taxes, population should be strictly used to delimitate constituencies as enshrined in article 89, (5) and (6) of the constitution.

Bwonya took a swipe at the disbanded Andrew Ligale, Interim Independent Electoral and Boundaries Review commission (IIBRC) saying the criteria it used to delimitate one of the nine proposed constituencies in the four (4) counties in the former western province were discriminatory and politically motivated.

He wondered which constitution and population quota the IIBRC used to sub-divide Emuhaya constituency adding that the constituency did not meet the constitutional threshold as spelt out in article 89 of the constitution. Bwonya demanded to know why the IIBRC skipped Kanduyi constituency which is number 7 on the merit list in the region in terms of population and landed on Emuhaya which is number 11.

According to 2009 population census Kanduyi constituency has 229,701 people with a surface area of 318.5 square kms while Emuhaya has 185,069 people with a surface area of 173.5 square kms.

The lobby group added that if the IIBRC was not biased in the distribution of the 9 new constituencies slotted for the region then it should have sub-divided Malava constituency and not Nambale.

Malava constituency in Kakamega County is number 10 with a population of 205,166 people and surface area of 427.4 square kms while Nambale in Busia County is number 9 with a population of 205,982 people and surface area of 433.9 square kms.

Global standards sought in coal project

By **KAVYU-KURA**

A LOBBY group allied to the residents of the coal rich Mui basin in Kitui County wants internationally accepted standards applied in all attributes of the coal mining project.

The team chaired by Nairobi lawyer Erick Kyalo Mutua agreed in Mwingi hotel that the commencement of coal mining would only be allowed if World Bank recommended standards were agreed upon. Already a Chinese company has won the contract to mine coal in the area.

"We have agreed to only accept international standards in compensation, resettlement, profit sharing and environmental once the projects takes off in the Mui basin's Blocks C and D," Mutua told the media recently following a meeting at a Mwingi hotel.

The lawyer pointed out that his group will seek the formulation of policies similar to the South Africa's Black Empowerment Bill where 25 percent of profits drawn from mineral extraction go to communities. He said his committee would demand 10 percent of Chinese profits to go to the people of the

coal basin.

He noted that such policy measure were prudent because past historical evidence indicate that in many places where minerals or natural resources have been found and mined the local communities have remained an extremely poor lot. He said they would guard against the same happening in Mui.

Mutua added that his committee would also push for water tight policies to ensure that the locals did not suffer the debilitating aftermath of coal mining once the mineral is expended and mining stops.

"We are aware that coal is a very dangerous mineral that can adversely affect lives. We must ensure that there are safeguards to ensure that people of Mui are not adversely affected," he said.

He added that his team would seek to moderate between the government, the people of the coal belt and the Chinese mining company that has already been given the contract to mine coal in Blocks C and D to avoid conflict and misunderstanding.

He said the committee was also in the process of mobilizing the people of

Block C and D to do business with the companies contracted to mine coal. He said that the locals were encouraged to have shares with the Mui Mines Limited Company which was a registered outfit. Mutua also added that his group was grateful that the Ministry of energy had disbanded a consultative committee headed by former Kitui East MP Muthusi Kitinga.

Mutua pointed out that decision by the Ministry of energy to allow Block C and D to have an independent committee was commendable. He said the annulled Kitonga's committee was not people driven and dully representative.

He said his committee had the mandate to effectively protect the interests of 3000 families in Block C and D to ensure they were not unduly exploited or shortchanged before, during or after the mining of coal. Meanwhile, the government has moved to assure residents of 5000 square Kilometres coal rich Mui basin in Kitui County that they will not be disenfranchised or short changed in any way.

Energy ministry chief geologist John Omenge assured them of equity in the relocation and compensation to

all residents who will be affected during the coal mining that is set to kick off in the area.

Omenge who is in charge of the coal projects noted that his department has embarked on a campaign to educate and sensitize residents of Mui basin on the nitty-gritty of the coal mining project.

Omenge spoke in the wake of a visit to the Mui basin where he held public awareness meeting with local leaders, government heads of departments and residents in a bid to enhance full residents' involvement in the coal project and to allay fears of massive displacements and exploitation.

Plan urges NACADA to step up war on drugs

By **JOHN NYAMBUNE**

PLAN International wants the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse Authority (NACADA) to step up the war on drugs.

The Programme Manager Mr. Phitalis Were says if the youth are left at the mercy of drugs, the country's future will be compromised and called for urgent action to avert the situation.

"If we leave drugs and substance abuse to spoil our young generation; we shall have nothing to smile about as leaders. A nation without youth has no future and is like a river without its source," says Were.

He urged NACADA to initiate more programmes to ensure the youth are captured in their endeavors.

"This is a symptom of a deep-seated menace in our society that we have failed to scrap out," he said.

He urged the youth to engage their minds in meaningful activities, including theatre groups as a way of reaching out to their colleagues.

He also appealed to the clergy to stop regarding drug addicts as sinners but consider them as people in need of assistance.

Meanwhile, as campaigns against drug and substance abuse intensify, the Kenya Medical Training College, Homa Bay campus has launched anti-narcotic club to curb drug abuse.

The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention (ADAP) club will organize a series of meetings in schools and the entire District to create more awareness among the students about drugs and substance abuse and provide correct information about drugs abused.

Speaking at the launch of the club recently, the Principal, Mrs. Karen Oyugi, said the club will empower students to make right decisions to help eradicate the menace which continues to pose a grave threat to the society.

She urged the students body to enroll in the club and keep off drugs since they are on the verge of being addicted to the substances.

Mrs. Oyugi said the club will liaise with the community to discard practices that encourage irresponsible drinking among the youth. "Drug and substance abuse is a national issue not a community affair and everyone has an equal share in the war to achieve our vision. We need support to make our dream a reality," she said.

The Principal said they expect to incorporate students from other colleges in future as well as from the community.



Energy Ministry Chief Geologist John Omenge shows Mui basin residents samples of coal collected from well drilled during exploration. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Bungoma roads in dire need of repair

By **AGGREY BUCHUNJU**

THE infrastructure which is key to Bungoma County's social-economic development in terms of marketing of farm produce appears to have been neglected by local political leaders.

No repairs have been done on major roads across the county's six current constituencies for the last four years.

The unprecedented situation has also hurt the matatu industry since the roads are potholed and impassable during the rainy season.

This key infrastructure has worsened and continues to worsen despite the fact that the Government allocates cash for roads repair to each constituency in the county every financial year.

For instance during the current fiscal year the Government through the Ministry of Roads allocated Kshs.30 million to each of the 210 constituencies in the country for roads repair.

Each constituency was allocated Kshs.7 million more through the constituencies roads committees to improve

rural roads.

Besides the Government's devolved roads funds, respective sugar factories, coffee factories and tobacco industry in different regions also pay cess to Bungoma County council to help improve rural access roads. Apparently all devolved funds meant for improvement of roads are at the local political leaders' disposal.

Consequently the current MPs and civic leaders in Bungoma County should be held responsible for the poor state of roads. The MPs and Civic leaders should explain to area residents how they have been using roads funds channeled through the constituencies and cess respectively.

Political leaders are duty bound to ensure that roads funds are utilized prudently to improve roads in their areas.

One of the key roles of MPs is to petition the Government for more funding and immediate measures whenever a situation seems to get out of control.

It is therefore irresponsible for political leadership to say that rehabilitation and maintenance of class B or class C road is beyond their mandate.

Assertions by Kanduyi MP Alfred Khang'ati that he has no control over the dilapidated and impassable road C41 since the road falls under the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) is defeatist and unacceptable.

Khang'ati should be reminded that Kenya Roads Act of 2007 was enacted in order to put in place effective management of roads sector in the country with funds being trickled down directly to the villages. The Act does not prohibit MPs from petitioning the government to grant them adequate funding for rehabilitation of national roads as MPs want Kenyans to believe.

Khang'ati who is also assistant minister in the office of the prime minister has on many occasions distanced himself from the woes of road C 41 arguing that it is the government which is supposed to rehabilitate it.

Road C41 is one of the roads that enhance trade and regional integration in western region hence should not be allowed to waste on the pretext that KeNHA is responsible for its management.

Kenya doing better than its neighbours — UNDP

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

DESPITE the harsh economic times, Kenya has made more robust efforts to improve the lives of its people compared to its neighbours, says Planning Assistant Minister Mr. Peter Kenneth.

He points out that the Government has been able to identify various ways of eradicating challenges associated with sustainability and equity through the new constitution and other policy documents such as the Kenya Vision 2030 and its Medium Term Plan.

These measures include provision of an enabling environment to facilitate the participation of all sections of the population in the production process through access to productive resources and opportunities, expansion of human capabilities by improving access to basic education, health, housing, water and sanitation, increase access to employment opportunities for the rapidly expanding labour force and increasing people's capacity to assert their rights.

The other strategies are; redefining the value of life in Kenya to increase respect for life and self-esteem in society, addressing the different forms of inequalities existing between regions and also addressing the problem of insecurity to enable increased investment and participation by a wider section of the society.

He however says the achievements should not be used to benchmark performance in other East African countries. "The challenge for us is to compare ourselves with Norway and find out what is it they have done to be number one in the world and what Gabon has done to be number one in Sub-Saharan Africa," said the minister. For the country to realize her development goals, Mr. Kenneth said, the focus must be on fewer projects and priorities that have lasting impact on the people rather than having many projects that have no benefit to Kenyans.

"Kenya is not short of good plans. What we seriously lack is alignment of funds for what Kenyans have planned and unless funds are availed, our good plans like the Kenya Vision 2030 will just remain a vision," the minister added.

The country's human development challenges, the minister pointed out, go beyond simply increasing eco-

economic growth to addressing the existing social and economic inequalities.

"Development is a complex and difficult process. It is, therefore, necessary to prioritise national issues according to their urgency, impact and implement ability."

He spoke as the Human Development Report 2011 published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) lauded the country's efforts towards promoting a green economy and its continuous improvement in education and health sectors.

The report whose theme is, "Sustainability and Equity: A better future for all" appreciates the country's new Constitution as one that recognizes equal rights to a healthy environment and promote equity.

"Kenya's new Constitution grants the right to a clean environment and requires the government to maintain its natural resources," the report reads

in part.

It continues: "The Ministry of Energy adopted a feed-in tariff in 2008 to supply and diversify electricity generation sources, generate income and employment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The tariff covers biomass, geothermal, small hydroelectric, solar and wind power."

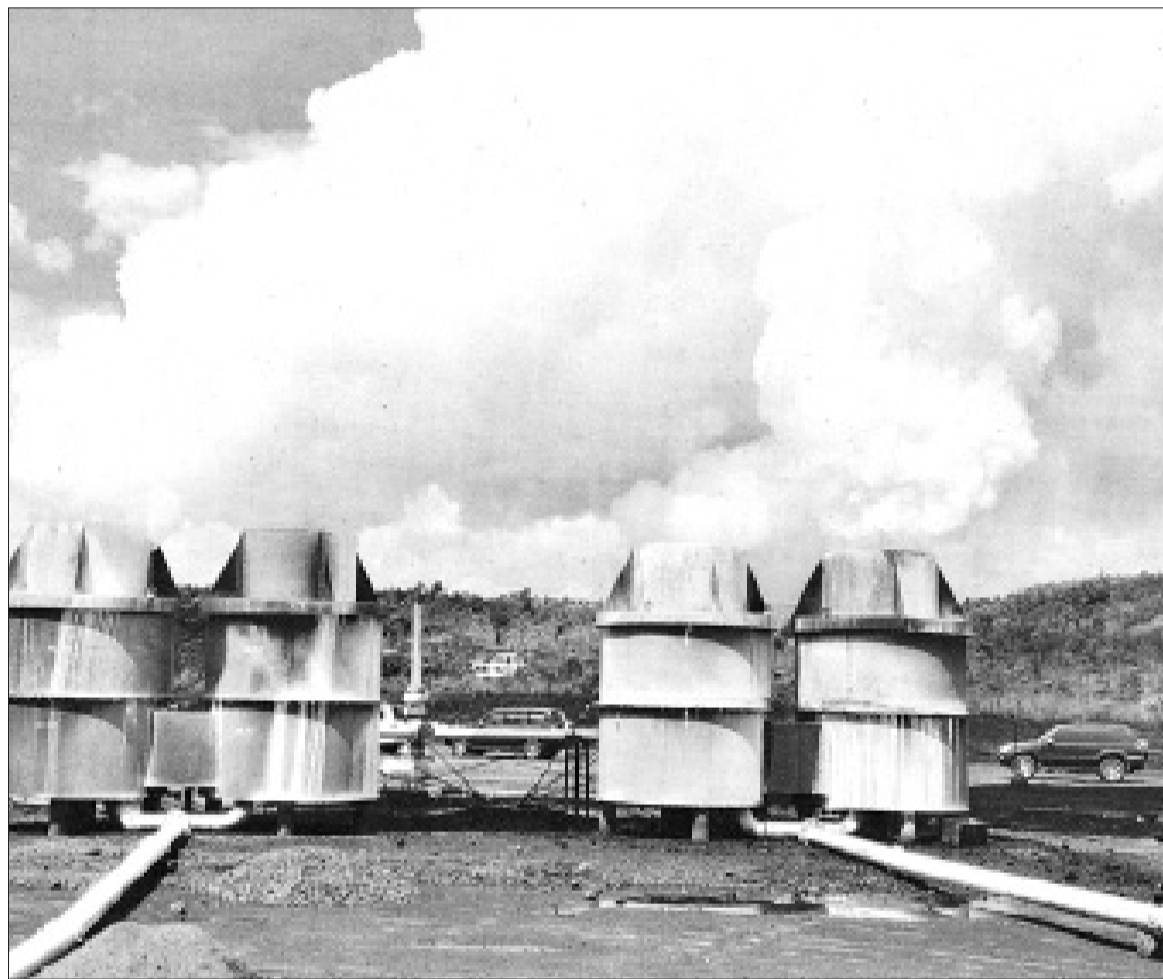
According to the findings of the report presented by UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Ainea Chuma, extreme poverty has also declined in both Kenya and Nigeria and these advances are attributable, in part, to improvements in water, sanitation, health and other living standards.

