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REJECT

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Living her dream despite losing her sight a decade ago

By ATIENO AKUMU

For the past decade, Marion Minaya has been living literally in the dark.

The 28-year-old charming lady had enjoyed the beauty of sight until something went wrong.

Minaya was just like any other child playful and eager to learn from daily occurrences.

Everything from dolls, fashion, weaving, dancing and singing amused her so much that she was adored by many who came across her.

Minaya never thought that her life would take a different turn later in life until she literally saw darkness.

But since then, she has accepted her fate and moved on. Minaya, who is training as a masseur, has big dreams and says that in the next five years, she desires to have her own spa and employ others.

She says that she accepted reality and stopped locking herself in the room as she had previously done.

"I realised that there was still

much for me to accomplish and there was no room for self pity, knowing that God is the sole creator and planner, I decided to give life a second try," says Minaya.

During a recent interview, the final year student at Machakos Technical Institute for the Blind says that having had a passion to work in the hospitality industry, she was determined to realise this dream despite the challenges she had to pass to achieve this dream.

It is against that background that she chose to pursue a course in Japanese Therapy which she says still provides an opportunity for her to work in the sector she has a passion for.

Minaya, who is currently on industrial attachment at the Ngulia Safari Lodge in Tsavo, says that although she has been at the hotel for a few months, she loves what she does.

"I am almost through with my attachment here but I am positive I will get work in a hotel which has a spa because I love this job especially when clients leave in satisfaction, although

I cannot see their smiles, I feel it in their voices," she says.

Her fingers move swiftly along the back before rubbing softly on the neck and patting gently along the knees of her client. One cannot marvel but wonder how she manages to do all this without seeing.

The massage otherwise known as 'Shiatsu' is a Japanese form of body-work literary translates to 'finger pressure'.

Massage

She elaborates that unlike other types of massage, no massage oil is applied and so the client does not have to undress.

The masseuse trainee seems to have the entire gist about this career as she effortlessly explains that shiatsu is based on the traditional Chinese medicine where diseases

are believed to be caused as a result of imbalances in the natural flow of energy in the body.

According to Minaya, this massage involves use of finger and palm pressure to improve the flow of energy.

"A therapist applies pressure in a continuous rhythmic sequence and because the finger pads are used to apply pressure for most of the treatment instead of the entire palm, the pressure feels more localised."

She says that shiatsu is used for relaxation, back pain, headache, fatigue, neck and shoulder pain, arthritis pain and depression among others.

A scientific explanation to this type of massage is that it calms an over-active sympathetic nervous system, which improves circulation, relieves

stiff muscles, and alleviates stress.

When she was 19 years, a slight headache which had begun as a migraine developed slowly into frequent throbbing pain marked the beginning of her "dark world" as she describes it.

"I got a headache and swallowed painkillers for three days without the pain subsiding. At the end of the fourth day, I sought medication," she says.

The soft spoken Minaya says that she received treatment at the Coptic Health Center, in Nairobi, although she was referred to Kenyatta National Hospital for further medication.

"I felt quite uneasy after the doctor referred me to Kenyatta because I had never been diagnosed with a complicated infection or illness and

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Marion at her work station at the Safari Lodge Tsavo massaging clients where she is on attachment. She hopes to secure attachment in a hotel.

Pictures: Atieno Akumu

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Nairobi residents cry foul

.....as the cost of water remains significantly high

By JOYCE CHIMBI

Nairobi residents are disgruntled over skyrocketing costs of water as reflected on water bills that show great variance from one month to the next.

It is clear that the water sector is still bedeviled by a myriad of challenges whose impact is far reaching.

Although Kenya has endeavored to half the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation by 2015, in keeping with the Millennium Development Goal 7C, there are still over 50 percent of Kenya's households who still do not have access to safe drinking water.

This situation has prompted a significant high number of land lords/ladies to resort to alternative sources of water for their tenants.

In 2009, the Athi Water Services Board carried out an environmental impact assessment which revealed that an estimated "75 percent of city residents get water from pushcart vendors and resellers at water kiosks."

More than two years later, Nairobi residents are still looking for sustainable options to the biting water shortages.

"Most of the rental houses that are now being constructed are coming complete with a borehole to supplement the water that comes from the Nairobi Water and Sewerage Company," says Owino Onyango, a property developer in Nairobi.

Inventory

When Water Resources Management Resources carried out an inventory study of boreholes in Nairobi, it was clear that a majority of borehole owners had not complied with the water laws which require potential borehole owners to have a valid permit.

"The process of getting a permit has always been marred with corruption where you pay certain people a certain amount, so that they can look the other way. Most boreholes in this city are about 100 meters apart," says a land lord in Embakassi, Eastland.

"When I dug my borehole, I had

no valid permit to approve the excursion, am beginning to regret it. A foreman in a building next to mine warned me that there is a possibility that my water is being polluted by sewage," the land lord laments.

Nairobi residents claim that exploitation is rampant in the water sector, where the end consumer is forced to pay inflated rates that are inconsistent with water consumption.

"We are left wondering what scales are used in billing consumers. I live with my wife, just the two of us. One month, we will get a water bill of Ksh700, then the next month twice that, yet consumption is more or less the same. This great variance in water billing is disturbing," complains Clyde Omondi, a resident in Woodley estate, Nairobi.

Omondi explains that even in months where they have both travelled away from home, the bills remain constant.

Others have experienced even more astounding variances.

Corruption

"There is a lot of corruption in the water sector. We have people tampering with water meters. For instance, the other day, we got a bill of Ksh48,000, which was about Ksh 47,000 in excess. I was in shock," says Prisca Mueni, a resident of Langata estate, Nairobi.

Mueni says that upon filing her complaint with the water company in question, the staff "reverted to their mother tongue, corrected the error without giving me any explanation. I feel that Kenyans who are not aggressive enough to fight this murky situations end up paying even up to ten times higher than the amount consumed."

Similar sentiments were shared by Robert Owuor "water disconnection is nowadays being done the day before a holiday or weekend. We have discovered that this is an attempt to create loopholes for corruption."

"Since no one wants to spend a day, let alone a weekend without water, residents in various parts of Nairobi end up bribing the staff charged with water disconnection. Also, once



Not even expectant mothers are spared the agony of looking for water.

Picture: George Ngesa

they disconnect your water, they are never in a hurry to reconnect your supply," Owino expounds.

Complaints around unfair and unjust treatment of residents are legendary.

"I had an experience in April where I had paid the water company in excess for the March bill. In April, they came to disconnect. I was not at home so my neighbor offered to pay the said Ksh600 in arrears," says Mueni.

"But when the receipt was brought to me, my bill was in the negative. They actually owed me Ksh1,002," she adds.

These problems are also rampant in the informal settlements where access to water remains a serious challenge.

In Kibera for instance, tins of 20 liter containers can be seen snaking through the dingy corridors that separate one row of shanties from the

other.

"Here (in the slums) water peddling is rampant. Individuals have diverted water pipes so that residents are unable to access water from the public taps. This water is then sold to us in water kiosks run by them," says Jane Wafula, a resident of Kianda 42, Kibera.

Costs

On average, residents of informal settlements spend up to Ksh 500 in excess on water per month yet water is essential and "we cannot just say that we will not use it every now and then so as to cut cost as you would do with other commodities," Wafula expounds.

Yet the population in the slums lives on less than a dollar per day.

Sources claim that the prolifera-

tion of middle men in the water sectors is enabling a select few to make exorbitant profits at the expense of the end consumer.

"I know for a fact that about 50 percent of water goes unaccounted for in Nairobi," says a source at the Athi Water Services Board.

While he does not rule out foul play, he says that substandard water pipes are also to blame.

"A good number of these pipes are in poor condition and cause water leakage because they were laid down during the colonial times," the source expounds.

He adds "Corruption in the construction industry has also seen buildings tamper with these pipes. There are places in Nairobi where you cannot access these pipes for servicing, even if you wanted to."

Confident Marion lives her dream despite losing her sight a decade ago

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given the magnitude of cases referred to KNH, I knew that something was not right," she says.

After completing her outpatient treatment at Coptic, Minaya left in the company of her parents to Kenyatta hospital where on arrival she was admitted.

The doctors revealed that she had Meningitis, a revelation which came as a shock to her because she was rarely sick even in her childhood.

"The news came as a shocker to me, how and when had I acquired this disease? I remember that I was never sick most of the time even when I was young," she says.

She narrates how for the next three months she stayed in the hospital re-

ceiving treatment optimistic that she was going to recover and come out of the hospital fit just like she was days before the headache.

Happy that she was finally discharged from hospital, she travelled back to their Sabatia home but as she

says, her bliss was short-lived when three days later she woke up to darkness.

"I woke up to do some household chores but saw that it was dark, so I assumed that it was still early and pulled the blanket over me but later

woke up again to darkness. I could hear voices of children playing outside and people were also talking, I opened my eyes wider but still could not see anything, it is at this point that I knew something was amiss," says Minaya.

She shouted and her mother came to the room after which she was immediately taken to Sabatia Eye Hospital.

To her dismay, Minaya who was then 19 years old says, the doctors explained to her that the nerve had been affected and this could make operation impossible and refused to accept the reality meaning that she would never see again.

She is a former student of Musoli Girls High School.

"I could not comprehend how life

was, I mean, I was never born blind, I even went to high school and completed with my eyesight contact, it was hard to believe, this was the lowest point in my life," and refused to accept the reality she says.

The second born in a family of five says that she lived in denial for months despite her family and mother's frequent encouragements.

"My family was very supportive and they could each talk to me about not giving up and that God had His reasons for the same," she says.

Her message to people who have lost hope in life because of their conditions is "do not give up because everything happens for a reason and nothing happens by chance, your condition could be a blessing in disguise."

"I am almost through with my attachment here but I am positive I will get work in a hotel which has a spa because I love this job especially when clients leave in satisfaction, although I cannot see their smiles, I feel it in their voices."

— Marion Minaya

New double sanitary pads for women hits local market

By HENRY OWINO

A new two-in-one sanitary pad that targets women and young girls for their much-needed support during their monthly menses is now available in local markets.

The new innovation seeks to address problems afflicting girls while also meeting the day-to-day needs of the modern executive woman who is constantly on the move.

SanPad Products Limited, a new personal care company has introduced the first-ever, disposable sanitary pad which is lined into the underwear, making it a revolutionary solution offering comfort, convenience and protection to women and girls who find themselves in water scarce situations.

The innovation comes at a time when it is estimated that an average school girl loses approximately 13 out of the 80 days of the learning school term during their monthly period, leading to poor performance among girls or cases of school dropouts altogether.

This is a big relief to the young girls and women questions and extra cost they incur monthly.

Sanpad also comes as a big relief to girls who despite accessing sanitary pads through the state-run program or from donor support; they are unable to afford the underwear to line the sanitary pads.

Member of Parliament for Nyeri Town Constituency and the former Minister for Special Programmes, Esther Murugi says while menstruation is an individual woman's experience, it has social and economic impacts that require to be addressed through the concerted efforts of both the public and private sectors.

She praised the Sanpad innovation, observing that it now makes it easy for young girls and women in general to access under garments and sanitary towels.

Packaging

All packaged in one unique offering that guarantees that they can now go about their education and other chores with the comfort that they deserve.

Sanpad Chief Executive Officer, Lucy Kapkirwok, said the company is keen to provide a convenient alternative to women and girls during menstruation.

They promised that sanitary pads would be made available mostly to regions with water problems or are economically challenged.

"We intend to work with the Government and private organizations in supporting the women and girls go by their day to day activities without interruption in order to achieve their goals," she noted.

Njoki Fernandes, a gynecologist, warns that as a natural process, menstruation must be properly managed to stem infections.

"Menstruation should not affect one's daily activities. As women, we should learn to accept that it is part of our lives. For the school going children, we should support them throughout their education.

Atieno Adul

Kisumu County Assembly Speaker has lofty plans for the lakeside city

By JOSEPH NGOME

For the past half a century, Kisumu has been producing firsts in the political arena. It was the first to produce the first woman mayor and the first woman member of parliament.

However, although, no woman has been elected MP since the days of Grace Onyango in Kisumu, the county beat all odds to elect a woman speaker of the assembly, who joins another two from Nakuru and Kirinyaga.

Lawyer Atieno Adul joined the list of who-is-who by being elected as the first Speaker of the Kisumu County Assembly.

She follows the record set by Grace Onyango, who was elected as the first woman mayor in the country and the one to represent the lakeside city in the 1960s.

Onyango late crowned her political career by being elected Kisumu Town MP and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

Those are some of the sentiments and historical justification that made Adul plunge into politics this year and battle it out with a handful of men for the Speaker's post.

Says Adul: "Kisumu people have confidence in women's leadership and that is what encouraged me most when I applied for the job of County speaker where I emerged the winner."

Drive

Her desire to join the County Assembly as the Speaker was driven by her leadership qualities, having worked in the city for many years and the fact that she hails from there.

"My dream is to reclaim the past glory of Kisumu City. I would be happy to extend my professional experience to the County," Adul notes.

She adds: "Finally, at the end of this service I want to leave behind a landmark ultra-modern structure in the form of the County Assembly building that includes assembly parliament, offices and a hall to remember."

Unlike in the private service where she only served a select few clients who engaged her services, Adul is now in the limelight where her responsibility is to serve the public.

"Kisumu County is endowed with expansive water in Lake Victoria that can be used for several purposes yet the lake is being choked by water hyacinth! This has interfered with water supply to the city and lake transport," she observes.

"My dream is to reclaim the past glory of Kisumu City. I would be happy to extend my professional experience to the County."

— Atieno Adul



Kisumu County Speaker Atieno Adul being sworn in office. She hopes to leave a legacy behind at the end of her five year term. Pictures: Joseph Ngome

However, Adul foresees enormous challenges in her position as Speaker citing the public's high expectation of her and the team in the assembly to deliver on their elections pledges.

With the promulgation of the new Constitution, public expectation is a notch higher.

The County Assembly government has the obligation to translate the activities and functions of the county to be visible by rendering services to the citizens.

While this is a challenge, they also have to grapple with a bloated work force which they inherited from the local authorities whose functions were politicised and duplicated.

The Speaker thinks the work for the members of the County Assembly is already cut out for them.

Mandate

Adul says that members of the County Assembly, unlike the defunct councillors, have unique profiles, different mandate with enhanced large representation and a larger ward to represent.

They are mandated to legislate; expected to provide oversight role; check and balance over the executive of the county and provide proper ser-

vice management.

Adul notes that she has good rapport with members of the County Assembly based on respect and team work because of her legal background and is able to guide the House.

They are now going through budget-making which runs into billions of shillings. At the same time, "I have inducted members of the County Assembly on the standing orders which they are taking positively."

Adul has a Bachelor of Law from University of Nairobi and Master in Law (LLB) from University of Warwick, United Kingdom. She has practiced law since 1989.

After graduation she worked with National Bank of Kenya between 1977 and 1978. She later joined Kisumu Municipal Council, the present Kisumu City in 1978 to 1985 where she worked as Assistant Town Clerk and was later promoted to Deputy Town Clerk in an acting capacity.

