

Unfiltered, uninhibited... just the gruesome truth

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# Reject

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# Conjugal rights denied

## Politics at play as married internally displaced persons tell of untold suffering

By ROBERT WANJALA

Delays in resettling Mau Forest evictees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have continued to expose the displaced families to serious harsh camp conditions without proper sanitation, health facilities and clean water and with now the married couples breaking silence over their conjugal rights deprivation.

### Battle

Gladys\* and Gideon Misoï\* have had to endure the cruel camp life battling with unsatisfied sexual desires toward each other. The Misoïs and their four grown up children admit that like the rest of the displaced families, their marriage has had many trying moments at times to the point of breaking.

Married for two decades now, the couple's camp life has forced them to implement unconventional ways when desiring to fulfil their matrimonial obligations. "With grown up children in the tiny tent, we are forced to do it away in the nearby shrubs. Sometimes I have had to fake impromptu 'travels' and in which I take my wife with me. The 'trip' is always to get away somewhere and lodge ourselves for a few concentrating hours," says Misoï.

With a tinge of shame on his face, Misoï says that this is not always the case considering that they are in camps where very limited resources are found for sustaining such 'arrangements'.

He admits though that it is always overwhelming to fight back the temptation to cheat on one's partner especially after staying for long without sexual fulfilment.

Misoï says: "It is only that you do not know who is safe and who is not

because a majority are still reluctant to go for an HIV test. However, immorality is still inevitable because of the environment we are living in."

The subject of intimacy is sacred in the small tents that house the evictees yet beneath these tattered canvases, parents pretend all is well to save their family breakage and prevent children from sexual escapades early as result see witnessing it through parents.

Like Misoï, displaced families found themselves in their present predicament following evictions from land at the height of post election violence, Mau, Kipkurere and Embobut forests.

For instance, forest evictions which were aimed at helping reclaim Kenya's largest water tower became a political battle ground pitting the Rift Valley leaders against Prime Minister Raila Odinga and the environmentalists.

The Mau conservation and its political struggle set in new challenges including jeopardising marital status for the couples especially those with grown up children under small makeshift tents.

### Reconciliation

Peace and reconciliation in the region continues to suffer following the resettlement stalemate and the political dimension the process had taken.

*"It is only that you do not know who is safe and who is not because a majority are still reluctant to go for an HIV test. However, immorality is still inevitable because of the environment we are living in."*



According to Nancy Koech, programme coordinator, Mercy Corps, one of peace and reconciliation actors in Rift Valley, the delays will deny the evictees their constitutional and democratic right to participate in coming polls.

"Resettling all evictees and IDPs is among the underlying issues of peace and reconciliation. Sorting out this issue will foster peace and enable the displaced families integrate ahead of the next polls," Koech observes.

She adds that while peace is not only in the absence war, the government should hasten the process of resettlement to allow evictees settle in their homes and engage in income generating activities because eco-



From top: Julius Mukhwana, assistant chief, Kinyoro Division Trans Nzoia west addresses internally displaced people in Teldet camp in Trans Nzoia County. Mary Nangila with her child stand next to their house at Teldet IDP camp. Pictures: Robert Wanjala

nomic disparities is another potential source of conflict.

"It will be justice to them if the Government meets their expectations by

fulfilling its promise of resettling them before next election," Koech observes.

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# Miracle shrub turns out to be liquid green gold

By TITUS MAERO

In Baringo and Mombasa counties the tree is an ordinary shrub to which nobody pays any attention to its value.

However, just a few kilometres away out of the Rift Valley into Western Province, the Moringa tree has become the green gold for farmers in Vihiga County. Raw powder extracted from the dry leaves of the tree earns a farmer KSh1,000 per kilogramme in the local market.

The tree has become so valuable that farmers in Vihiga now call it the miracle crop. John Hamisi sought to give farmers a new source of income when he first introduced the wonder tree in Vihiga County, which is said to have originated from Japan because of its name.

## Value

Hamisi, who formerly worked as an accountant learned about the economic value of Moringa through his association with ICRAF's agro-forest scientists and decided to introduce it to his people.

According to Hamisi, Moringa tree has many economic uses making it a very unique plant in the area. He buys powder from farmers at KSh1,000 per kilogramme and uses it to make several medicinal and beauty products at his small processing plant at Gambogi, a few kilometres from Kisumu city.

According to Walter Musoga, an Agricultural Extension Officer in Vihiga Division, the tree's seeds could have been blown to the Kenyan coast by strong sea waves from the Far East and probably taken by wind or birds to Baringo County.

"Moringa is a miracle crop to local farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture has teamed up with Hamisi to popularise its growth in Vihiga County," says Musoga.

Musoga and Hamisi took reporters to the home of Zephania Ombudu, a 66-year old retired manager with Mea Agro Company Limited where they showed them the tree which the farmer had intercropped with maize and groundnuts.

## Profit

Ombudu, a farmer at Jepakoyi Division in Tigoi sub-location says: "The plant was first introduced in the area in 2001 and now earns him KSh10,000 per month."

According to Hamisi, the tree can be grown from its stems or seeds and it does well in sandy and loamy soils that is abundantly found in the area.

"The tree which grows from seeds was more preferred and takes about eight months to mature," he explains.

When the tree has matured, farmers pluck



its green leaves and dry them indoors and sell to Hamisi at KSh1,000 per kilogramme after pounding it into powder.

"The Moringa is becoming popular because of its economic value," notes Hamisi who is he planning to consult Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and ICRAF to raise high yielding seedlings to give to farmers in Vihiga and the neighbouring counties.

Once he has received enough raw material, Hamisi plans to look for funds from donors and financial institutions to start a fully fledged processing plant to process enough products for local and international markets.

## Procedure

During a visit to his home where he showed reporters how the leaves and seeds are dried, his wife demonstrated how leaves of the Moringa tree can be used by frying it with onions, tomatoes and an egg.

According to Hamisi, who has produced a lot of literature on Moringa tree, the plant has high nutritional value and can be used to manage stubborn diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, arthritis, ulcers, malaria and anaemia among others.

He says the tree can also be used to reduce cholesterol in the body as well as strengthen immune system and energize the body to make people active.

Hamisi is now planning to exhibit his products during the forthcoming field day at the Kakamega KARI Centre to popularise the tree in Western Kenya.

"The farmer's innovativeness and entrepreneurship is a clear indication on how youth can



From top: Ministry of Agriculture Vihiga Division Extension Officer Walter Musoga (Right) and Zepha Ombudu a farmer observing the Moringa tree at his farm. Packed powder made from Moringa tree.

Pictures: Titus Maero

harness local raw material to create employment and generate income as well as new products for the country," says Musoga.

The health sector is one of the key components that appeals to the equity and social-economic agenda emphasised in the social pillar of the Vision 2030. Musoga notes that the development blue print builds on the achievements of the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and employment Creation (ERS).

"The Government also recognises the role of the private sector in improving the delivery of health services in partnership with the public sector," he says.

Musoga observes that fostering partnership in the health sector has been one of the goals of health reforms.

# Fight against tax evasion taken a notch higher

By BEN OROKO

Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has launched a Public Private Partnership (PPP) programme with local authorities in the Kisii County, to fight tax evasion among members of the business community through a project dubbed Business Advocacy Fund (BAF) 2012 project.

According to the KNCCI Executive Officer, Nyanza Chapter Ben Kitoto, the project is meant to facilitate a working partnership between the organisation and local authorities to address challenges faced by the authorities in revenue and tax collection from the business

community and other stakeholders.

Speaking in Kisii town during a one day consultative workshop on the BAF project, Kitoto who was accompanied by KNCCI Kisii County Chairman Benjamin Onkoba and the BAF/KNCCI 2012 project consultant Otieno Churchill underscored the importance of having a binding document between KNCCI and local authorities as part of the efforts to attract investments at county levels.

"The project is meant to put in place and harmonised Memorandum of Understanding, a document that will bind the KNCCI and local authorities to work as partners for the best inter-

ests of the business community," clarified Kitoto.

Otieno noted that the project was out of a bilateral agreement signed between the Government of Kenya and the Royal Embassy of Denmark for the purpose of empowering business membership organizations.

He said the project which focuses on single business permit programmes was a replica of the successful ones in Kisumu City Council and County Council of Kisumu where tax and rate collections have been harmonised through consensus between the business community and the local authorities.

## Benefits

"The benefits of the project are enormous and if well implemented the conflicts and chaos pitting local authorities against business community members will be a thing of the past," explained Otieno.

On the other hand, Onkoba welcomed the project saying it will be a godsend opportunity for investors in Kisii County where there was untapped investment potentials which need exploitation to enhance socio-economic development in the county.

"The project will harmonise the relationship between the local authorities and the business community members to enhance investment and socio-economic development in the County which he said was economically endowed," says Onkoba

# Dispensary offers relief to expectant mothers

By DAVID KIMANI

More than five villages in Naivasha Constituency will benefit from new services which will be offered by one dispensary in the area.

This is after Naivasha Rotary Club funded the construction of a maternity ward at Nyamathi Dispensary at a cost of more than KSh15 million. The ward can hold about ten patients.

Speaking during the ground breaking ceremony, Naivasha Rotary Club president Sylvia Kipketich termed the project as a relief to expectant mothers around the area because they will no longer visit Naivasha District Hospital which is 17 kilometres away for delivery.

"Most women around this area have been facing a great challenge when it comes to delivery since they have to travel to Naivasha District Hospital," said Kipketich.

She added: "The distance is quite long yet the district hospital is nearest. This has in turn led to an increase in the number of home deliveries which are risky to both the mother and the child."

She said that the club will also drill a borehole at the facility and later on a secondary school as a way of eradicating illiteracy and improvement of sanitation in

the area.

"Our major goal as a club are eradication of illiteracy and improvement of both sanitation and health care," noted Kipketich.

She also said that the current dispensary will be upgraded to a health centre complete with a men's ward to fully cater for the health requirements of all residents.

## Improvement

Speaking at the same function, Naivasha District Public Health Officer Samuel King'ori promised support the institution by providing health workers to the facility upon its completion.

He called on locals to make maximum use of it as a way of eradicating deaths and complications that result from deliveries that are made at home.

"The facility will considerably reduce the deaths and complications that come with lack of medical attention during delivery. In case of complications during delivery, patients will be referred to Naivasha District Hospital," noted King'ori.

He termed the construction of the dispensary as a step ahead towards curbing deaths caused by road accidents along the Nairobi-Nakuru highway.

He said that in case of accidents the health centre will administer first aid to critical casualties before referring them to the Naivasha District Hospital while it attends to less serious ones.

"The facility is at vantage point near the highway's major black spots like Kinungi and Karai where many lives have been lost through road accidents. Sadly, most deaths could be averted if a health facility like this could accommodate accident victims by administering first aid before referring them to Naivasha," reiterated King'ori.

"We have casualties from Limuru to Naivasha since there is no other near health facility than Naivasha that can take care of accident victims. Consequently, many lives have been lost en route to Naivasha District Hospital which is quite far," said King'ori. He added: "With the completion of this facility, things will change."



*"The project is meant to facilitate a working partnership between the organisation and local authorities to address challenges faced by the authorities in revenue and tax collection from the business community and other stakeholders."*

— Ben Kitoto, KNCCI Executive Officer, Nyanza Chapter

# Coal project generates more opposition than acceptance

By MWERI MAYENGE

Politics and lack of correct information on the effects of coal energy is threatening the construction of a coal-fired electricity generating plant in Kilifi County.

Speaking to the press in a Kilifi shortly after releasing a ten-month programme to be used before putting up of the plant, chief geologist in the Ministry of Energy John Omenge said that the Government had pinpointed generating power from coal as one of the flagship projects towards attaining Vision 2030 but politics has hit the project.

## Target

According to Omenge the ministry is targeting to produce at least 2,650 megawatts by 2023.

"The installed power generation capacity is currently at 1,500 megawatts which is against a suppressed peak demand of about 1,300 megawatts," said Omenge. He explained: "The small difference between power supply and power demand means the reserve margin is inadequate and that there is insufficient extra power to drive economic growth."

He said due to the small margin the Government has been working on ways to boost energy capacity through other means not previously used in the country.

"The Government has so far discovered coal in Kitui and is working to put up a coal fired electricity generating plant in Ukambani area," he said.

Residents of the area are said to have resisted any plans to have the plant built in a different area.

According to Omenge, the Government has been carrying out studies in various areas of Coast Province in search of the product and hinted that there could be deposits of coal along the poverty stricken Ganze area.

The Ministry of Energy has released a programme aimed at looking for workable means to forge ahead with the stalemate of the proposed

plant in Kilifi County.

After releasing the programme, Omenge asked leaders and residents of Kilifi County to support the Government's move to boost the country's energy capacity by supporting the controversial coal fired electricity generating plant proposed to be set up in Zowerani Village, Kilifi District.

"I know the people of Zowerani feel left behind in the implementation of the project but all is not lost. As a ministry, we have gone to the drawing board and seen where we went wrong," observed Omenge. He explained: "I believe the people of Zowerani will sit with the Government and have a fruitful dialogue because they will be the immediate beneficiaries of the project."

In the first phase of the project, the plant is expected to produce 300 megawatts and another 300 megawatts in the second phase.

The ministry has said that over 3,000 jobs will be created when the plant starts its operations.

## Opportunity

"Many businesses will spring up around the area and we expect a business boom to the locals as those working in the area will need houses to reside in and places to eat," observed Omenge adding "this is an investment opportunity to the locals".