Kenya which was ranked 143 out of the 187 countries in the study is the highest ranked in East Africa followed by Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi at positions (152, 161, 166 and 185) respectively.

Libya was the highest ranked

country in Africa at position 64 in the world, followed by Tunisia at position 94 which feature in the category of High Human Development countries while Algeria (96), Gabon (106), Egypt (113), Botswana (118), Namibia (120), South Africa (123), Morocco (130), Cape Verde (133), Ghana (135), Equatorial Guinea (136) and Swaziland (140) featured among the Medium Human Development countries.

Overall, the 2011 Human Development Report notes that steady advances in human development in sub-Saharan Africa could stall and even reverse unless bold steps are taken to reduce environmental risks and inequalities in the region and around the world. The report indicates that following current trends, inequality and deteriorating environmental conditions will together pose obstacles to progress in Africa across the globe.



Menengai Geothermal Project under construction to enhance power production in the country. Photo/File

State releases fund for ASALs water projects

By PETER MUTUKU

THE government has earmarked over one billion shillings to oversee the establishment of water projects in six counties in the Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASAL) in the country.

The projects are to be implemented in Wajir, Marsabit, Tana River, Garissa, Isiolo and Lamu counties from the beginning of this month and will cover a period of two years in readiness for the integration of a planned multi donor long term joint arid land programmes.

The projects are to be implemented jointly by the Ministry for Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands Water Services Trust Fund (WSTF) and Water Resource Management Authority.

According to a Memorandum of Understanding signed recently, WSTF will receive Kshs537.3 million to undertake 360 small scale investments

in water covering 18 supply systems, while WRMA will receive Kshs113 million for the development and implementation of 18 water resource associations.

Speaking after the signing of the MOU, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Development of Northern Kenya and Arid Lands Mr Lawrence Lenayapa said the programme will help alleviate food shortages besides empowering and enhancing resilience among citizens in ASALs.

"While the support areas are inter related and mutually supportive, climate change adaptation measures, gender balance, good governance and human rights issues are to be mainstreamed into the activities," said the PS.

Under the projects, emphasis is to be placed on direct water investments for production, county level planning and devolution for natural resources and economic development, facilitation

of private sector development and investments and provision of knowledge on management of natural resource and economic development opportunities.

"These MOUs will provide the framework for basic elements of the activities and fund flows, arrangements on how to transfer and utilize the money are underway, we expect that activities in Isiolo, Lamu, Garisa to commence in February this year," he said. Prof Lenayapa says that over 14 million Kenyans living in the areas have to contend with acute water shortages due to erratic rainfall patterns and prolonged periods of drought.

"ASAL thus remains the last frontiers of development but has the potential to turn the fortunes of this counties but only if the available natural resources are exploited in a sustainable manner," he said. To expedite the implementation of the programmes with-

in the stipulated time, the PS said the partners will outsource key services to allow the incorporation of individuals willing to invest in the sector.

The WSTF Chief Executive Officer, Jacqueline Musyoki said the projects will be ideal in providing essential water services to the residents of the ASAL areas as a long term solution to their water problems.

She said the plan will be inter-related and mutually supportive and give opportunity to work with local communities to ensure sustainable development.

"These projects will empower the communities and we want to ensure that our services have impact in sustaining livelihoods," she added.

The funding of development partners will provide technical assistance, Mr Musyoki said and expressed optimism that the projects will go along way in the providing long term water solution in ASALs.

State launches water management plan

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE government has rolled out the second phase of the natural resources management programme in the Upper Tana catchment to restore water sources and the environment. During the launch, 68 community-based organizations (CBOs) from Nyandarua, Murang'a and Kiambu counties received Kshs.22 million to promote income generating activities among members at a fete held in Gatura Primary School in Gatanga constituency.

Water resources management authority (WARMA) chief executive officer Eng. Philip Ollum said the programme was meant to support residents living in the catchment areas to start money-making activities like dairy and poultry farming, bee keeping, food processing and rabbit rearing.

Eng. Ollum said the programme, funded by the World Bank and which in the first tranche rolled out another Kshs.22 million, is to provide the communities who have been targeting trees for survival through commercial charcoal burning and sale of timber with an alternative source of livelihood.

The CEO said the project being coordinated in conjunction with National Irrigation Board and the Kenya Forest Service will enable the communities to generate money to source alternative sources of energy like gas and solar which are environmentally friendly.

The communities that border forests were encouraged against encroachment and farming along river lines in order to check on soil erosion which has been a major hindrance to fish farming activities owing to pollution.

Eng. Ollum said the grants ranging from Kshs.50,000 to Kshs.500,000 are monitored and evaluated by both the implementing agencies and the donor to ensure compliance members of the benefiting CBO contributes 30 per cent of the amount sought.

Stating that the protection of water catchment areas was a core function of WARMA, Eng. Ollum decried the wanton destruction of water sources which he linked to poverty as people cut trees in an effort to survive. The authority selected the region for the 12-month pilot project because it was experiencing excessive soil erosion. It was extended after the donor gave the Phase I a clean bill of health.

The approach which also sets to mitigate climate change has worked well in countries like China, Nigeria and South Africa. The government is working out modalities of extending it to other parts of the country. Eng. Ollum observed that the introduction of the programme had seen the rate of encroachment into the Aberdare catchment area decline but expressed concern that the trend was worrying within Mt. Kenya catchment region.

According to the project manager Mr. Mutavuta Kinyua, other agencies involved in livelihoods improvement for the communities like the Department of Agriculture and that of livestock have been brought on board to check on duplication and misallocation of resources.

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

Bunyore residents form water users association

THE Water Services Trust Fund plans to streamline management of water supply and sanitation services.

The Managing Director Kennedy Ochuka says the trust fund will continue to finance the provision of water services in areas that have inadequate supply.

Speaking during the commissioning of South West Bunyore community water users association funded jointly by Finland, the MD added that the organization plans to mobilize adequate resources nationally to enhance provision of water services, develop systems that ensure proper implementation and sustainability of water and sanitation projects, establish and nurture partnership with stakeholders.

"We source our funds through government budgetary allocation, development partners, grant and donation from institutions and individual," he adds.

He says that projects that benefit from the funding must be initiated by the community or non-governmental organization, must be demand driven and managed by the communities themselves.

Ochuka says beneficiaries are to meet the costs of survey and design of the facility should be economically and technologically sound with suitable management structures.

He says all projects must seek to

improve health, eradicate poverty and create wealth.

Community receives funding through legally registered community based organization or NGO. Support for improvement of facilities is given on condition that the owner contributes to the project implementation by sourcing locally available material labour as well as cash.

Users are expected to meet the cost of operation and maintenance of the facilities upon completion of the project and come up with a well structured revenue collection system.

Further, the project should be environmental friendly and should demonstrate gender equality and governance. Ochuka calls on community groups to submit their proposal adhering to the above named criteria for consideration.

During the function held at Ebwiranyi Primary School at Emuhaya in Vihiga County, the Finland Ambassador to Kenya, Ms. Sofie Emmersberger, commended the work done by the organization say-

ing beneficiaries can now access water.

Mrs. Emmersberger says Finland will continue supporting the community in several ways and urged the community to maintain the project. Other projects that have been funded include the construction of VIP latrines in 15 schools and water kiosks at Mukhalakhala market.

The project came as a reprieve to the community with beneficiaries saying that they will save on the time they spent fetching water

"I have been moving for several kilometers to fetch water during dry season while during the rainy season I have to be rained on while fetching water. But the agony in over as the South West Bunyore community water users association with support from Water Services Trust Fund and Finland Government have brought piped water in my compound," says Sarah Atiengo.

Atiengo says with the availability of water, she can be able to establish a green house to enable her

earn a living after losing a husband a year ago. The chairman South West community Water User Association, Mr. Joash Oniango, expressed gratitude and hailed donor partners and the Water Service Trust Fund directors from Lake Victoria North Water Service Board for supporting the (COMMCAP) services.

Mr. Oniango said South Water Bunyore Water Users Association, serves Emmasaba and Mukhalakhala locations in Luanda Division of Emuhaya District, Western Kenya.

Oniango added that since its establishment in 2008 it has been involved in several activities including training of members in various aspects of water and sanitation management. It was after they received the fund that they embarked on construction of 15 VIP latrines in 10 primary and 5 secondary schools within the targeted areas and spring protection at Nang'oli water springs.

The project also entailed the construction of the pump house and 50 metre cube masonry tank, laying of pipes from the intake to the 100

metre cubic storage tank. However, the chairman said challenges experienced during the implementation phase included the sharp rise in prices of materials, transporting of material from the store to the site, slow pace of community contribution due to poverty, deliveries of material from suppliers due to long bureaucracy involved and change in the pipe water project design which increased the cost of the project.

Finally, Oniango thanked members of the CBO and the Lake Victoria Water Service Board for the support towards the project and the stakeholders at large for their tireless and sacrificial support towards the implementation of the project.

Among the guests present was the director of planning western region, director Lake Victoria Water Services Board, Harry Namubeyi and the DC Emuhaya Muthama Wambua who conveyed there thanks to the Finland Government for the support to the community to establish several project and the major one being the water project.

Hunger programme set for expansion

By PETER MUTUKU

THE Business Alliance Against Hunger (BAACH) plans to roll out a project that seeks to spur food security, job opportunities, income generation and business opportunities in selected areas in the country.

The project that was initially started on a pilot basis in Siaya in 2008 will soon be replicated in Yatta, Murang'a and Bungoma Districts in Eastern, Central and Western provinces with specific areas being Matuu, Gatanga and Kanduyi respectively. Already the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of agriculture Dr Romano Kiome has officially launched the Programme in Eastern Province.

Speaking at Wikwatyo Youth Group farm in Matuu, Yatta District, the PS said similar launches will be carried out in Central and Western Provinces. Dubbed Imarisha Kenya, the project seeks to develop micro enterprises and irrigation agriculture and is currently being supported by a conglomeration of 22 local and international companies.

BAACH was mooted at the World Economic Forum in 2006 during a conference held in Davos, Switzerland, with partners bestowed with the responsibility of defining and implementing commercially viable and sustainable business solutions to fight hunger and poverty.

It is jointly sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USAID, Rockefeller Foundation, Bill Gates Foundation, Sealed Air, Monsanto, Nike, General Mills, Kraft, TNT, Techno-serve and MDG centre/ millennium village project. Local organizations include Amiran Kenya Limited, agriculture, Finance and trade ministries, Kenya Commercial Bank, National Oil Refineries, Equity Bank, Eye Kenya, Maseno University among others.

Kenya was picked as a pilot coun-

try with the purpose of using key experiences as benchmarks for launching similar programmes in Africa.

The government has already incorporated the initiative into the agricultural sector development plan for vision 2030. Ten more constituencies have been earmarked for the activities.

Piloting activities in Siaya, Nyanza Province, included rice retailing, honey production and irrigation farming. For Kithendu, Iria-Kiriga Irrigation scheme in Gatanga and Kanduyi projects, BAACH plans to work with 22 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to ensure increased agri business development solutions for increased impact on food security and growth.

Under the initiative, 2,000 units of irrigation schemes will be introduced, including drip, green housing, improved seed, fertilizer and disease control application as well as post harvest handling, quality management.

Other objectives include promotion of water harvesting, prudent water usage and management discipline, facilitate route to markets, market links among farming communities in the target areas and improved marketing and value addition of farm produce as well as equipping entrepreneurs with skills to run and grow businesses.

A report compiled by BAACH reveals that 7,200 jobs have been created through micro small enterprise agribusiness, micro small enterprise development and expansion of retail and services, thus ensuring consumers access better and affordable goods and services. It says BAACH was working with 18 partnerships and community based organizations that are being facilitated to increase capacities at constituencies to realize the targets.

To oversee the expanded Programme, BAACH entered into public private partnership with the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture and other private sector players in

October 2010 which later transformed into Kenya National Public Private Partnership (PPP) in 2009.

The activities in Siaya were centred on increasing food production, giving access to affordable products and services as well as sustainable income generation through engagement of entrepreneurs, says the bulletin.

It says 20 traders engaged in rice retailing in partnership with Dominion Farms generated a net income of Kshs 15 million, with the price of commodities reducing by 33 percent due to the retailing transactions.

Revenue generation per each of the 300 households involved in bee keeping in collaboration with Honey Care Africa, Equity Bank and Millennium Village was Kshs 15,000.

Access to financing increased from 17 percent to 41 percent, fertilizer use from 20 percent to 70 percent, improved seeds use from 30 percent to 90 percent while diseases dropped from 45 percent to 20 percent.