She later left Kisumu City Council for further studies in the UK where she graduated with Diploma in Development Administration between 1983 and 1984. Adul returned in 1984 and worked briefly for Kisumu City Council before joining Cotton Lint and Marketing Board in 1985 as Company Secretary and Administra-

tive Manager.

In 1985, she again left for the UK in 1987-1988 to study for a Master of Law (LLM) from University of Warwick before she briefly resumed her tenure with Cotton Lint and Seed Marketing Board.

Adul called it quits in January 1989 when she opted to venture into private legal practice in Nairobi until March 2013.

The Kisumu County Assembly speaker is the treasurer of the CAS forum whose mandate is to agitate for the member of county assembly salary with the Salary Remuneration Commission (SRC).

Believe

Adul and her colleagues, speakers across the country, believe that the member County Assembly could only perform splendidly if the representatives are well remunerated.

"The member County Assembly," she argues, "are now tasked with representation, with expanded wards and oversight roles that now cut down even the MPs' role."

The CAS has already sent a memorandum to the Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC) and given their views.

"What we want is harmonisation of the salaries even if it's not matching that of senators or governors but a salary that gives dignity to the member County Assembly," she says.

She laments that due to lack of funds, the counties cannot employ people with expertise. For example, the County Assembly needs someone to craft the appropriation bill to enable the County spend as per the budget but because there is nobody to do it, she may have to do it although this may amount to conflict of interest.



Abandoned orphans turn to burning charcoal to survive

By GILBERT OCHIENG

For Douglas Owino and his three siblings, all pupils at Rwambwa Primary School in Bunyala East location, Bunyala Sub-county, life has become extremely harsh and bitter following the demise of the father over a decade ago.

The orphaned children, Douglas Owino, 13, class four, 11-year old Michael Ochieng, class three, Nancy Achieno, aged seven, attending early childhood education and Sylvia Achuma aged four, who is yet to join school, have been leading desperate lives as they have been forced to fend for themselves.

Their father, George Ajiambo Humba, who until his demise in the year 2002, was a resident of Mukhweso village.

The children were now left in the custody of their mother, Consolatta Kura, who was their provider.

But things took a different turn for the orphans when their mother abandoned them at their hour of need and instead opted to re-marry, leaving them all alone at the home with nobody to take care of them.

Owino, being the eldest son in the family had to look for an alternative means of finding food for his siblings.

"I and my brother, Michael Ochieng, would wake up at dawn to do casual work on other peoples' farms. Some would opt to pay in the form of *goro-goro* (2Kg. tins of maize) that we would later grind into flour," said Owino.

"I would also wake up very early in the morning to prepare porridge for my siblings after which we would set off for school together, leaving behind our youngest sister, Sylvia, at a neighbouring home until we return back home from school during lunch break," said the orphaned boy.

After returning home from school, Owino would delegate duties to his follower, Michael Ochieng, to sell ripe bananas to clients outside

a shop along the road leading to Rwambwa shopping centre, 3Km. away.

"My main role was to cut down trees and burn charcoal which we later sold. Some of them would at times take advantage of our predicament and pay us less with others taking the charcoal promising to pay the following day only to disappear for good, leaving us with no money to buy food," said Owino.

Owino recalls a day when he decided to visit their mother at her new home, a stone throw from their own home to ask for food because he and his siblings had slept on an empty stomach the previous night.

He unfortunately stumbled upon the father of the home who accosted him and gave him a thorough beating before ordering him out of the home.

Assistance

"From that day henceforth, I and my siblings vowed never to set foot at our mother's new found home again to avoid further embarrassment from our own biological mother who we expected would take care of us," said Ochieng.

However, in 2010, lady luck came knocking at their door when APHIA-Plus, a non-governmental organization identified a local resident from Rwambwa sub-location as its care-taker who would help identify needy children in collaboration with the local provincial administration.

It was then that the abandoned children were picked by the area care-taker, Violet Chausiku, who promptly forwarded their names to the organisation for consideration.

Their status was finally approved and the NGO started providing them with blankets, mattresses, mosquito nets, relief food, and household utensils among others.

The organization also constructed a house for the orphaned children after their mother's house collapsed due to many years of neglect.



Michael Ochieng, one of the abandoned Bunyala orphans waiting for customers to buy his bananas. Picture: Gilbert Ochieng

"We had lost hope in life following the suffering we have been undergoing, but we are extremely grateful to APHIA-Plus for the kind gesture they have shown towards us, having been completely abandoned by the very person we had banked all our hopes on," said the orphans.

Chausiku on her part said before the organisation stepped in, the orphans had been living under unhygienic conditions, which she noted had subjected them to jigger infestation and other challenges.

"These children had been infested with jiggers on both hands and feet and they had a difficult time walking to school, but our organisation bought anti-biotic drugs and applied on the affected body parts," said Chausiku.

Bleak future for pupils as teacher shortage bites

By ROBERT NYAGAH

Parents and pupils in Malindi and Magarini Districts in Kilifi County are a worried lot because of the serious shortage of teachers in the region.

The two areas are also affected by the Government's delay in releasing funds from the Treasury to support education programmes in the County.

Years of appeal by leaders, parents and Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) for more teachers to be recruited and deployed to Malindi and Magarini have apparently fallen on deaf ears.

According to Fredrick Nguma, regional KNUT executive secretary, 800 extra teachers are required in the various schools to ensure effective teaching.

"Unless the Government hastens plans to post 800 more teachers to the various schools which have been struggling with shortages, education standards will continue to be compromised," observes Nguma.

The teacher-pupil ratio is too high and is affecting the educational standards in the County.

Pupils in the two districts are disadvantaged and cannot compete with their colleagues in neighbouring schools or counties as a result of the serious teacher shortage.

"The Government is to blame for the poor distribution of our children in national schools and in various universities given that their learning is compromised right from primary school level," says Nguma.

Develop

When contacted, Kilifi County Governor, Amazon Jecha Kingi, noted that he will give education priority in his development programmes.

Kingi, who is the immediate former Member of Parliament for Magarini notes that during his tenure he decided to dedicate KSh5 million from the Constituency Development Fund for the initiation of the Kaembeni Teachers' Training College to help address the growing shortage of teachers in Kilifi.

"I decided to initiate the Kaembeni Teachers' College in Magarini area because I realised that the institution would eventually be taken over by the Government and provide a bulk of teachers, first to the schools in the areas and eventually to other parts

of the County and country at large," said Kingi, noting that understaffing at primary school level had seriously affected learning because teachers were overworked.

An attempt to address the shortage saw 102 teachers being posted to the area last year. According to Nguma, although this was good, it is not enough and is like a drop in the ocean.

"Out of the 102 teachers recruited, 57 teachers were posted to Magarini while 45 teachers were sent to Malindi," Nguma said.

He now wants the Ministry of Education to have an affirmative action policy to address areas like Magarini and Malindi that have a serious teacher shortage.

Profession

He would like the authorities to favour Coast Province schools with the bulk of the teachers who graduate annually from Shanzu Teachers' College which is in Mombasa County but neighbouring Kilifi.

Nguma noted that Malindi and Magarini districts have a huge number of well trained and qualified teachers from a cross section of colleges who need employment. He said the Government should not complain over lack of human resources in the primary teaching profession.

In majority of schools which lack teachers, apart from the general physical facilities, Nguma said teachers ended up straining in their work and this eventually affected performance of candidates in the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations.

"We all know that teachers are being overworked and unless the Government hastens efforts to have more teachers hired, our children will continue to suffer and perform poorly in the national exams," said Nguma.

He reiterated the need for the Government to



Pupils of Sir Ali Primary School in Malindi town of Kilifi County during morning assembly. Many schools do not have adequate teachers. Picture: Robert Nyagah

give education matters great attention by ensuring that schools have adequate teachers and facilities to enhance academic standards.

While the teacher shortage affects the pupils greatly, lack of meals during the day also interferes with their performance.

According to Beatrice Unda, KNUT chairperson in Malindi, 50 primary schools in the two districts with a population of more than 35,000 pupils that have been under the school feeding program have suffered because of a delay in the funds for buying food.

Unda noted that lack of food had affected enrolment of pupils in schools in the semi-arid Langobaya Division in Malindi District and Bungale area in Magarini District.

The educationists also noted that in most parts of Kilifi County there were no quality assurance education officers to ensure that teachers did their work with perfection.

"Politicians in Kilifi have contributed to the poor performance of the area schools in national examinations as they have not given education the priority it deserves in their development plans," said Unda.

Feeding a family still difficult a task for most

By ANNIE WAITE

"All arms of Government must set the example and lead the way in bringing this wage bill down. Our focus both as the executive and the legislature must be on reducing the cost of living and making Kenya much more competitive thereby increasing opportunities while improving the standard of living. Indeed, that shall be the centerpiece of our Government" said President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Flora Muthoni, 29 years, a mother of two sat for her Kenya Certificate of Primary education in 2002. Due to lack of fees, she could not proceed with higher education and instead resorted to casual labor where she washed clothes from door to door.

Later in the year she was employed as a house help in Kimathi estate until January 2003 where she was able to raise funds for training at Bahati Dressmaking School Kimathi Estate. At the end of the year she attained a grade 3 in dressmaking. At this time her job as a house help had come to an end.

In 2004 she got married and continued working as a casual laborer in Rongai, Nairobi.

In March 2012, tragedy struck the family. Her husband, while on his way home from work, was accosted by gangsters who beat him up leaving him for the dead.

Muthoni's family is just an example of what Kenyans are grappling with on a daily basis, shouldering heavy responsibilities on meager and irregular income. This comes in the wake of a Presidential directive increasing the wage bill for casual laborers.

Deputy President, William Ruto said that "there is need of a new engagement with the Kenyan workers, in that the government should engage by way of ensuring that we lower the cost of living."

The President's Labor Day directive, comes shortly after an indication that the Jubilee government declared that it shall strive to improve the livelihood of Kenyans.

Focus

The president stated that "taking into account the needs of our lowest paid workers and cost of living while ensuring a conducive environment for investment and job creation, my Government has awarded a salary increment of 14 per cent on the minimum wages which should be implemented with immediate effect"

While opening the 11th parliament, the President stated that: "Our focus both as the executive and the legislature must be on reducing the cost of living and making Kenya much more competitive thereby increasing opportunities while improving the standard of living. Indeed, that shall be the centerpiece of our Government."

But others had a different view on this 14 percent increment due to the fact they are self employed. Richard Khwame* a father of three and working as a carpenter, feels that the president should have also considered those who have not yet been employed but are struggling on their own to make a living.

Toepista Nyaguthii, a mother of two, working as a house-help wonders if she falls in the group to get the 14 percent increment. Her basic salary of KShs 7,000 is too little to give her children the best. She stated "I am approaching 40 years and I hear there is NSSF, where I could save towards my retirement."

While it is a Government requirement that all employers put their employees under the NSSF scheme, Eunice, like most casual laborers is apprehensive on whether her boss will meet this requirement.

Teachers' passion transforming the lives of orphans

By KAMUNDIA MURIITHI

The days when communities would take responsibility for children who had lost their parents are long gone. Today, when parents die, relatives and close friend hardly think of taking in the orphans. They are in most circumstances left to fend for themselves. Cases of children headed households while previously unheard of are now very common.

However, in the communal indifference, a group of women have come out and have taken in orphans under their wing.

The women's group in Embu County is transforming the lives of over 50 orphans in the area by supporting their education.

Wendo Ladies Group, chaired by Lucy Karimi Laichena is made up of 15 female teachers drawn from different primary and special schools in the County.

They have been caring for 50 orphans who include three who recently graduated from various colleges and two others who have secured jobs in Nairobi.

"We are helping the third graduate to get a job. We do not leave them to do it on their own, considering where they came from and our dream is to see them start earning an income as soon as possible so that they can help their siblings and other orphans," explains Laichena.

Three of the orphans under their care are in secondary schools while the rest are in primary.

The philanthropic teachers decided to form a merry-go-round savings group with the aim of loaning money to members and directing the interest earned towards helping orphans.

To fund their activities, the members contribute KSh2,500 per month and of this amount KSh1,000 is given to one member on merry-go-around basis and the other KSh1,500 is loaned to members at an interest rate of 10 per cent per annum.

They have since also gone a notch higher by starting an outside catering service to help create jobs and boost their cash base. Since teachers have a wide network, they get invited as caterers in many occasions at a fee especially those involving their fellow teachers.

Out of the amount that they are paid as professional fees, 10 per cent goes directly to the orphan's kitty while the rest goes to the members as a way of rewarding and motivating them.

Interact

Wendo meaning love in the Embu language, is a name the women chose in their endeavour to express their love for the less fortunate children in society.

Other than raising the money, the women also use the opportunity to socialise among themselves and to expand their networks.

"As teachers, we interact with children from all backgrounds and we were overwhelmed by the many difficulties orphans go through," explains Laichena. She adds: "This is why we decided to help them."

Laichena, who is the head teacher of DEB Kangaru Primary School, says some of the major problems faced by orphans include lack of facilities from where they can do their homework. They also suffer from poverty and hunger among others.

She recalls that the idea of helping the children was mooted a decade ago during a teacher's forum when six of them decided help two orphans from each of the schools that they came from.

"We paid tuition, examination money and bought clothes for the first group of 12 pupils. For children whose guardians were aged and could hardly provide food to them, we provided basic things like soap, toothpaste and foodstuffs," says Laichena.

Their goodwill picked up well and they were able to better the lives of those children and consequently in the next two years more teachers joined



From top: Wendo Ladies who have formed a catering group to channel the proceeds of their activities to help orphans. Lucy Laichena the leader of the group and head teacher of Kangaru Primary School in her office.

Pictures: Kamundia Muriithi



the group and the number of orphans under their care rose to 20.

The group is now supporting 50 orphans. They include three who recently graduated from various colleges and two others who have secured jobs in Nairobi.

"We are helping the third graduate to get a job. We do not leave them to do it on their own, considering where they came from and our dream is to see them start earning soon and help their siblings and other orphans," says Laichena.

Empowerment

Wendo Ladies has gone a step further and is now involved in empowering girls about the dangers of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and how they could avoid it.

"We held a seminar as a matter of urgency after reports reached us that FGM was being practiced at Kangaru, Njukiri and Nthambo areas.

We picked 20 girls and created awareness among them on the dangers of the practice and then sent them out as ambassadors who would spread the word to others," notes Laichena.

In the workshop they discussed

topics that included rights of children: HIV and Aids; FGM, its effects and how to avoid it; and how to report to relevant people or authorities in case a girl is forced to undergo circumcision by parents or guardians.

Apart from meeting the educational needs of the children, Wendo Ladies are also involved in counselling and social support for the orphans and in this respect visit them every Christmas season and give them foodstuffs like wheat flour, cooking fat, soda and clothes.

Wendo Ladies' Group, which is a member of Embu Teachers Microfinance and they hope to get funds from here to buy a piece of land on which they will build an orphanage for children who are living with elderly guardians.