He said that the Government had established that the region is the most ideal for the setting up of the project because the area does not require much drenching to increase the depth.

He pointed out that the Government will compensate every person who has been living on the land to be used for the plant.

***The Government should stop harassing us over our land which we are not ready to sell and nobody is going to evict us from this area"***

— Jackson Dadu



Residents of Zowerani village in Kilifi County demonstrate against the setting up of a coal plant in the area. Below: Nominated councillor Safari Kilumo arguing with Kilifi OCS Peter Maina when the police tried to thwart the demonstration. They were however allowed to continue. Pictures: Mweri Mayenge

The plant shall be used

to generate electricity from coal imported from South Africa and not the one from the Mui Basin in Kitui hence the need to put up the plant adjacent to the ocean.

According to the implementation programme, the Government has set two weeks for the discussion and awareness creation with the local community which is currently ongoing.

After the discussions are concluded, the Government will be expected to conduct an environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) for approval by the National Environmental Management Authority which is scheduled to take three months.

The Government will then develop the resettlement action plan (RAP) according to the relevant Kenyan laws and the World Bank standards parallel to ESIA.

The environmental licensing and

RAP approval shall take one month followed by the implementation of RAP. The construction is expected to start six months later.

The residents have vowed not to let the Government take the 330 acres of land to put up the plant.

They claimed that they were exasperated by the Government and their leaders for failing to consult them during the initiation of the project.

They further blamed area councillor Gambo Mwambeni for failing to present their grievances to the authorities when they first raised the alarm.

However, Mwambeni defended himself and claimed that the Government had not consulted him at any point. He said he learnt of the plan to put up the plant from the residents.

"The Government should stop harassing us over our land which we are not ready to sell and nobody is going to evict us from this area," said Jackson Dadu, chairman Tezo-Ngerenya Residents' Association.

They also raised concern over the people living at 500 meters radius of the buffer zone claiming that the Government did not expound on their fate.

# Smokers in Embu continue to flaunt the Tobacco Act

By ALLAN MURIMI

Embu residents are blaming poor implementation of the Tobacco Act for breaking of smoking rules.

According to Martin Fundi, smoking in public many towns across the country is not allowed and he wondered why it is permitted in Embu.

He said smoking in the streets is common adding that some people smoke even in government department compounds.

"We are used to having smokers in the town and they do it with impunity because they are never arrested. People who flout the law in other towns are being arrested but in Embu we are forever exposed to the smoke," said Fundi.

The provincial administration says the Embu Municipal Council has not designated smoking zones to protect non-smokers from passive smoking. On the other hand the Municipal Council says there is no format for implementation.

Acting Embu West District Commissioner Daniel Obudo said the Tobacco Act of 2007 cannot be enacted because the council has not provided smokers with areas where they can smoke.

Speaking to the Reject, Obudo said the implementation of the law is being hindered by the lack of the zones.

"The municipal and county councils should come up with smoking zones to protect non-smokers from secondary smoke. No one has ever

been arrested in the town for smoking in public places," noted Obudo.

However, Embu Town Mayor Peter Murithi said the council had designated smoking zones but the smokers failed to utilise them.

He said that the council askaris cannot go arresting smokers adding that the implementation of the Act is difficult.

"Will the askaris go to collect money in the market or chase after smokers? The government should set a format for implementation," said Murithi.

Area public health officer Peris Nyaga said the department is formulating ways to facilitate implementation of the law.

"We have not started implement-

ing the act here but we are planning to execute it to protect non-smokers from secondary smoke," said Nyaga.

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

They say smoking is being treated like a healthy habit and called for the smokers to be arrested.

According to Gloria Njoki, the town has been left behind in implementing the act years after it was formulated.

"There is no one who is helping us avoid secondary smoking and smokers should feel ashamed of the vice and not treat it with pride as has been

seen on televisions," said Njoki.

She said there are no designated smoking areas adding that smokers should be quarantined like animals with contaminable diseases.

"Members of the public should be made aware of the dangers of secondary smoking to help in the enforcement of smoking law," noted Njoki.

Under Section 32 of the act, Kenyans have the right to protection from exposure to second-hand smoke while Section 33 prohibits smoking in public places apart from designated smoking areas.

Involuntarily exposing non-smokers to tobacco smoke is an offence stipulated under the Tobacco Control Act 2007.

# Squatters yet to be resettled 23 years after eviction

By PAUL MWANIKI

The Government's plan to resettle squatters' who were evicted from Mt Kenya Forest over a decade ago are yet to benefit the whole population of people who remain landless.

After over 15,000 families were settled at the Solio Settlement Scheme, thousands others were left behind and continue to wait in hope that the Government will settle them.

These are the families that decided to continue rolling the wheel of life after they were evicted. According to their chairman, these squatters were evicted between 1989 and 1993 and settled at Kwa Mbuzi open ground in Nanyuki. However, they were evicted again from here as the grounds was said to belong to the Kenya Army and was occasionally used for training.

They moved to various towns that include Nanyuki, Narumoro and Timau among other towns in Mt Kenya region where they rented houses and started doing menial jobs to cater for their families.

## Isolated

The 3,600 squatters claim to have been evicted from forests west of Mt Kenya that include Kahurura, Gathiuru and Ontulili. They were never considered during the resettlement of their colleagues in the 15,000 acre Solio Settlement Scheme in Laikipia County which had been bought by the Government for that purpose. Those in Solio were settled in 2008 and 2009 this was after they were evicted from Ndathi, Wote, Kabaru, Chehe, Kian-dongoro, Thuti among other areas and they went and settled along the roads leading to the forests making makeshift houses into small villages. Speaking during a recent peaceful demonstration at the Laikipia East District Commissioner's office, the group's chairman Samuel Wachira noted that their efforts to seek audience with Lands Minister James Orengo have been in vain as they are always referred to junior staff at the ministry where their pleas have never been addressed.

## Dismissed

"We have on several occasion visited the offices but we are kept on the bench waiting and later dismissed with letters that never materialise," said Wachira.

The squatters note that since they were not in such villages the Government sidelined them since they were only settling those who looked desperate in the villages and on the roadsides. The group comprises elderly men and women and children, some too young to comprehend what their parents have gone through over the years. The group camped at the DC's gate for hours singing songs that expressed their suffering at the hands of the Government.

Benon Macharia, 54, who was



Administration Police chief in Laikipia East John Tarus addressing squatters who claim to have been evicted from Mt Kenya West Forest after Shamba system was abolished. Below: The squatters participate in a peaceful demonstration outside the Laikipia East District Commissioner's Office. Pictures: Paul Mwaniki

evicted from Kahurura Forest, moved with his family of six to Ichuga in the outskirts of Nanyuki town where he rented a house.

He noted that it has been a nightmare feeding and educating his big family and some of his children never made it to secondary school for lack of fees.

"Most of us were farmers in the forest and we had no other way of earning a living. The eviction meant that our source of livelihood was cut short and there was nothing else we could do without land," he says.

Macharia is currently employed at a timber yard where he works as a loader.

"At my age I cannot do anything big as we were evicted even before harvesting our crops leaving us with no capital to rebuild our lives outside the forest," laments Macharia.

## Optimistic

The families evicted from Kahurura Forest are optimistic that their current Member of Parliament, Mwangi Kiunjuri, who was also a victim of the evictions will address their plight.

According to Macharia, the Laikipia East MP's family was among those evicted from Kahurura and settled on the outskirts of the forest.

"We were very happy when Kiun-

juri was elected as MP and thought that with him in Government we had someone who would represent our interests," said the elderly man.

However, that was not to be and they have continued seeking recognition as evictees of the forestland.

## Hopes

When word spread that the Government was purchasing land at the then Solio Ranch for settling the squatters evicted from Mt Kenya, the hopes of these families were raised and they were confident that soon they will no longer pay rent.

However, they were not beneficiaries and as those who received land from the Government are families who had been living in deplorable conditions in east of Mt Kenya.

After they were evicted the families stayed put along the roadsides heading to the forest and a visit by the first lady Lucy Kibaki in the region triggered the Government to

look for the land to settle them.

The move by the First Lady saw them referred to as "Squatters wa Lucy". They were to benefit as the government gave each family 4.5 acres of land at the Solio Ranch. The ranch has been divided into seven villages, with each family getting half an acre for building a homestead and four acres for tilling.

Mary Wangu from Gathiuru wondered why the Government is so keen in resettling people who were evicted from Mau Forest only three years ago.

"It is very unfortunate that we have been forgotten just because we never constructed makeshift houses outside the forests where we were living," notes Wangu.

She called on the Government to be bold and address their concerns before the next General election.

She said that every time they write to the Ministry of Lands, the reply they get is that they will be settled

with other squatters.

"The problem is that we do not know who the others are or when the resettlement will be done," Wachira laments.

## Ignored

The squatters together noted the settling of internally displaced persons in Laikipia County and wondered why they were being ignored in the process.

"We remain as the genuine squatters in this country who were evicted for the betterment of our natural resources but left to languish in rented houses without a place that our children can call home while our colleagues evicted as a result of a political situation have been resettled within five years," lamented one of the squatters.

As these cries continue to come from these Kenyans, others are still in makeshift villages. A good example are those in Kieni Forest, Gatundu North who have remained at the Aberdare forest.

As politicians continue to criss-cross the country in search of votes these desperate squatters remain with the history of the tough life they have led. The young ones are optimistic of a good life they are not sure of and the unborn a story will be told of the suffering of their parents and grandparents at the hands of a Government that should have given them the right to own land.

*"It is very unfortunate that we have been forgotten just because we never constructed makeshift houses outside the forests where we were living."*

— Mary Wangu.

## Proposed airstrip turned into toilets

By CAXTONE NYANGE

Shortage of toilets at the Pipeline Internally Displaced People Camp in Nakuru has forced post election victims with no alternative but to use the neighbouring proposed site for Nakuru Airstrip as toilet.

"Children go to the airstrip during the day

while adults go at night" said Daniel Njenga, vice chairman of the internally displaced people (IDP) during an interview with journalists at the camp.

Njenga told journalists that only three toilets were functioning out of the seven blocks of 12 in the Camp. He noted that this posed a grave health threat to the community of more than 600 families living in the camp.

"The families living in the camp are not able to dig more toilets due to lack of land and financial constraints," observed Njenga.

He added: "Accessing quality health services remains a big challenge to the IDPs living in the camp as majority of them are jobless and cannot afford to pay for medical expenses."

He thanked the government for putting up

a clinic at the camp which he said was helping a lot despite the fact that it needed more drugs and personnel.

Njenga expressed fears over the outbreak of diseases in the camp if the issue of putting up new toilets is not addressed. He called on well wishers to come to their assistance before the problem gets out of hand.

# Fears of eviction loom high in Kilifi

By YUSUF AMIN

Residents in Kilifi District majority have called on the District Land Control Board through the Ministry of Lands to intervene and solve land problems that are facing them before the General Election.

## Demonstration

The residents, majority of them women, expressed fears that some people have been coming to the area claiming that they owned the land in which they are living.

They appealed to the Ministry of Lands to make haste and investigate these allegations before they are thrown out of the land they are living in.

The residents of Fumbini area in Kilifi town also took to the streets carrying placards blaming the provincial administration of failing to help them fight for their land rights.

"We have no place to go. The Government should consider our demands on time before we get thrown out," the residents said during the demonstration that took almost four hours to reach the Kilifi County Commissioners' offices.

They claimed that their food crops would be lost if they are evicted as that is their major source of livelihood.

In an interview, 77 year old Kauchi Mwaringa lamented that she was confused after being issued with an eviction notice to move from the land where she has been living since she was born.

Kauchi who was being assisted by her granddaughters said she had lived in the land for many years and the demand by an investor stating that he owned the land shocked her.

"I am really surprised by the investor who claims that he owns this land and I ask the Government to come in and address this issue," she said with tears rolling down her face. She said she had nowhere to go if the eviction notice was implemented.

## Eviction letter

Another resident, Daniel Wanje had also been served with an eviction letter from the same land which is about 1,000 acres.

Wanje who has been leaving in the area since 1957 noted that the eviction letter was not genuine.

"The Ministry of Lands officials should visit this place and get proper information about the land so that we can have the problem solved on time," he observed.

According to Florence Sidi, an area resident, the problem started in 2000 when the investor alerted them



Residents holding placards demonstrate after being issued with an eviction notice in Fumbini area in Kilifi County. They allege that people have been coming to the area claiming to own the land they have lived in for years. Pictures: Yusuf Amin



*"I am really surprised by the investor who claims that he owns this land and I ask the Government to come in and address this issue."*

— Kauchi Mwaringa

that the area they were living in was not theirs and they should vacate within 60 days after the eviction notice was issued.

## Development

The eviction notice dated September 25, 2008 indicated that Coast Development Company owned the land and the residents should vacate so the company can develop it.

The letter signed by a Mr John Keen on behalf of the company, asked the residents to remove all

their temporary structures as soon as possible.

Addressing the residents after the demonstration, Kilifi DO One Christopher Siele said that the Government is aware of their problem and they should not fear.

Siele asked them to be patient and use correct ways of demanding for their rights rather than demonstrating in the streets.

They presented their memorandum to the DO One which stated that their land rights have been trodden

upon by people with a lot of money and yet the new Constitution guarantees everyone the right to own land in the country.

The residents also accused the Lands office of not solving their problem despite having informed it about the eviction notice issued to them.

Land problem in Kilifi is rampant and the residents are now calling on the county's top leadership to come in and address the problem without fear.