In a tabulated presentation, the publication cites Kshs 106,072,080 million as the net income for 1,000 households hosting 5,000 people since piloting begun 3 years ago.

It says 200 Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) had engaged 300 youth in gainful employment. At Iria-Kiriga irrigation scheme, the public invested in 24 hectares irrigation infrastructure covering 120 farms with potential to be expanded to 56 hectares at a cost of Kshs 36 million. The report says 60 percent of local population rely on relief food in the event of drought but Dr Kiome is optimistic the reliance culture will stop with successful implementation of the projects. Citing drip irrigation as a success story in Israel, the PS said the same was being replicated in Kenya to boost production.

He vowed to continue monitoring progress of the projects through quarterly reports to be generated by teams drawn from relevant ministries.

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Forestry body launches plan for Mt Kenya region

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

THE Kenya Forest Service has launched a management plan for Nanyuki, Narumoru and Ragati forest station in Mt Kenya forest.

The plans were launched recently by the senior Deputy Director of Forests for field operations Emilio Mugo who reiterated the commitment of KFS to the proper management of forests adding that the service will follow the letter and spirit of the law in managing of the forests in the country.

"I call upon the Community Forest Associations (CFA) and other stakeholders to cooperate in the drawing up of the plans in order to incorporate all sustainable activities that will bring benefits to the whole community," said the director.

He said that already over 50 forest management plans had been drawn while over 15 forest management agreements had been approved by the KFS director which gives the community and the KFS a leeway to start utilizing the forest resources as agreed.

"I call upon all concerned to hasten the process in order for communities that are doing a good in conservation to start drawing benefits from the forests," he added.

The launch of the plan is in accordance to the forests Act 2005 which stipulated that all gazetted forests shall be managed on the basis of Forest Management Plans which lay out all activities to be carried out in the forest as well as the responsibilities of both the community and the Kenya Forest Service.

"This is meant to ensure that forests are managed sustainably for the benefit of the community and the sustainability of the forest for the long term," he added.

The director was accompanied by Head of Central Highlands Conservancy John Wachih, Chairman Forest Conservation Committee Central region John Kibaki and area DC Daniel Ondambu.

Nanyuki forest occupies a total of 9, 854 hectares of which 1,227 hectares is plantations.

According to the management plan of the forest, the user groups of Mt Kenya West Nanyuki CFA identified eco tourism, tree nursery establishment, firewood collection, bee keeping (apiary), pruning, grazing and extraction of herbal medicines as the main activities they intend to carry out in the forest. The community will also be involved in the fencing and protection of the forest.

"Narumoru forest occupies 7,195 hectares and is located in western part of Mt Kenya forest ecosystem. The forest groups will mainly engage in extraction of medicinal plants, eco tourism activities and industrial plantation establishment through concessions. Already, the community is involved in plantation establishment and livelihood improvement scheme

where over 106 hectares have been rehabilitated.

The community also benefits from silvicultural and provision of fodder for their livestock," he added.

The groups will be involved in grazing of livestock, apiary, tree nursery establishment, eco-tourism and

agro-forestry among other activities.

The various communities of Narumoru and Ragati forests may identify other benefits they can draw from the forests and include them in the management agreements to be signed later after consultations with various stakeholders.



Senior Deputy Director of Forests Emilio Mugo (right) hands over a guide book to the Head of Central Highlands Conservancy, John Wachih, during the launch of management plans for Nanyuki, Narumoru and Ragati forest station. Inset: Part of Mt Kenya forest. Photo/Joseph Nukubwa

Officials out to debunk AIDs myths

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

PUBLIC health officials in Taita District have embarked on a rigorous campaign to debunk myths associated with HIV/Aids which have been cited as a major obstacle to winning the war against the scourge in the area.

Taita district Public Health Officer (PHO), Mr. Christopher Senge, says AIDS patients in the District were still being stigmatized owing to the inability by the residents to debunk myths linked to HIV/AIDS.

This, he says had negatively affected efforts to encourage people to know their status as majority fear they will be ostracized in the community if they turn positive.

The Public health official says that majority of the residents suffer most from an acute dread of discovering their status and preferred to live in ignorance.

He said the onslaught against Aids would not be won unless residents change attitude towards Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) and

urged residents to go to take the test.

"The first major step in wiping this scourge from our community is to learn your status. Without the knowledge of one's status, we can never effectively fight this disease," he said.

He advocated for incorporation of lessons on Aids to students and pupils in schools to help provide facts about transmission, effects and how the disease/virus can be controlled.

"To dispel the fear, people will require lessons in schools so that as children grow up, they will be given the factual information about AIDs. That will give rise to an informed society with no delusions about the disease," said Mr. Senge.

The County Aids Control Committee (CACC) Coordinator of Wundanyi Constituency, Mr. Abdalla Mwachama, urged men to attend the testing session to learn their status.

He said preliminary data on the number of people taking tests revealed more women than men were attending their centres, a trend, he said, had become a major cause for concern.

"Men are not going for testing and that places their wives in peril. Husbands must come forward and lead the way," said Mr. Abdalla.

He said the level of stigma in the district was gradually dropping as people living with HIV/Aids were no longer being viewed as evil. The gradual change of perspective has been caused by a decision by some of the affected people to go public about their status and demystify the disease.

"Aids is not different from other ailments but out of ignorance, people thought and some still do AIDs is the worst form of disease to get. But the public awareness campaign and civic education on AIDs is bearing fruits," said the official.

Taita District Officer (DO), Mr. David Boen, urged residents to go for testing, saying the move would foster positive living. The DO said learning of one's status was a sign of heightened awareness on the disease and the impact it had in society.

Meanwhile, the government plans to put up a farmers training centre at

Boji area in Wenje division of Tana River District at a cost of Kshs10.6 million.

The facility targets crop and livestock farmers who will be equipped with relevant skills to enhance their capacity to improve agriculture and livestock production.

Galole MP, who is also an Assistant Minister for Information and Communications, Major (rtd) Dhado Godana says that the area is endowed with good soils for crop and livestock production and thus the need for residents to exploit the underlying potential in agriculture.

The MP says Tana River has the potential of being the bread basket for the Coast region due to the presence of Hola and Bura irrigation schemes.

He notes that recent developments at the schemes were turning the area into a major food production area.

"Tana has remained a pastoral district for long but due to irrigation projects, the area is being transformed to also accommodate crop farming," he adds.

Anti-FGM groups target cultural leaders

By BOB OMBATI

ANTI-FEMALE Genital Mutilation (FGM) activists in Kisii county want community leaders involved in the fight against the retrogressive practice that violated on the rights of the girl-child. Stema Women Development Group (SWDG) and Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) officials say the practice continues unabated due to lack of cultural goodwill and support, which has hampered the campaign against FGM.

Kisii Branch YWCA manager, Mary Mogaka and SWDG chief programme officer, Nyabuto Onyambu lament that the vice has refused to go in Gusii region despite the new Anti FGM legislation and relentless campaigns by various Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Addressing a one-day stakeholders strategic planning workshop in Kisii, the officials resolved to change the approach to win the war against FGM.

Mogaka urged the Ministry of Education to introduce anti-FGM messages in the school curriculum to sensitize the girl-child on the dangers of the practice at a tender age to enable them resist attempts to subject them to the dehumanizing practice.

She noted that FGM practitioners collaborated with parents and were targeting young and innocent children whom they 'cut' during August and December holidays. According to Mogaka, parents invite circumcisers to their homes at night to circumcise their daughters while others took their children to private hospitals where they face the cut.

Onyambu faulted some medics for perpetuating the vice for monetary gain and urged the government to take action against such individuals who flouted the anti-FGM Act, 2011. He said that elders from Gusii community will be educated on the dangers of the practice to sensitize their peers on the need to discard the outdated practice. "Circumcisers will be helped to start alternative businesses to eke out a living, abandon FGM and be used as role models to fight FGM," stated Onyambu.

The official regretted that innocent children aged between six to seven years were being subjected to the inhuman act in complete disregard of health risks involved.

He disclosed that stakeholders will help the children to undergo an alternative rite of passage to end stigma. "These children will then serve as role models while vulnerable groups will be aided to join rescue centres to help end the practice.

Reach Out women and Youth Director, Paul Nyamweya said anti-FGM organizations had resolved to use videos in seminars, schools, shopping centres and families to sensitize parents and the girl-child on the side effects of the harmful practice that has been cherished for long.

MOA parastatals set for reduction

By BRIGHTON KAZUNGU

THE Ministry of Agriculture is planning to reduce the number of parastatals under its wings from the current number 36 to 31 due to the current crisis of inflation, Agriculture Minister Dr. Sally Kosgei has said.

"By reducing the number of parastatals, it will help the government cut on costs that have affected our economy to an alarming level," the minister said.

Addressing a meeting last week at the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS) in Nairobi, Dr. Kosgei said there was need to analyse the performance of all parastatals with a view to rationalizing the functions.

"All the parastatals should pay attention to what the ministry, the public and the media is saying," said Kosgei. "We need to be more cost-effective in our operations."

She said that due to the current shortage of sugar, the Sugar Board of Kenya needs to explore ways to boost the production of sugar in the country.

The minister also urged all agricultural co-operations to review their strategic plans and have a clear implementation framework indicating activities and timelines for ease of monitoring and evaluation.

During the function, the Coffee Board of Kenya was applauded for its swift move in curbing coffee berry theft problems in

Central Kenya.

Other parastatals were also awarded for various efforts, with the Tea Research Foundation being awarded for their asset management while the Coffee Research Foundation was awarded for their responsiveness among others.

On its part, the ministry resolved to enhance competency in all the parastatals and enhance employee satisfaction at all levels, a move that the minister said would yield maximum benefits from all agricultural sectors.

Meanwhile, most parts along the coastline are suitable for floriculture but lack of knowledge by residents remains an impediment for those willing to venture into

the profitable activity.

A one time, the Kilifi Town Council chairman, Mr. Premji Hirani, who has been growing Athurium flowers at Mtwapa in Kilifi County, says he has practiced floriculture for over 30 years.

Mr. Hirani says for the 10 acres he has planted anthurium flowers, he has been harvested 5,000 stems per week. This did not meet local demand even as global demand stands at two million stems per week.

Mr. Hirani, who speak at his farm, asked the Government to give him 50 acres at Ganze District for cultivation and production of anthuriums, orchids that fetch good prices at the global

market.

Mr. Hirani says soils in the region were suitable for floriculture with coco peat that is the main requirement for maintenance of moisture readily available.

He urged the Kenya Airports Authority to invest in cold storage facilities at Malindi International Airport for the benefit of farmers interested in floriculture and horticulture production.

Mr. Hirani said the high cost involved in transporting produce from Kilifi to Nairobi and the stringent phytosanitary requirements were a hindrance to many farmers.

He says using courier services for transportation had forced many florists in the East Africa region to receive anthurium flowers from the two largest anthurium growers based in Kilifi, Mr. Hirani and Kenthurium Kenya Limited.

Hort turns man's dreams into reality

By JOHN NYAMBUNE

CASSIM Bilali has defied the odds to introduce horticultural farming in Siaya County.

Cassim, 41, has set up a horticultural farm, in Rarieda District, Siaya County and the initiative resonates with success.

"I wish I could have ventured into horticultural farming much earlier after enjoying the sweet fruits since venturing into the farming," he adds.

He says horticultural production, especially pawpaw and passion fruits, have provided him with self employment, a high and reliable income to his family that have changed his life. "Horticultural farming can give you everything that you ever dreamed of having in your life. I can now provide to my family a very upright lifestyle," says Mr. Bilali.

The farmer ventured into the production in 2003 after resigning from office employment to embark on horticultural production using modern technology that most producers are reluctant to embrace.

"I use fertility trenched system to preserve water," he says. He digs terraces in between pawpaw trees, puts manure and covers with dry grass to act as mulch and reduce the rate of evaporation.

Siaya County has favourable climate conditions for horticultural production that farmers should take advantage of to enable the region grow crops for export soon after the official opening of the Kisumu International Airport.

Mr. Bilali has prospered from an initial investment of a single pawpaw tree bearing over 200 fruits to his current plot of 1.5 acres plot. He says he has over 80 pawpaw trees in his farm and a pawpaw fruit sells at between Kshs.30 to Kshs.50 depending on the size.

A bag of pawpaw sells at Kshs9,500 while produce from one tree fetches him not less than Kshs12,000 that collectively generate at least Kshs.900,000 after every two months.

Pawpaw is a perennial crop that one is able to harvest for 3 to 4 years



Pawpaw plantation Photo/File

before it can no longer bear fruits as expected to.

Pawpaw takes about 6 months to mature, while it takes a shorter time depending on climatic conditions of a given area and how you take care of plants where you find that it can take 3 to 4 months before the plant bears fruits.

Mr. Bilali has challenged farmers in Siaya County and other parts of Nyanza region to diversify their production and not focus on the traditional maize, sorghum, beans, and peas. He says farmers should embrace horticultural production using modern methods.

He conducts training on horticultural farming for those who have shown interest with the hope of generating income to ensure a change in lifestyle.

"We should focus on farming activities that can generate income to change our lifestyle rather than sit-

ting back to wait for famine relief food if farmers can embark on serious farming activities using modern farming methods such as irrigation system," Mr. Bilali says.

He says farmers should take advantage of the lake and river waters to irrigate farms, especially during the short rainy season to improve on food production and as source of income.

The programme has also enhanced his income. He charges Kshs.10,000 for training that lasts at least three months.