Setback

Laichena points out that there are some uncooperative guardians of the children who think the group gets money from other sources, which she says is not true.

Another challenge they face is

when their husbands fail to understand their philanthropic gesture and question why they are doing so where as they have their own children.

"We have, however, not let anything dampen our spirit and as vulnerable children who were once hopeless have got a chance to get education and some of them are now working," she observes.

She is proud to reveal that most orphans who have benefited under the programme and landed jobs are a source of inspiration to the others who are still in school.

However, Laichena says their support is a drop in the ocean and is calling on the Government to intervene and help such orphans to acquire education by giving them full bursaries.

She proposes that a school principal who has 1,000 students and 10 orphans should sustain the orphans with the food contributed by the others instead of sending the vulnerable children home.

Kwale experiencing high dropout rates among boys

By ANTHONY ZOKA

Campaigns to promote girl-child education in Kwale County are already bearing fruit but the boy child remains in a desperate situation.

Education stakeholders in Kwale County are concerned over the number of boys dropping out of school and getting involved in activities that keep them out of class with the tacit support of their parents and other stakeholders.

"More girls are now attending and excelling in their education than their male classmates," says Daudi Yusuf Kheri, Kwale branch secretary general of the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT).

Some of the boys do not attend classes and only appear at the end of the term to sit for examinations.

Cases of students spending the day doing *boda-boda* (bicycle taxis) business in their locality and other odd trades to supplement family income

is common.

"Despite our poor economic background this move will not do us any good. I fear that we might end up worsening the situation in the near future. All stakeholders should join hands and fight this vice," advised Kheri.

He appealed to parents to give education priority and desist from involving children in none academic activities that may affect their performance and attention in class.

Some parents have also been accused of using their children to work in quarries to help them eke a living.

Kheri now wants a concerted effort between parents and teachers to deal with the problem that is affecting education standards in the County.

"There is need to invest more in the education sector in this county. Parents should be role models in advising their children on what to do," Kheri noted.

Similar sentiments were expressed by John Mackenzie Tuki, Kenya Post Primary Education Teachers (Kuppet)

Kwale County secretary general, who called on new elected leaders to deal with negative societal attitudes to improve performance of students.

"Our Governor, Salim Mvuria and his team should make it a routine of using their offices to address matters relating to education," said Tuki.

He noted that everyone should take responsibility and ensure that all school-age children were receiving education.

Early February, parents stormed Ningawa Primary School and paralysed learning at the institution demanding the release of English results for 22 students of the 2012 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations.

Tuki told *Reject* that despite the campaign to instil discipline in schools, a lot still needed to be done in promoting education in the area.

"Indiscipline should not be tolerated at any level, many students do not want to hear about mocks and

end up rioting. Last year in Kwale alone students in 23 schools rioted in fear of mock examination during the second term," said Tuki.

However, he noted that there was improvement in girl-child education in the area according to last year's KCSE results. The two top performing schools being Matuga and Waa.

According to the last KCSE results, only one boys' school featured in the top five schools in the county ranking while in KCPE Kwale County was recognised as the area that had most irregularities.

Tuki called on area education directors to speed up the process of curriculum based establishment among the schools in the area to deal with understaffing in the area.

According to Tuki, although Kwale County is considered a hardship area, teachers do not receive hardship allowance.

"Staff shortage is a major cause of the poor performance in schools in



Kiteje Primary School pupils drinking water at their school tap. Boys in Kiteje and Mbuguni areas in Matuga Sub County have been dropping out of school to earn a living for their families. Picture: Anthony Zoka

Kwale and the Ministry of Education should address the issue urgently," reiterated Tuki.

Male involvement key towards attaining Zero Tolerance to FGM

By JOYCE CHIMBI

As global attention shifts to the Day of the African Child, statistics show a decline in the number of girls being subjected to the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

This is a step in the right direction and an indication that male involvement in the campaigns to fight FGM are bearing fruit.

A significant number of Kenyan girls in cultures notorious for practicing FGM have received respite from the heinous 'cut', as more and more men begin to speak against the illegal practice.

A UNFPA report on FGM dubbed 'Accelerating Change' reveals that there is "an emerging and innovative phenomenon in Kenya, where there is an increased role by young men to fight (FGM) by speaking out publicly to announce their preference to marry uncut girls."

The same report shows that in 2011 alone "23 Muslim leaders (male) made public declarations to fight FGM."

According to Ibrahim Shabo, an FGM activist from Isiolo, Northern Kenya, a pastoralist community notorious for practicing FGM, early marriages and polygamy "this is significant because among the Kenyan Somalis who also practice the Muslim religion, people have been misled to believe that the Koran supports the 'cut'. It doesn't."

Philipo Lotimari, a community leader in Kapenguria, Rift Valley region concurs "The Pokot Council of Elders has already made a public declaration to abandon the practice. This is a community that is known to practice extremely brutal forms of FGM, to such an extent that before a girl sleeps with a man after she has been 'cut' they use the horn of a cow to open up her vagina."

Further, he says that the Council of elders among the IL Chamus, a small minority tribe in the Rift Valley with an FGM prevalence rate of 73 percent, according to government statistics, have also made a public stand to fight FGM.

Publicity

"This is significant because only men sit in these councils. Further, young morans (young men) in communities such as the IL Chamus, have also spoken publicly in favor of marrying girls who haven't been 'cut'," says Lotimari.

John Chomil, a village assistant Chief in Kapenguria, Rift Valley region, says that "We

(Pokot) are extremely conservative and have been slow to abandon harmful cultural practices such as FGM. I want girls to stay in school and have a better life."

Chomil says he depends on community members to notify him in the event that "they hear rumors that anyone is intending to circumcise girls. My people are my ears because they are everywhere."

The assistant Chief says that circumcised girls get married "Among the Pokot, a 25 year old woman who isn't 'cut' is like a child. A 10 year old who is 'cut' is a woman. Am working closely with other community leaders to end this impunity."

Dr Salim Ali, a reproductive health doctor in Northern Kenya "We have conducted a series of research on the impact of FGM on sex and it's proven that women who have been 'cut' have very low libido, sex with them is uncomfortable and they do it as a duty, they rarely reach orgasm and make sex tedious. Women who haven't been cut enjoy frequent sex, sex with them is enjoyable."

Dr Ali adds "A majority of the male respondent have repeatedly said that they have sex with a 'cut' woman for reproduction because she is not sensitive to touch. The parts that excite a woman have been removed."

Complications

Further, Ali says that while a woman who has not undergone FGM will deliver a baby with no complications, those that have been 'cut' often have to undergo operations.

"The men are forced to sell their livestock to raise the money. This is a problem because of the attachment they have to their herds," says Grace Gakii a gender activist who has worked in FGM practicing communities such as the Maasai's and the Pokot.

Further, the long arm of the law has continued to penetrate communities that practice FGM.

The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation 2010, enacted in 2011 stipulates that offenders of this law will serve up to 7 years in prison and fines of up to Sh500,000.

"I was recently asked by a couple to contribute money to help them offset a fine of Sh500,000, after they were charged for having their daughter circumcised," Shabo explains.

Shabo has been using this case to warn people that the arm of the law is long enough to

punish offenders.

This is a lot of money in a country where the monthly average wage is 250 dollars.

Further, according to the law, anyone who causes death in the process of carrying out FGM will be liable to life imprisonment.

Providing of premises for purposes of carrying out FGM, possession of tools associated with FGM or failure to report an incident of FGM knowingly are also punishable by the law.

"It also illegal to send someone out of the country for the illegal 'cut,'" Gakii adds.

According to government statistics about 28 percent, which is significantly high, of all Kenyan women have undergone circumcision.

Government statistics show that the practice rates are at 98 percent among the Kenyan Somalis 96 percent among the Kisii, 73 percent among the Maasai and 48 percent among the Kalenjins.

Among the Luyha and Luo, FGM practicing rate is at 1 percent. They account for about 14.3 and 10.3 percent respectively, of the Kenyan population.

Consequently, Dr Ali says that although the fight against FGM has not borne fruits fast enough to prevent thousands of women and girls from being maimed, disabled or even dead, the country is moving in the right direction.

Involvement

According to statistics from the most recent Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS), the most comprehensive survey on the status of Kenyan households, there is a significant decline of the practice of FGM.

"In fact, since 1998, incidences of FGM have continued to decrease. Perhaps because in 1999, the government issued its first ban against FGM," Gakii says.

Gakii adds "The law can only go so far. Male involvement is critical. For more than ten years I have closely interacted with FGM practicing



Nimo Omar, now 17, escaped the 'cut' at the age of six when her elder brother intervened. Picture: Joyce Chimbi

communities and I attribute this to a combination of factors."

"The law has had to reach out to those in the community whose opinion is influential, women have no say in FGM practicing communities so getting the support of men has been crucial," she says.

According to KDHS, overall prevalence of FGM has reduced from 38 percent in 1998 to 32 percent in 2003 and further to 27 percent in 2008 among women aged 15-49 years.

While 26 percent were circumcised in 1998, the numbers decreased to 20.3 percent in 2003 and further to 14.6 percent in 2008.

Further, the report reveals that "There is an even more prominent decline of FGM among younger women aged 15-19 years."

"If more Council of elders and young morans (young men) continue to show support for an FGM free society, Kenya will be heading to zero tolerance of FGM," says Gakii.

Rising numbers of illegal children's homes alarming

By ADAM JUMA

The number of unlicensed children's homes that are coming up in Kilifi County without following the proper channels of registration are worrying.

The problem is compounded by the fact that children's rights at the said homes and orphanages were being violated.

It is because of this that Paul Mutuku Kisavi, Director of Children in Kilifi County raised an alarm and put the perpetrators on notice.

Kisavi said he will crackdown on all children's homes and orphanages operating against the specified guidelines.

Addressing participants at a child labour workshop organised by the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in a Kilifi hotel, Kisavi lamented that Kilifi town was leading by having the highest number of children's homes operating without legal documents.

"It is sad to note that most of the homes in this County are not address-

ing the needs of the children but are instead using the children's needs as a way of making money," Kisavi observed.

He noted: "We have information to the effect that some of the managers of these homes, especially within Kilifi town, are diverting the funds to build their own private expensive houses while the children are suffering."

Target

He pointed out that the targeted children's homes were under scrutiny and could be forced to shut down on legal grounds.

"Some of these children's homes are operating under the certificate of community based organisations from social services," noted Kisavi. He added: "Most of them do not have bank accounts and all the funds are deposited in an individual's bank account which is wrong."

He reminded the managers of the homes that the law requires that they be registered with the registrar of societies.

He also noted that some of the organisations were colluding with Government officers to deny the children their rights in the homes.

"In Kilifi there is a serious cartel which has been oppressing children in these homes. I want to issue a warning to them that their time is over and very soon all those operating outside the law will be shut," he warned.

However, Kisavi also noted that there was a challenge of where to transfer the affected children after homes are closed.

He said they had already issued warning letters to three affected organisations which have been ordered to comply with the rules governing children's homes or have their managers prosecuted and the institutions shut down.

Some of the most notorious chil-



Children hawking fire wood in the streets of Kilifi during the April holiday. Child labour has become rife in the county. Picture: Adam Juma

dren's homes that were pinpointed are run by church organisations.

He also expressed fears that some of the children's homes were involved in child trafficking but he did not give

statistics nor name the culprits.

Last year, a foreign managing director of a children's home in Kilifi was deported after he was found guilty of child trafficking.

Child labour rears its ugly head in the cities as AU celebrates 50th anniversary

By MERCY MUMO

It is 6:30pm and most working Kenyans are struggling to beat traffic or the looming dark cloud to be home. Eunice Akinyi* and Sophie Murugi* aged 8 and 9, respectively, are busy hawking peanuts and boiled maize to motorists and pedestrians on Enterprise Road in Nairobi's Industrial area.

They live in the nearby sprawling Mukuru kwa Rueben slums. Traffic snarl-up works to their advantage. They are able to sell everything. Back home, woe unto them if they do not manage to meet the day's target.

"After school, mother takes over my school bag as I remove my uniform in exchange for the basin full of boiled maize. There is hardly time to catch my breathe as I am expected back home before 9pm," says a jovial Akinyi.

She meets her friend Murugi at the main road during the weekdays to make that extra shilling. They have been friends for the last four years even though they attend different schools.

"We have been doing this for almost two years now. It is tiresome but at the end of the day, we are assured of not sleeping hungry," adds Murugi.

The question begs, even as the two fend for their families, is their safety back home or on the road guaranteed?

Children have been thrown into adulthood leaving them vulnerable to a myriad of evils in the society. Parents who are not able to take care of their young ones delegate the responsibility to unqualified or even inefficient siblings or neighbours who either have disregard on protecting them or see opportunity for defilement.

Early this year, a young girl below the age of five was kidnapped in Nairobi's Umoja estate in a bid to settle scores with the parents. Recently, another child's body was found decomposing in a well after being kidnapped.

Meanwhile, her attackers continue to solicit for money from the relatives.

Reports indicate there has also been an increase in child deaths at the Coast region. Statistics further indicate that over 20 children are admitted to hospitals daily, five of them often in need of emergency treatment.

In the same region, it is reported that 270 children die every month due to lack of medical equipment and facilities in public hospitals for children only.

Insecurity

Children are continually kidnapped, abused physically and sexually by relatives, neighbours and people they trust. They continue to be made vulnerable by parents or guardians who have reversed the bread-winning role to them.

Others have been orphaned thus the emergence of child headed homes.

In other instances, where parents cannot afford the services of a housekeeper, young ones are left behind closed doors when parents endeavour to make ends meet. Behind those closed doors is the risk of sexual predators or in worse instances, a fire gutting down the home.

Across the borders, others continue to be recruited and used as child soldiers in countries like Uganda, DRC and South Sudan. These are some of the challenges children undergo as they struggle for a better life.

The looming insecurity continues to threaten their survival. Poverty also continues to place greater demands for them to provide. The state is failing in its duty to protect and provide the required security for children.

Compared to the developed countries where there are laws that govern the protection of children's rights, their safety, wellbeing and survival is to be questioned. Concerted effort between

the government, parents and child welfare organisations is needed to safeguard the rights of children.

As African leaders met in Addis Ababa to mark the 50th anniversary of the African Union, they missed an opportunity to re-affirm their commitment to reduce child mortality across the continent.

While acknowledging great strides made in reducing the number of children who die of preventable causes in Africa, the world's leading child's rights organisation, Save the Children, emphasised that much more must be done to meet the fourth millennium development goal; the promise all



Zawadi Emmanuel a pupil from Sabaki Primary school in Malindi preparing food at school due to shortage of funding for various school activities like hiring cooks.

Pictures: Robert Nyagah & Courtesy Save the Children

countries made to reduce child mortality by two thirds by 2015.

"Between 1990-2000 and 2000-2011, Africa doubled the rate at which it reduced child mortality," said Save the Children's East Africa regional director and head of delegation to the AU summit, Hussein Halane.