## Politics at play as married IDP tell of untold suffering

Continued from page 1

Almost six months to the next general election and resettlement exercise for the evictees is far from over with many decrying the Government which is charged with the resettlement responsibilities for violating their constitutional human rights.

Milka Wangari, also a victim of post election violence says life in the camp is hell on earth, literally.

## Desires

"We have lost our men because of unsatisfied sexual desires. Some wandered away from us and we hear they live in town with other women. They either stopped coming home completely or visit occasionally just for the sake of their children," Wangari claims.

Mary Njoki\*, also an IDP adds another twist to the evictees' plight alleging that the small relief food ratio being provided by the Government has found its way into non-IDPs homes because of not 'cooperating' with food agents. They are being asked to give in to sex before they can get their ratio.

"We have no choice but agree to sexual demands in order to receive our relief ratio. It's not something to hold back after all we have unmet desires. While the fear of HIV/Aids is real, one has no choice but accept while believing nothing bad comes with it," notes Njoki.

The Prime Minister's office which was in charge of the resettlement exercise had earlier said all the remaining forest and PEV evictees leave for their new homes before the general elections early next year.

The PM's office says more than KSh3 billion has been set aside to resettle both forests evictees and IDPs in Rift Valley.

The cash had been put aside for buying alternative land to resettle the displaced families although the process was yet to be finalised.

According to the Ministry of Special Programmes, spearheading the resettlement process, the delays are due to unavailability of alternative land.

However, Lands Minister James Orengo says the process to purchase land for the evictees was at advanced stage with negotiations ongoing.

"The land has been identified within Rift Valley and negotiations to buy it are ongoing," Orengo revealed.

Orengo notes that the Government released money for the resettlement exercise last year but efforts to get more than 10,000 acres had derailed the entire exercise.

Simon Kariuki, another IDP at Naka camp in Uasin Gishu County says the resettlement deadlock has since seen their lives lose meaning and as the waiting has been too long.

## Promise

"The Government promised to resettle us before Easter holiday in March this year. Now six months to the next general election and nothing is forthcoming. Kenya hii kweli mnyonge hana chake (in this country the poor have no rights). Our hopes have since died and just waiting for God's miracle to happen", laments Kariuki, a father of 10 children.

With only less than six months to the general election, the vote equation coupled with the unavailability of land has seen the last patch of Mau forest eviction halted.

More than 24,000 people living in the forest will not be evicted after all. Former Provincial Commissioner, Hassan Noor, who heads the Mau Forest Restoration taskforce reportedly advised the

Government to stop the evictions to avoid escalating the situation that has led to evictees suffering.

According to Noor, the whole exercise was to see about 50,000 people moved out the Mau Forest Complex believed to be a source of water to about 23 million people along Lake Victoria and White Nile.

## Votes

Mau Forest Complex was converted into settlements after the Government began allocating the forest land in 1997. Large plots were given to individuals in what was seen as political bait to win votes during the general elections that year.

In 2009 the Kibaki government said all forests land allocations in the late 1990s were illegal and directed that the occupants be evicted.

According to a report by an interim forest restoration back then, the resettlement of the families on alternative land was the mandate of the Ministry of Land.

However, the report had stated that lack of support from the community leaders to relay facts on how they ended up encroaching on the forest for determination of those eligible for (land) compensation had hampered the process.

The report had noted that while there was a consensus that the continued destruction of the Mau complex should stop, divisions emerged over the eviction of those said to be illegally settled, with leaders insisting on full compensation.

The exercise had also been delayed by a slow process of verification of those holding genuine land deeds.

However the latest report by the taskforce says the government had resolved to involve local communities in conserving the water catchment forest.

So far about 290 out of an estimated 3,000

families evicted from Mau and another 130 have been resettled at Chemusian farm in Uasin Gishu County.

And with elections' drums sounding in the country, Rift Valley MPs are appealing the Government to accelerate the resettlement exercise to allow the evictees participate in the coming general polls.

"We are really concerned that the resettlement exercise is taking long as our people continue to suffer nearly four years now since they were evicted from the forest," says Franklin Bett, MP for Bureti Constituency and Minister for Roads.

Bett is among Rift Valley leaders who have been pressing the Government to either complete the resettlement exercise or allow the evictees to return the forest.

## Suffering

Linah Kilimo, who is the MP for Marakwet East and assistant minister for Cooperatives has also said those evicted from Embobut Forest within her Constituency, have suffered enough in camps and should be resettled to alternative lands to enable them develop their lives economically.

Like Gladys, many women are shy to discuss openly their struggle in marital bed and if they did, the law of the land is not yet clear on bedroom issues.

However, it is obvious that the issue is real and a grave health concern for married spouses enduring harsh camp conditions. Poor sanitation and health facilities, lack of clean water among many basic human rights have become their daily companion.

As the government drags its feet on resettlement, politicians continue to play to the gallery with this life-threatening camp experience for their own political expediency.

As the world is headed to mark the first International Day of the Girl Child on October 11, *Caroline Oyugi* took a trip to Uganda and brings inspiring stories of how girls have been empowered and are making a mark in their own special way.



# Girls in Kamuli take their agenda to Parliament



"Honourable councillors we will move to the next item in our agenda ..... Madam Speaker, allow me to discuss this issue....." for a moment I thought I was in a Parliament but no I was in a girls' primary school.

Despite being pupils, these young girls have given the Ugandan Parliament reasons to scratch their heads and work harder when it comes to issues of children's rights.

They have tabled three petitions to the 'Parliament' and will not rest until legislative arm of government reacts to their issues. The three petitions are: Abolishing corporal punishment, Rights of the girl child and Rights of the children living with disabilities.

## Commitment

Beginning in October 2011, the United Nations adopted October 11, 2012, as the International Day of the Girl Child and for the first time the world comes together to celebrate the girl. The move comes as a result of the passion and commitment by the girls themselves who lobbied the UN with support from Plan, the Canadian government and all the UN member states, as well as the thousands of people who signed the petition.

Indeed, the African girl child is faced with many challenges. She is left out on education opportunities, sexually abused, faces child and forced marriage among other problems that include being killed at or before birth.

Despite all these challenges pupils in Kamuli Girls' Boarding School have come up with a way of solving their problems the best way they know how. The girls under the leadership of their patron Mkaiso Raphael and guidance of Plan Uganda formed a children's council at the school and have never looked back.

## Structure

Kamuli Children's Council has a representative from each class from P1 to P7. The Council that was formed in 2010 has many achievements to boast of despite being in a society where chil-

dren, especially girls are undermined and their rights violated.

Through the Anti-violence Committee, the council encourages positive discipline without violence and that includes corporal punishment. The children are involved in both Parents-Teachers Associations (PTA) meetings and the management of the school.

It is during such meetings that they have been able to acquire a school bus and had some of their buildings like dormitories and toilets renovated and better ones constructed.

## Rights

According to members of the council, some problems faced by children can simply be solved by fellow children without involving adults, and that is why they encourage problem sharing and finding solutions before approaching the adults.

The girls also teach each other about their rights as children with emphasis on their roles and responsibilities. For example, they have a right to education and responsibility to work hard in school, a right to food and responsibility to help around the house.

The children's council also has a children's court where they handle cases among pupils. If the court fails to get a solution then it is referred to the patron and if he too fails then he refers it to the school administration.

However, the school girls' campaign goes much further and they are also involved in the 'Because I Am a Girl' campaign which is sponsored by Plan International. Through this campaign, the girls take time to interact with fellow children in the community and share with them the values that they

have learnt.

According to a report released last year, the campaign because 'I am a Girl' argued that the only way to transform gender relations, and to tackle the unequal power structures that lie at the root of discrimination, is for men and boys to be convinced of the basic unfairness of the lingering inequality between the sexes, to be horrified by gender based violence, to challenge the stereotypical constructs of male and female that exist and to be energetically committed to change.

Plan International is committed to realizing the full potential of all its stakeholders for development with equity, without which development can neither be balanced nor sustainable. Gender equality is central to achieving our vision for change; a world in which all children, both girls and boys realise their full potential in societies that respect people's rights and dignity. Education results to many long-term benefits, particularly for young girls, therefore contributing to later marriage, lower fertility rates and reduced domestic violence.

The group also organises meetings with parents in the villages to sensitise them on the importance of educating a girl and how to go about some unique issues concerning girls' social welfare like sexuality, relationships and menstruation period.

## Regional forum

The school is the only girls' boarding school in Kamuli District in the Eastern Part of Uganda and it is a Government-aided institution built by the Protestant Church.

Their outgoing chairperson Mar-

***"We must behave in a way that demands respect. Interact with the right group, dress well and use your beauty intelligently and not to attract men at the wrong time."***

— Naankwali Mercy



**From top: Children's Council at Kamuli Primary School, Eastern Uganda. The children have tendered some of their recommendations to the Ugandan Parliament. Thirteen-year old Martha Atweiri the outgoing speaker of the Council. Titi Gloria, community development coordinator with Plan Uganda who has been working with the girls.**

Pictures: Courtesy Plan International

tha Atweiri, who is in P7, has also had a chance to present these issues at a regional forum. She was one of the four representatives from Uganda who met with children from other East African countries in Burundi recently to discuss issues that impact on the realisation of children's rights within the region. The chairperson before Atweiri also presented the same issues in Berlin, Germany.

However, according to Atweiri, children's rights are not only violated by adults but also by fellow children. She says that this is why they also go to other mixed schools so as to talk to the boys and educate them on girls' rights.

They teach them their rights and responsibilities and how to go about achieving them. According to Gloria Titi, Community Development Coordinator, Plan Uganda—Kamuli: "They go an extra mile, they know how to articulate their issues and I'm very proud of them."

Titi has worked with scores of girls in Uganda but is very proud of this particular group, she said during a journalists' field visit to the school.

However, Mkaiso testifies that he is proud to be associated with the girls but that position has put him in constant conflict with the parents.

He says parents think that he is em-

powering and giving the children too much power by teaching them how to demand for their rights.

"Some have even told me that they are waiting to see how my children will be because all they see in these children is me."

Mkaiso also fears for the well being of the girl-child in Kamuli village due to the high number of defilement cases. "The issue of defilement must be solved as soon as possible if we are to achieve the rights of the girl child," he says.

The patron urged the community to stop seeing girls as liabilities, but instead take them as assets by investing in their education.

Naankwali Mercy, the incoming speaker blames some girls for their misfortune. According to Naankwali, the society has been negative towards girls but some girls also put themselves in positions that make them easy prey to the perpetrators of sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

"We must behave in a way that demands respect. Interact with the right group, dress well and use your beauty intelligently and not to attract men at the wrong time," Naankwali advised.

The girls also have Rebecca Kadaga the current speaker of Ugandan Parliament as their role model.

# Selling, keeping accounts and managing her parents potato business

By AJANGA KHAYESI

Sharon Achieng might not be an excellent entrepreneur but a young businesswoman with a story worthy telling.

At tender age of 11 years, Achieng is the exemplary description of determination that eventually pays off in the world of the youth.

The *Reject* traces the fairy-tale of Achieng from Kabondo Location in Kadongo area of Rachuonyo District where she has practiced the skill of selling sweet potatoes to commuters along the Kisumu-Kisii road.

As a pupil at Kogalo Primary School in Kabondo Location, the business has proven to be an uphill task for Achieng. As a girl interested in education, she has always dreamt of excelling in school and going to college.

As we mark the International Day of the Girl Child, Achieng is an epitome of what all other girls around the world go through. They may not realise their dreams as family responsibilities take away their time from normal school work, time that they would have spent doing assignments well or doing extra studies just to sharpen their knowledge.

## Fees

Achieng is a common feature by the roadside during school breaks or when sent home to fetch school levies. During such times she helps her parents to raise the needed money that will pay for school levy and also cater for other family needs.

The class six pupil is a first born among five siblings to Hezron Owuor and Damaris Atieno. Achieng is not exceptional among other young children in the area, and mostly girls.

She says: "When not working on school activities in, I will be found most probably selling sweet potatoes at the Holo bus stage to help my parents put food on the table or pay for our school fees."

Achieng juggles this business with great admiration and serves as the accountant, cashier, storekeeper and marketer.

When her mother is not at home, Achieng takes up her responsibilities as well. These include budgeting the family needs including meals and other necessities from the sales, paying village farmers on deliveries of potatoes and balancing the books for her parents.

The prices for the sweet potatoes depend on the container in which they have been put. A five litre tin will sell for KSh200 for ten litre tin, KSh400 for 20 litre tin while a full sack is sold at KSh2,000.

## Multitasking

Although the lakeland region has not changed its cultural rabuon (sweet potato) farming, many children, especially the girls in Kadongo area mix schoolwork and home duties.

Most young children understand the three duties to be performed weekly as going to school, attending church and the sweet potato business.

To drive the point home, a good number of families are supported by children right from doing house chores, farming and selling of the potatoes along the Kisumu-Kisii highway.

"Whenever children are out of school, they always hope to join their parents in performing family chores such as working on the farm, an activity which many have adopted," says Owour.

Doing business when one is still in school can be hectic but if it is one's passion, then it ceases to be a problem. This is how the youngsters of Kadongo view the potato selling activity.

Martin Oduori, 16 years and Form Three student at Harambe Secondary School sells potatoes at Ringa Market.

"I know pretty well that selling along the roadside can be risky but what can I do when I am sent away from school to collect school fee balance and the money is not at home? I need to help my parents to sell so that the needed money is raised quickly," Oduori explains.