Bilali has so far trained over 80 farmers who have later joined horticultural farmers associations, including Care for the Earth Environmental Resources Centre which he is the Founder and Director.

Mr. Bilali says horticultural production (pawpaw) is cost-effective and requires simple inputs. One only requires a piece of land to dig a bore-

hole, manure site (cow dung) to take care of a tree until harvesting time.

A farmer, Ms. Mary Okello, and who has been trained by Bilali on the production of pawpaw and water melon. Horticultural production can ensure maximum profit with rearing cattle and goats combined.

Ms. Okello says she quit her job as a cleaner to venture into farming and grows water melon and pawpaw. She has 20 trees of pawpaw and 0.5 acres of water melon that generates income to her family.

Mr. Bilali says horticultural production may costs a farmer more than Kshs.50,000.

Market for pawpaw fruits is available and during harvesting time, vendors and companies that manufacture soft drinks compete for his produce for its high quality of production.

He says Government efforts to reduce poverty especially in rural

areas could get a major boost if horticultural farming is adequately promoted and funded.

Many youth in Nyanza region are facing a major challenge of unemployment yet many owned inherited land that lies idle. If you are empowered with skills and funded on horticultural production, unemployment related challenges such as the high rate of crime can be reduced significantly," he says.

Horticultural production is the best investment one can indulge as one only needs a small piece of land to grow your crops as it does not require huge amounts of capital such coffee and tea.

Bilali has urged the youth to acquire technical and vocational skills instead of staying idle which leaves them vulnerable to misuse by politicians to fight their wars.

Mr. Bilali aims at providing employment opportunities to youth in his County and expects to plant more pawpaw, vegetables, passion fruits and water melon in a 2.5 acre piece of land.

Nyanza Provincial Director of Agriculture, Mr. Joas Owiro, says his office would give necessary support and was encouraging farmers to venture into horticultural production. Going by last years' census results, the population numbers are a threat to dairy, maize, beans, groundnuts and sorghum farming.

The major concern of Bilali and Owiro is the low uptake of horticultural farming but is optimistic farmers will steadily take up production.

The County may be far in working out a solution to food shortage and improve economic activities in Nyanza region.

Mr. Owiro says farmers should seek assistance from the Government for funding of their activities so as to exploit the advantages of the international airport that has worked to reduce unemployment rate in the region.

"Why don't we give horticultural farming a trial and see the benefits it has as this would help to improve on the socio-economic development that will culminate the food shortage in the County?" says Mr. Bilali.

Kisii coffee farmers reject new secretary

By **BOB OMBATI**

Coffee farmers from Motonto cooperative society in Kisii County have rejected a clerk posted to their society, claiming he was imposed on them by unscrupulous officials and his appointment was questionable.

They blame Gusii Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (GCFCU) officials for replacing Alice Obwocha with Josephat Maroro without consulting the farmers.

Charles Ombati, a farmer says that Ms Obwocha has served the society diligently, honestly and for a long time and could have been promoted to reward her for the exemplary work she has done for the society instead of replacing her.

Ombati, who spoke during a special coffee farmers meeting at Nyamonya main coffee society recently accused area District Cooperative Officers of interfering with the society's management, stressing that farmers will not condone highhandedness and will use all means at their disposal to push for

the reinstatement of Obwocha.

He said farmers were satisfied with Obwocha's honesty in her work and were not interested in the level of education unlike other corrupt clerks who stole their earnings in complete disregard of the hard labour committed to their coffee farms.

The farmer told the meeting they had recommended to the management to employ Obwocha permanently but the management ignored them and went ahead to conduct interviews and settled for Maroro.

"Farmers are not concerned with Maroro's high level of education. They want someone who has been tested, has experience and can serve them honestly," said Ombati, claiming that majority of educated people were manipulative and corrupt especially when they were dealing with illiterate farmers.

Ombati said that farmers had been enlightened on their rights under the new constitutional dispensation and they will not sit and watch as few individual trample on them with impunity, adding

the devolved system of leadership was being felt in the grass-roots by all and sundry.

The irate farmers directed the Society's chairman, Julius Maganga to speedily intervene and have Obwocha reinstated and threatened to withdraw from the society if he declined.

They appealed to the society officials to invite coffee experts to educate them on proper coffee husbandry to help increase the quality and quantity of coffee to gain from the rising coffee prices in the international market.

Maganga accepted their request, stressing they will undergo training besides being supplied with chemicals and fertilizer to boost their production.

He noted that coffee prices in the international market had gone up unlike before when they kept on fluctuating, adding that the society had paid the farmers at the rate of Kshs. 79 up from the previous Kshs. 10 due to poor management and low prices.

The chairman lashed at errant clerks in some Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (Saccos)

who took advantage of illiterate farmers to steal their hard earned money by underpaying them.

"The farmers rush to be paid and they do not countercheck with the Clerks to verify that they have been paid well. So it becomes difficult to return to the Cashiers to complain after realizing the mistakes," said Maganga.

Maganga said a farmer was hurriedly paid Kshs. 700 instead of Kshs. 7000, panicked and cried, forcing him to intervene to have her paid her money in full, adding such cases were rampant with the Clerks perpetuating them with impunity.

He urged the farmers to seek help from their literate colleagues if they doubted the Clerks to avoid conflicts and report clerks who ignore their plight to the society's management to address the problem.

The chairman stated that various Saccos levied various charges on their services and products for their customers and urged the farmers to be conversant with them to avoid underpayment or overpayment.

Farming skills in Wenje set to improve

By **BRIGHTON KAZUNGU**

FARMERS are set to benefit from a training centre to be set up at Boji area, in Wenje division, Tana River District, at a cost of Kshs.10.6 million.

The facility will provide crop and livestock farmers with relevant skills in order to improve agriculture and livestock production.

Galole MP, who is also an Assistant Minister for Information and Communications, Major (rtd) Dhado Godana, said recently while inspecting the site that land in Tana River the region has high potential for crop and livestock farming and urged farmers to form co-operative societies for the Government to offer them loans.

The MP said Tana River has the potential of being the bread basket for the Coast region due to the presence of Hola and Bura irrigation schemes.

He said recent developments at the schemes were turning the area into a major food production area.

He said: "Tana River had remained a pastoral district for long but due to irrigation projects, the area is being transformed to also accommodate crop farming."

Meanwhile, plans are underway to construct a cold storage plant at Faza in Lamu East.

The plant which is expected to triple production from 2,500 to over 8,000 metric tonnes annually on completion has been funded to the tune of Kshs.14 million.

Officers in Lamu County are also upbeat that the completion of the Faza Fish Processing Plant will also enhance earnings from Kshs.8 million to Kshs.40 million per annum.

Lamu County Fisheries Officer, Mr. Simon Komu, told The Link fishermen in the entire archipelago will eliminate rudimentary gear and agents who have been exploiting them once the plant is complete.

Mr. Komu said due to lack of cold storage facilities, fishermen at the archipelago have been held hostage for years by unscrupulous middlemen.

He said the completion of the facility will also ensure ice preservation leading to improved prices that are expected to improve fortunes for the fishermen, majority of whom have suffered high poverty levels.

"Faza Fish Plant will produce both flake and block ice which will enable fishermen to preserve thousands of kilogrammes of fish for value addition," he said. The two types of ice are sourced from Mombasa which is hundreds of kilometers away hindering many fishermen from actively engaging in activities due to prohibitive costs.

The officer said the new plant is expected to process 8 tonnes daily once it becomes operational besides increasing the fishermen's bargaining power by cooling their products, thus increasing the shelf life and value of the catch.

He said a new contractor has been installing ice processing machines to replace faulty ones that were installed by a contractor over the 2008/9 financial year when construction works started.

Biting frost roasts tea in Central

By **JOSEPH MUKUBWA**

KENYA Tea Development Agency (KTDA) has warned that the biting frost affecting many tea farmers in the country might continue up to next month.

KTDA national chairman Peter Kanyago however said the crop will recover within few weeks if it rains.

Kanyago who was assessing the damage the frost has caused at Chinga area in Othaya said that the agency has lost three per cent of the total production so far of tea kilogrammes countrywide which amounts millions of shillings.

Hundreds of farmers from around the country were up to last week counting losses after the worst ever frost hit their farms recently.

The farmers started experiencing the effects of Climate Change which is a national phenomenon with many tea farms turning brown in colour.

He says frost damage is expected to extend especially this month of January following adverse effects of climate change.

"The conditions that precipitate frost bites include very high day temperatures and very low night temperatures. The drop in temperature from day to night is very rapid, so young shoots tend to freeze," says Kanyago.

Most of the areas affected are along river valleys and areas where there are no many trees and so farmers have been advised to plant more trees to increase forest cover.

Most of the affected tea factories includes Ngere Tea factory with 20 per cent affected which accounts for over 500 hectares of tea destroyed, Kagwe area where 15 per cent of the tea has been destroyed by the frost, and Ikumbi and Kanyanya-ini with 12 per cent respectively.

Kanyago recommends that the broken shoots should first be removed



Some of the tea which has been destroyed by biting frost in Othaya of Nyeri County. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

at the normal height (instead of pruning the plant) at which they would have been plucked.

"In most mildly affected areas, the tea plants will recover in one or two months time after the rainfall, though in severely affected areas it may take up to three months to recover fully," adds the chairman.

If the scenario continues, it is likely production will go down which may adversely affect the volume of made tea. In Rift Valley workers in tea plantations have been laid off until the crop sprouts again.

Frost is a weather phenomenon showing adverse growing condition of tea that may be experienced mainly

during the dry months of January/February in low lying areas mostly adjacent to river courses.

Continued transpiration throughout the dry season, result in marked alteration of the diurnal heat balance-high air and soil temperature during the day and low at night leading to a likelihood of occurrence of frost.

The young shoots are most susceptible because they are tender and succulent with high moisture content and least protected by temperatures approaching freezing point of water which has a potential to cause injury to the tea plants.

The low temperatures cause water in the cell sap to expand, the cell wall

raptures resulting in chemical reactions normally associated with green leaf fermentation thus the leaves turn brown.

The extent of browning in different fields reflects degree of cell rupture and subsequent fermentation; the dead leaves dry up in the course of the day as the day time temperatures rise.

Central Provincial Meteorological officer Francis Nguatah says that frost had been an annual phenomenon but its magnitude had intensified.

He says weather changes had been occasioned by lack of cloud cover, which means heat is lost from the earth's surface at night and is not reflected back to maintain some warmth.

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

Mutheka coffee farmers protest over poor management

OVER 400 coffee farmers from Tetu district affiliated to Muthaka Cooperative Farmers Society recently marched along Nyeri streets protesting over poor management of the society.

The irked farmers who were mostly from Kiandu Coffee Factory marched for about a kilometer from YMCA hall to Central Provincial Commissioner's headquarters in Nyeri town where they demanded to be addressed by the Central Provincial Cooperatives Officer Stephen Mwenje.

Waving twigs and placards and chanting anti-society slogans, the farmers claimed that the society has embezzled millions of shillings.

Administration police officers had a rough time trying to block them from accessing the PC's offices.

The farmers also caused a heavy traffic jam along the roads vowing that they want a split from the society.

The society is made up of seven coffee factories which include Muthua-ini, Kaiguri, Kigwandi, Kiandu, Chorong'i, Kamuyu and Kihuyo with over 7,000 farmers.

A farmer John Icheera from Kiandu said that they were opposed to the last minute cancellation of a special general meeting which was scheduled to pass a vote of no confidence against the management.

Another farmer Esther Macharia lamented that the society has been paying them peanuts despite the rise in coffee prices and thus majority cannot even afford to pay school fees for their children.

"We have been suffering very much and we now want a split. This merger has led to poor payments. We also want the society management to be probed over mismanagement and embezzlement of funds," added another farmer John Maina.

The farmers accused the management of being insensitive to their plight and cited the unorthodox manner used in calling off the

meeting. "We were heading for the meeting only to be confronted with notices at the doorstep of YMCA, the venue of the meeting informing us that the meeting has been put off".

This prompted them to march along the streets. The farmers vowed to close down Mutheka offices located at Ruring'u area until their issues are addressed.

They also declined to sell their

coffee until the management is ousted.

Central Provincial Cooperatives Officer Stephen Mwenje later addressed the farmers who promised them that a special general meeting will be conducted within a fortnight. He also urged them not to take law into their hands.

The farmers insisted that the agenda of the meeting should be that of splitting from the society.



Protesting Mutheka Cooperative Farmers Society marching along the major streets in Nyeri town recently. Photo/Joseph Mukubwa

Kisiis urged against hawking tea

By BOB OMBATI

THE Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) is up in arms over the hawking of green leaf tea by growers to multinational companies.

A board member with the agency, John Nyagarama reveals that Nyankoba tea factory in Nyamira County loses over 3 million Kilogrammes of green tea leaf annually due to tea hawking.

Nyankoba tea factory board chairman, Andrew Nyarango adds that the factory has been operating below its capacity to churn out 15 million kilograms of green leaf per year.

Nyarango however blames the scenario on poor application of fertilizer and neglected farms over land disputes which have resulted in the factory's low crop intake. The chairman lamented that if tea hawking was not checked, it will destabilize the sector by fueling conflicts and criminal activities in the area.

"We have to concert our efforts to end the vice. Our farmers are selling their raw tea leaves to agents of multinational companies and the malpractice is impoverishing them," stated Nyarango.