"There are many individual stories of success, with countries such as Malawi and Rwanda, despite enormous odds, being on track to meet MDG4."

Save the Children urged leaders who congregated in Addis Ababa to step up efforts by investing in children's health care and skilled health workers and for each government to ensure that children have the nutrition they need to survive and thrive.

"Despite accounting for around 15 per cent of the world's population, Africa accounts for nearly half of the world's child deaths. At the current rate of progress, Africa will not meet millennium development goal 4. We need to redouble our efforts to meet our collective promises, and ensure that children growing up over the next 50 years are given the opportunity to meet their full potential," says the regional director.

According to a report done by The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn

and Child Health, for every dollar spent on key interventions for reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, about \$20 in benefits could be generated through producing healthy children who enjoy better cognitive development, achieve more at school and become healthy, productive adults. Healthy women are also more able to work and, on average, earn, invest and save more.

African member states have been called upon to honor their commitment to meet the Abuja target of allocating 15 per cent of their national budget to health.

"50 years ago, the OAU was formed to bring African leaders together in the fight against inequality and colonialism," Halane said.

"Today the fight continues - against the inequality which means that many of the children born today in Africa will not see their fifth birthday let alone their fiftieth."

"Accelerating progress in the last 1,000 days will put us in the best position to start on the new post-2015 development framework. This is the best way to improve the lives of this generation of Africa's children and the next," Halane noted.



"Today the fight continues - against the inequality which means that many of the children born today in Africa will not see their fifth birthday let alone their fiftieth."

— Hussein Halane, Save the Children's East Africa Regional Director

Tears of agony in Nakuru County as victims of FGM mark Day of the African Child

By NICOLE WAITHERA

As the world celebrated the day of the African child, thousands of Kikuyu girls were still recovering from being circumcised in the name of religion.

The girls are secretly subjected to the female genital mutilation (FGM) under the guise of Mungiki, an outlawed cult and by a cross section of the Akorino believers.

The FGM, which has been banned by the Government, has been a major problem in areas like Naivasha, Molo, Nginda, Maela and in majority of the Internally Displaced Persons' (IDPs) camps in Naivasha the young girls admit they succumbed to the pressure of their parents and faced the knives.

It is estimated that at least 100 girls undergo the practice annually in the area.

According to the Gilgil Children's Officer, Eunice Njuguna, admits that they have rescued more than ten girls who were enroute to be circumcised in the past few months.

According to Ms Njuguna, the lack of an active police unit to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators has enhanced the practice.

Ms Njuguna argues that even in cases where the perpetrators have been arrested the amount charged in the law courts was too little.

"Even though the Government is doing sensitisation to the children about FGM, the courts do not give hefty punishment to the parents involved. In fact in some cases they are charged as little Sh50,000 which most parents can afford," she added.

The girls, who spoke on condition of anonymity, say that their parents took them for the practice during school holidays after which

they were forcefully cut.

At one of the IDP camps in Naivasha, 12 year old Jane Muthoni, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, explains how she was tricked by her parents into being circumcised.

"We were taken to our *cucus* (grandmother's) home with my cousins where we were told that we were going to be made women. When we arrived in Turi area, we were told we should wait for the rest. We were taken to an old woman's hut where we waited for grandmother to arrive. When she came, we had our aunts behind us. They forced us to part our legs before they cut of our private parts. We were then sewn together. Majority of the girls we were with fainted. We bled a lot and I was just screaming. When we attempted to put our legs together, we slapped on our thighs and told to be respectful. Upto now, I have never known why they did this to me," she added.

She claims that she was given a *lessos* and a cooking pot after the sad ordeal and told that she was now ready to start a home.

Pain

"No one told me how painful it would be. Though I had become a woman, I still wanted to remain a small baby. I was forced to avoid my friends and not play their games which I was told were 'silly'."

Even though I'm still young I felt like an old woman," she added.

In an interview with her parents, they argued that they had done the right thing.

"Our parents never saw a problem with being circumcised. In fact, it marked an entry to woman hood. We would like to uphold our

tradition and this will only be through circumcision," said the girls father, 56 year old John Njuguna.

He claims that all his girls will have to undergo the practice before they get married.

His wife claims that even though she underwent the practice, she has never suffered from any side effects.

"I gave birth to ten children and they are all healthy and I wonder why they have to change their culture just because the white man told them that it was wrong," said Josephine.

However, teachers in some of the primary schools in the area attribute the high school dropout rates among the girl child in Mai Mahiu, Ndabibi and Kongoni area to FGM.

The teachers argue that some of the school-going children do not report back to school especially after undergoing the practice since they are married off.

The teachers decry that the practice was still rampant among the Kikuyu community living in the area.

"The health of the child who undergoes the practice is often poor and affects her performance in school. This has seen many of the girls opt to stay out of school rather than come and go home daily due to sickness," said

Mrs Celina Muthemba of Kongoni Primary school is calling for stiffer penalties for parents who force their children to undergo the practice, saying that the money will make parents think twice before forcing them to face the knife.

Ms Florence Kerecho of Kipkunyonyo Primary School argued that the stigmatisation that a circumcised girl had undergone sometimes forced them to abandon school altogether.

"Majority of the school going children would laugh at their fellow classmates and criticise them for being circumcised, which in turn forces them to opt not to come to school," says Kerecho.

Laxity

According to Esther Njeri, a social worker, the increased cases of FGM has been due to the assumption that the law has relaxed on the practice.

Njeri argues that the parents who engage in the practice feel that the laxity of the law to curb the vice has made them relax too.

"It's rooted in the Kikuyu culture that in order for a girl to graduate into becoming a woman, she has to face the knife like her fellow brothers and cousins. However, as time went on, the issue declined but there are some parents who choose to still circumcise their children. Personally I have rescued more than 50 girls in the last one year whose parents have sought to have them face the knife," she added.

Njeri argues that the young girls have often felt stigmatised and traumatised that they cannot talk about their harsh experiences.

"They fear being laughed at by their peers, or being ridiculed.

Everyone feels it's their fault that they failed to stop the circumciser's knife," she added.

Njeri argues that the girls need counseling but many have been unwilling to come forward.

"The girls are aware that the practice is illegal. Hence, they cannot tell their peers even when they return to school that they have been circumcised. They are forced to live with the guilt and pain and have no one to share their sad experiences with," she added.

Wairimu's passion for orphans bears fruit

By LARRY KIMORI

When Irene Wairimu Wainana set out to help disadvantaged children, she was aware that she was getting enormous responsibilities on her shoulders.

However, her mind was set and nothing was going to stop her from meeting the desire to make a difference in someone's life.

In view of the strong desire within her, St. Ann's Baby and Children's home was established in April 2007 and shortly thereafter, the home received its first three children.

The home targeted young and newly born babies who were abandoned upon birth or a few days later.

Six years later the founder of the home can look back with pride as she sees how the children have been nurtured, educated and equipped for the world.

Wairimu hopes that well-wishers will help them establish an endowment fund for the vulnerable children, to ensure that they are able to attend school and college to brighten their future.

She is optimistic that the courageous decision she made will bear fruit. Her greatest joy would be to see the children excel and make a difference in the society.

"I also look forward to a time when Kenyans of goodwill will be able to adopt children and give them a bright future that they would otherwise miss," she hopes.

Until that happens, Wairimu presses on and trusts in God every step of the way. As she puts it, it is not an easy task and requires divine guidance to undertake it.



Children enjoying playtime at St. Ann's Baby and Children's home. The facility takes up children who have been abandoned and gives them a new home and life skills. Picture: Larry Kimori

Receive

She told this writer that the home receives the children through legally established mechanisms that include a court placement to ensure that anyone who wishes to claim any of the children has to follow the legal process.

Wairimu recalled that once they had started the home, they received many babies and especially during and after the 2007-8 post-elections violence.

She says that behind the joyful faces of the children, there are heart rending experiences of children who had been condemned to die, but managed to survive by the sheer grace of God.

Each of the children has a story, with some being abandoned by the road, others dumped in pit latrines while others were abandoned in hospitals immediately after birth.

One of the children was found abandoned in a forest known to host wild animals and her survival is perhaps proof of a great destiny ahead.

She says that they receive most of the children from the police while hospitals also call upon them whenever they are left holding newborn babies with no trace of their mothers.

"It is such a joy when such children recover fully given that some of them are often left in life threatening situations," the care-giver says.

She recalls an incident where a baby was dumped in a pit-latrines where she spent several

hours but miraculously survived.

Wairimu, who is also one of the directors of the home, says that the home has also received several children infected with HIV but have reverted to negative status after months of caring for them. Some of these children have already been adopted.

Appeal

The home's ultimate goal is to have all the children adopted but so far only nine, aged between 2 and 5 years have been adopted since the home was established.

She says that adoption has not taken root within the Kenyan culture and appeals to financially able Kenyans to consider adoption of children as a way of helping them grow up within family units where they can receive and give their love.

She says that there is also an option where Kenyans can identify children at the home and support their education needs without necessarily having to move the children away from the home. She noted that currently, some well-wishers were catering for the education of the children but says more help is needed as the needs keep on increasing.

Currently the home hosts 28 children between the ages of 9 months and 7 years. 21 of them are in school.

However, Wairimu's journey has not been smooth and although she has faced many challenges along the way, she is not about to give up.

"My greatest challenge currently is the relocation of the children to a new home in Kikopey, a few kilometres from Nakuru town where my family has donated a four acre piece of land to build a permanent home for the children," she says.

The children have been occupying rented premises within Milimani Estate and there is need to relocate the home to a permanent residence where rent will not be a challenge.

The desire to relocate the children saw her get together with a few friends to raise an initial KSh3 million to put up basic infrastructure at the new site.

Wairimu is hopeful that the directors will embark on construction of a primary school within the home that will not only cater for the children at the home but also the neighboring community, once the children have settled into their new residence.

Another challenge that the home faces is in provision of health care for the children. Irene says that whenever they take the children to government hospitals, they have to pay for their treatment and appeals to have charges waived have not borne fruit.

It is ironic that the hospitals cannot waive any

of the fees charged yet they always call on the home to pick up children abandoned on their hospital beds by fleeing mothers.

"The hospital authorities should consider a waiver on medical bills especially when the children have to be admitted in hospital," Irene appealed.

Care

A visit to the home located in the quiet and serene Milimani Estate reveals a passionate desire to ensure the children live comfortably.

The imposing five bed-roomed house with a large garden and domestic animals resembles a home in every aspect.

Nine employees watch over them and ensure that they are well taken care of in terms of feeding and wellbeing.

The children, oblivious of their trying backgrounds enjoy their playtime as they curiously approach visitors to the home. Their friendliness and infectious smiles draws every visitor to them and friendships are quickly made.

Like other children of their age, they too are curious and have conversations with visitors.

It looks like one large family, only that each of the children has a unique past. When the children arrive, they are given new names; a new chapter is opened in their lives, a chapter of hope, love and a bright future.

Social worker pleads for support for adoptees

By BONIFACE MULU

Members of the society have been asked to treat an adopted child humanely.

The request was made by a social worker with the Child Welfare Society of Kenya, Tom Muindi, there should not be any stigma about adopting a child.

The official said that the adoptee is a child like any other child and should be treated equally and with respect.

"We (the Child Welfare Society of Kenya) do have some disclosure meetings where we give the parents professional counseling," Muindi said.

He said children were blessings and should be supported to identify their talents.

The social worker was lecturing Kitui Dis-

trict Primary School teachers who teach special education in their schools during a two-day teachers training on supporting children's rights through education, arts and media organised by the Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya (APDK) at the Kitui Agricultural Training Centre.

Muindi said that the children should participate in their own growth and development. "The children are sufficiently mature to know their rights," the CWSK official said.

On his part, the ADPK Machakos Branch Coordinator, Shedrack Nduti, said that the ADPK is a non governmental organization that works in partnership with persons with disabilities. He said that they do rehabilitate the disabled by providing them with assisting aids that in-

clude wheelchairs, listening devices, calipers, hearing devices and white canes. Nduti said that the disabled need to be given opportunities to be involved in activities of their choice.

He asked the community to discard the negative attitudes regarding the disabled. "There are disabled persons who are more competent in many things including education and professionally than many normal people," the ADPK official said.

Nduti said that they work in partnership with Government ministries, community based organisations, faith based organisations and other partners on disabilities.

"We are not selective when it comes to networking," Nduti said. The Kitui District Education Department's Special Education Officer,

Veronica Mbaika, said that the children with disabilities are the most vulnerable to child labour in Kitui District.

She said that they were working out modalities to tackle the problem in the area. Mbaika said that they do educational assessment for school placement regarding special education.

"We also give guidance and counseling to the parents of children with disabilities," the educationist said. In his lecture, the CWSK Programmes Officer, Peter Njuguna, said that the media is a vital community to mobilise in the fight against violation of the children's rights.

"The community integration aims to stimulate the interest and involvement of the external communities in the issues you are addressing," Njuguna said.

Child abuse cases drop in Naivasha District

By DAVID KIMANI

Secrecy and failure to provide information to the government are the major challenges in the quest for total abolition of child abuse vices such as early marriages.

Addressing members of the public at Kongoni in Naivasha during the celebration of the annual Day of the African Child, Naivasha District Children Officer Francis Njagi said that unless the government is informed, the fight against the abuses cannot be totally achieved.

He however noted that the cases have drastically reduced in Kongoni area of Naivasha which had registered many of the cases in the recent past.

"Cases of early marriages and female genital mutilation among members of the community

are diminishing by the day save for a few cases which mostly go unreported," said Njagi.

"Unlike in the past when they used to be practiced openly, nowadays, we have learnt that they are conducted in secret therefore making it difficult for us to completely control them."

He further noted that his office only learns of early marriage cases whenever a couple develops differences and seeks assistance.

"When couples are in wrangles and come for our assistance, that is the time we establish that the wives were married off at an early age going by the dates of birth of their children and their present age," Njagi said.

He appealed to members of the public to cooperate with the government by providing relevant information regarding such practices

which he termed outdated.

Speaking at the same function, Kongoni District Officer Adan Issack noted that child labour has also been a problem in the area but was quick to add that it is also reducing.

He accused business owners and entrepreneurs in the area of employing school going children in their premises to run errands.

"Last year we arrested several people in connection to child labour and as a result, the vice has dropped significantly," said Issack adding that they have issued warning of closure of some quarries whose owners have been employing children.

He further said that it has become difficult for them in tracing the parents of the said children claiming that most of them move to the place from other parts of the country.



Naivasha District Children's Officer Francis Njagi addressing members of the Public at Kongoni Primary School in Naivasha during the celebrations of the Day of the African Child. Picture: David Kimani

Child abuse cases irk Taita Taveta County leaders

By BENSON MWANGA

As the country marked the Day of the African Child, the girl and boy child in Taita-Taveta County felt unsafe due to widespread cases of child abuse.

The school going girls and boys are facing many challenges ranging from child prostitution, defilement, incest, sodomy, early marriages, unwanted pregnancies and child labour among other forms of child abuse.