The faces of the young boys and girls in tattered dressings at various bus stages along the busy highway reveal just a tip of the poverty in their homes. The children face challenges such as selling under harsh weather conditions during the rainy season and dust during drought while risking their health.

Some of the challenges they face including encountering bad buyers who will refuse to pay or end up stealing from them. Such buyers keep the residents in continuous worry.

The traders target mostly travellers and wholesale business people from major towns in Kenya including Kisumu, Nairobi, Nakuru and Mombasa among others. Some traders export the commodity to markets in Southern Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania.

## Jobs

According to teacher Titus Omondi children who previously frequented farms and markets seeking jobs in the trade have reduced since the government introduced Free Primary Education (FPE).

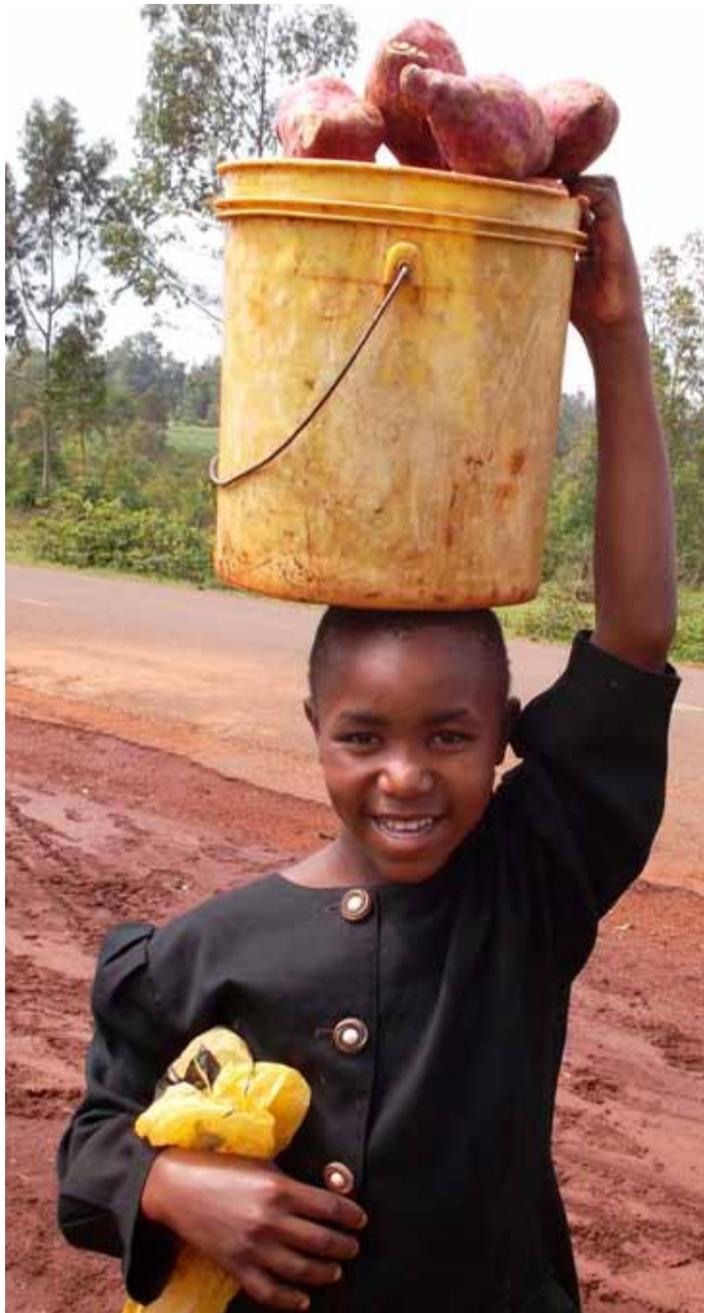
"However, during school holidays and weekends children go out to work in potato farms," he says.

Omondi who says that all children have equal rights to education, health, food, shelter and security, calls upon all children to take advantage of the children's rights and ensure that their views are heard.

According to Owour, farming has the ability to build cultural bridges in the villages in a way no other activity can. For this to happen, he says Kadongo farmers should not copy the western or foreign style of agriculture and foodstuffs.

Sweet potato farming continues to dominate Kadongo's economy.

Most families earn their living from farming potato which contrib-



utes a large percent of wage employment and revenue.

The sweet potato crop takes five months to mature and is completely a drought resistant plant. However, it has not escaped disease and weevil infestation.

Inter-cropping the potato and other crops such as maize, millet or beans reduces the potato yield.

However, the locals have resorted to potato farming as a source of livelihood. They have realised that to sustain lives throughout the year, other food crops must be cultivated including cassava, maize,



From top: Sharon Achieng arrives along the Kisumu-Kisii road with her bucket of potatoes. Martin Oduori displays potatoes at Iringa market along Kisumu-Kisii road. Pictures: Ajanga Khayesi

beans, peas, bananas, vegetables, groundnuts, sorghum, yams and sugarcane.

Although the sweet potato is typically grown organically, farmers can be found heap soil methods yielded larger tubers without using fertilizers but applying mulching and crop rotation after harvesting maize.

"Kabondo villagers sun-dry and grind potato into flour purposefully to make porridge during hunger times," says Damaris Atieno, Achieng's mother.

## Underage girls engaging in commercial sex work

By YUSUF AMIN

Human rights officials in Kilifi County have called on the Government to intervene to curb prostitution among underage girls in the region.

Muslim for Human Rights field officer in Kilifi County Eric Karisa Mgoja noted that the number of girls dropping out of school to engage in commercial sex work was on the increase in the region. He cited areas like Malindi and Mt-wapa towns as leading in urban centres where many young girls engage in prostitution. He called on the police to take action against those involved in the vice.

Mgoja also asked the Ministry of Education and the Children's Department to also intervene by visiting the towns to crackdown on men engaging in sex with underage girls. He called for their arrest and prosecution according to the law.

## Solution

"I am calling on the relevant ministries to come together and look for a lasting solution to the vice by prosecuting those involved for the sake of saving the girl child education in the county," said Mgoja.

Most of the girls engaged in the practice interviewed by the *Reject* Newspaper said poverty and lack of food had led them to engage in prostitution. They asked the Government to come up with new strategies of overcoming their problems.

The *Reject* learnt that most of the girls from the rural areas flock to the urban centres and big towns in the region to look for jobs but instead found themselves practicing prostitution after life become hard.

Mgoja further urged parents to be careful with their daughters and make sure that they take them to school. He noted with concern that the girls were in danger of being infected with HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses through prostitution.

He said: "Many parents have failed to take up their responsibilities and the Government should arrest and bring them to face the law so that the vice can be eradicated from the society."

## Action

Elsewhere the Children's Department in Ganze District is investigating some cases where children have dropped out of school and warned that it will take action against their parents.

According to Daniel Mbogo, the Children's Officer the areas most affected are in the district are Palakumi, Bamba and Bamba divisions where old men are getting married to underage girls.

"We are going to arrest the old men and send the girls back to school. Escalating poverty among the families is to blame as it is forcing some parents to marry off their daughters to get money paid as dowry to them," said Mbogo.

Women leaders in Kilifi town led by the Vice-chairlady of the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation Asha Saidi noted that many girls go to the beaches to look for tourists and expressed concern that the problem if not addressed well will leave many girls infected with HIV.

"We should address this problem properly in our communities so that young girls are rescued and saved from being infected with sexually transmitted diseases and HIV," reiterated Saidi.

**"I know pretty well that selling along the roadside can be risky but what can I do when I am sent away from school to collect school fee balance and the money is not at home? I need to help my parents to sell so that the needed money is raised quickly."**

— Martin Oduori

# Tuvuke presses on for peaceful elections

By HENRY KAHARA

As the country is headed towards the next General election, nobody wants to see a repeat of 2007-2008 post elections violence.

Call for peace are resounding every with one of the leading initiatives Tuvuke, taking a caravan road show across the country in an appeal for peaceful elections. Tuvuke Initiative recently launched a caravan road show in Nairobi dubbed standing in Solidarity with the Women and Children of Tana Delta. Under the leadership of the Kenya Land Alliance, the caravan was flagged off from the Uhuru Park by religious leaders and Chairperson of the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution Charles Nyachae.

Nyachae urged Kenyans to govern themselves in a manner befitting them even as we approach the general election.

## Responsibility

"This is the first election since promulgation of the new constitution and it will tell whether we have succeeded or not," noted Nyachae, adding that under the current Constitution every person has a responsibility to maintain peace.

"It's upon us to know that for now we have an effective institution which is able to address our problems instead of taking the law on our hands," he advised.

Nyachae appealed to faith based organisations to be at the frontline in preaching peace.

"I know faith based organisations played a huge role in getting this nation to where it is today and I urge them to continue standing firm," reiterated Nyachae.

Tuvuke Initiative chairperson Dr Jennifer Riria appealed to the women of Kenya to stand for

peace. "We the mothers of this nation will not tolerate violence and we will take time speak to our children about the importance of peace," said Riria.

## Challenge

She noted that Tuvuke will take peace to the community level. "This is an initiative where we want to challenge families to live in peace with their neighbours. We will make sure we engage communities to talk to each other."

Riria said this time round Kenyans will hold leaders to account for spreading hatred during their campaign rallies.

"We will ensure that there will be spies in each and every rally in order to report whether our leaders are behaving politely," she said

Riria urged Kenyans to alert the authority in case of anything which is likely to cause chaos on the numbers 108 and 8355.

Secretary General of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) Cannon Peter Karanja said Kenyans must change their culture, values, hearts and attitudes in order for the nation to move forward.

"The role of civic education cannot be overemphasized. Every Kenyan has a duty and responsibility to understand the new constitution and prepare to usher in the new dawn in their individual, family and community level," noted Karanja.

## Initiative

"NCCCK appreciates the Tuvuke Initiative that contributes in education to citizens on the electoral process and engagement with duty bearers such the electoral commission and national police service as well as government department and



From top: School children at Uhuru Park during the flagging off the Tuvuke Initiative caravan road show. Entertainers at the event. Chairperson of the Inter Religious Council of Kenya Adan Wachu with Chairperson of the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution Charles Nyachae.

Pictures: Reject Correspondent

agencies."

Karanja urged Tuvuke to consider other ways of contributing to peace and stability like comprehensive civic and voter education, observation of electoral process, dialogue with political leaders and psychological support and counselling to victims of post-election violence among others.

Chairperson of the Inter Religious Council of Kenya Adan Wachu noted that peace is important and Kenyans must guard it.

"There is no need for Kenyans to fight because of leaders who win elections and their term expires after five years," says Wachu. "I urge my colleagues — religious leaders — to



preach peace," noted Wachu.

Tuvuke Initiative seeks to contribute to a peaceful and fair electoral process by equipping Kenyans with skills so that they can become agents of social change.

Among the estates the caravan passed were Dandora, Kariobangi, Huruma, Mathare and Eastleigh on the first day. On the second leg they went through Kibera, Kangemi and Kawangware among other areas.



**"It's upon us to know that for now we have an effective institution which is able to address our problems instead of taking the law on our hands,"**

— Charles Nyachae

# Women warn politicians over poll violence

By HENRY KAHARA

Women have expressed fears over the forth coming polls and are saddened by the ongoing killings as the country approaches the General Election.

Chairperson National Gender and Equality Commission Winnie Lichuma warned leaders to stop gambling with the lives of Kenyans as a measure of political supremacy.

"It is not only annoying but irresponsible to see political leaders engage in verbal exchanges on their positions with little interest to stop the killings," Lichuma noted.

She added: "We are concerned that with barely six months to the elections, it is not farfetched that unscrupulous politicians will do anything to retain power."

Under the Article 131 (2) (e) of the Constitution of Kenya, the President

has moral obligation to the citizens to ensure the protection of human rights and fundamental freedom and the rule of law.

National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) and the women's movement are demanding for quick response in protecting lives and property in Tana River Delta where ethnic violence has continued to escalate.

## Concern

Lichuma said women are concerned by the recent outbreak of violence in the country.

"The Commission and women of Kenya are gravely concerned with the deaths where women and children have been the greatest casualties," noted Lichuma.

Over 120 people have been killed, over 1,000 injured while more than 12,000 displaced in the violence that

has seen even mass graves being suspected to be in the area.

The Commission now urges the Government to make reference to the agreements made during the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation process mediated by former UN General Secretary Kofi Annan and panel of eminent personalities in 2008.

The Kofi Annan led team mediated the talks on the formation of the grand coalition Government in 2008 after the crisis which erupted following the announcement of the 2007 presidential election results, which saw the country being overtaken by unprecedented levels of violence.

Among the key recommendations was to achieve sustainable peace, stability and justice in Kenya through the rule of law and respect for human rights

The Kenya National Dialogue

and Reconciliation process was to "ensure that the assistance to the affected communities and individuals is delivered more effectively as well as ensuring the impartial effective and expeditious investigation of gross and systematic violations of human rights and that those found guilty are brought to justice".

## Disarmament

Also listed under the agenda items was disarmament and demobilization of armed militia and citizen militia holding illegal arms. Further, all leaders were to embrace peaceful co-existence and promote reconciliation among communities and refrain from making irresponsible and provocative statements.

Lichuma noted that the Tana River Delta is already a marginalized area with its residents expressing concern that they have been left out of the de-

velopment agenda.

"The Government needs to act urgently and use all machineries at its disposal to stop this violence immediately."