Nyarango, flanked by the agency's Regional manager, Willis Odhiambo said the factory jointly with others have formed Nyakwana hydro power project to generate energy, noting that construction at the site will begin after the feasibility study is over.

"Feasibility study is on going. The duration for research and construction of the first proposed site is projected within 36 to 42 months," Nyarango said.

He said the factory had put measures in place to mitigate the effects of the fluctuating dollar against the shilling, adding that the management has developed strategic plan to diversify its activities, expand and fully embrace modern technologies to benefit farmers.

The chairman cited the acquisition of land in Transmara where the factory has planted trees to use in processing tea and reduce energy costs to enable farmers to reap maximum benefits from their produce.

The chairman said the factory will also venture into geothermal, solar and wind energy to generate power for use and sell to boost farmers income and make them self reliant.

Nyagah gives Nyamira Coffee society reprieve

By BOB OMBATI

COFFEE societies in Kisii and Nyamira counties have received a reprieve after the government waived Kshs. 16 million owed to Wakenya Pamoja savings and Credit cooperative society (SACCO) and Gusii Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union (GCFUCU).

Cooperative Development and Marketing Minister, Joseph Nyagah says the waiver is part of Kshs. 1 billion that has been set aside to cushion the heavily indebted coffee farmers in the country to spur coffee production nationally.

Nyagah says Kshs. 13 million will be remitted to the union while Kshs 3 million will be channeled towards the Sacco.

The Minister made the remarks in a speech that was read on his behalf by Permanent Secretary Seno Nyakenyanya during the presentation of the cheques to the union. He said the waiver will go a long way in enhancing coffee production to cope with the increasing demand in international markets.

The PS, accompanied by Commissioner for cooperatives, Fredrick Odhiambo, Deputy Commissioner, Patrick Musyimi, Nyanza Provincial Cooperative officer (PCO) Zephaniah Osok and area District Officer (I) Philip Soi urged managers of cooperative societies to embrace modern technology that will enable them to provide efficient and effective services.

He challenged officials of the societies to shun wrangles and guard against coffee theft which threatens to destabilize the sector. Nyakenyanya disclosed coffee prices had registered remarkable improvement in the international market with one kilogramme of processed coffee fetching Kshs. 103 up from Kshs. 25

three years ago.

He challenged farmers to adopt better coffee husbandry to boost the quality and quantity of coffee to increase their earnings and uplift their standards of living as the country strive to attain vision 2030.

"Coffee farmers can only fight poverty through production of quality coffee which will fetch higher prices in the international market," said Nyakenyanya.

He said the government has started reviving Kenya Planters cooperative union to help coffee farmers and challenged youths to join the cooperative movement to alleviate poverty, adding cooperatives were a solution to the jobless youths in the country.

The officer decried rampant coffee theft in the area and warned members of the public and society officials against protecting the culprits who should be apprehended and arraigned in court to deter others.

Soi assured coffee farmers of security at the societies and implored members of the public to volunteer information that will help in the arrest of the suspects to curb coffee theft in the area.

Odhiambo urged officials of the societies to ferry their dried coffee to the union's coffee mill to reduce cases of theft at the societies instead of transporting the coffee to far flung millers which reduces their profit margin due to transportation costs.

The Commissioner asked the farmers to patronize the coffee mill to strengthen Kisii county economically, adding that as the cooperative movement was being devolved into counties, farmers should embrace the changes to gain.

He urged the coffee sub-sector stakeholders to shun politicians who are likely to interfere with the sector especially

during the electioneering period, noting that retrogressive politics had previously affected coffee industry, demoralized farmers and affected coffee production.

The Sacco's chairman, Zedekiah Agata said the society will use the funds to empower women and youths to alleviate poverty by giving them soft loans with little interest while the union's chairman,

Peter Ndemo said the union will use the funds to transport milled coffee to the market.

Agata, flanked by the union's Chief Executive Officer, Robert Mainya urged the government to avail Coffee Development Fund (CODF) regularly and on time to help the farmers increase coffee production in the area to feed the miller.



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KCPE results: Mwingi private schools cry foul

By KAVYU KURA

PRIVATE schools in Mwingi region that performed well in the 2011 KCPE examinations have cried foul doctored the results.

The Chairman of the Mwingi chapter of the Kenya private schools association, Stanley Wanjohi, rued that the results were not a true reflection of the hard work and commitment the schools had put in preparing the candidates.

"We strongly feel that they have reduced marks for our children. We expected a far much better performance," said Wanjohi as he announced that his Kanginga Oasis Academy had emerged top in Kitui County with a mean score of 363.

Wanjohi who is the director of the heroic Kanginga Oasis Academy charged that the government chose to reduce marks for private schools candidates in order to deny them places in national schools during the form one selection.

"Even though we are celebrating the comparatively good performance, we are not very comfortable. I do not understand why

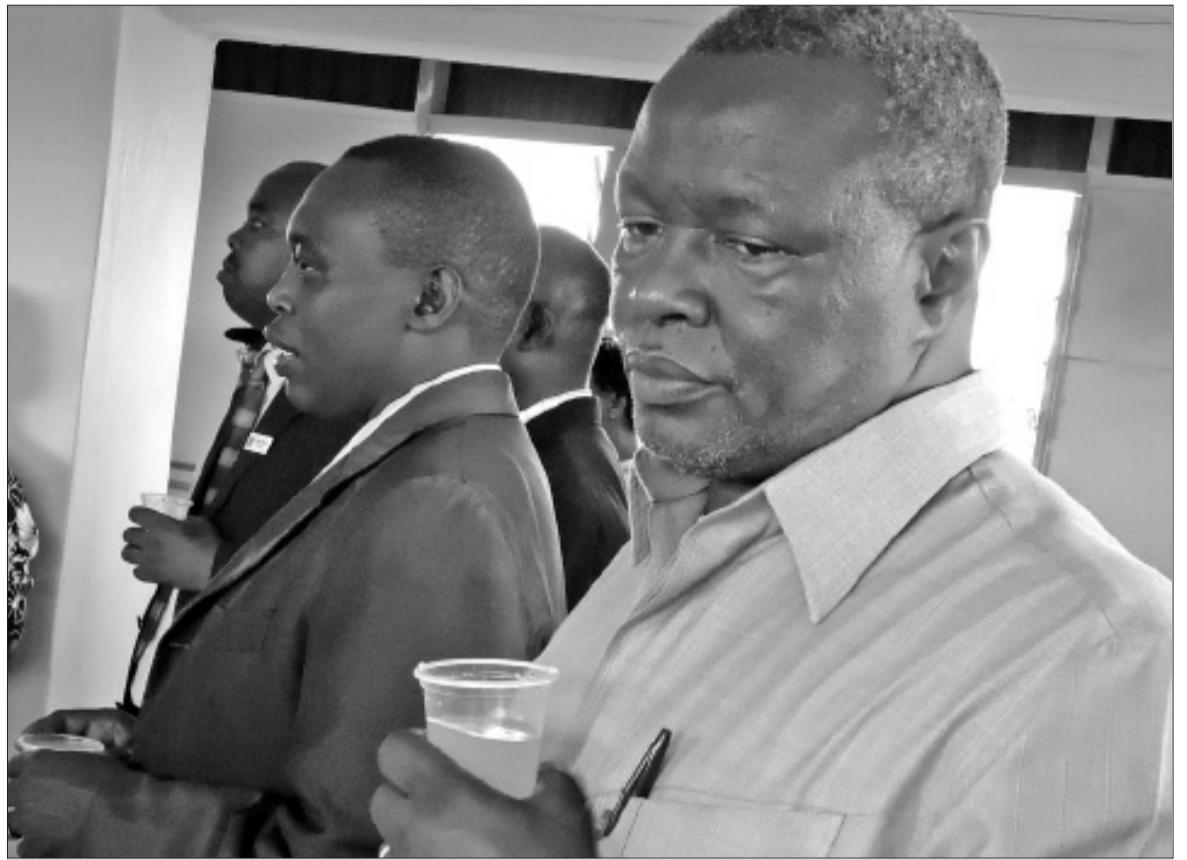
we have only seven candidates with over 400 marks while we expected 40," lamented Wanjohi.

The chairman whose school in the periphery of Mwingi town managed to produce the top girl-Angeline Mwendu Musee- in Kitui County with 425 marks, said he could not comprehend how only seven candidates in the school got over 400 while the target was 40.

"This decline is not possible. The government must appreciate the fact that it takes hard work for kids to achieve this. It is not easy. They should give us an upper hand and not ignore our pleas," said Wanjohi.

He said it was prudent for the government to consider that they were in partnership with private schools in improving the education standards. "The government should understand that it is commitment and hard work that makes us post sterling performance."

Nevertheless, Wanjohi said that his school community would only take solace in the fact that it led in the KCPE results in Kitui and produced to top female candidate to boot.



Stanley Wanjohi, the Director of the Kanginga Oasis Academy, with Mwingi DC Peter Kinuthia (left). Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Youth cautioned against selling their votes

By MORRIS GITHENYA

YOUTH have been cautioned against selling their votes during the electioneering period as the vice denied them the right to exercise their fundamental freedom to spearhead change.

Kiharu youth leader Munyi Kariuki said effective leadership can only be achieved if youth resist political maneuvers that encourage the sale of votes among other malpractices.

Addressing a youth forum in Gatari location, Kariuki lamented that

youth in the country have for years been used as political turn coats as the rich ascend to leadership positions.

He, however, said that with the establishment of county governments, the youth will be expected to play a major role in ensuring only visionary leaders take up leadership positions.

He lamented that Murang'a region has continued to lag behind in development due to lack of a clear agenda by the political class to initiate development programmes to alleviate poverty.

"The new constitution however places an obligation on the youth to participate in pertinent national issues and ensure that only leaders committed to change are elected," said Kariuki.

On issuance of identity cards, he asked the government to speed up the process saying millions of the youth risk being locked out of elections for lack of the vital document.

"Millions of the youth have attained age of 18 yet they are turned away owing to lack of materials at the registration offices in the districts," said Munyi.



Kenyan voters at a polling station. Photo/File

Rights groups flay state over persistent impunity

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

THE culture of impunity still persists even with the new constitution now in place.

Human rights defenders now want all government agencies to comply with the requirements of chapter six of the constitution which outline responsibilities of leadership and integrity.

Western Kenya Human Rights watch executive directors Mr. Job Bwonya, and Mwatikho Torture survivor's organization coordinators Mr. Taiga Wanyanja accused the government of allegedly continuing to protect its agents who perpetrate crimes against humanity.

They claim that the government is trying to employ every trick in the book to cover up the intrigues surrounding the violent robbery that took place at Namang'ofulo coffee factory in December last year.

During the night attack, three guards employed by the coffee factory and one villager were hacked to death by the attackers. The villagers caught up with the three thugs and in retaliation lynched them as others escaped with some bags of coffee.

As they were being lynched, one of the thugs allegedly implicated the then Bungoma West District Commissioner (DC) Mr. Paul Merinyang and administration police officers (APs) attached to his office and Namubila chiefs camp in the theft.

The DC was immediately interdicted and all the APs transferred to other stations to pave way for investigations. Bwonya and Wanyanja are however filled with anger in the way investigations have been conducted by the government.

They want the government to prosecute the administrator and police officers instead of transferring them

arguing that there is enough evidence associating the officers with the theft.

Bwonya wonders how a person who hails from Kisii can travel all the way to Bungoma to steal coffee in a rural set up like Namang'ofulo.

One of the lynched thugs, identified as Hosea Onyiengo, is rumoured to be a police officer and his body was alleged to have been secretly sneaked out of Bungoma District hospital mortuary.

"We cannot sit back and watch as innocent Kenyans lose their lives and institutions mandated to investigate such cases turn their tables in an effort to institutionalize impunity in the society", says Bwonya. He adds that Kenyans can no longer afford to continue hearing rumours that these people were police officers yet there are institutions with the capacity to investigate and tell the public the truth.

The other two thugs lynched were; Christopher Otieno from Raihonyo south and John Eshiemu Mumia from Makunga, Mumias and their bodies were claimed by Mr. Mitui Sodo and Mr. Walter Shitandi respectively.

Namang'ofulo coffee factory guards killed during the robbery incident include; Isaac Kuywa, Festus Sitati Wabomba, and John Kiabi Mwalie.

Former area councilor Noah Sitati concurs with the two human rights defenders saying that nothing substantial has come out of the investigations.

Sitati wonders whether any serious investigations and eventual justice will be done given that the authorities are allegedly harassing people who demand that no stone should be left unturned during the investigations.

He discloses that the three killed watchmen hailed from poor families and had accumulated salary arrears at the coffee factory of about Kshs. 200,000 each.

Residents want bandits disarmed and arrested

By KAVYU-KURA

LEADERS in Mwingi have called for a massive disarmament exercise to mop up illegal firearms in the hands of criminals behind numerous bandit and rustling attacks in peripheral areas of the region.

Leaders attending a security cum peace meeting in Mwingi town in mid-January concurred that it was prudent for the government to confiscate firearms held by criminals hiding in parts of in Tana River County and Kora National Park.

It was also agreed during the meeting that all illegal squatters residing within the Kora Park and the Mwingi North corridor be evicted as the area had been turned into a criminal den where gunmen unleash terror with impunity.