Many are those who have dropped out of school due to high poverty levels and were currently engaging in child labour to supplement family income despite the introduction of free and compulsory primary education in the country.

To reduce child abuse in the region, Taita District Children's Officer Lenah Sitati said the department has gone on board to advocate on child rights and protection and finalising child abuse cases, enhanced communication among stakeholders and lobby for free medical care for sexually abused children.

The county has 325 pre-schools, 221 primary schools, 73 secondary schools and 4 tertiary institutions.

A brief report from the County Director of Education shows that pre-school has a total of 80,658 (40,300 boys and 40,358 girls), Primary schools 65,718 (33,354 boys and 32,364 girls) and secondary schools 18,401 (9,813 boys and 8,587 girls) respectively.

In one of the recent shocking incidences, police arrested a man for sexually exploiting a primary school girl, who happens to be his relative.

Remand

The accused, Micah Malalo Maghanga denied the charge that on May 10 this year at Mwambiti Village in Chawia location, Mwatate District committed the act to a minor aged 12.

Maghanga, 45, who appeared before Wundanyi acting Principal Magistrate Isaac Orange also faced an alternative charge of intentionally touching the girl's private parts.

The accused was remanded in custody after he failed to raise a bond of KSh150, 000 and a surety of a similar amount.

In another incident, two young girls aged below 17 years were arrested and charged for allegedly working as barmaids at Kamtonga Location in Mwatate district.

"We found the minors selling beer to adults in a bar and arrested them," confirmed a senior police officer Charles Kibett. Reports from Wundanyi law Courts later confirmed that the accused were each fined KSh3,000 each.

This comes at a time when many girls continue to be exposed to the risks of early pregnancy, contracting HIV/Aids scourge among other contagious diseases.

Unfortunately, these are among the many child abuse cases that have been reported in the region with stakeholders calling for stern action against offenders.

The incidents come at a time when the Government is still grappling with increased cases of sexual exploitation among girls.



Pupils from Mwashuma Primary School in Mwatate District dancing. Children in Taita Taveta County experience various forms of abuse. Picture: Benson Mwangi

Over 500 child abuse cases were reported last year and the number could go up this year if measures are not taken to address the matter.

The children's and education departments in the region have expressed concern over widespread cases of child abuse and called for measures to stem the vice.

Rising cases

The department's officials said cases of sexual abuse among minors in both primary and secondary schools has reached alarming levels and challenged the relevant stakeholders to intervene.

Presenting a report on caseload analysis for both boys and girls, Taita District Children's Officer Lenah Sitati said a total of 217 minors between the ages of five to 18 had been sexually abused in the recent past.

The number of boys sexually molested outstripped that of girls, she said.

"A total of 110 boys and 107 girls have been sexually abused between July last year to date. March this year had the highest number with 34 followed by June with 31 cases respectively," says Sitati.

The children's officer said 37 children both boys and girls had been counselled, 10 reintegrat-

"Cases of child abuse have become rampant because some parents are protecting culprits making it difficult for law enforcement officers to end the vice. This habit must end to protect girl child education that is under serious threat."

— Lenah Sitati, Children's Officer

ed with families, 22 others placed on supervision with court order, 11 committed to Charitable Children's Institutions and six parents bonded.

"Cases of child abuse have become rampant because some parents are protecting culprits making it difficult for law enforcement officers to end the vice. This habit must end to protect girl child education that is under serious threat," said Sitati.

It also emerged from the meeting that even the tough sentences handed down to offenders had not acted as a deterrent measure.

Sitati said many school going girls have sexually been molested while others dropped out of school owing to early marriages and pregnancies.

"We want parents to cooperate with law enforcement officers to end the vice. Anyone found protecting criminals will face the full force of the law," the children's officer warned.

Protection

Sitati told the Area Advisory Committee chaired by Taita District Commissioner Njenga Miiri in Wundanyi town recently that among the cases reported in the region include sexual, physical, emotional and psychological abuses, child labour and trafficking.

Other cases include child prostitution, incest, sodomy, defilement, early pregnancies, early marriages gender based violence among others.

At the same time the meeting called for the establishment of a Children's Protection Unit (CPU) in the wake of increased cases of sexual exploitation among minors.

The committee members said the unit would ensure that minors who have been sexually abused were protected from emotional trauma but also interference of their cases.

Noting that poverty levels are high in the region, the members further said they would lobby health facilities to fill P3 forms for free.

"We will ensure that children's rights and welfare are adequately safeguarded and the cases

brought before court were quickly dispensed with," she noted.

Sitati said the Government will recruit more Voluntary Children's Officers in the region to cater for the increased cases of child abuse cases.

The committee criticised some parents for perpetuating child abuse cases by failing to report to authorities for action.

Voi District Education Officer Kennedy Machora said child abuse cases had adversely affected education in the region.

"When pupils learn that their colleague have been sexually molested they fear for their security. They do not also concentrate on their education well hence affecting the standards of education by schools in the region," said the education officer.

Machora at the same time accused some rich people of perpetrating child abuse cases by employing young boys to engage in sand harvesting and drug trafficking. Those involved pay the little boys some money to lure them to do odds jobs for them.

Taita-Taveta Human Rights Watch chairman Haji Mwakio said that Voi District was leading in the number of child abuse cases in the region followed by Wundanyi, Taveta and Mwatate districts.

"High poverty levels, breakdown in marriages, corruption and widespread consumption of illicit brews and drugs were also to blame for increased cases of child abuse in the region," added Haji.

The research conducted by the human rights organisation, police and the Children's department shows that cases of female genital mutilation and gender based violence have also been on the increase in the area.

The human rights activist said: "We are sensitising residents on the dangers of all forms of child abuse and we are committed to ensure that human rights issues are respected. We are also advising residents to report such cases to the relevant authorities for action."

Partnership to save children's lives

By HENRY OWINO

As the Millennium Development Goals target of 2015 draws closer, Kenya still lags behind in nearness to achieving the eight goals. The country has only been successful in as far as implementing the Free and Compulsory Primary Education for All.

Goal number two aims at universal primary education and one of its targets is ensuring that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

However, looking at the state of the Kenyan child there are other goals that needed to have been reduced by 75 per cent or totally eliminated by 2015.

Goal Four aims at reducing child mortality of children under five with a target of two thirds, between 1990 and 2015. Goal Five seeks to reduce maternal mortality ration by three quarters to ensure mothers do not die from pregnancy related consequences so that the babies can survive.

In sub-Saharan Africa, only Rwanda and Liberia are sufficiently progressing towards achieving goals Four and Five targets. One would argue this is because of the fact that both countries were affected by war and that women's empowerment is at a high level. Liberia boasts of having the first female president in Africa while Rwanda leads the world in having the highest percentage of female legislators.

In Kenya, building of infrastructure especially roads has been given first priority compared to other sectors such as health. Education is prioritised second and there is free and compulsory in primary education. Those attending day secondary schools are also enjoying the benefits of free education.

The health sector has suffered from corruption, under budgeting and lack of proper management. In the recent past, the country witnessed nurses and doctors going on strike over salary and other allowances. While civil strife has been going on children have especially suffered the consequences of not have access to skilled health care.

Push

To assist in pushing for achieving MDG Four and Five, Save the Children and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) have partnered to identify ways to ensure the widest possible access of medication in the developing world. Save the Children is an international non-governmental

organisation while GlaxoSmithKline is an international pharmaceutical firm.

"Through this new and exciting partnership, we believe that we can make huge gains for children in Kenya and across Africa. By harnessing the power of GlaxoSmithKline's innovation and research and working together in new ways, we can focus our efforts and expertise to achieve maximum impact for children," said Duncan Harvey, Country Director Save the Children.

The partnership comes from a recognized need of a lack of medicines approved for children. Lack of medication can result in one of two scenarios: Children are prescribed medicines approved only for adults or they simply do not get the medicines they need.

Focus

The GlaxoSmithKline and Save the Children partnership will focus on widening vaccine coverage to the poorest children in hardest to reach communities through mobile technology solutions; sending short message service (SMS) messages to remind parents to take up vaccination services and provide health workers and health facilities with smartphones to allow them record and schedule vaccinations.

Increasing investment in health workers, as well as developing a low-cost nutritional product to help combat scourge of child malnutrition for the poorest families is also part of the partnership.

According to Harvey, the two organisations have been working together for eight years on a number of public health projects, including GlaxoSmithKline's initiatives to invest 20 per cent of the profits it makes in least-developed-countries in community programmes. He said this is to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, primarily through the training of community health workers.

"Investing in healthcare workers in the poorest communities, building on an existing GlaxoSmithKline-Save the Children collaboration is to help address the estimated shortfall of at least 3.5 million trained healthcare workers," Harvey reiterated.

He disclosed that they will deliver vaccines and essential medicines to babies and young children as well as provide health advice and treat malnutrition.

The collaboration to save the lives of a million of the poorest children in the world will see the two organisations working together in different ways that include sharing expertise, resources, reach and influence to tackle some of the leading causes of childhood deaths.



General manager GSK John Musunga and members of Save the Children Organization shake hands during the launch of the partnership. Pictures: Henry Owino

The unique collaboration will also look at some key initiatives such as transformation of antiseptic used in mouthwash into a life-saving product for new-borns, and the roll-out of a powder-form of an antibiotic in child friendly doses to help fight pneumonia, one of the main killers of children under five years.

While good progress has been made in recent years, almost seven million children each year still die because they do not have basic healthcare, vaccines or nutritious food. Through these and other initiatives, the partnership aims to help save the lives of one million children in the next five years.

Admit

The flagship programme is initially set to run in Kenya and Democratic Republic of Congo. These will be closely monitored and the evidence on how to save children's lives at scale will be used to replicate programmes in other countries within Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America.

According to John Musunga, General Manager, GlaxoSmithKline Kenya, the country is lagging behind in achieving MDGs Four and Five but there is sufficient progress. He noted that with a new government in place, more improvements are expected.

"At GSK we are motivated by developing innovative life-saving medicines and getting them to the people that need them. By joining forces with Save the Children, we can amplify these efforts to create a new momentum for change and stop children dying from preventable diseases," said Musunga.

Estimates in the United States suggest that about two-thirds of medicinal products that are prescribed for children have not been adequately studied and recommended for paediatric use.

There are long-established reasons for the lack of medicines with approved guidance on paediatric use. These include a number of ethical and scientific challenges posed by conducting paediatric trials.



By joining forces with Save the Children, we can amplify these efforts to create a new momentum for change and stop children dying from preventable diseases."

— John Musunga

Mandate to rescue one million children in Sub-Saharan Africa

By NANCY WAFULA

GlaxoSmithKline and save the children have launched an initiative that seeks to save the lives of one million children in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Among countries set to benefit from the programme include Kenya and Democratic Republic of Congo.

The programme aims at reducing child mortality rate by one million through the introduction of vaccines and developing new forms of products to improve on nutrition.

This will be the first time save the children will be involved in helping GlaxoSmithKline to research and develop medicines for children. "Too many children are dying of malaria and diarrhea and thus the new initiative will help reverse the problem," said Mr. Justin Forsyth who is the CEO of the Save the Children in Kenya.

Under the initiative, the two organizations will introduce an antiseptic mouthwash as a life-saving product for new-born which will also

be rolled out in powder-form and in child friendly doses to help fight pneumonia- one of the main killers of children under five.

The new partnership will also address Pneumonia which currently kills 1.4 million children under the age of five years in countries with a high incidence of the illness.

The partnership will also focus on widening vaccine coverage to the poorest children, increasing investment in health workers, as well as developing a low cost nutritional product to help combat child malnutrition.

GSK will also work with Save the Children to explore alternative ways to protect children in places where access to water and milk is not easy.

Collaborate

"Through this new and exciting partnership, we believe that we can make huge gains for children in Kenya and across Africa by harnessing the power of GSK's innovation and research and working together in new

ways to achieve maximum impact for children," said Mr. Duncan Harvey, country Director of save the children Kenya.

The partnership will also roll out a flagship programme which will run in Kenya and Democratic Republic of Congo.

According to Harvey, the initiative will closely be monitored and the evidence on how to save the children's lives at scale will be used to replicate programmes in other countries within Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The other key feature of the partnership is to develop a blueprint for how businesses can deliver better social outcomes by engaging with health and development issues and pursuing joint advocacy efforts to ensure a focus on children's health and their well being.

Though good progress has been made in the recent years, seven million children each year are still dying in Africa because they lack basic healthcare, vaccines and nutritious food. Through

these initiatives, the partnership aims to help save the lives of one million children in the next five years.

Justin Forsyth, the Chief Executive of Save the Children explained that, "This ground breaking partnership involves both organizations working in genuinely new ways to save the lives of a million children.

Commit

Johnson Musunga, General Manager, GSK Kenya added that the organisation is committed to developing innovative life-saving medicines and getting them to the people that need them.

"By joining forces with Save the Children, GSK will amplify effort to create a new momentum for change and stop children from dying from preventative diseases in Kenya and other countries.

The two organizations have been working together over the last eight years on various projects that focus on health issues to strengthen healthcare infrastructure, primarily

through the training of community health workers where GSK has also been able to reinvest 20% of its profit to developing countries to strengthen community healthcare.

GlaxoSmithKline is one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare companies committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer, while Save the children has been working to more than 120 countries to help save the lives of children and fight for the rights and help them fulfill their potential.

According to Sir Andrew Witty the CEO GlaxoSmithKline, the partnership will enable the two organizations save the lives of one million children and to transform the lives of millions more. At GSK we are motivated by developing innovative life saving medicines and getting them to the people that need them.

He expressed optimism that the initiative will stop children dying from preventable diseases.

Victim of rape turns the ordeal into an opportunity to help others

By WILSON ROTICH

At the tender age of 9, something awful happened to her. She kept mum about it for three days.

Janet* (not her real name) had been defiled by her uncle in the comfort of her parent's home while her mother had gone to fetch water downstream.

"We had always been so close. He had often been great to me. He would buy me juice. He was my hero then, but not anymore. I cannot bear to be near him now. I could not look at him in the eyes after the harrowing ordeal," she recounts with bitterness.

Unable to access medication promptly, she ended up being HIV positive.

Fortunately, Janet is now happily married and is a mother of a healthy baby boy. She is currently gainfully works as one of the professional counselors assisting rape survivors to move on with life despite adverse effects of sexual and gender based-violence.

Since then, Janet vividly recalls how she traced her way back to normalcy after the harrowing ordeal.

"I went to the police station and reported the incident at the gender desk and was sent to the Center for Assault Recovery of Eldoret (CARE) at the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret.

When I came to CARE, the 72 hours had already lapsed. They did the first HIV test and it was negative. When they did another one after 3 months, it turned positive."

She says that when she went for counseling sessions and care, she was downtrodden. "I could not even talk, and I only cried a lot. But with time I gained courage and picked myself up. I was given some drugs and injections that prevent sexually transmitted infections. After that I was supplied with P3 forms which I filled and took to the police station. The rapist was arrested and remanded. The case be-

gan and I was assigned a doctor who represented me in court. The court process was so slow that it took one year to be concluded. Finally it was over when he was jailed."