"We appreciate the deployment of the military and police but, we want to caution that women and girls should not suffer sexual violence as witnessed in Mt Elgon in 2006 when security personnel were deployed to bring peace," she said.

At the same time, Deborah Okumu, Executive Director Caucus for Women Leadership urged the Government to look into the root cause of the clashes.

"We want a lasting solution to be found and those who are responsible for this conflict brought to book," said Okumu. She added: "We are also demanding for the inclusion of women in decision making processes so as to gender satisfying solution."

# Women benefit from para-legal training

By KARIUKI MWANGI

About 20 women in Embu County have been trained as para-legal and programme officers to help in reducing crime in the area and promote out of court settlements for petty cases.

The women from Manyatta and Runyenjes constituencies were trained by a team of experts from the Open Society Initiative of East Africa (OSIEA).

They will be working with the court users' committee, Probation Department as well as the police and provincial administration in a collaborative process of transforming the society.

Speaking during an induction programme in Runyenjes, Margret Kariuki, Programme Secretary with the Women in Need Network, said the women will sensitise the public on how to reintegrate offenders back into the community.

## Initiative

"The initiative is geared towards preparing the offenders due to be released from the prisons and also preparing the community on how to accept them back so as to avoid a disconnect, hostile reception and stigma," said Kariuki.

She noted that preparing the offenders and the community on proper interaction would help in avoiding a cycle of crime where the released offenders end up going back to criminal activities after receiving poor reception by the community. She pointed out that the women would also be sensitising the community on diversification where not all crimes that are committed in the society should end up in jail saying that there are other avenues of



Some of the women who have been trained as paralegal officers in Manyatta and Runyenjes constituencies. Picture: Kariuki Mwangi

solving them locally.

Kariuki noted that the programme has also put in place a temporary home for the offenders who are released from the prisons with nowhere to go to either because the community has refused to integrate them or because they have no homes to go to.

## Home

"The home provides a soft landing for the offenders where they are provided with guidance and counselling for a period of three months before they decide on what activities to do as pro-

ductive members of the community," she said.

So far, the programme has also trained women on ways in which they can develop themselves and earn a living in the short run. These include helping them gain medical certificates to avoid conflicts with the law while selling food products.

Kariuki noted that there was an urgent need for intensified guidance and counselling to the youths on the negative impact of consuming illicit brews so that they can be productive members of the society.

# National budget key to ending malaria in Africa

By SAMUEL OTIENO

Over reliance on donor funds, lack of political will and poor treatment regimens are to blame for the failure by African countries to fully manage malaria.

According to Dr Nathan Mulure, Director of Operations at Novatis Africa, there are many African countries that have managed to make progress in tackling the disease.

However, these efforts were being hampered by poor policies and politicians who are not keen in seeing an end to the menace that has continued to kill thousands.

"Countries like Egypt, Algeria and Zanzibar have managed to eradicate the disease, while others like Rwanda and Botswana are catching up in being declared malaria free," Mulure observed.

## Dependency

He noted that the fight against malaria in Africa will take a lifetime unless African states stop relying on donor funding. He gave an example of Zimbabwe which was levying its population to contribute towards an Aids kitty.

"A similar initiative could be used to raise funds for malaria control," he said.

Addressing a roundtable session at the Africa Science Journalist Conference in Nakuru, Mulure said donor funds often come with stringent conditions and restrictive strategies to be used in the

fight against malaria.

In his paper, Changing Landscape of Malaria Vectors and Its Implications, Mulure said donors spend more than \$12 billion dollars annually in fighting Malaria in Africa.

He said countries which have managed to scale down malaria prevalence such as South Africa used the outlawed DDT while Egypt managed to achieve the success through pyrethrum based indoor spraying.

## Donors

"Strategies which donors recommend are very slow towards malaria eradication. The best way is to have African owned initiative in the fight against malaria rather than depending on funds that are released at the donor's discretion", said Mulure.

However, he acknowledged the fact that coming up with permanent solution on malaria will render some companies irrelevant. He noted that scientists were committed to finding a drug that will eventually eliminate the disease.

He vouched for a strategy that can break the cycle of transmission from man to man through mosquitoes.

"Between humans and the mosquito, who is the victim? Mulure posed. He noted: "To me the fight against malaria has to be won by making humans parasite-free so that the new born mosquitoes live without the plasmodium and are unable to transmit it further."

# A couple that lost daughter to rabies now leads anti-rabies campaigns

By WILSON ROTICH

The tears of Agnes and Barnabus Korir are now drying up as they see the fruits of their anti-rabies project started in honour of their daughter who was a victim in 2004.

The loving couple are confident that fewer families will lose their children, as they did, to rabies as was the trend in the past.

"The project has succeeded. The cases of rabies have reduced considerably in Nandi Central. Many people have called us from other districts seeking for assistance," Agnes reveals.

Rabies is a zoonotic disease; that is transmitted from animals to humans. It is caused by a virus.

World Rabies Day September 28, has been celebrated since 2007 coordinated by the Global Alliance for Rabies Control. As the world celebrates 5 years of fighting rabies, the government is yet to declare any of the 47 countries free from rabies.

This is the challenge that the devolved Governments will inherit from the central government.

Indeed, Barnabas, a father of 5 children, lives in his rural home in Kapsabet, Nandi County. He graduated from a univer-

sity in the United States where he also worked briefly before returning home to start a family.

Some of his children were used to the western lifestyle. They mistakenly thought all pet dogs were safe to play with, until they lost their sister to rabies.

Korir will never forget how he lost his 12-year old daughter to rabies.

"In 2004 we were home for holidays. Our children visited their grandmother in the countryside. While they were playing with the neighbours children, our daughter the late Sharon was bitten by a neighbour's dog. The neighbour was also our relative. She was taken for first aid in a local dispensary but it seems she was injected with expired drugs. We took her for treatment at the AAR clinic in Nairobi for advanced treatment, but she succumbed to the complications," he says.

## Statistics

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), four out of 10 people who are bitten by suspect rabid animals are children under 15 years of age. Dogs are the source of over 9 out of 10 of human rabies deaths. Wound cleansing and immunization within a few

hours after contact with a suspect rabid animal can prevent the onset of rabies and death.

If you see men and women in some rural parts of the country strolling around with walking sticks, do not be in a hurry to conclude that they are alarmingly aging. They may not be sick either. This could just be a natural anti rabies measure. The stick can easily help scare away stray rabid animals. If adults are armed as such, how are the vulnerable children protected from bites of rabid animals as they play innocently?

You do not have to go far before seeing skinny, emaciated, stray and even guard dogs. These sorry souls may look genuinely in need of your help, but they could be couriers of the deadly disease, rabies.

Rabies is highly endemic in rural areas and immunizing a pet costs slightly over KSh1,000 which is half of the welfare funds that some retired Kenyan senior citizens earn in a month. Other factors include poor quality vaccines, poor cold chain maintenance and pets which frequently



Mr and Mrs Barnabus Korir with some of their children at their home in Kapsabet. The couple is optimistic that fewer families will lose their children to rabies. Picture: Wilson Rotich

come in contact with infected wild animals.

After years of mourning, Korir and his family thought of starting a project that would help reduce incidences of deaths caused by rabies.

"We later resolved as a family to do this project in memory of our child and to help other families not to go through the same predicament. This year, our vision materialised."

Agnes Korir is the wife of Barnabus Korir. She is the Director of the Sharon Anti-Rabies Foundation in memory of their daughter whom they lost to rabies. "We do immunisation of dogs, donkeys, and cats, against rabies. These are frequent carriers of death caused by rabies in this region of Nandi Central. We have plans to expand this program to other areas of Rift Valley. Our sponsors proposed

an annual program, but we have a plan to build a special hospital that can assist the needy. Some people seek treatment in Eldoret town, which is very far."

## Transmission

Agnes said neglecting a bite from a dog, puppy, or any animal that could transmit rabies is always very dangerous. Humans exposed to rabies need to undergo a regimen called the post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP). But most people in the rural areas do not seek medication as required.

"According to our findings the data incidences of rabies are very scanty because some people in the village do not report these incidents to the authorities. Most of the available data is found in the district hospitals. Even the veterinary department does not have conclusive statistics," she says.

# Regulate private sector role in public health services

By PETRONILLA WANGUI

The private sector operates more than 49 per cent of the health facilities and plays a key role in supporting people living with HIV in the country.

According to Maureen Okola, a programme officer with Gold Star Network, said some of the services and support offered by the private organisations must be regulated.

"The role of private sector is indeed very important as it helps to supplement government health services which are overstretched," said Okola during the Africa Science Journalist Conference held in Nakuru.

However, she noted that some of the services being offered by the private sector are expensive for the common man hence the need to regulate some of their charges.

"Guidelines and strict regulation measures for pharmacy and poisons board must be strengthened for the provision of quality health services," observed Okola.

In the last issue of the *Reject*, we carried a story of the lucrative small arms trade in the horn of Africa. The story detailed how top politicians and businessmen were raking in on the war in Somalia to bring arms to Kenya. In this second story, *Hussein Dido* looks at how the arms are transported into the country.

# Arms delivery takes place at night through undesignated routes

It is mid night in Dadajibula border town of northern Kenya and sounds from moving vehicles interrupt deep slumber as wind blows from the Somalia side of the border into the bed made out of acacia tree, hide and skin. The reverberating sounds from moving vehicles continue to morning hours when a sound from the nearby mosque calls on Muslims to attend morning prayers.

## Timing

I was warned by my guide when I visited the border post in a bid to unravel the underworld of arms business that supply arms to various conflict hotspots in Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, that delivery and transportation takes places during the night hours. After morning prayers, a former arms courier who lost his job due to restructuring of arms business and other key players taking control of the lucrative Dadajibula arms smuggling triangle joins me.

The courier, in his prime age offers the same information and updates given to me by my guide on arms transportation and the timing of arms movements from Somalia side of the border.

They are transported to various undesignated routes that cut across vast areas of northern Kenya without going through any settlements or security checkpoints.

## Cut-line

The undesignated routes in northern Kenya are locally known as cutline. The name was inherited from oil exploration firms that tried to reach various oil blocks in remote northern Kenya areas and also across the border into Southern Central Somalia where exploration work has taken place and various international energy companies have marked potential oil sites. Oil exploration companies invested a lot of resources in clearing and making unofficial roads to their exploration sites with all roads branching off from main roads like Wajir-Mandera,

Garissa-Wajir, Garissa-Liboi and Mandera-Moyale among various official roads to cutline.

The former arms courier says that arms load are usually transported at night. "Vehicles from Somalia side of the border move into Kenya through the undesignated routes and deliver the arms to various collection points where vehicles among other modes of transport like donkeys or human beings then take over, he says.

"This is big business and it involves everybody in the security agencies, residents, elders, local couriers, buyers, Al-shabaab as well as other local militias in Kenyan and Somalia side of the border. It also involves millions of shillings.

"Every night I used to make KSh50,000 from services I offer the vehicles dropping these arms to the middlemen and buyers along the cutline road," says the source. He adds: "I would on top

of a commonly used lorry in Somalia known as *iritrea* and my work was to ensure the arms loads are safe and I knew which load belonged to which customer."

Middlemen collecting arms from the cutline roads start the long journey of smuggling the arms to various destinations within northern Kenya and also using the same cutline roads that cut across northern Kenya to various counties like Moyale, Marsabit and Isiolo.

## Collection

The middlemen will deliver the arms to secret locations within the above mentioned three areas and distribute it to the community that ordered the arms or the group of people or individuals that placed order and paid for the arms.

According to the ex-arms trafficker, the cutline arms dropping and collection zone are crucial because it supplies leading markets that include Garissa, Dadaab, Wajir, Tana River, Isiolo, Samburu, Laikipia, Marakwet, Moyale, Marsabit, Kitui, Kariobangi, Korogocho and Kiamaiko areas of Nairobi.

There are also other markets like Pokot and Turkana as well as the Karamoja region of Uganda that is inhabited by warring pastoralist communities. A well-knit cartel smuggles and ferries arms to above mentioned towns in Kenya and Uganda and the cartels underworld operations is undertaken by three networks operated by coterie of arms smugglers, middlemen and militia and led by key figures recognised and answerable to Al-Shabaab terror outfit.

The first group collects arms and ammunitions and uses various transport modes like lorries, Land Rovers and Land Cruisers as well as a convoy of donkeys in transporting the haul to Wajir, Marsabit, Moyale, Samburu, Isiolo, Meru Turkana, Pokot and Laikipia.

Each arms destination has a person in charge and reports to a key figure heading this first group. Second group collects the cache of arms and ammunition from remote cutline road and transports it to Daadab, Garissa, Kitui and Tana River where it is distributed to various buyers and customers in the areas.

Arms supplied by this second network has led to surge of armed attacks in the refugee camps and resurgence of armed violence between pastoralists and farmers in Tana River Delta area where more than 100 people have so far been killed, thousands injured and several houses torched by armed raiders.

**"Every night I used to make KSh50,000 from services I offer the vehicles dropping these arms to the middlemen and buyers along the cutline road."**



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The third network comprises of smugglers and a gun runner who collects the arms haul from delivery and collection point and smuggles it into the Nairobi arms market where it's distributed to various customers and buyers in the slums areas of Kiamaiko, Korogocho and Kariobangi areas. The Nairobi network sells arms to various criminal networks and groups and also offers arms hiring services where robbers can hire a gun and ammunition to commit crime.

## Guarantee

The network hires each AK-47 for KSh25,000 for a night, American pistols for KSh15,000 and other pistols for KSh10,000. The criminals are expected to guarantee that they will return the arms.