The meeting held at a Mwingi hotel was sponsored by the World Vision Non-governmental Organisation and brought together district security committee members from Mbala Mbala in Garissa county, Tana north, Mwingi East, Tseikuru and Kyuso in Kitui county as well as respective Peace committees.

The meeting was held in the wake of killings of five people in Tseikuru district by bandits believed to have emanated from Tana River almost a fortnight ago.

Two peace committee members, Jones Munyithya (Mwingi) and Juri Osman (Tana River), accused the government of laxity in addressing the banditry issue. Munyithya wondered why known criminals had

been allowed to own guns while Osman questioned why suspected bandits were not arrested even after their names were given to DCs.

The Warden in charge of the Kora park Wilson Njue who was present announced that he had given suspected criminals who masqueraded as herders one week to move out of the Park as well as the Mwingi north game reserve lest they would be forcefully evicted and face court action.

The meeting was attended by senior government officials who included DCs Martin Mwaro (Mwingi East), James Kianda (Mbalambala), Stephen Momanyi (Tseikuru), Reuben Loyotaman (Tana north) and Kyuso DC Peter Maina who was chairman.

DCs Kianda and Loyotaman claimed that the people who perpetuated banditry in the area had migrated from other parts of Eastern and NEP provinces. They suggested that the

best way to handle the insecurity problem was by cultivating peaceful and harmonious co-existence among the warring communities.

Kianda however doubted whether animals stolen in rustling were hidden in Tana river saying that regular security operation could have exposed them. He said he highly suspected that the cattle thieves slaughter them soon after raids and sell them as carcasses to butcher men.



The Kyuso DC Peter Maina speaks as he chaired security-cum-peace meeting in Mwingi town. He is flanked by DCs Stephen Momanyi (Tseikuru), and Martin Mwaro (Mwingi East) extreme right. Photos/Joseph Mukubwa

Busia Sacco disbanded over funds

By NYAKWAR ODAWO

WITH the declaration by the United Nations that 2012 is a special year for savings and credit cooperative organizations (SACCOs), majority are now preparing for their Annual General Meetings (AGMs).

Most of these meetings are usually characterized by reports that display their successes or failures, election of new officials or re-election of existing ones.

But for members of Busia County Council's Akili ni Mali Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization, there is nothing much to celebrate since their Sacco is faced with liquidation owing to gross mismanagement and corruption which has cost them of Kshs 1 million through fraudulent dealings.

In a closed door meeting between the society and the district cooperative officials held at the Busia County Council chambers recently, the irate members accused the society officials of failing to exercise transparency and accountability in the management of their savings and shares.

The Sacco which was formed in early 80s with active members standing at 60, has registered drastic drop in membership over the years with the figure currently standing at 38 members as majority them have opted out after they noticed that there was

no meaningful improvement at all in their standards of living despite investing for a better future.

"Initially, our Sacco had a strong financial base, but was later turned into a cash cow after officials begun to siphon our hard earned cash with the promise that they will do everything at their disposal to make the society vibrant in order to increase members earnings," said a member on condition of anonymity.

The members accused the officials of receiving members monthly contribution during 2010/2011 financial year but failing to remit the same to the bank with the express knowledge of the local authority's chief officers.

"As members we regret having joined the Sacco because at no time have we received any development loan to invest on income generating activities. Whenever we apply for a loan we are told the society has no adequate funds at the moment," they said, adding that they suspected all was not well when the chairman plotted to resign without notice," said a member.

During the closed door meeting, the irate members unanimously resolved that the Sacco be disbanded forthwith and demanded that the local authority stops deducting their monthly contribution until further notice.

"We have unanimously agreed that the local authority should stop deducting our monthly contribution until further notice," they said, adding that the district cooperatives office should intervene as a matter of urgency and order auditing of the society's books of accounts.

The members at the same time accused the Sacco officials and the chief officers of failing to refund the money contributed by members who have since retired from the local authority.

The Busia District Cooperative Officer Silas Njoga who presided over the charged meeting at the Busia County Council chambers, blamed members woes on gross mismanagement by Sacco officials who colluded with chief officers in the council to exploit members with impunity.

Njoga said the Sacco officials had failed to live up to their mandate by offering effective services to members, adding that due to poor management, the Sacco members have lost a significant amount of their savings amounting to Kshs.1million as revealed through the society's balance sheet.

"The savings and credit society organizations are normally formed to empower members through the issuance of development loan facilities to enable them undertake various income generating activities and improve on their living standards, but

here is one that has failed to live up to its obligation," said Njoga, adding that the same is expected to create cohesiveness among the members.

The cooperative official at the same time said that the district audit officials have already embarked on an inspection audit after which liquidation will follow.

"Auditors are already inspecting the society's books of accounts and after that the society will be liquidated," he said, adding that sacco officials found culpable will be surcharged and forced to repay the same through their monthly salary until the entire amount is fully recovered.

Njoga at the same time said local authorities that fail to remit members contributions will have their accounts frozen in line with section 28 (6) CAP 490 of the law of Kenya.

He however says it is unfortunate to note that most councils sack affected employees and underscored the need to adopt measures that will protect employees from victimization for demanding their rights.

"There is need to come up with a law that will protect the affected employees from being sacked by their employers for demanding their rightful dues," said Njoga, adding that he will ensure justice was done to the members of Akili Ni Mali SACCO as well any other within his area of jurisdiction.

Nyambati under heavy fire from the youth

By BOB OMBATI

A CROSS section of youths from Kitutu Masaba constituency in Nyamira County wants their area Member of Parliament, Walter Nyambati, to involve them in the development agenda.

They assert that community participation, good leadership, planning and proper management and usage of public funds are vital to the area's social and economic development, which, they claim had stagnated since independence compared to other neighbouring constituencies.

Led by Paul Makini, the youth urged Nyambati to ensure prudent management of public funds earmarked for the constituency or face the wrath of the community.

Makini told The Link that previously unscrupulous committee officials embezzled public funds, resulting in the stalling of Constituency Fund supported projects and conflicts that derail development. He said Kitutu Masaba youths had waged a relentless war on graft and plan to expose corrupt individuals regardless of their political affiliation, economic status or god fathers.

"We will not sit and watch corrupt officials drain the constituency's public funds kitty with impunity while we wallow in poverty and projects stall," quipped Makini, adding they won't spare them either for all the monies they have stolen, misappropriated or mismanaged before.

The youths alleged that Nyambati's re-election in the November 28 by-election was marred with anomalies and blamed the provincial administration and security officers for allegedly abetting them.

They claimed they reported the anomalies to the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) officials but they never took heed and action.

Security officers, averred the youngsters failed to arrest individuals who allegedly bribed voters and doctored poll results to favour some candidates.

They appealed to the handlers of the Commission to put measures in place to ensure that the 2012 general election is conducted freely, fairly and transparently for the commission to win public confidence. "We want the Commission officials to be work professionally, impartially and honestly to ensure that the Commission delivers the 2012 poll with minimum anomalies," said Makini.

He said Kenyans will not accept a botched election like one witnessed in 2007 which left 1133 people dead, over 500 thousand displaced and properties worthy billions go up in flames.

The Commission has not taken any action while Manga District Commissioner, Onesmus Kyatha has since refuted the bribery allegations, maintaining the exercise was free, fair and transparent.

By KAVYU-KURA

Group launches pro-cremation lobby group

AMBITIOUS plan to popularize cremation as a cost effective way of disposing off the dead among Kenyan communities has been mooted.

Already, the Cremation Society of Kenya has been formed with Nairobi hotelier Haroun Nyamongo Omari as chairman, an accountant Daniel Njoroge as secretary and businesswoman Ms Margaret W. Ndaba as the treasurer.

Speaking to The Link the secretary said that the official launch of the Cremation society will take place at a ceremony to be held in Nairobi soon.

Njoroge said that the plan to form the society was borne out of the fact that the traditional Kenyan methods of disposing the dead have proved too costly for the bereaved families. He added that due to rising population growth, cemeteries in major Kenyan towns were also filling up fast.

He pointed out that it was obvious that cremation was the way to go for Kenyans because cemeteries in Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru and even Karatina and many other urban centres were filled up with authorities being forced to look for scarce land for new burial sites.

The secretary noted that transporting the deceased for long distances to be interred in their rural homes was not only emotionally and socially draining for the bereaved relatives but an economic nightmare due to the huge fiscal cost involved.

“Socially, cremation reduces the social burden on the bereaved families by ensuring faster disposal of dead relatives while it is economically feasible because it is cheap and affordable. It is also environmentally friendly as it minimizes the use of harmful chemicals that preserve dead bodies,” said Njoroge.

He added that there was absolutely nothing queer about cremation in Kenya considering that a number of prominent personalities including environmentalist Wangari Mathai, former cabinet Minister Peter Okondo and Anglican prelate Mannases Kuria were cremated.

Njoroge said that cremation was fast gaining international acceptance with up to 98 percent of the dead in Japan being cremated, while in Britain it was 56 percent

and 60 percent in Canada. He said the cremation societies have been formed in many countries to encourage cheap disposal of the dead.

He noted that cremation was quicker, thus cutting down the period of gatherings for mourning and reducing the cost of feeding the mourners.

“Cremation is cheaper; it brings social harmony and it is environmentally friendly and it will cut down on use of wood that makes the coffins and also does

away with use of chemicals that are used to preserve the body as people engage in prolonged periods of mourning. Some of these chemicals are harmful to the atmosphere,” he said.

He further said that whereas some countries have increasingly been embracing cremation, Kenyans have not yet embraced it in any significant level. He added that persons who opt for cremation are seen as odd and their choice to be cremated is not accepted by their relatives and friends.

The Cremation society of Kenya, he said, will advocate and sensitize cremation to be generally acceptable to Kenyans and remove the stigma that is associated with it. “The society will popularize cremation so that many Kenyans opt for it and get their relatives and friends accept their choice to be cremated,” he said.

“The society will advocate for passing of laws that will accommodate and facilitate cremation to make it cheaper and easily acceptable to Kenyans,” he said.



Coast PC Ernest Munyi, next to a casket of a Kinango District officer Peter Syengo Kyavoa that had to be transported to his Nguni home in Mwingi East district for burial recently. Photo/Kavyu-Kura

Gusii leaders endorse creation of Borabu constituency

By BOB OMBATI

MORE than ten thousand residents of Borangi and Bokeira locations in North Mugirango/Borabu in Nyamira County want the government to recognize them by availing services closer to them.

Dismas Oyollo, a resident from Borangi says that since independence, they had not had any form of representation from provincial to civic level, yet they have been voting for subsequent Members of Parliament from North Mugirango/Borabu constituency. Oyollo, told the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) at Uhuru Gardens in Nyamira that residents, who speak both Kisii and dholuo languages are descendants of Gusii community.

He said Abakeira and Bonyengwe clans occupy the two locations which lack piped water, electricity, good roads, markets, adding the area's schools are understaffed due to lack of representation in various organs of the government.

The residents claimed that they were only recognized during elections, adding that once the exercise was over, politicians allegedly forgot about them. He told the Commission chaired by Kule Galma Godana that they have no representatives in committees at the constituency level, adding that the area had been neglected.

Oyollo, flanked by elders, Michael Abuga, Lawrence Jaoko and Ezra Otieno said they would like to remain in North Mugirango constituency and want to elect their County Ward representatives and access various government services and public funds without discrimination.

He said that Abakeira, known as Mikiria and Bonyengwe commonly called Onyengwe clans speak both Kisii and dholuo languages, adding that majority of Onyengwe dholuo speakers occupy Chapella, Owidi and Misambi geographical areas.

The residents said they wanted to know whether they are under Nyamira or Homabay counties, adding that the two languages- Kisii and dholuo were allegedly being used by leaders from both sides to marginalize them.

During the hearing of public views on electoral boundaries, Gusii leaders unanimously endorsed the creation of Borabu constituency to be carved out of North Mugirango/Borabu Constituency. Lawmakers- Wilfred Ombui (North Mugirango Borabu), Dr Robert Monda (Nyaribari Chache), Simon Ogari (Bomachoge) and Walter Nyambati (Kitutu Masaba) resolved that Wards from Kitutu Masaba should not be hived off to include parts of Borabu constituency. Veteran politician, Zephaniah Anyieni Mogunde, who served Bassi/Majoge before it was split into Bobasi and Bomachoge, said Borabu was a settlement scheme with Omogusii's seven clans adding that electoral boundaries and peoples views should be respected to avoid conflicts.

The MPs told the Commission that the views presented to the disbanded Ligale -led Commission were interfered with by some unscrupulous individuals for their selfish interests and told the Commission to guard against such malpractices. The leaders said they had proposed to the Commission to split the proposed without merging clans or shifting civic Wards to meet the requirements of creating the constituencies.

Insure examiners against risks — KNEC told

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

KENYA National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and Kenya Union of Post Primary Education teachers (KUPPET) are up in arms over poor scheme of service for National examiners.

The two trade Unions have asked Kenya National Examinations council (KNEC) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mr. Paul Wasanga to revise examiners' terms and conditions of service.

Bungoma South KNUT branch executive secretary M. Ken Ng'ang'a, Kuppet national chair Mr. Omboko Milemba, and his deputy Mr. Julius Ko-

rir want KNEC to include insurance cover in the scheme of service for examiners.

The trade unionists argue that since the exams marking exercise involves risks; examiners must be insured by KNEC.

They made the remarks in Bungoma County last December during the burial of two teachers, Protas Karandini and Erick Walumbe.