The court process was difficult. This was mainly because of her age and the system that needed urgent reforms that is currently underway.

"There were lots of challenges in the court. After every court session I would go for counseling sessions. The questions I faced in court were very disturbing. I often came out of court crying. Were it not for CARE I would not have been the person I am today. They gave me a shoulder to lean on; they came to my home to comfort me. When I was depressed and admitted to a hospital for a week, they visited me at the ward. CARE went further and cleared my pending medical bill."

Janet says: "I did not have any problems accessing medication but I had a hell lot of challenges in the legal process."

Sometimes she could go to court and was shocked to learn that all the evidence had vanished, the file and the exhibit were nowhere. But CARE gave me a legal officer through the Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH), legal office in Eldoret. When she came in, the process went on smoothly.

She says before receiving a legal officer, she was constantly harassed by the perpetrator especially during the cross-examination.

Janet has a noble word of wisdom for those who may find themselves in a similar situation.

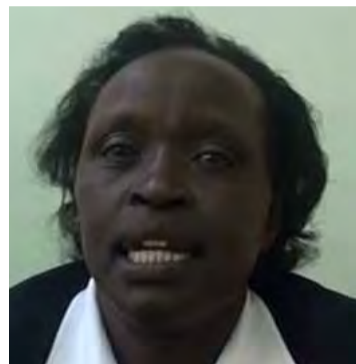
"My wish is that all those who have been raped should come out of the closet for assistance. During my frequent visits here I have witnessed people of all ages and gender who have been violated. I have seen children in nappies and even elderly women who have been raped."

Being a trained counselor, she understands the paramount part played by family members in restoring the

resilience of a rape survivor.

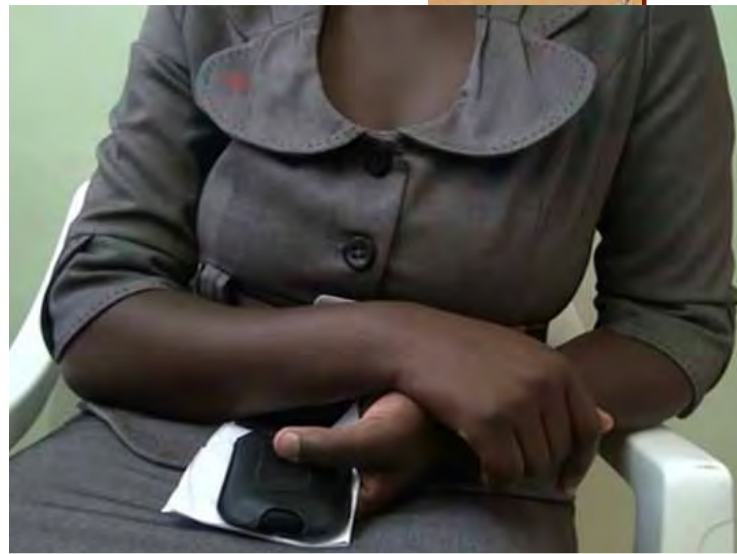
"My advice to the community members is that they should support those who have been sexually violated. We should not despise them. Many of them may commit suicide. Not everyone will move on, not everyone will think of getting married. They need a shoulder to lean on at the end of the day. This hospital will help them through the counseling sessions; you get to know more about yourself, you get to appreciate yourself that despite what happened you still have a life to live and that there are those who still need you."

The Survivor-turned counselor



"In support group counseling we put together clients who are almost of the same age and have undergone similar experiences. This is normally done once a month for six hours. But those who need continuous counseling are free to do so."

— Hellen Limo, Counsellor



The Survivor, Janet* explaining how it happened.

Pictures: Wilson Rotich

admits that though it is a personal decision to go for counseling, people have to assist the survivor to go on with the sessions.

"I am happily married now and am blessed with a baby boy. Despite my status being HIV positive I am living, I would like us to move on," she affirms.

She advises those who go through the same to visit CARE as soon as possible and especially before the 72 hours to prevent HIV infection.

On her part, Helen Limo, the psychology-counselor at the CARE center says survivors of rape come for assistance with feelings of bitterness about what happened, anger, shame, fear of contracting diseases, fear for men in general, suicidal tendencies, lower self esteem, lose of identity. All these feelings and emotions are captured during the counseling sessions as a way of helping them feel better.

She says that counseling is done in different methods. "First there is the individual counseling done in privacy where the survivor has sessions alone with the counselor."

"In support group counseling we put together clients who are almost of the same age and have undergone similar experiences. This is normally done once a month for six hours. But those who need continuous counseling are free to do so," she explains.

Limo says the parents or guardians of the survivors especially those of children are included in the sessions because they are usually more traumatised than the survivors.

Mary Chitaih, a nursing officer at the centre, emphasises the need for a survivor of rape to visit a hospital for examination before 72 hours.

"Do not change your clothes. If the clothes are dirty and stained and you must change, put them in a paper not polythene bag as they will be used as evidence to assist your case," she clarifies.

The medic says both men and women, boys and girls who are survivors of both sexual violence and domestic violence do visit the center. "For sexual violence most of our clients are girls. 63 per cent of these girls are below the age of 18. For domestic violence the bulk of them are women but we also see a few men. For sexual violence we see few boys. About 5 percent of our clients are boys. The number has been increasing because of more awareness," she reveals.

She says most of the sexual violence incidences have been rape or defilement. "Most of the toddlers and babies have been defiled by close relatives like father, uncle, big brother, or even a neighbor whom they trust.

Religious leaders demand intervention

By YUSUF AMIN

Religious leaders in tourist towns in Kilifi County have asked the provincial administration to intervene and curb prostitution among young girls in the towns.

Leaders from Mtwapa and Malindi have raised their concern after an increase in the number of girls who dropped out of school flocked to the town looking for jobs after their parents failed to pay for their school fees.

Council of Imam and Preachers of Kenya in the North coast region Coordinator, Sheikh Ali Hussein, says the two towns were more affected and asked officers from the provincial administration to conduct investigations and get the girls out of the streets and back to school.

Sheikh Hussein said that parents of such girls should be arrested and arraigned in court for shying away from their responsibilities.

He lamented that most of the parents were to blame for the large number of girls engaging in sex business that was being experienced in the towns for many years especially

in tourist towns.

"Parents who fail to take their responsibilities should be arrested so that the vice can be tackled on time as the County government takes root," the Sheikh said.

The leaders said that young girls were being targeted by old men who have money in these towns adding that they would educate other religious leaders in the region on how they could preach against the vice.

Bishop Lawrence Chai also condemned the vice and asked Kilifi County government to set aside funds that will help conduct civic education against young girls engaging in prostitution in the region.

The Bishop said that in order for the county to develop as per its vision, young girls should be given proper education and blamed those parents who have failed to take their family responsibilities.

"The County government should create a fund that will help curb young girls engaging in prostitution and further sponsor them in their education since most of them are bright and they come from poor families," he said.

The bishop further said that the

girls' fear was that they might be affected with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases that may affect their lives and bring to an end their lives.

Kilifi County Islamic leader Bakar Ali Nassib asked parents to be very keen and have their young girls engage in development activities rather than involving themselves in immoral activities.

Bakari also asked other religious leaders to have special forums in their churches and mosques to educate girls on the consequences of prostitution in the community.

"We should teach our girls on how they can become responsible people in future despite the hard times facing the families in accessing education."

Kilifi County Commissioner, Erastus Ekidor, said that his officers were fighting the problem and asked those who have information on old men who engage in sexual activities with young girls to inform the police.

Ekidor said that big towns in the region were the most affected by the vice and added that more police patrols would be conducted to arrest suspects and their godfathers as well.

Kilifi parents cash in on ban on holiday tuition

By ADAM JUMA

The ban on holiday tuition across the country is a relief to many parents in Kilifi County as it means getting an extra hand to provide for the family.

The ban was a relief to some parents who holiday tuition meant looking for extra funds to pay teachers for their extra efforts, yet others used the opportunity to use the children in fending for the family.

In Many parts of Kilifi, Mtwapa and Malindi towns, young girls were used to sell firewood and vegetables in estates and other rental houses.

A survey conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Kilifi County during the April holiday revealed that at least in four out of ten children who stayed at home during the April holiday was engaged in child labour.

According to the Kilifi County ILO officer, Paul Mwandikwa, the mostly affected were girls living with single parents and those living in the outskirts of the big towns.

"Most of the parents of these children are very poor and when the Minister banned the holiday tuition it came as a relief to many parents because they knew they would get assistance in their businesses," said Mwandikwa.

Some young girls engaged in selling of local brews like Mnazi when their mothers

engaged in other businesses.

The official said young girls would roam the towns with loads of firewood or local vegetable from 6:00am until about 10:00pm or even further depending on when the goods will be bought.

A baseline report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics indicates that Kilifi County is faced with numerous forms of child labour practices notably commercial sex, domestic labour, selling illicit brews, farm labour, quarrying, fishing, hawking, touting and exploitation for entertainment.

In 2012 about 1,853 children were involved in child labour. Of those, 851 were boys and 1,002 girls.

The number of children in child labour could be higher as those figures were the ones reported to the County children's officer.

Mwandikwa pointed that young boys involve themselves in boda-boda business. Most of them are not experienced and do not have licences which he said puts their lives and the customers at risk.

"These boys use motorbikes from relatives. Some of the motorbikes are not insurance contrary to the law, while they are risky," said Mwandikwa.

Education stakeholders in the county called on the government to allow for remedial classes during the holiday tuition so that children can concentrate on studies rather than child labour.

Naivasha leaders shocked by rising teenage marriages

By NICOLE MACHARIA

Leaders in Naivasha have raised a red flag over the high number of teen-marriages taking place in the area.

Majority of the young girls are lured into marriage by young boys who are in their teens, often times forcing them to drop out of school.

The Chairman of the Social Welfare Department, Esther Njeri says that the problem has become a norm especially in the rural areas of Kinangop, Kinamba, Mai Mahiu and Kongoni.

However, when arrested and arraigned in courts, many girls defend their teen "husbands" arguing that they have a right to love their boyfriends.

The problem is also well felt in the primary schools in the areas, where many more are trapped into marriage by young boys who have barely sat for their 'O' level Form IV national examination.

According to the Headmaster of Mirera Primary school, John Kinyanjui, majority of the teenage boys who could not pursue further education have become a trap for the young girls seeking to study.

"These young boys are employed as casual labourers in butcheries, hotels and shops and they end up cheating our students that they can bring them out of the poverty that they have faced all through their lives," says Kinyanjui.

Promise

As the headmaster of the school which has a population of more than 4,000 students, Kinyanjui feels that poverty is the driving force behind these teen marriages.

"The girls in our schools walk around with torn dresses and they have to tie pullovers around their dresses to hide their private parts.

Anyone promising marriage is a life-saver to them," said Kinyanjui.

The high rates of teen-marriage have led to a crackdown among the rural areas and slums, which are popular in the practice. The increase in child labourers in flower farms has also stopped many from accessing basic education.

Njeri argues that majority of the pupils in the area have been forced to quit school to supplement the incomes that their parents get.

"After getting some few coins many feel that they are now ready for marriage," she added.

She decried the number of immigrants who have come to seek jobs from flower farms who force their children to join them.

Danger

She added that majority of the children are also forced to become water vendors, who transport water for sale in majority of the estates.

"This not only puts their life in danger, as they are carried by the donkeys, but also makes them too tired to concentrate in education and thus there has been a sharp increase in the drop out rates in schools," she added.

She appealed to the relevant authorities to come up with strict measures to curb the vice, especially by imposing heavy fines on the parents. She added that immigrants from Tanzania have been on the increase in the town yet no one has ever bothered to arrest them and return them to their country.

But according to Naivasha District Commissioner, Abass Mohammed, blames the practice on improper housing, saying that the lack of privacy in the house is what has led to such marriages.

"Many flee from their homes in search of a private life which in most cases they get from their boyfriends," said Mohammed.

Alarm over rising cases of child abuse at the Coast

By YUSUF AMIN

A Coast based lobby group has launched investigations into the rising cases of children rights' violation that have been experienced in the last seven months.

Human Rights Agenda HURIA project officer, Eric Karisa Mgoja, said defilement cases and child negligence are on the rise in urban settings and in rural areas.

HURIA has been in the forefront in advocating for children's rights with a view of making a safe haven for them.

Mgoja took issue with some parents who were shying away from taking responsibility in upbringing of their children.

"We have had cases of parents running away from their homes while others fail to cater for the education needs of their children," said Mgoja.

The official said they were investigating several cases that had been reported them with a view of taking appropriate action to address the problem.

"Some parents have not been taking their responsibilities seriously especially on education and as an organisation we are concerned that if the cases are not addressed the children may not realise their dreams in life," he added.

Investigation

The organisation is also investigating corporal punishment cases that are imposed on children by teachers especially in primary schools.

Mgoja says that despite the government abolishing corporal punishment in schools long time ago, some teachers were still practicing it.

He said in recent weeks, three pupils from Chonyi Division in Kilifi had to stay out of school for four days to nurse injuries sustained after they were punished by their teacher.

The organisation also expressed concern about reports that cases of child labour involv-

ing parents were on the rise and cited cases of girls being overworked with house chores at the expense of their homework.

Mgoja called on parents to give their children ample time to study and warned them against violating the Childrens Act.

According to the organisation, most of the areas that have been affected by children violation are Kwale, Mombasa, Kilifi and Malindi.

"These areas have both urban and rural settings and have been mostly affected and we have our officers on the ground carrying out investigations so that children can have a more conducive environment for development."

The International Labour Organization in Kilifi has warned parents against allowing their children to work as casual labourers in quarries in Tezo and Roka areas.

Exposure

The organization's Kilifi co-coordinator Paul Mwandikwa said that most of the children have been exposed to jobs at the quarries and asked the provincial administration to intervene and curb the vice.

Mwandikwa said ILO has raised the complaint to the county children officer for appropriate action.

The coordinator urged the community to partner with ILO to address the problem.

But the official lamented that many school age children had dropped out in order to work in the quarries. He asked education officers to play their role in making sure that children remain in school.

"We should cooperate and protect the rights of our children, and have the number of educated people rise, for the prosperity of Kilifi County," said Mwandikwa.

Kilifi County director of education, Dickson Ole Keis, said measures have been put in place to curb the problem in the whole county.

Why active citizen participation is important for County development

By HENRY OWINO

Citizens now have the liberty to actively participate in their respective County decision making process, projects initiation and implementation as well as all public developments.

This is as opposed to the past where Members of Parliament (MPs) used to be the chairmen of Constituency Development Funds (CDF).

Now there is the Constituency Development Fund Act 2013 which aims at re-aligning CDF to the current Constitution. However, all provisions regarding citizen participation remain virtually the same, with a few administrative changes introduced. It attempts to curtail the role of MPs as administrators, limiting them to mobilizing community meetings and coordination of selection of committee members by citizens.