Apart from the guarantor, the person hiring the gun is required to pay half of the money and the remaining half is paid when returning the gun in the morning or renewing the hiring period for another day or week.

Another network exists in Nairobi where they collect arms cargo and dispatch it to various spots in conflict prone areas.

An example is the Karamoja region that inhabits warring pastoralist communities practising cattle rustling and also waging attacks at neighbouring communities in Kenya.

Once communities procure arms which they store in what is known as community armoury that entails a secret safe keeping area for arms. Most communities prefer underground armoury where a huge hole is dug and plastered with mixture of cow dung and soil and various compartments are made to accommodate certain types of arms.

The armoury is covered by strong acacia trees covered in soil and livestock waste. It is only opened and sophisticated arms taken out when a community receives intelligence of an impending attack from their rivals or when certain community plans to wage large scale attacks against other pastoralist communities. On September 14, police on a tip off fortunately arrested two suspects in Eastleigh, Nairobi with an assortment of arms that included six suicide bombs, 12 hand grenades, four rifles, four suicide bomb vests, six bullet proof



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**(1) Meru County Commissioner in black suit addresses the public after a joint security meeting at Gambela after Borana and Meru communities clashed over land. (2) Isiolo Deputy Police boss looks at a pistol that was recovered in Safi Estate. (3) Bullets recovered from bandits after they were shot by police in Isiolo. (4) A herdsman nursing bullets wounds at Isiolo District Hospital after armed bandits raided the area recently.**

Pictures: Hussein Dido

jackets, 40 kilogramme of explosives material and 484 bullets on Fourth Avenue of the sprawling suburb. Police said eight more suspects were on the run and they have intensified their search in order to arrest and prosecute them.

The arrests came amid high alert by the American Government of imminent attack after it bomb attacks targeting various places in Kenya. With this, and information received from gun runners, the government should double its efforts and resources to investigate proliferation of small arms and light weapons in order to curb their movement and effects in the country.

# Reformed sex worker preaches against the vice

By NICOLE WAITHERA

Hundreds of women now troop to seek solace and comfort at her house.

"Sometimes a hug or a simple smile is just what we need. It is the simple assurance that we are loved," says Lucy Wambui, a reformed commercial sex worker.

## Challenged

She challenges the young girls in the vice to love and accept themselves first instead of accepting small treats from men who will in turn exploit them sexually.

According to her, prostitution, drug and substance abuse go hand in hand and are used as a means to escape from reality.

She urges prostitutes in the streets to obtain alternative employment and urges them never to consider violence as part of the job.

When she quit prostitution five years ago the hardest part was seeking forgiveness from her four children.

"Facing my children and pleading with them for forgiveness was one of the hardest things I have ever done. It was not easy, but it was certainly worth it," she says with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Currently, she is in charge of a micro finance organization in the area. She also went back to school and will be sitting for her secondary certificate soon.

## Dream

"I still can become a doctor. My dream has never died," she says with confidence.

Indeed, at only fifteen years, Wambui was already in the streets peddling her flesh to earn a living.

Abject poverty forced her to look for alternative means to fend for her siblings, since her parents were not able to provide the basic needs for them.

She was already in an abusive

marriage that had left her with one child, and hence she had an extra mouth to feed.

Sharing her experience 30 years down the line to a group of reformed sex workers, she could not help but break down as she narrated her painful ordeal.

"I never knew what I was getting into when I agreed to subject my body to a man so that I could put food on the table."

Born as the eldest child in a family of six and raised by a single mother, getting a descent meal was a struggle.

"I could not complete my schooling and had to quit at class six due to family problems and opted to get married instead," says Wambui.

## Missing love

She says that her mother, who was also in the streets disliked her. The desire to find love pushed her further away from the family.

"My mum never really liked me. I sincerely had no idea why but I think its because she was struggling to take care of my brothers and sisters. I only dropped out of school because she said so, yet I harboured the dream of being either a teacher or a doctor," says Wambui

Her mother argued that if both of them worked, they would be able to send the young ones to school.

Being the first born, she had to take the sacrifice for the sake of her siblings. "We both worked, my mother

*I just want the ladies out there to know that there is always the option of quitting, that you can always start a fresh."*

— Lucy Wambui

and I. By then I was fifteen years old. Yet I bore nothing that resembled love. My mother instead diverted my love to a man I thought loved me. We eventually got married," she recalls.

## Marriage

Her marriage, however never lasted as the man constantly beat her up.

"I thought he loved me, But he constantly beat me up till I miscarried. I was hospitalised, but he did not bother to even come and see me," she adds.

Despite the beatings, she persevered for seven years and had four children, but when the assaults became unbearable, she left and returned home. There she found little solace and was soon kicked out by her mother.

Wambui decided to seek for odd jobs and she eventually landed a job as a house-help in Limuru, where her employer assaulted her sexually for close to two years.

She chose to keep quiet as she feared that she was going to loose her job yet she had children to feed. She tried to get other odd jobs, but they did not last long.

She later quit and drifted into prostitution again to make ends meet.

"It was the only thing that made more sense and I was not faint about it. I was so courageous that if I went to a bar and at the end of an hour a man had not approached me. I would take matters into my own hands and approach them as I could not afford to go home empty handed," she adds.



Deep down, she never wanted people to know what she was. She still lived in shame. This forced her to go to a different bar every night.

"I could not go to the same bar on two successive nights. Each night I went to a different bar."

She recalls a night she got so frustrated for lack of clients till she went to the highway to look for some.

At that time there was some construction work going on and so she decided to try her luck there.

"I stood at the side of the road and I had worn a blouse that glowed in the dark. A truck passed by and stopped a few meters away. A white man came from the truck, spoke to me in a language I never understood and I answered him in my own language," she laughs.

## Training

She joined Life Bloom International; an organization that sought to reform women in the streets in 2004. This was after they approached them in Karagita area in Naivasha and asked them to volunteer in the project.

After a series of trainings, she became bold enough to face her fellow colleagues in the streets and appeal to them to change.

Today, a reformed woman, she has started her own organisation, Kenya Network for Women Transformation (KENLIT) and is on a mission to educate the women to quit or at the very least, to protect themselves from HIV infection.

"I just want the ladies out there to know that there is always the option of quitting, that you can always start a fresh," she says adding that if all the women out there know how much they are worth, they will not allow men to misuse their bodies."

She adds that the women out there just need to be shown love and not lust, saying that this is the only way that they will feel accepted in the society.

# Parliament urged to enact KWS Bill

By WAIKWA MAINA

Delay in the enactment of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Bill has been cited as an impediment to far reaching changes expected to address the ever emotive human wildlife conflict issue in the country.

According to Dr Paul Mbugua, KWS Assistant Director for Conservation Education, the bill will among other things see to the compensation for any human life lost as a result of the conflict being increased from KSh200,000 to KSh1 Million.

Speaking during the Africa Science Conference for Journalists held in Nakuru, Mbugua who is also the KWS spokesman said that the bill which has been pending for the past couple of years will equally address pressing issues on conservation of the water towers' eco-system and the tourism industry.

He noted that unlike the common perception that KWS was responsible for the delay in tabling the bill in parliament, it was the Ministry of Wildlife that is responsible for presenting it for debate.

"If this bill is enacted, it will certainly address some of the issues that have posed a major challenge to us as the KWS management and even the other stakeholders as it will promote community participation in the industry," he said.

## Compensation

Apart from the human wildlife conflict related deaths compensation, the bill also seeks to increase the amount of compensation for injuries as well as introduce compensation for destruction of crops and death of livestock, which are currently not covered under the compensation law.

Since the beginning of this year, 31 people have so far been killed by wild animals compared to 49 victims last year. At the same time KWS has killed 56 marauding animals in protection of human life and property compared to last year's 101 wild animals.

"We have also noted that the number of reported cases of human wildlife conflict went down to 2,386 in 2011 as compared to 3,911 in the year 2010," explained Mbugua.

He attributed the encroachment into gazetted wildlife areas to increase in human population, scarce water distribution for both man and animals and climate change.

He expressed optimism that the involvement of the communities in the management of the forests and ecosystems will reduce the conflicts, and that the KWS has already embarked such initiatives in various parts of the country.

# Restoration of forests should not be pegged to planting trees only

By JEREMIAH ORONDO

Increase in population as well as the need for building space and land for cultivation has seen a rise in communities encroaching on forests.

According to Dr Paul Orenge, who is an environmental expert, the Government not to think about planting trees alone as the only way of restoring the ecosystem.

"Participatory forest management should be embraced because about 80 per cent of locals depend on the ecosystem for their daily livelihood,"

explained Orenge.

He called for provision of other sources of income in order to prevent over dependence on forests, stressing that restoration of the environment requires concerted efforts from relevant stakeholders in order to realise the goal.

Orenge noted this in the backdrop of concerted efforts by the Government to restore the Mau Forest Complex which covers approximately 416,542 hectares and is the largest forest ecosystem in East Africa.

Speaking to journalists at the African Science

Conference in Nakuru, Orenge said the Mau was overlooked when the forest was intact and the land pressure was low.

"The tourist potential of the Mau has never been exploited despite its proximity to the world famous wildlife conservation areas of the Maasai Mara National Reserve and the adjoining Serengeti National Park in Tanzania as land pressure increased," observed Orenge.

He noted that historically the Mau was overlooked when the forest was intact and land pressure was low.

# Nema accuses major towns of poor sewage disposal

By ALLAN MURIMI

The environment watchdog has raised concern over poor sewerage systems in major towns saying raw waste is being discharged into surrounding environs.

The National Environment Management Authority (Nema) says most towns do not have proper sewerage systems and that residents are exposed to raw effluent.

According to Ayub Macharia, director in charge of environment education and public awareness some towns do not have sewerage systems and others lack infrastructure.

"Some towns like Othaya do not have sewerage infrastructure and residents are not connected to the system

while others like Karatina pump the waste into rivers," said Macharia.

Karatina residents have been complaining to Nema that they cannot use the water from nearby rivers because it is contaminated with raw sewage discharged by Karatina Water and Sewerage Company.

Speaking to *The Reject* during a meeting between Nema and water and sewerage providers from central region, Macharia accused most companies of not having waste discharge licenses.

The environment watchdog issues waste discharge licenses to sewerage companies that clean their wastes in ponds before discharging to the environment to avoid pollution.

"We want water companies to have a single discharge point and not scatter

them to allow us to monitor them," said Macharia, adding that some towns use exhausters to pick the wastes and pour it into farms.

The Nyeri Water and Sewerage Company is now compensating fish farmers after its sewerage pipe burst discharging water into six ponds killing all the fish.

## Poisoning

Macharia noted that there are water and sewerage companies that allow industries to discharge into their system and when this ends up in farms it causes serious poisoning when it rains.

Nema fines companies that discharge industrial waste into the environment KSh350,000, but the director said most companies lack capacity to

restore the poisoned ecosystem.

He said Nema is conducting surveillance and warned companies that discharge their waste into the environment that they will be prosecuted.

"If we or a member of the public decides to take a company discharging industrial wastes into the environment to court, the company will be forced to import experts on environmental restoration because we do not have them in the country," he said.

He noted that the exercise would cost the company a lot of money, and lamented that environmental restoration after industrial poisoning usually takes a long time.

The Tana Water Services Board recently said it had secured some funds to put up new sewerage systems in

some towns. Macharia identified Eldoret town, which is expanding fast, saying it has the best managed sewerage system in the country.

"The water and sewerage companies must ensure they comply with the law and audit their old systems so that Nema could understand how they are faring," he said.

Companies wishing to install new sewerage systems are required by law to conduct an Environment Impact Assessment first.

The environment watchdog has scheduled meeting water service providers from Central, Nairobi and eastern in the last quarter of this year after conducting similar meetings in Nyanza, Coast, Western, North and South Rift last year.

# After 15 years of living with HIV, Oliver Mutoi is still going strong

By ARITA KEMUNTO

Fifteen years ago Oliver Mutoi's life was turned upside down when she tested HIV positive.

However, having accepted her status she decided to make the best of it and has soldiered on as an HIV and Aids campaigner. Mutoi says getting to know her status was the darkest part of her life. However, she realised that it was easier to manage and live with HIV than with other diseases.

The mother of eight found out that she was HIV positive in 1995. However, while that would have sounded a death knell she was also being diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure. Dealing with all this has not been without challenges.

"What those who have been tested for being HIV positive need are just a few tablets a day. They do not have to worry about their diet or exercising," says Mutoi.

She recalls that in the 1990s when there was no effective or affordable treatment, the disease was a taboo topic and no one wanted to talk about in public.

## Depression

Mutoi recalls how her lifestyle changed drastically when symptoms showed that she could be HIV positive. It was then that she withdrew and went into depression suffering a state of despair and hopelessness.

She stopped associating with her extended family, friends and members of her church because she feared the stigma associated with those who are living with the virus.

"I was worried about what people would say because they knew I was a Christian. If it could be true I had been infected with the virus, why would God allow this to happen to me?" she recalls. She spent sleepless nights bitter and crying alone. Angry, worried, tired, shocked at how her world had come tumbling down.

"My best friend came to my house the wee hours of one morning. She told me I could be HIV positive. She advised me to go to a Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) Centre where I would be able to know my status. She gave me hope which I had hungered for months because I had seen the world crumbling under my feet," she recalls.