Walumbe was before his death deputy principal at Chebosi Secondary School in Bungoma East District while Karandini was Director of studies (DOS) at St. Martins Mwibale secondary school in

Bungoma south district.

The two were among five teachers who died in a tragic road accident in Machakos shortly after finishing marking KCSE Kiswahili paper 2.

Ng'ang'a and Omboko now want KNEC to compensate the bereaved families arguing that the teachers met their deaths while on official duty.

The trade unionists at the same time are calling upon teachers to boycott marking this year's KCPE and KCSE exams if KNEC declines to revise the terms and conditions.

“We will not allow teachers to mark this year's national ex-

ams until KNEC agrees to negotiate with us new terms and condition for examiners” says Omboko.

Nganga challenges the government to be proactive to issues and not reactive.

Speaking at the same funerals former Alliance Boys High School Principal Mr. Christopher Khaemba urged the government to put sanity in the matatu industry by enforcing Michuki rules.

Khaemba challenged the government to also unveil performance contracting for traffic police officers in order to reduce road accidents.

Wamunyinyi calls for peaceful elections

By AGGREY BUCHUNJU

ASPIRANTS for political leadership in Bungoma County have been asked to embrace peace and democracy during electioneering period.

Former Kanduyi MP Wafula Wamunyinyi says that leaders of all political parties and their agents have a constitutional right to tour the county and solicit for votes and support.

Wamunyinyi challenges Bungoma County residents to shun leaders who hire goons to disrupt meetings by their opponents saying that Kenya is now in the era of competitive politics.

He decries zoning of areas saying that the scenario may lead to political violence and poor political leadership.

The former legislator observes that it is only through listening to all and sundry without disturbance that Kenyans can elect the best leaders to steer this country to the next level of development.

Wamunyinyi says that politicians who do not strive to unite people have no business being in positions of political leadership in Bungoma County and the country at large.

He further asks those who have developed appetite for political leadership seats not to insult their opponents but instead tell voters how they intend to improve things if elected.

Wamunyinyi at the same time also challenges Bungoma County residents to set priorities for the political leadership arguing that the county's development plan must reflect the wishes and aspirations of the people.

The former MP was speaking recently in Mwimbale village of East Bukusu location during the burial of the Chebosi secondary school deputy principal, Erick Walumbe, 51.

Speaking at the same function Bungoma south KNUT branch executive secretary Mr. Ken Nganga accused Bungoma County political leaders of doing nothing to improve residents' lives.

Nganga claimed that politicians take advantage of the residents' poverty especially among the youth to buy leadership through handouts and hire of the poor youth to harass and intimidate opponents.

He urged Bungoma County residents to go for responsible and accountable political leadership and not money if they want their lives improved through the devolved governance system.

Troubled land companies to be wound up

By MORRIS GITHNEYA

THE government policy that seeks to outlaw land buying companies has become operational.

Officials from the registrar of companies are now sensitizing shareholders of various companies on the need to wind up their operations to help recover assets lost to corrupt management committees.

At the troubled Ngimu farm limited in Murang'a County, shareholders unanimously endorsed a resolve to wind up the company.

The shareholders mandated the board of management led by Henry Mwangi to identify and compile all the remaining assets to pave way for the dissolution of the company and the disposal of assets whose proceeds will be shared out among the members.

Office of the Registrar of Companies had listed Ngimu, Muhotetu, Ereri and Mboi-I-Kamiti in Central Kenya region as some of the troubled institutions that should be wound up with immediate effect.

During a recent extra ordinary meeting held at a Kenol hotel under tight security, the shareholders of Ngimu land buying company mounted pressure on the management to wind up the company and dispose off the remaining assets in Makuyu Division to conform with the government's policy.

The shareholders further directed the board recover parcels of land disposed off without their approval. The board had not listed the winding up agenda but members were able to pick



Mr. James Orengo, Lands Minister

it up and demand that the matter be concluded within a year and proceeds shared equally.

Senior Deputy Registrar of Companies Francis Ng'ang'a and State Counsel Ms Doris Wangui said most officials of land buying companies had continued exploiting shareholders.

Ng'ang'a said many of the compa-

nies were financially crippled due to massive corruption which thrived in the absence of information to shareholders on the progress of their investments as required by law.

"It has been noted that most of these companies have not been holding meetings as outlined in the law and board of directors have been forging minutes to justify their existence

in office," said Ng'ang'a.

Ngimu Farm has been dogged by numerous controversies which have been subject to a number of court battles with officials allied to the company being implicated in fraudulent deals that touch on the sale of land using fake titles deeds.

In the past ten years' the company has been embroiled in protracted leadership wrangles which has seen shareholders petitioning the government to intervene to enable them hold meetings to deliberate affairs of their investments.

But even as majority of shareholders endorsed a resolve to wind up the operations of the company, another faction led by former chairman Danson Githuka vowed to oppose the move saying they had not been consulted.

"let the matter on winding up the company be approached with fresh minds to ensure all the systems are pursued to ensure justice is done," said Githuka.

The Board chairman however said the move was final and accused individuals fronting the interests of former officials of trying to sabotage the resolution. He further accused the former board of flouting government directive by failing to hand over the office to the new board as required by law.

"With help of the shareholders, the board has managed to trace many of the assets that were disposed off irregularly. The board will recover all assets and dispose them before sharing out proceeds equally to all members," said Mwangi the company chairman.

US asked to assist Kenya avoid chaos

By LINK WRITER

IN 2012, Kenya plans to hold national elections. These general polls will be the first since December of 2007, when the country's disputed presidential race provoked a deadly crisis that threatened to erupt into civil war. Ultimately, more than 1,000 people were killed and an estimated 500,000 displaced.

Many Kenyans have since worked tirelessly toward breaking their country's cycle of electoral violence, and the upcoming polls will mark a critical moment in the attempt to prevent crisis renewed. As the elections approach, the U.S. government should proactively take part in the effort to help prevent deadly conflict and support long-term peace - not only because of Kenya's longstanding economic and political partnership with the United States, but because of the crucial role Kenya plays in its wider region.

While much has been achieved in Kenya since 2007, many of the grievances most responsible for past electoral violence continue to plague its citizens. Tensions around issues including inequality, ethnic division, lack of land reform, corruption and high rates of youth unemployment remain. Though Kenyans peacefully approved a new constitution in 2010 that contains many much-needed reforms, political resistance to changes in the status quo continues. The government has also been slow to hold perpetrators of the 2007 post-election violence accountable, causing Kenyans to question the government's commitment to ending impunity and leading to an external investigation of the crimes by the International Criminal Court.

At the same time, Kenya's relatively robust institutions and infrastructure provide much of the foundation necessary for long-term stability. Moreover, its past demonstrates that action to avert violence can be effective. Even in the midst of the

growing conflict in late 2007, Kenyan civil society, regional African groups and the broader international community were able to respond with humanitarian assistance, citizen advocacy and rapid diplomacy. The efforts led to a peace agreement that both put an end to the immediate violence and called for commitment to long-term reform, demonstrating how the tools of diplomacy, civil society mobilization and international cooperation can be used to halt atrocities and restore peace.

Once again, the United States and greater international community have a significant stake in helping to ensure a peaceful outcome to the Kenyan election. Kenya has long served as the anchor of U.S. policy in the region, and its strong economy, vibrant civil society and meaningful contributions to regional organizations and peacekeeping efforts make the country critical to East African and global stability.

Though Kenyans themselves will take the most important steps toward lasting peace, the Obama administration and Congress can and should join them in supporting the prevention of deadly conflict. By investing in grassroots peacebuilding and civic education, coordinating preventive diplomatic efforts, encouraging greater accountability from the Kenyan government and preparing to respond rapidly to any violence that might occur, the United States can make concrete contributions toward preventing another crisis - well before the election begins.

Key Recommendations for the U.S. Government

- Develop and implement an interagency prevention strategy focused on Kenya well in advance of the 2012 elections. Utilize the new Atrocities Prevention Board at the National Security Council to create a coherent, prevention-focused strategy that emphasizes early, sustained diplomatic en-

agement and support for local preventive efforts. Invest in the U.S. civilian capacity necessary for effective prevention and response to potential violence (including tools like the Complex Crises Fund and Civilian Response Corps).

- Coordinate preventive diplomatic efforts with key Kenyan and international partners, including the African Union and United Nations. Support others' leadership and contribute U.S. assets where most useful.

- Direct U.S. diplomatic engagement toward pressing Kenya's leaders to implement the constitution and to advance government accountability at both national and local levels. Support the International Criminal Court investigations, as well as Kenyan judicial and criminal justice reform. Urge greater demonstration of commitment to volatile issues, including land reform, corruption and the resettlement of those internally displaced.

- Increase funding for U.S. assistance focused on conflict prevention and management, as well as funding for aid that addresses root causes of conflict and supports stability in the long-term. Provide more resources for initiatives related to civic education, community peacebuilding, civil society, fair elections and youth economic empowerment, particularly in volatile areas.

- Ensure that U.S. assistance does not inadvertently enable further human rights violations. Undertake a full review of U.S. security assistance to Kenya that is informed by a conflict assessment and a thorough examination of the current state of Kenya's security forces. Proactively monitor units receiving U.S. assistance and halt all lethal aid.

- Provide funding to support the disarmament of local militias and increase efforts to help reduce arms trafficking in the greater region. Continue to facilitate the destruction of small arms and light weapons.

Judicial service desks set at Kisii law courts

By BOB OMBATI

A NON-GOVERNMENTAL Organization has entered into partnership with the government to train paralegal officers and police officers to enhance service delivery in Kisii.

Legal Resource Foundation (LRF) will implement the programme jointly with the law society of Kenya (LSK), Kisii chapter to help offer fast, efficient and effective services.

The branch's LSK chairman, Momanyi Aunga says the officers will be sensitized on human rights and civil proceedings to enable them serve wanjichi better.

Aunga, who spoke during the launch of the Judiciary service care desk and LRF desk at Kisii law courts said police officers will be trained on how to uphold the rights of suspects to avoid conflicts.

"Police officers must learn to arrest suspects without harassing them. The suspects must be told why they are being arrested. The suspects must also be made aware of their rights once they take pleas in courts," said Aunga.

The chairman lamented that some people purporting to be lawyers had defrauded unsuspecting members of the public millions of shillings, adding the two desks will help eradicate the vice.

He said the desks will also help members of the public to follow up on their cases and familiarize themselves with court processes to curb on time wastage.

Aunga asked the local Chief Magistrate to engage officers to man the judicial Desk to direct the public to various courts for their cases to avoid wasting time and crowding at the registry.

Cane poaching crippling Nzoia sugar

By LUKE KAPCHANGA

THEFT of harvested cane by a cartel, which allegedly comprises of senior employees, at Nzoia Sugar Company, is threatening to cripple its operations.

Senior managers in the agriculture department who serve in privileged positions have allegedly been colluding with contracted transporters to fraudulently sell cane to poachers.

A report compiled by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Bungoma indicate that the company lost close to Kshs 215 million in fraudulent sale of cane to poachers between 2008 to August 2011.

According to the report, the poaching of cane is planned and executed through cohorts as follows:-

Senior managers create deliberate lapses in control mechanisms to give a safe passage to illegal cartels. This essentially means ignoring control mechanisms put in place to ensure that all cane from the Nucleus Estate is harvested and delivered to the factory as Nucleus cane.

Errant officials in the company also deliberately use unserialized harvest tickets to undermine existing procedures and ensure that there is no continuity. Consequently, field clerks issue harvest tickets during transit of harvested cane along the roads or at the weighbridge without ascertaining the source of cane.

Further, the Nucleus Estate cane is then exchanged with cane from the Outgrowers zone to gain heavier weight and it is finally delivered at the weighbridge as private cane at the expense of the company.



Cane cutters at work.

There are many weaknesses on accountability of cane for the Nucleus Estate that allow for cane deliveries to be traded under private care. Key among them include a ploy by errant delivery managers to deploy "friendly staff (mostly their relatives) in strategic sections in the nucleus Estate and support services (e.g. harvesting transport, cane yard and patrol section to facilitate implementation of the fraud activities).

The investigation report into theft of cane within the nucleus es-

tate by Bungoma CID notes that, "there is collusion between the employees of various departments including farmers. It was found that there is laxity in supervising the employees and guarding of company properties"

In 30th July, 2011, the company lost cane which was being delivered by a tractor registration number KBE 075P which belonged to Koomo Transporters from the nucleus.

At the weighbridge, the driver

of the Tractor produced out grower harvesting ticket which was used to weigh the cane.

The cane was allegedly collected from the farm of one Abraham Bursuru. A person who noticed, what was happening informed the weigh bridge clerk and acting supervisor but they disregarded him and went ahead with the weighing process.

The transport supervisor also came to the scene, had the tractor impounded and later released under unclear circumstances.

Six suspects appeared in a Bungoma court on 8th August 2011 charged with the offence which they denied and later released.

Statements recorded at the weighbridge by the employees were different from the account given by the acting supervisor who denied knowledge of the cane, while data entry clerk admitted being aware.

The report mainly indicts individuals who work at security, nucleus, transport or finances departments.

The CID report, recommends that the following persons be disciplined for negligent in their duties. They include Francis Mukheli, Suhura Sikuku, Alfred Barasa Hassan, Michael Kulundu Okumba, Chaka Aggrey Butasi, Tennar Wanyama Webala and John Ouma Odhiambo.