According to the Act, the administration of Constituency Development Fund will now fall in the hands of a board of officials dispatched to the constituency, while MPs exercise oversight over projects. This new Act further reduces the number of CDF Committee members down to 10 from 15, while at the same time providing for citizens to nominate who sits in the committees. The MP sits on the committee as ex-officio but with voting powers.

As much as MPs do not have direct mandate to elect CDF committee members, citizens should not sit back and watch but actively participate in the elections since MPs might have great influence over who are elected.



Helen Muchunu, NTA Project Officer and Central Region Coordinator urges citizen actively participate in CDF decision making processes. Picture: Henry Owino

The 2013 Act provides for the establishment of the CDF Committee by the MP within the first 40 days of being sworn in. The MP shall convene open public meetings of registered voters in each of the elective wards in the constituency. Each ward shall then elect five persons whose names shall be forwarded to the officer of the Board in the constituency.

Upon receiving the names from all the wards in the constituency, the MP in consultation with the officer of the Board and the sub-county administrator for the constituency shall appoint eight persons to the Board, taking into account the geographical diversity within the constituency, communal, religious, social and cultural interests in the constituency and the requirement of gender, youth and representation of persons with dis-

abilities.

By defining these groups, the Act encourages representation of various interests in the management of the affairs of the fund. To a certain extent, this will facilitate public participation. In the past, in constituencies where the MPs properly constituted these committees there was a higher level of success in prioritisation, ownership of projects and overall success in management.

Framework

The pitfall in the 2013 Act remains that the MP still retains the power to appoint the committee members. Often, political cronies were rewarded through these appointments and there is likelihood they will still find their way into the committee under the current framework.

According to Peter Kubebea, chairman National Taxpayers Association (NTA) in their social audits, there was widespread bias with members drawn predominantly from the MPs location within the constituency leading to biased distribution of development projects. He notes that this is why citizen participation is recommended for any new project initiative for developments.

"It is through participation of citizens priorities could be looked at in terms of immediate and long term priorities and then submitted to Parliament for approval and allocation of funding," says Kubebea. He explains: "The Act provides that for projects initiated by the community to be submitted and supported as provided. If a community requested, it should be given a chance to nominate representatives to represent their interests in any project being undertaken in their area."

The CDF Act 2013 provides that the chairperson of the Constituency Development Fund Committee (CDFC) in consultation with the MP for the Constituency, the sub-county administrator for the Constituency and the ward administrator for every ward shall, within the first year of a new parliament and at least once every two years thereafter, convene open forum public meetings at the ward and the constituency.

According to Helen Muchunu, National Taxpayers Association Project Officer and Central Region Coordinator, each ward shall come up with a list of priority projects to be

submitted to the CDFC to be ranked in order of priority.

"Notwithstanding the constitutional and legal ambiguities, CDF stands out as perhaps the most focused attempt to address inequality and poverty at the local level," observes Muchunu.

She emphasises the Constituency Development Fund has been responsible for the transformation of communities all over the country. It has built classrooms, health centres and dispensaries, roads, police posts, bridges, dug boreholes and provided water, supplied electricity, irrigated farms and educated children from poor and vulnerable families.

"Indeed no other fund has been responsible for transforming infrastructure among rural populations in Kenya," Muchunu reiterates. She notes instances where political goodwill existed, CDF played a pivotal role in socio-economic transformation of those communities.

According to Muchunu, the 'locking' of funds to specific projects limits the extent to which they may be diverted to other purposes without the express approval of the CDF board.

Previously it was the legislators who decided how the constituency funds were used on projects most of which were never implemented. Constituents were never consulted mainly because MPs based projects on personal interests and this depended on the type of project, site, location, who to hire for contracts and making the whole Constituency Development Fund become an MP's campaign tool.

Kilifi residents want land law unravelled

By ROBERT NYAGAH

Land remains a controversial issue in the Coastal strip but the situation is compounded by the fact that land reforms are going on and people do not understand what the new law says.

It is for this reason that Malindi Local Urban Forum is urging that Kilifi County residents be assisted in understanding the principals of land policy by being systematically taken through the various articles of the Constitution which stipulate how land shall be held, used and managed in a manner that remains equitable, efficient, productive and sustainable.

According to the stakeholders at the Malindi Local Urban Forum, this requirement puts into question poor utilisation of land or leaving of land idle on speculation grounds at the expense of the people.

This has been happening in many parts of the county where owners of prime commercial land fence off such properties as they wait for the prices to improve.

Controversial damage of land in Magarini Constituency right along the shoreline by salt manufacturing firms who flood huge areas to create salt drying pans destroying mangrove vegetation and agriculturally suitable land comes into mind when one considers how protectively public land is utilised.

The uncontrolled building and sand mining quarries at the Mjanaheri in the same constituency will have to be addressed especially because sand harvesting threatens agricultural land and water wells which serve more than 100,000 people.

Mining

The sand and the salt mining can be economically viable but it has progressively eaten into the prime land at the expense of the area's economy.

Most local people and former owners of the land only serve the salt firm as labourers while their sand is bought cheaply and sold at millions of shillings in yards in Mombasa and Nairobi.

Raymond Chadi, a sand quarry businessman and resident of Mjanaheri where the sand which constructed the Moi International Airport was taken says this resource is exported to Arabia in ships.

"The same sand has been used to build the entire coast and parts of Nairobi but profits are not reinvested back to the area," says Chadi.

While land must be accessed equitably, it is necessary for the people to realise that there is security on land rights which according to the Constitution covers profitability from land use, cost effective management as well as conservation and protection of environmentally fragile areas.

Customs

Unlike in the past when customs and traditions seemed to override the law, the Constitution has made it clear that while communities were encouraged to settle land disputes through recognised local community initiatives consistent with this Constitution, they were also expected to eliminate gender discrimination in law, customs and practices related to land and property.

To avoid rigidity in land laws, the constitution clarifies that such principles would be implemented through a National Land Policy developed and reviewed regularly by the national



Squatters in Mayungu and Jacaranda area demonstrate against the takeover of prime plots by foreign investors in the region. Below: The chairman of the Malindi Local Urban Forum Godfrey Karume and the then Malindi deputy mayor Fuad Rudainy raise a torch to create local interest in land issues.

Pictures: Robert Nyagah

government and through legislation.

According to Kashero Chinyanga, secretary Malindi Local Urban Forum, while it is clear that land attracts quite some passion in the Coast at times causing conflict, animosity and even violence, if the residents understood how land was classified under the Constitution they would perhaps be more sober in dealing with it.

The residents need to first realise that as indicated under the Constitution "all land in Kenya belongs to the people of Kenya collectively as a nation, as communities and as individuals".

Warning

He explains: "Kilifi County residents need to understand that some of the public land shall be held by the county government in trust for the people in the county and shall be administered on their behalf by the National Land Commission."

Chinyanga warns against the assumption that land will be managed haphazardly as happened in some instances in the past because the law is clear that "public land shall not be disposed of or otherwise used except in terms of an Act of Parliament specifying the nature and terms of that disposal or use".

Chinyanga explains that community land shall be held by communities identified on the basis of ethnicity, culture or similar community of interest as stated in the constitution.

However such community land, the law further indicates, shall not be disposed of or otherwise used except in terms of legislation specifying the nature and extent of the rights of



members of each community individually and collectively.

Under such sections of the law, parliament will be expected to enact legislation to give effect to these articles.

Although the pillar of the Kilifi County shoreline's economy is tourism which continues to be dominated by foreigners, many issues of land ownership will have to be resolved.

According to Godfrey Karume, chair of the Malindi Local Urban Forum, dominance of the hotel and tourism industry by foreigners means that they control a huge chunk of the prime coastline land "This also means that the foreign investors end up controlling tourism almost in entirety," says Karume.

If the Kilifi County government has to deal with foreigners who own prime beach plots sometimes merely for speculation, it will have to understand the Constitution especially where it indicates that "a person who is not a citizen may hold land on the basis of leasehold tenure only, and any such lease, however granted, shall not exceed 99 years".

The Constitution states that "if a provision of any agreement, deed, conveyance or document of whatever nature purports to confer on a person who is not a citizen an interest in land greater than a 99 year lease, the provision shall be regarded as conferring on the person a 99 year leasehold interest and no more".

However, what is not clear is whether foreigners have been made aware of the new requirements. That section is bound to cause great controversy in Malindi where more than 3,000 Italian-foreigners own various plots where thousands of holiday villas and cottages have been constructed.

Abuse

With the laws in property registration heavily abused in the past, it seems the foreigners could take advantage of the section on land which indicates that "a body corporate shall be regarded as a citizen only if the body corporate is wholly owned by one or more citizens".

Malindi people, and Kilifi County residents specifically will depend

strongly on Parliament to enact legislation to make further provision for the operation of some of the articles given that some Kenyan owners of property are only indicated as directors for purposes of paper work and never benefit from the profits driven from tourist establishments.

The greatest remedy, however, shall perhaps emanate from the fact that the state may regulate the use of any land, or any interest in or right over any land, in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, or land use planning.

Majority of land in the Malindi coastline is owned and controlled by foreigners to a point that they have security at the beach and fences restraining access to the beach.

Karume notes that Kilifi County National Assembly members will have to be quite familiar with the land issues on the ground given that it is Parliament which holds the mandate to enact legislation to ensure that investments in property benefit local communities and their economies.



Livestock data innovation launched to help African farmers boost income

By **DUNCAN MBOYAH**

Majority of rural dwellers in Africa depend heavily on livestock for their livelihood and for meeting their marriage expenses.

Unfortunately investments, policy and institutional reforms that target African livestock markets which can translate into opportunities generated by the growing demand for animal sourced foods fails to benefit the farmers.

This is blamed on lack of quality data on the livestock sector in the continent yet cattle play a key role in poverty reduction.

"The aim of this project is to improve the quality of data collection and analysis as well as evaluation of tools to enhance the role livestock plays in the continent," said Dr Ibrahim Ahmed, Director of Africa Bureau of Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) during the launch of livestock data innovation project in Africa.

Ahmed noted that the project is set to support African governments and regional organisations to identify entry points for linking smallholder livestock farmers to potential animal protein markets.

He disclosed that the three-year project would be piloted in Tanzania, Uganda and Niger and will help inform policy makers in developing countries, the private sector investors and local stakeholders on how to support market-driven livelihood opportunities for small scale farmers.

Demand

"Formulating effective livestock sector policies and institutional changes require a flow of information on market conditions and on the constraints to market entry," explained Ahmed.

In sub-Saharan Africa, policies and institutional changes are rarely available hence calling for the investment in

data collection as the basis for supporting policies and investments in Africa.

Ahmed observed that the increase in demand for animal sourced foods are projected to be extraordinarily high in Africa in the coming decades, but left as it is, the production is unlikely to keep the pace with consumption.

"The continent is predicted to become a net importer of animal-sourced foods unless interventions are taken seriously by adopting innovative ideas throughout sub-Saharan Africa," Ahmed warned.

In the developing world, gains in per capita income, rapid population growth and urbanisation have been sustaining major increases in the consumption of livestock products.

In recent decades, consumption of animal sourced foods has increased in Asia and Latin America but it has lagged behind Africa.

In Africa prospects for livestock sector development will differ across agro-ecological zones, countries and in geographic areas within countries.

However, Africa is gradually waking up, given that in 2010 and 2011 the continent recorded Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates of 4.6 and 2.7 per cent respectively, signs that it is improving.

The fact that Africa's population is set to increase to over 1.5 billion in 2030, up from 1 billion in 2010, the situation calls for a change of gears in the way the livestock industry is to be developed.

In the coming years, African livestock markets hold the potential to generate major business opportunities for livestock producers. However, producers will find it difficult to satisfy the demand of the increasing population.

During this period, Africa is expected to increasingly become a net importer of livestock products and this gap will be filled by imports from foreign countries.

In Africa, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is still leading in milk market in the continent while Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries remain the largest poultry producers.

Beef potential

Southern, northern and eastern Africa hold the potential for beef market in the continent in the coming decades and will provide major business opportunities for beef producers since the regions each account for about one quarter of the African beef market.

"Central and eastern Africa as well as Egypt are projected to be the largest mutton markets in Africa and are capable of producing almost 70 per cent of additional demand for lamb and goats," Ahmed noted.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) indicates that African producers will be increasingly challenged to respond to the growing demand and will be forced to increase imports to meet the local demand of livestock products.

"With the exception of eastern Africa, all regions are expected to have increased imports of the livestock products in the coming decades," says Dr Nancy Morgan, FAO's agricultural economist.

She observed that the region is expected to maintain a positive trade balance for beef, mutton, pork and eggs.

Opportunities

Morgan said despite the handicaps, Africa remains the only continent with opportunities for investment in its animal sourced food markets than other regions of the world.

Morgan noted that over the period 2005-2050, milk, beef and poultry will be the dominant livestock growth markets in Africa, with beef and milk presenting the largest business opportunities in value, followed by poultry



From top: A boy grazing cattle at Kabarak Farm in Laikipia East District. Maasai livestock traders driving their cattle to the local market in Basil Kajiado County.

Pictures: Paul Mwaniki and Duncan Mboyah

and mutton.

"This is a wake up call that is set to re-introduce the potential of Africa within Africa and to the whole world given that the sector has been neglected for many years," said Prof Abdi Guliye, Associate professor of Animal Nutrition at Egerton University.

Guliye noted that neglect of northern Kenya, that produces the highest number of livestock in the country, is a drawback to the economy.

"Whereas Ethiopia and other regional countries benefit from the livestock sector through exports to the Middle East, Kenya is yet to realise the potential of the sector and continues to concentrate on crop agriculture only," Guliye noted.

This development could help change the economies of counties, especially those that rely on livestock as their main source of income. The semi-arid and arid lands are known for their nomadic lifestyle where they move with their animals in search of pasture and water. Although they export meat and skin to Saudi Arabia, an improved system could see them widen their market for meat products.

Poultry, keeping, which does not require much space is also picking up and especially as people are trying to change their lifestyle of feeding on white meat for health reasons. This could also improve economies where

commercial poultry is being practiced and also improve food security.

Differences in the paths of market growth for regions and countries offer significant opportunities for inter and intra regional trade within the continent.

Differences

Formulating effective livestock sector policies and institutional changes requires a flow of information on market conditions and on constraints to productivity and market entry which are rarely available.

Investment in data collection, data collection systems and analytical capacities in the region are a critical foundation to sector development and should be given adequate priority when formulating livestock sector policy and institutional reforms.

Beef and milk are, and will continue to be, the largest markets by value for animal proteins at \$46.6 billion and \$43.5 billion by 2050.

The four-year project funded by Bill and Melinda Gates will be helpful in creating awareness and also help avail important data for investment in the sector.

AU-IBAR is also expected to produce a resource book to help inform decision-making within ministries of agriculture in regard to livestock development in the continent.

Girl child education still a major challenge

By **SHABAN RAWLINGS**

The Government's efforts to champion the education of the girl child still face a big challenge from the communities in Luhya land.