## Encouragement

Mutoi says that her friend's spirit of determination gave a new meaning to her life. For the mother of eight, it was like thunder had struck. She could not imagine the reality and what could happen to her family and husband. After weeks of encouragement from her friends and prayers, she got encouraged and gathered the guts to get tested. She ended up at Danso, a Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) centre in Dandora. After being tested and the results were given to her she was able to join a support group for those who have been infected and affected with HIV. The group has more than 50 members. There she found a support group which counselled and helped her realise how important it was for the public to be educated on the pros and cons of HIV and AIDs.

"It was hard to live like before when the reality struck that I was HIV positive. My life changed. Everything had gone haywire," she says. She then asked her husband to get tested

as well, but it was in vain as he never accepted. He later developed Tuberculosis (TB) and became frail that still did not change his mind.

By then, she confesses, Mutoi had not told him that she was HIV positive. "He said if he went for the test and found out that he was HIV positive, the community would perceive it negatively in relation to his age," Mutoi says.

## Husband

Meanwhile, her husband was under performing his duties in the office and made frequent trips to the hospital for treatment.

"When he got totally bedridden, I talked to him again to attend a VCT centre and the results were finally positive."

The nurse revealed that his immunity was low as he had remained with one CD4 count (an indicator of immune strength) and his chances of surviving were minimal.

"We shared the news with my husband. He warned me against disclosing my status to anyone. I did not dare defy his orders," says Mutoi.

As submissive wife, Mutoi was aware her husband had other relationships out of marriage but she could not do anything about it.

"My husband had married two other wives who were living in our rural home, but he continued to behave as though they did not exist," she says.

He died in 2002, a few months later of what Mutoi believes was from Aids-related complications. The family travelled to their home in Bungoma for burial.

In retrospect, she laments that as Kenya continues to intensify its efforts against the spread of HIV, some elements of traditional cultural practices in various parts of the country, such as Western Province continue to hinder the success of these efforts.

## Customs

"According to the Bukusu customs, the *baraza la wazee* agreed that my brother-in-law should inherit me after the burial ceremony. I was astonished and by the fact that I was HIV positive, I could not be inherited," she narrates. According to the family and the entire village, their son had died from witchcraft but now Mutoi had to reveal to them the truth to avoid being inherited. However, to her surprise, they decided that she and children should stay away from their rural home.

"On hearing the news, they neglected me, threw my belongings out and gave me two hours to move out of the house. It was a nightmare," she narrates.

Mutoi travelled back to the city with her eight children to start a new life from scratch as her husband had been the family's sole breadwinner.

Her prayers were answered and she later landed a job at Holy Cross Catholic Church in Dandora which helped her to pay rent and feed the family. After coming to terms with her sta-

***"According to the Bukusu customs, the baraza la wazee agreed that my brother-in-law should inherit me after the burial ceremony. I was astonished and by the fact that I was HIV positive, I could not be inherited."***



**Oliver Mutoi who is living with HIV has decided to make a positive life out of her status. She makes bracelets and earrings to earn a living.** Pictures: Arita Kemunto

tus, Mutoi decided that she would be there for her children. She disclosed her status to them and decided to enlighten many other people to come out in the open.

"I continued to attend meetings of the support group. Initially, I could not stand before people but I have been strengthened and can now talk about my HIV status and how those who are positive should go about it," she says.

Months later, Mutoi lost her job due to her ill health. "Life was unbearable. It dawned on me that I was alone with all the miseries which surrounded me," she narrates.

She returned home with hope and determination that God would answer her prayers again. She started making earrings, necklaces and bracelets to sell. Whatever little she got as income, she used to care for and educate her children.

In 2004, she fell sick again with a lot of complications. She had visited a doctor who diagnosed her with high blood pressure and diabetes.

Despite the challenges, she never forgets to take her anti-retroviral drugs. She has set an alarm which reminds her to take the medicine religiously on time as required.

Mutoi now works as a volunteer community mobilizer during outreach activities at the centre. She is determined to fight the stigma

and discrimination from the community which comes about as a result of ignorance. She also helps people in her community to go for HIV testing to enable them know their status and counsels them on how to live with the disease.

"I normally tell people about my status. I wear T-shirts that are emboldened with the words *HIV and AIDs* with an aim of spreading the 'gospel' for it is good for all people to know their HIV status," Mutoi explains. She adds: "From the messages on the T-shirts, I receive mixed reactions but it will help those who are infected avoid infecting others."

## Family

HIV has not spared her family. One of her grandsons is living with HIV while her daughter Angela died from Aids three years ago. Her son's wife also died from Aids.

"He has re-married but they are a discordant couple," she says. After going for a HIV test, the wife was found to be positive while the husband is negative.

"People should know that HIV and AIDs is not only for the young. Look at me, I am 65 years old and still strong because I have accepted my status," says Mutoi.

She notes that it is the stigma that contributes to the infection. Her advice to all the women living with the virus is that they should "refuse to let the virus control their lives, instead live for their children and forget about the men who have tried to destroy their lives".

"We can get other men who deserve our love but we are the only mothers our children will ever have and know. Let us live positive and longer lives for them," she advises.

# Clerics walk the peace talk ahead of polls

By GILBERT OCHIENG

As the General Election draws nearer, Kenyans have expressed fears of a repeat of the post elections violence as occurred in 2007-2008.

It is on this background that a team of religious leaders from Central Province have been walking the talk literally. The leaders under the Amani Kenya Initiative have been walking from Nairobi to Busia to promote the importance of peaceful co-existence between different communities. They have also been preaching to members of the public along the way about the benefits of a holding a peaceful General Election.

The church members and pastors from various ethnic communities are led by Reverend Joseph Ngugi, who says: "The purpose for walking all the way from Nairobi to Busia County was purely to educate Kenyans on the importance of peaceful co-existence among various ethnic groups in order to avoid a repeat of the post election violence witnessed in 2007-2008."

During the walk, the pastors have based their prayers and preaching on seven issues as outlined in the Book of Proverbs 6:16-19 comprising things that God hates such as false witnesses, lying tongue and feet that are swift to do evil among others.

Speaking at the Busia District Headquarters where they paid a

courtesy call on the County Commissioner, the pastors urged churches to be at the forefront in preaching peaceful co-existence among various ethnic tribes within their respective areas.

"As religious leaders we must lead by example ensuring we have laid effective peace strategies within our areas of jurisdiction," said Ngugi, adding that churches are in a better position to play a key role in peace building. Initiatives.

So far they have visited Central, Nairobi, Rift-Valley, Nyanza and Western provinces. They plan to continue with the sensitisation exercise in other parts of the country to ensure all Kenyans uphold peace.

"We will proceed with our peace mission and ensure that we cover the entire country ahead of the elections scheduled to take place in March, next year," said Ngugi.

They were received on arrival at the Busia District Headquarters by Busia County Commissioner Joyce Isiakho who was accompanied by Busia police boss Kenneth Kimani.

Isiakho urged all religious and political leaders in the entire County to emulate the church leaders in both words and action order to avoid election violence.

"Peace is paramount, therefore there is need to preach peace and harmony among our communities to



ensure peaceful co-existence," noted Isiakho. She added: "Leaders should avoid hate speech that might cause ethnic animosities."

**Peace crusaders under Amani Kenya Initiative planting a tree at the Busia District Headquarters. They were in the town to advocate for peaceful elections. Picture: Gilbert Ochieng**

## Global Fund releases more money for the fight against HIV

By TITUS MAERO

The Global Fund has been lauded for the role it has continued to play in the fight against HIV and Aids disease in Kenya.

According to the Kenya Red Cross Society a total of 170,000 people living with HIV have been put on anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs through KRCS programmes using money from the fund.

Speaking at the launch of the Global Fund Round 10 at the Kakamega Golf Hotel, Miriam Ngure programme co-ordinator at the Kenya Red Cross signed a contract with the Global Fund secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland as a non-state principal recipient to undertake HIV and Aids programmes.

Ngure said the organisation signed \$4 million funding for a five year period to be disbursed in two phases to enable the largest humanitarian organisation in the country undertake its HIV and Aids activities countrywide.

"The Global Fund Round 10 for HIV and Aids programmes are based on Kenya National Aids Strategy Plan (KNASP) of 2010-2012 which seeks to deliver a HIV free society in Kenya by reducing new HIV infections," Ngure noted.

She said the money from the Global Fund also aims at improving the quality of life for those infected and affected by the disease. It will also mitigate the so-

cial and economic impact of the scourge among those living with the virus.

She said the money will be used to increase access to HIV testing and controlling, procurement of ARVs, expanding services for the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) and provision of services for most at risk population including commercial sex workers.

"Kenya Red Cross has come up with a programme that ensures participation with the Ministry of Medical Services at regional and district level where meetings are held to evaluate the initiative," Ngure explained. She added: "Measures have been put in place to address emerging challenges in the use of the Global Fund money"

Ngure named such measures as proper understanding of the Global Fund procedures, reporting requirements, coordination, documentation and submission of field reports.

"So far Kenya Red Cross has procured 80 million HIV and Aids test kits," she revealed adding that areas with high cases of HIV infection include Nyanza which has 13 per cent, Nairobi (seven per cent) while the national prevalence rate is 6.3 per cent.

Ngure said the organisation has been striving to ensure systems are in place and maintained in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the programme.

## Church takes leadership in HIV care and management

By DIANA WANYONYI

A discordant couple in a village in Mombasa town are living positively with HIV, thanks to the support of a local church.

Mishomoroni area in Kisauni Constituency is renowned for being the home of one of the biggest slums in the coastal city known for the wrong reasons.

These are its mushrooming slums with countless dens of chang'aa in addition to being notorious for rising incidences of insecurity and of drug abuse.

However, the Nomiya Church based, in Mishomoroni area Kisauni Constituency, is one of faith based organisations that provide mutual support to its congregation and locals by providing counselling and education on HIV and Aids as well as other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Two hundred meters from church is Mrs. Elizabeth Achieng's house, a mother to a three-year old baby whom I found resting under a tree at noon. With a smile, she directs me to sit next to her on a bench. Though she looks healthy and full of life she informs me that she has been living with the HIV virus for five years.

### Shock

"I got the news from the hospital during my pre-natal visits and I was shocked! It was difficult to get to terms with the news. However, I was a bit relieved when the doctor told me that my unborn baby would be free from the virus," she says.

Achieng's husband is HIV negative, making them a discordant couple. She proudly narrates about the support she has been getting from him.

"It was difficult for me to break the news to my husband, but I got the cour-

age and told him. I knew he would beat me and give me a divorce, but to my surprise, he took it positively. We went to the nearby health centre for him to be tested but his results turned negative," explains Achieng. She adds: "Since that time, he makes sure that I take my anti-retroviral therapy (ARVs) daily and he even reminds me to go for check-ups on monthly basis. My baby is also HIV negative."

Before joining the Nomiya Church, Achieng an isolated life for fear of being the laughing stock in her community.

"I never used to mingle with anybody including my relatives when I realised that I was infected with HIV. I did not have confidence to speak before my fellow women especially during merry-go-rounds, I felt like they already knew my status and they were laughing at me," notes Achieng. She explains: "But my sister could not tolerate my behaviour. She insisted to know what was wrong with me. I told her and she advised me to join Nomiya Church as it has HIV/AIDs programmes," she said.

### Support

Norman Otieno, a pastor and counsellor at the church says they started the support group to empower and educate people living with HIV and those who are most at risk of being infected, especially the youth and women.

"We started this programme to provide counselling and mutual support to church members and also other members of the society on HIV and AIDs after we discovered that this area has many widows and orphans after their spouses and father's died of Aids," says Otieno.

Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2008-2009 shows that women are most infected with HIV at 8.8 per cent (?) compared to men at 4.3 per

cent of those aged between 15 and 49. An estimated 1.4 million adults aged 15-64 are infected with HIV, with about one million rural and 400,000 urban residents infected (NASCO, 2009).

This motivated Pastor Otieno to start a support group of 30 people, majority of them being women.

The group mainly targets women who are most at risk of being infected with the virus. "This is why we formed a group dubbed: 'Boresha Uzazi Young Mother's Club' that provides information on reproductive health, HIV and AIDs as well as family planning," says Otieno.

"We also encourage them to join different groups so as to spread information that they have learnt to others," he explains.

"I felt like there was need for me to deliver a message to people living with HIV as they feel isolated. With this testimony, after sometime, some of the infected people started to open up and we are doing well in our support group. The sermons that we receive from the church every week uplift us," says Isaac Waguda, a peer educator who confidently confessed his HIV status during the church service. He adds: "We get ARVs from the hospital and sometimes we are trained by different non-governmental organisations on stigma reduction, peer education as well as HIV and AIDs."

However, all is not smooth for the support group as it faces several challenges such as lack of aid to its members because most of them are not well off. Some need clothing, food and money.

"We need support of sponsors and well-wishers to help us in this programme because we are now receiving more people than we had planned for," says Waguda.

# Taxis ordered to mark their cars to enhance security

By ALLAN MURIMI

Taxi operators in Othaya have been ordered to paint a yellow line on their cars to help police track them in cases of theft.

The police said they could not differentiate between a private car and a taxi and, therefore, directed the operators to follow traffic rules and have stickers on their cars.

Nyeri South OCPD, Adriel Nyange, noted that the police and taxi operators must come up with strategies to fight car-thefts in the area.

"Taxis must follow traffic laws and have a yellow line and a sticker so that we can differentiate between them and a private car. This will also help us track any stolen cabs," he

said.

He was speaking to the operators after a taxi that had been stolen in Othaya town was recovered at Mbombo area in Murang'a, two weeks ago.