Because cane poaching is executed by managers, information regarding the declining state of the nucleus Estate and the rampant theft has never been reported to the Board of Directors.

The yields in many fields situated close to the factory according to the available information were very adversely affected by cane poaching, with most of them recording negative incomes.

Plant crop in field 8020 was harvested on 24TH February 2011 recorded very poor income of Kshs 348,089.78 from a surface area of 8.83 hectares.

Cane that was harvested from field 7061 on 11th March, 2011 yielded negative income of Kshs 823,806.88 from a surface area of 8.95 hectares.

Similarly, the cane that was harvested on the same day from field 171 also yielded negative income of Kshs 1,691,428.80.

The field completion report of the harvesting activities from field 243A indicates that: Cane was harvested from field 243A for a period of five (5) days from 24th to 29th July 2011. A total of 198 stacks were realized. All the harvested stacks were transported from the field.

Only 189 stacks were recorded at the weigh bridge as having been received.

A total of nine (9) stacks went missing and have to date not been accounted for as indicated by pending/hanging harvest ticket numbers 21560, 23720, 23721, 454120, 2164600, 2174400, 9240610, 9240810 and 39850000.

The Nucleus Estate is essentially the backbone of the agribusiness manufacturing operations of Nzoia Sugar Company Limited. It spans a surface area of 3600 hectares. It is divided into five (5) districts and 55 fields for growing sugar cane.

It contributes to about 30% of the total annual cane requirement for the factory.

During the financial year 2010/11, about 184,577 metric tonnes of cane (equivalent to 28.3%) out of the total of 652,170 tons were delivered.

The company's enormous investment in the Nucleus Estate (in terms of cultural activities and farm inputs such as seed cane, fertilizer and chemicals) is in essence intended to secure the availability of sugar cane raw material for supply to the factory on regular and sustainable basis and also to bridge any lapses/gaps that might occur from the Outgrower communities sometimes caused by striking drivers/staff of contracted transporters

Nzoia Sugar Company being the only thriving economic engine that provides livelihood and hope to the people of Bungoma County, is now under pressure to take stringent action against the unscrupulous employees who use their privileged positions to undermine the operations of the company for self-enrichment.



Tractors transporting sugarcane to the factory.

Parties Act to inculca

INTRODUCTION

THERE are 47 political parties on paper, but only 19 have parliamentary representation. They include ODM, PNU, ODM-Kenya, Narc-Kenya, Ford Kenya, Safina, Ford People, UDM, KANU and Narc, among others. Strong political parties likely to survive under the new dispensation have to make political sacrifices, especially on elections and gender provisions. The Act (Section 25 (2) (b)), blocks political parties whose office bearers account for more than two thirds of the same gender from receiving funding from the newly established Political Parties kitty.

Registration of a political party

For a party to qualify for registration in the new Act, it has to recruit not less than 1,000 registered voters in at least 24 counties and reflect ethnic diversity, gender balance and representation of minorities and marginalized groups.

This is a major departure from tradition where political parties only required 200 members from each of the eight provinces, bringing the total to 1,600 members with no particular emphasis on special groupings.

Under the new law, the governing organ of a party is not allowed to have more than one member from one county and not more than two thirds of the members from one gender.

Members of the governing council must also meet requirements of Chapter Six of the constitution on leadership and integrity and laws relating to ethics.

A political party has also to establish branch offices in more than half of the 4 counties.

All political parties are to be registered with the Registrar of Political Parties. The Act outlines the process of registering a new political party. New applicants are to be issued with a certificate of provisional registration which has a shelf life of one hundred and eighty days after which the new party has to seek for full registration.

Prior to issuance of a registration certificate, the Act directs that the Registrar publishes the application in a Gazette notice and newspapers with large circulation within seven days to invite objections from any person or any political party in respect to the name, symbol or colour of the party or any other issue relating to the registration of the party.

Rejection of an application

The registrar may reject an application if the name of the political party, the abbreviation of the name

or the symbol

- (a) is obscene or offensive
- (b) is the name or is an abbreviation of another political party that is registered
- (c) resembles the name or symbol or an abbreviation of the name of another political party registered under the Act.

Further, the new law requires that existing political parties amend their rules to comply with the constitution, the Act and any other written law or face deregistration.

Political parties that form a coalition before or after election are to deposit the Coalition agreement with the Registrar.

Further, the law allows political parties to merge as long as the merger is not in violation of the constitution, rules and procedures of the political parties

Respective governing bodies of merging political parties have to determine the constitution, rules, regulations and the principles which are to act as reference points for the merger and the registration of the new political party.

The law outlines that in the event that a member of parliament or county assembly rejects the merger, they are free to join another political party or choose to be an independent member for the remaining term in parliament.

Under the new law, party hopping has been outlawed.

The Act (Section 14 (4)) states that a person shall not be a member of more than political party at the same time. A person is deemed to have resigned from their party if he or she forms another political party, joins in the formation of another political party, publicly advocates



Political Parties are recognized in mature democracies of good governance. In Kenya, however, the moneyed tribal chiefs' self-aggrandizement. The Parties Act marks the genesis of a solid foundation of strong and ideology-driven parties as institutions in the country. The specter of tribal outfits which used to advance a tribal agenda is headed for extinction demands that members of political parties and ethnic diversity, gender balance and representation of marginalized groups. Further, the new legislation introduces stringent more than two thirds of the registered parties to disband, writes FAITH Sub-editor.

for the formation of another political party or promotes the ideology, interests or policies of another political party.

The law spells out that a member of a political party who intends to resign from the political party has to notify the political party, clerk of the relevant house or clerk of the county assembly within 30 dirty days.

Declaration of Assets

The new law requires that political parties declare their assets and expenditures including all contributions, donations or pledges made to the initial assets. The Act directs that the declaration must include the following:

- Sources of all funds and other assets of the political party
- Relevant particulars as outlined by the Registrar
- Statutory declaration made by the person designated to issue such a declaration by the governing body.

The declaration is to be made public through a Gazette notice and in a daily newspaper with a large circulation

Deregistration of Political Parties

The law empowers the Registrar to deregister a political party which

- Has contravened provisions of Article 91 of the Constitution
- Does not promote free and fair nomination of candidates
- Does not adhere to the law relating to the nomination of candidates
- Contravenes national values and principles of the constitution
- Obtains its registration through fraud
- Has instigated or participated in the commission of an election offence

Prior to the deregistration, the law demands that the Registrar informs the affected political party

reasons behind the act, intention to deregister and give the political parties ninety days to rectify the breach.

Winding up political party

In case the political party is deregistered, the law mandates the Registrar to notify the Attorney General who is to file an application before the high court seeking the dissolution of the political party and disposal of the property, assets and liabilities of the party

Effects of deregistration

Once the political party has been deregistered, no person can

- Convene a members' meeting other than for purposes of winding up the political party or for challenging the deregistration of the political party
- Attend or instruct people to attend meetings on behalf of the political party
- Publish a notice or advertisement inviting people for a meeting
- Invite people to support the political party
- Make contributions or loan to funds held or to be held on behalf of the party

Political Parties Fund

The law provides for the establishment of a Political Parties Fund to be administered by the Registrar

Sources of the Fund

They include

- 0.3 percent of the national government revenue
- Contributions and donations from lawful sources

Distribution of the Fund

The fund is to be shared as follows

- 95 percent of the Fund to be shared based on the total number of votes secured by each political party in the preceding general election
- Five percent for the administrative expenses of the fund.

However political parties that are unable to garner at least five percent of the total number of votes at the preced-



Sheria House: Where the registration of political parties done. Inset: Ms. Lucy Ndung'u, Registrar of Political Parties

Uphold democratic ideals

agencies as crucial institutions are mere vehicles for enactment of Political to oversee the formation of public governance have for decades been in function. The new dispensation have to reflect regional and national interests and not rules that may compel

TH MUIRURI, *The Link*

ing general elections are not entitled to receive funding.

Purposes of the Fund

The fund seeks to inculcate democratic ideals in political parties including

- Promoting the representation in Parliament and in the County assemblies of women, persons with disabilities, youth, ethnic, other minority and marginalized communities
- Promoting active participation by individual citizens in political life
- Covering the election expenses of the political party and promoting policies of the political party
- Civic education and other electoral processes
- Bringing the political party to bear on the shaping of public opinion
- Administrative and staff expenses of the political party which must account to less than 30 percent of the total allocation

Offenses related to sources of Funds

The law provides that no person or organization is allowed to contribute to a political party an amount which exceeds five percent of the total expenditure of the political party. Political parties that contravene the provision are to be penalized and forced to forfeit the amount to the state.

Officials of political parties who fail to disclose the funds or other resources or gives false information in relation to the same are liable on conviction to a fine equal to the value of the resources not disclosed or to imprisonment to a term not exceeding two years or both.

Office of Registrar

The law provides that the President with the approval of parliament is to appoint a selection committee to nominate the registrar. The panel is to comprise

- (a) a chairperson nominated by the president
- (b) a person nominated by the Law society of Kenya
- (c) a person nominated by the Institute of Certified



Members of Parliament in session.

- (d) Public Accountants of Kenya
- (e) Association of Professional Societies in East Africa
- (f) two persons nominated by the political parties represented in the National Assembly according to their proportion of members in the Assembly
- (g) two persons nominated by the political parties represented in the senate according to the proportion of members in the senate

Qualifications

To qualify for appointment in the office of Registrar, a person must

- (a) have a degree from a recognized university
- (b) have proven knowledge in the following fields
 - (i) Finance
 - (ii) Management
 - (iii) Political science
 - (iv) law
 - (v) Governance
 - (vi) Public administration
 - (vii) Fifteen years post qualification experience in the relevant areas of expertise and in the case of an Assistant Registrar, has at least ten years post qualification experience in the relevant area of expertise.

Functions of the Registrar

The act enumerates functions as follows

- Register, regulate, monitor, investigate and supervise political parties to ensure compliance with the Act
- Administer the Fund
- Ensure publication of audited annual accounts of political parties
- Verify and make publicly available the list of all members of political parties
- Maintain a register of political

parties and the symbols of the political parties

- Ensure and verify that no person is a member of more than one political party and notify the commission of his findings
 - Investigate complaints received under this Act
- Additionally, the Registrar has been empowered to provide guidelines for

- (i) Registration of political parties
- (ii) Regulate the activities of political parties that are registered under this Act as provided by the law
- (iii) Regulate or restrict the use or changes of names, symbols or colours of political parties
- (iv) Prescribe the forms which may be used for carrying out the provision of this Act
- (v) Securing the submission to the Registrar of the audited accounts and financial accounts relating to the assets and liabilities, income and expenditure of political parties
- (vi) Prescribing fee for anything that is to be done under the act
- (vii) Requiring submission to the Registrar of annual or other periodical returns relating to the constitution, objects and membership of political parties

Removal of the Registrar or an assistant Registrar

The law directs that a person seeking the removal of the Registrar must file a petition before the Public Service Commission. The

Commission is to examine the petition to establish valid grounds before submission of the same to the President.

The President shall upon examination of the petition

- (a) suspend the Registrar or assistant Registrar pending the outcome of the petition
- (b) appoint a Tribunal as outlined in the Act

The tribunal is to consist of

- (a) chairperson nominated by the Judicial Service Commission and qualified to hold office as a judge of a superior court
- (b) two other persons, representing both gender nominated by the Law society of Kenya and qualified to hold office as a judge of a superior court
- (c) two persons nominated by the Association of Professional Societies in East Africa and who have knowledge and experience in public affairs and are competent to assess the facts in respect of the particular ground for removal

The tribunal investigates the matter, reports on the facts and submits recommendation to the president who is to respond thirty days

Political Parties Dispute Tribunal

The law provides for the establishment of the political parties Disputes Tribunal.

The tribunal consists of the following members appointed by the Judicial Service Commission

- (a) a chairperson qualified to be appointed a judge of the High Court
- (b) four other members one of whom is an advocate of the High Court of five years standing
- (c) the chairperson and members of the Tribunal to serve on part time basis

- (d) members to hold office for a non renewable term of six years

A person is not be qualified to be appointed as a member of the Tribunal if that person is a member of the public service or takes an active part in the activities of a political party.

Jurisdiction of Tribunal

The tribunal has powers to determine

- (a) arbitrate disputes between members of a political party
- (b) disputes between a member of a political party and a political party
- (c) disputes between political parties
- (d) disputes between an independent candidate and a political party
- (e) disputes between coalition partners
- (f) appeals from decisions of the Registrar

The tribunal is to determine a dispute within a period of three months from the date the dispute is lodged.

The Judicial Service Commission may remove a member of the Tribunal if the member

- Is declared bankrupt
 - Is convicted of a criminal offense
 - Is incapacitated
 - Violates the constitution
 - Unable to discharge the functions of the office
- Political Parties Liaison Committee

The law provides that the Committee is established both at the national and county levels.

The committee is to provide a platform for dialogue between the Registrar, Commission and political parties

Offences

The law provides that a person convicted of an offense for which no penalty is provided is liable to a fine of not less than Kshs 1 million or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or both.

- Where a political party commits an offense, the Registrar has been empowered to
- Issue a warning and direct the political party to comply with the law within a specified period
- Suspend the registration of the political party for a period not exceeding twelve months
- Withhold funds to the political party for a period not exceeding twelve months

However the law stipulates that even after dissolution of a political party, members who are already serving in parliament or county assembly will remain in office until the expiry of the parliamentary term.