Prof Missia Kadenyi of Maasai Mara University said many girls among the Luhya community were still denied education despite the government's call for education for all.

Speaking during the inspection of Maasai Mara University branch in Mumias, Kadenyi noted that women in the Western part of Kenya were only

heard when they are called upon to offer prayers before meals and meetings.

"Elsewhere, they are demoralised and denied education from their childhood level where priority is given to boys," noted the dean of the faculty of education at the university.

She said the transition rate of girls from primary to high school and university was still low despite policies on equality in education.

Maasai Mara University, formerly Narok University College, has partnered with the e-Smart college to offer degree courses at the Mumias branch

housed at MOCO offices.

The college's dean of arts and social sciences, Prof Tabitha Sewe, lamented at the misery of girl child saying in spite of campaigns to empower the girl-child, there still exist disparities between the two genders.

"What our society needs to understand is that when you educate a girl, you are educating the whole world and when you educate a boy, you educate an individual," she said.

She asked girls who have completed Form Four to pursue further education despite the grade they attained at

O' levels.

"You can register for a certificate course and thereafter advance to diploma. Gradually, you will find yourself holding a degree without going through the Joint Admission Board (JAB) program," said Sewe.

She asked the Luhya community to give education more priority by registering at the available academic centers.

"People of Mumias and its surrounding should take advantage of e-Smart which has collaborated with Maasai Mara University and register

in large numbers for higher education courses," said the dean.

E-Smart director, Geoffrey Anyembe, said over 2,000 students had enrolled for management and administration, Human Resource and Business Management courses apart from the educational school-based programs.

"Majority are from the provincial administration that includes the chiefs and police officers," said Anyembe.

He said the college offers 10 per cent discount to children of sugarcane farmers contracted to Mumias Sugar Company.

Why the land question is giving Taita-Taveta Governor nightmares

By **ROBBY NGOJHI**

Even though he has taken office and gotten down to business the governor of Taita-Taveta County is not going to have it easy. He has inherited certain ghosts that are going to give him sleepless nights and major among these is the land question.

Land remains the most explosive issue that Governor John Mruttu and his team are facing in their first 100 days in office.

For one he does not have land to establish the county headquarters. However, the Governor says that plans are underway to purchase a portion of a controversial land in the sisal estates to establish the County headquarters.

Despite this being what he wants, the proposal has been opposed by most residents who say that the land is theirs by right and the County authorities have no right to buy it from the foreigners.

However, to avoid controversy, Mruttu says he will make sure the boundaries are known to the farm owner on the portion where the headquarters is to be built before he moves on to build the offices.

Indeed, the land question in Taita Taveta County has been a thorn in the flesh before and even after independence 50 years ago.

To the locals, the County is better known as "a land of two landlords and 200,000 squatters".

Residents refer to the Kenyatta and Criticos families, who own expansive tracts of land in Mwatate and Taveta as 'two landlords', while the population of Taita Taveta residents which is roughly 284,000 people is referred to as '200,000 squatters'.

Manage

For years, residents of Mwatate have been at logger heads with the management of Teita Sisal Estate, following claims that the sisal farm has encroached on most of the community land.

The sisal farm, which is reputed to be one of the largest in East and Central Africa, is under management of investors of Greek origin who are known as the Kyriazi family.

According to Mnjala Mwaluma, Secretary General of Mwasima Mbuwa Welfare Association, a local lobby organisation which is advocating for land rights in the County, management of the sisal investment report-

edly "grabbed expansive portions belonging to the local community at Singila-Majengo area and forcefully evacuate area residents".

"Initially the farm stood at 33,000 acres but they have further grabbed our community land and we now live as squatters on our own land," says Mwaluma, while addressing hundreds of residents in Mwatate town. He explains: "They have also pushed further and grabbed parts of road and railway reserve corridors."

Mnjala recalls that two decades ago the sisal management stormed Singila and Majengo villages with six bulldozers and destroyed residents' properties including houses, graves and crops in the farms.

According to Mwaluma several herds of livestock including cattle, sheep and goats disappeared.

"They did not even have respect for the dead and went ahead to exhume the remains of our forefathers who were buried there. What we do not understand up to date is who sent them and why?" he poses.

Dispute

The residents allege that management of the sisal farm has also been blocking residents from carrying out any activity within the disputed land.

"If the security guards of these farms find you grazing animals within this portion they will detain the animals on trespass claims. They do not allow us even to collect firewood from that area," says a 70-year-old woman who resides in Singila.

The elderly woman, who refers to the Greeks as "Magirigi", says she was once arrested by police after her goats were found grazing within the controversial land.

"This is our ancestral land but we live as if we were invited by these foreigners. The Greeks grabbed our own land and now they cannot allow us to use it. Grazing is a problem and so is collecting firewood," says the old woman. She ponders: "We wonder where the Government is as we are left at the mercy of these foreigners. How could it allow the Greeks to come and grab our land? Where will the next generations stay? Is it possible for any one of us to go and grab land in Greece?"

According to Mnjala the farm's management is in a serious conflict with residents. "No one including school going children is al-



A child sitting on a grave. Residents at Singila Majengo are now being forced to bury their loved ones next to their door steps as a result of the encroachment on community land.

Picture: Robby Ngjhi

lowed to use the route that cuts through the sisal estate even though we know very well that the section falls under our community land."

He accused provincial administration led by area Chief Samuel Mwanga of colluding with officials of the said farm to intimidate area residents.

When contacted, the chief denied the allegations saying he was not biased and was doing his work.

Mnjala says a police post, which is inside the Teita Sisal Estate within Mwatate Constituency should be shifted to Mwatate town.

"We want the police post removed from the sisal farm because it is a public property aimed at serving the interests of everyone," says Mnjala.

He notes that the residents through Mwasima Mbuwa have filed a case in court and staged several demonstrations in seeking justice but their efforts have all been in vain.

Injustice

In relation to this, leaders among them former Wundanyi MPs Mashengu wa Mwachofi and Mwandawiro Mghanga argue that all the land under the sisal estates was acquired illegally and said the leases should be revoked to allow the National Land Commission to address the land injustices.

Mwatate ward Member of County Assembly, who is also former Taita Taveta County

Council chairman Erasmus Mwarabu, describes the issue of land in Taita Taveta as a legacy of historical land injustices dated back to the colonial era.

Mwarabu says the county covers an area of 17,128.3 square kilometres most of which was grabbed by the colonial government. It carved out some 10,000 square kilometres (62 per cent of the county) and converted it into a national park.

He says the Queen of England gave out the remaining land to British soldiers who participated in the battle between the Germans and the British during the Second World War as war as an appreciation in Taveta, Mwatate and Voi.

These farms were later converted into the current sisal farms thereby continuing to worsen the issue of landlessness in the county.

"In Mwatate, a Major Lezen was given over 40,000 acres. He used the land to hunt wild animals such as rhinos, elephants and the big cats for game trophies. This merciless grabbing left score of locals displaced and forced to live like squatters," says Mwarabu.

However, later in the 1950s, a local freedom fighter, Mengo Woresha, led an uprising that saw Major Lezen relinquish some of the land he had acquired and settle on 33,000 acres where the Teita Sisal Estate sits.

He claims that the management of the sisal farm has been extending its boundaries and it now occupies over 80,000 acres.

Repossession of grabbed public land: the big monster in Uasin Gishu county

By **WILSON ROTICH**

The Governor for Uasin Gishu County has begun his work with a bigger in-tray full of enormous responsibilities. Top in the list is the repossession of grabbed public land. The other remaining stumps include corruption and tax evasion.

While addressing journalists in his office, Jackson Mandago said he had toured Kapsoya residential Estate to get a glimpse of the situation on the ground. He said some affected residents had written to him while others had visited his office complaining that most of the public land in the estate had gone to the wrong hands.

He said his fact finding mission found out that public land that was meant for schools, health centers, cattle dips, recreational fields and even abattoirs had been illegally allocated to private developers.

"I am giving notice to those who are in illegal possession of public land

to surrender to my office immediately. If they do not hearken to this call then we shall repossess the land forcefully and will destroy the structures in them and all the demolition costs will be billed at the respective illegal land owners," he revealed.

Roads

The Governor said he was proud that Kapsoya Estate was one of the best-planned residential areas in Eldoret town. He emphasised that he would do everything possible to restore the original plan and reputation of the estate.

Mandago who is a former Teachers Service Commission information communication expert said that his County Assembly in partnership with the Rural Roads Board has allocated substantial amounts of money to improve the road network in the estate. He said with such efforts in place, he would not tolerate land grabbing to muzzle development.

"It would not make economic sense to construct modern roads that lead to slums. I would not allow structures that contravene the physical plan to be put up in the estate," he said.

He noted that apart from restoring integrity in the county, he would not like to see an emergence of slums and informal settlements in Eldoret town. The governor said if left to mushroom, slums would derail the gains already made in positioning the town as a hub for farming and tourism especially following the frequent global success of athletes from the region.

The governor said he would like to see the genuine developers who bought land in the estate to reap the benefits of their investment to full fruition.

"I will liaise with the town physical planners and engineers to ensure the other residential estates in the town are alive to the original physical plan and that all grabbed public land is retrieved."

Mandago has also put on notice all those public officers who might have participated in the illegal allocation of public land to individuals that they would be investigated and if found culpable would be sacked and prosecuted. He said already he had interdicted two revenue collection officers who participated in corruption.

Original plan

The Eldoret Municipality engineer and the physical planners were among the entourage that accompanied the Governor to Kapsoya estate. However, some residents do believe that the original physical plan of the estate has been tampered with. They do complain that it is not only the public land that has been snatched, but there are several cases of land belonging to individuals that have changed hands illegally.

Bernard Kemboi is among the victims who are at the brink of losing his land in Kapsoya estate. He said that

he is in the process of recovering his plot which had been reallocated to another private developer.

"I had bought the piece of land through the right procedure and I have all the documents of transaction. But I was surprised to learn that somebody else was in the process of putting up a structure in my property. I have registered my grievance with the local criminal investigation officers to follow up the matter."

As the county government is rapidly taking shape, land ownership may initially take some ethnic overtones as some are already questioning why people from other counties are busy putting up decent structures in their strong holds. However the 2010, Constitution accords every Kenyan the right to own land in any part of the country.

The bigger assignment for the county governors is to correct the vice of land grabbing without degenerating into ethnic cocoons.

The untold story of women's voice in the Tana River Clashes

By **ROBERT NYAGAH**

At the height of the Tana Delta violence which left over 100 people dead when the Pokomos and the Ormas clashed, some daring women stepped in to promote peace and dialogue between the warring communities.

Tana River women leader, Doris Godhana, whose Sauti Ya Wanawake (Voice of the Women) organisation, says dialogue and village monitoring conflict committee mainly made of volunteer women helped to forestall the spread of conflict and bloodshed during the clashes over six months ago.

Godhana's organisation has been fighting for the rights of women and girls since 2002, and had launched campaigns for women rights after realising that women were being neglected.

"When fighting started, we founded peace committees from village to district level, all which brought all stakeholders and workers through volunteers from the Pokomo and the Wardei communities to monitor foreigners from the Tana Delta and ensure that the conflicts, which caused the blood bath, were not imported to the District," says Godhana.

Looking back, the women leader is proud that they gave dialogue between the Wardei and the Pokomo- the two predominant communities in the Tana River a chance and succeeded.

The two neighbours have a history of conflict over grazing ground and access to the waters of Tana River especially for livestock.

Consolidated

Admitting that the training workshop offered much guidance on issues of peace building, Godhana says that what become even more consolidated from her earlier skill is the need for stakeholders at conflict prone areas to first identify the cause of conflict and build team work to handle issues of such conflict.

She admitted that although in the past her group held successful forums to build peace; she had learned that more partnership needed to be built between all stakeholders and especially the youth who are mostly used to promote violence.

"I now know that if I wish to promote peace, it is important to involve all stakeholders including Non Governmental Organizations, community based organisations and even the media," said Godhana.

She says that organisations from outside conflict areas are able to pro-

vide guidance on how to deal with conflict without bias hence the need to include them in peace building efforts.

The women leader admitted that research and survey had revealed that whenever conflict arose, it was women and children who suffered most.

"The women and children may not be attacked, but during conflicts they become easy targets of gender based violence including defilement, rape, forced marriages and displacement to unfriendly and unhealthy environments where trauma and suffering at times become overwhelming."

International Rescue Committee (IRC) conflict is an organisation that is keen to ensure that women in conflict-prone areas in Kenya were fully enlightened on peace-building skills right from the homestead to community level irrespective of what drawbacks hindered their campaigns to fight against conflict and violence.

Manuals

The IRC has generated training manuals for various beneficiaries and each trained group was expected to spread the skills to target groups.

IRC worked closely with COVAW which was mobilizing community activists in conflict hot spots to identify the causes of conflict and come up with strategies to reduce and eliminate violence altogether by use of simplified means of dialogue suitable for each given area.

Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) focuses on the particular risks that female face in conflict and the specific contributions that women and girls can make in the promotion of a peaceful society.

One such program fostered a protective and peaceful environment before and during the 2013 Kenya elections. The program continues to work with communities through existing local and national networks to respond to and prevent conflict. Community leaders are trained to disseminate information and messages on key topics including the election process, conflict mitigation and gender-based violence.

Hot spots

The conflict specialist explained that the seven organisations operated under the PIK project in 18 counties considered to be hot spots based on what happened in 2007-8 during the post-election violence and each organisation played a role to play in



Participants at a peace building training workshop organized by the Coalition on Violence Against Women Kenya (COVAW) on Gender Based Violence and peace building in Coast region at Coral Key Beach Resort in Malindi. This was after a three day training workshop under Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) and USAID sponsorship. Picture: Robert Nyagah

promoting peace and fighting violence under a 14-month program set to end in September 2013.

The organizations included Sauti Ya Wanawake, Federation of Women Lawyers of Kenya (FIDA-Kenya), COVAW, the Rural Women Peace International (North Rift) Peace Net, AWC, Well Told Story and USAID.

She said that although the program initially targeted the General elections, a wide range of awareness on the need to avoid conflict and violence has been achieved through several peace platform forums in Tana River and Kilifi Counties.

The training programs, she says,

promoted a unified approach by all stakeholders to dialogue and exchange ideas on ways and means to build peace first by identifying causes of conflict, deal with indicators in a bid to forestall violence.

Notable successes were reported in Mt Elgon conflict which was forestalled through skills impacted on various groups in the region where women groups were trained to identify causes of conflict and fight to forestall violence through dialogue and whistle-blowing.

The specialists noted that since the program started there has been many success cases with gender based vio-

lence cases showing a downward trend in many parts of Kenya where cases were on the rise.

Women, she said had also learnt how to work with health experts to deal with reproduction issues emanating from Gender based violence where issues of health and the law become incorporated in campaigns to ensure that suspects were arrested and charged in court.

But perhaps the most successful section of the training, according to the conflict specialist, is the ease at which the special power posters and question or message cards have been received and adopted.