## Attack

The taxi was stolen when Jackson Kanyi, chairman Othaya Taxi Operators was stabbed on the chest and face as he struggled with two armed robbers who had posed as customers during the incident that took place at night.

He told the *Reject* that he was approached by a customer who wanted to be ferried to Kairo in Murang'a at 9 pm.

"The customer said he was with somebody else who was waiting

at Division Bar in the town where they requested me to go into to the bar bargain the fare. We negotiated and agreed on the fee," explained Kanyi.

He took them to Kairo before they commandeered the car and stabbed him twice and left him at the spot for dead where he was found by police and taken to Kiriani Mission Hospital.

Police and Othaya taxi operators started searching for the vehicle whose number plates were circulated to police stations and posts in the area.

The vehicle was spotted by the police at Mukuyu roadblock but the occupants declined to stop after they were flagged down.

Nyange said the car ran over the

spikes puncturing two tires and it did not stop but went on to Mbombo area where it was found abandoned.

## Arrest

The police and taxi operators from Othaya combed the area and managed to nab one suspect who was taken to Murang'a Police Station.

"The police would have easily identified the car as a taxi if it had a yellow line and a sticker," noted Nyange.

He denied allegations made in the media that cases of car thefts are on the increase in the area saying that only two vehicles had been stolen in three months and that they were recovered.

It is alleged that some residents had claimed that they had sought the help of two witchdoctors to help

them identify the thieves.

Peter Wanjuki, a taxi operator, distanced himself saying the men who had claimed to be looking for witchdoctors were not speaking on behalf of the operators.

He accused them of being touts who had not been engaged in the search for Kanyi and his vehicle adding that the operators were not insecure.

At the same time police arrested six *boda boda* operators in a morning crackdown in an effort to fight crime in the town.

Nyange said the motorcycles are used by criminals who do not follow the main roads but move on side tracks.

*Boda bodas* which are not affiliated to any cooperative society are not allowed to operate in the area.

# New mill to enhance coffee production in Gusii

By BEN OROKO

Small holder coffee farmers continue to suffer as the coffee bean theft has increased.

Widespread theft of coffee beans from co-operative societies' stores or while the produce is on transit to commercial coffee mills located far away from the Gusii region are to blame for the poor earnings.

The problem is compounded by increasing coffee transportation costs that have over several years exposed small-holder coffee growers in the Gusii region to untold agonies.

With the establishment of a coffee mill by the giant Gusii Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union (GCFCU) in the Kisii County, coffee farmers from the region are a happy lot as the initiative will not only address cases of coffee theft and transportation costs but will also translate to improved coffee earnings for the farmers and empower them economically.

## Reception

The establishment of the coffee mill in the Gusii region has been received positively by small-holder coffee farmers from Moromba Farmers Co-operative Society in Nyamira County who have commended the union's initiative as a noble idea that will transform the coffee industry in the region and turn around the local community members' standards of living and household economies through improved coffee earnings to the farmers.

The farmers who had switched off from coffee farming to alternative crops like tomatoes, bananas and other fast maturing cash and horticultural crops due to mismanagement of the coffee sub-sector which led to poor payments to farmers are slowly switching back to coffee farming thanks to the establishment of a coffee

mill in the region which is aimed at turning around the sub-sector for the benefit of the farmers.

Farmers who spoke to the *Reject* welcomed the Union's efforts to establish a coffee mill in the region saying it will reduce transportation costs and coffee theft incidents.

## Timing

The farmers argue that the mill had come at the right time and with the county Government in which they are expected to turn around household economies and improve standards of living within Kisii and Nyamira counties.

Speaking at Moromba Main Farmers Co-operative Society grounds, William Asiago, who is a farmer said they were adopting a Brazilian coffee breed known as Batian as part of the efforts to ensure there was coffee production all year round.

"This will help to sustain operations of the newly established coffee mill," said Asiago.

He observed that Batian was a fast maturing coffee breed and growing it would translate to continued coffee production and increased earnings for the farmers.

"This will empower them economically and scale down cases of rural poverty at household levels," noted Asiago.

He noted that it will also translate to better earnings for the farmers as transportation costs which have been eating into the farmers' proceeds reduce.

"Coffee theft cases will also be reduced to minimum if the local co-operative societies' management committees will sign contracts of delivering the farmers' coffee produce for milling at the Gusii Coffee Mill instead of transporting farmers' coffee produce to commercial coffee mills located away from the region," Asiago observed.



A woman dries her coffee berries in Gusii before taking to the mill. The construction of a new coffee mill in the region has been welcomed by farmers. Picture: Ben Orok

As a coffee farmer, Asiago commended the management of the Gusii Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union for establishing a coffee mill in the region.

He regretted that piling of coffee produce in the co-operative societies' stores and transporting the coffee produce to far away coffee mills were some of the causes of coffee theft witnessed in the region.

"With the establishment of a coffee mill in Gusii region, incidents of coffee theft while in stores or on transit has been reduced to minimum by the distance to the new mill," Asiago noted. He added: "Collection of coffee from the co-operative societies' stores will be convenient and cost effective to the farmers."

He challenged local co-operative management officials to intensify education meetings for the farmers to educate them on the importance of embracing modern crop husbandry and agronomic practices to tap on the benefits of the new coffee mill and maximize earnings.

The farmer's remarks came barely after the Government recently waived

coffee debts worth KSh13million owed by small-holder coffee farmers contracted to 27 primary producer coffee co-operative societies affiliated to the giant Gusii Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union (GCFCU). This was to relieve them of the burden of servicing the loans and concentrate on improving coffee production.

While making the announcement, Co-operative Development and Marketing Minister Joseph Nyagah tipped coffee farmers in Gusii region on the benefits of the Government's waiver of coffee debts. He challenged them to use the opportunity to improve their production and maximise their earnings.

## Efforts

Nyagah noted the Government's efforts to write-off coffee debts owed by small-holder coffee growers across the country was meant to boost production and enhance better payments to farmers through production of quality coffee that fetches good prices in the world market.

Speaking in Kisii during the co-operative leaders meeting at the Gusii

Coffee Farmers Co-operative Union (GCFCU) grounds, Nyagah disclosed that the Government coffee debt write offs were prompted by the increasing demand for Kenyan coffee in the world coffee market, especially in India and China.

Citing GCFCU and Wakenya Pamoja Sacco Society, which received coffee debt waivers of KSh13million and KSh5.7million respectively. Nyagah called on other unions and saccos to emulate the two organisations by putting into prudent use of the funds for the benefit of coffee farmers.

The GCFCU used part of the KSh13million to purchase a KSh11.2million truck to be used in ferrying milled coffee from the Union's Coffee Mill to the market while Wakenya Sacco topped up the KSh5.7 million with some funds from the Sacco's kitty.

This was used to develop a new product identified as coffee crop advance to facilitate smallholder coffee growers offset farm labour expenses to improve their production.

# Donkeys gain recognition for running business in Mwea



By KARIUKI MWANGI

**Donkeys at work in Nyeri County. The animals have been used to transport water and other good in Mwea town.** Picture: Joseph Mukubwa

Donkeys are fondly referred to as beasts of burden and the relationship between the animals and human beings revolves around baggage.

However, as the country races against time to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Vision 2030 few have paid attention to the role of the donkey in both of the ambitious targets.

With a population of 6,000 plus donkeys, Mwea East District, Kirinyaga County has one of the highest numbers of the animal.

Each day break, residents inch closer to realising their economic and social dreams as the animals literally drives the economy around Kenya's biggest rice irrigation scheme.

From carrying manure and seeds to the fields, to fetching water for domestic use, the donkey is the most important asset for a farmer here. If the animals were to go on strike it could halt most of the businesses in the entire region.

## Dreams

The animal which was in yester-years regarded as a mere beast of burden is slowly cutting a niche as a key player in helping the community realise its dreams.

Rice paddies are inaccessible by vehicles and the 24,000 acre irrigation scheme is sub-divided into sections that are owned by farmers who grow the crop once or twice a year.

According to Titus Musyoka who works with the Kenya Network for Dissemination of Agricultural Technologies (KENDAT) which runs the (Heshimu Punda campaign), only donkey carts can access most parts of the expansive scheme.

"Once farmers buy fertilizers or manure it is loaded on the donkey

pulled carts which deliver to the most remote part of the region," says Musyoka.

He adds: "During harvesting of rice, the same donkeys are used to cart away bags of paddy rice to commercial millers and drying fields that dot Mwea town along the busy Makutano-Embu highway."

Motorists using the road have to bear with the nuisance of the donkeys which mostly ply the route as they dutifully deliver the produce to hundreds of stores in homes and town.

However, unknown to many these donkeys, just like cars, are owned by individuals who have invested in them to provide a means of transport as an income generating project.

A spot check at one of the biggest commercial millers, Nice Rice Millers Limited in the outskirts of the town reveals that owning a donkey is a worthwhile investment.

About 50 donkeys have been deployed by the proprietor, Charles Kaburu Mkombozi, to assist farmers drying paddy rice in the nearby fields to carry the grain in and out of the stores.

According to Francis Wanyoike Kairu, firm manager, they have ten carts each pulled by two donkeys and on a bad day each cart makes about KSh3,000.

Each bag loaded is charged at KSh15 and in a day over 3,000 bags are removed from the store for drying while others are freshly brought by farmers.

Hundreds of youth earn up to KSh1,000 in a day by just climbing on the carts and directing the animals in a routine whose peak is December when the main crop is harvested.

Mwea produces over 48,000 met-

ric tonnes of paddy rice and a sizeable amount is delivered from the farms to the mills by the donkeys.

However, the expansion of Mwea town due to the thriving rice industry has posed some challenges. Though there is so much water but not a drop is available for drinking.

Each day tens of donkeys are used to deliver drinking water to thousands of homes that have continued to be built since the scheme and the entire town lacks piped water.

Samuel Muriithi says that each day he has to fetch 15 drums of 100 litres each from the main irrigation canal that cuts across the busy town to deliver to his consumers.

Muriithi, who has been in this business for the last 12 years, notes that his donkeys are used to the routine claiming that some of them can take water to his clients without being followed.

Hotels, schools, market stalls and other establishments wholly rely on donkeys to deliver water.

Elijah Fundi, 23, earns KSh800 from his two donkeys which he uses to vend water in the town and only spends KSh200 to buy bran for the healthy looking animals.

## Recognition

As the population of donkeys soars, self help groups have been formed by owners in a bold move that signify that the beast of burden is finally gaining recognition.

The donkey owners have formed a support group. Ngurubani Old Stage Donkey Group has 26 members aged below 27 years and they own over 50 donkeys. The association has helped them to ensure the animals are well

taken care of.

Donkeys are also used to fetch firewood and construction materials from the interior of the scheme which is characterized by poorly maintained earth roads that are not accessible during rainy seasons.

The proposed KSh12 billion expansion project for Mwea Irrigation Scheme is expected to double the land under irrigation to over 48,000 acres which means the beasts of burden will have an extra duty.

It is the high population of donkeys that attracted KENDAT which introduced the Heshimu Punda programme in 2006 due to the poor welfare of the animals.

Musyoka reveals that before the sensitization, donkeys in the community were ill treated by owners and one would see them with visible wounds all over.

"Apart from helping various agencies enforce Cap 360 of the laws of Kenya that prohibits cruelty against animals, the community project has assisted donkey owners to vaccinate and treat the sick ones," says Musyoka.

However, several donkeys are killed every month by motorists along the roads but that has reduced significantly with the training of handlers on road safety.

It is common now to find donkey carts competing for space on the Makutano-Embu highway and motorists too have learned that they have the right of way as they are a way of life in this part of the country.

The increased population of the animals has multiplied conflicts where a number of them have been fatally wounded after attacks when they stray into private crop fields.

# Poverty levels set to reduce in Busia

By JAYNE CHEROTICH

The current high poverty levels in Busia County will be history when a recently launched agriculture and livestock programme takes root.

The County on the Kenya-Uganda border has been experiencing development challenges such as low agricultural productivity, poor access roads, poorly maintained market infrastructure, food insecurity and poor nutritional status.

All these will be addressed through the Programme for Agriculture and Livelihoods in Western Communities (PALWECO) is a bilateral integrated programme between the Governments of Kenya and Finland. The programme is designed to reduce poverty and improve the livelihoods and living standards of residents of Busia County, where currently poverty stands at over 60 per cent.

The project which was launched by the Prime Minister Raila Odinga will cover Teso North, Teso South, Busia, Butula, Nambale, Samia and Bunyala, giving an opportunity for all the concerned communities to benefit.

## What did Raila say

The Ministry of State for Planning, National Development and Vision 2030 is coordinating the implementation of the programme through various Government of Kenya technical departments.

According to Minister for Planning, Wycliffe Oparanya, his ministry has been planning and implementing rural development programmes all over Kenya.

Oparanya noted: "PALWECO has been designed to enable households and especially women to grow food crops for the market selling directly to consumers." He added: "It will enable families feed themselves better and improve their standards of livelihood."

Among the main activities identified and prioritised as key to boosting the economy of the sub-counties are rice storage, support to Bunyala Fish Cooperative, improved management of local poultry and bee-keeping, disease resistant cassava multiplication and collective grain storage. These projects represent the growing determination to ensure agriculture and nutrition get the attention they deserve.

Through this programme, the average household income is expected to increase from KSh1,239 today to KSh8,000 in 2016.

The launch of the programme came just a week after another multi-billion irrigation project was launched in 'Todonyang' in Turkana County with the support of the Israeli Government.



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