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ISSUE 103

November 1- 30, 2014

Reject

Media Diversity
Centre

A monthly newspaper by the Media Diversity Centre, a project of African Woman and Child Feature Service



Searching for the elusive gold:

Despite the health hazards, Kakamega miners are not giving up anytime soon

By VALENTINE ATIENO

For the common man, anything that can bring a little cash and put food on the table will always be important no matter the risks involved.

And when it is something that is considered valuable, those searching for it never tire, hoping that one day, one time they will strike it rich.

This is the case of the gold miners of Kakamega County. Some have never gone beyond the borders of their village as with each passing day they hope that they will strike the right stone that will get them out of poverty.

In Rosterman village in Kakamega, David Makaka, has been a gold-digger for more than two decades, but without much success.

He started mining when he was barely into his teens and is one of the many from the County who have sought for the illusive fortune in the mines for decades. With each day that the sun rises, they all hope against hope that they will strike the right stone that will bring to an end the poverty they have experienced.

“When you see us here every morning searching for gold, we have faith that one day we will succeed to get that which will change our lives forever,” says Makaka.

Initially when he started working at the mines, like every beginner, he worked as a rock driller. However, despite this being a risky job that exposes them to hazardous conditions, they never give up.

The act of drilling rock to get to the gold produces large quantities of dust which are harmful to the miners' health. It leaves them exposed to various respiratory diseases.

The situation gets worse for those who are always working in the goldmines without a break. They do not have a social life for they spend most of their day searching for the precious mineral.

“I have never known how to socialise, most of my time is spent at the site busy digging and washing stones with hope that I will get rich soon,” says Makaka. This is the story that is repeated by his colleagues at the mines.

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Men and women eking a living at Kakamega goldmines. Picture: Valentine Atieno

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Stakeholders urged to involve communities in tourism development

By HENRY KAHARA

The Government has unveiled ambitious plans to revamp the tourism sector which is in the brink of collapse.

This is due to several adverse travel advisories by some powerful Western countries and Governments following the rising cases of insecurity and terrorism linked to militia groups like the Al Shabaab.

To salvage the sector, the Government is taking steadfast measures on security matters to restore the country's image as a peaceful tourist destination. Kenyans are also being urged to maintain peace by flashing out and reporting suspected criminals amongst them to the authorities.

Governors in the 47 Counties have been urged to revive local tourist destinations to attract both domestic and foreign tourists. However, this will not be possible without sensitisation and marketing of the country's diversity in unity to attract more tourists.

However, stakeholders in the tourism sector are being urged to involve local communities in all their tourism promotion activities.

According to Kezia Odemba, Assistant Director of Tourism, communities must be involved in the management of the sector because they are the key stakeholders who deal directly with the tourists.

She noted: "Kenya is endowed with rich and diverse cultural heritage, abundant wildlife, rich agriculture as well as unique landscape

which offer special tourism experience."

She called on the public to join in the fight against terrorism by exposing any suspect living and working with them.

Odemba added: "Without proper strategic planning and organisation, all these resources mean nothing and that is why there is need for the Government to work together with other stakeholders in the communities."

While the community is key in the tourism sector, stakeholders must ensure that proper standards are maintained.

On his part, Willis Ondiek, head of Standards and Training Accreditation at Tourism Regulatory Authority, there are recommended standards and policies that ensure quality of service delivery.

Ondiek urged Counties to adhere to the regulations before marketing their tourist attractions.

"The process of classifications of hotels is on-going to ensure clear and specific standards of service delivery are maintained," said Ondiek.

He noted the move will ensure that revenue remitted from the hospitality industry improves.

"We don't want garbage in, garbage out in the tourism sector and this is why we are going to classify hotels into "stars" according to standards and performance in service delivery," Ondiek explained.

Boost

His sentiments were echoed by Odemba who said their emphasis was to make the sector as marketable as



Empty beaches along the Kenyan Coast are common place due to adverse travel advisories by some Western powers. This has brought the tourism industry virtually to its knees. Picture: Courtesy

possible by paying employees well to boost their morale.

She said issues that affect standards in tourism sector are numerous starting from training institutions, employment procedures, salaries and management.

But Odemba regretted that poor management of the sector had led to quacks infiltrating the industry and making it perform badly. She challenged stakeholders in the industry to put their houses in order before requesting for more funds to market the sector.

"There should be vetting of potential employees before they are hired to redeem the tourism sector

from quacks who do not have public relations," said Odemba. She added: "We only need those who qualify for the job. The sector must re-organise itself first and iron out derailing issues."

Expose

The Government's policy towards national development as anchored in the Vision 2030 has prioritised tourism as the leading sector under the economic pillar. The vision aims at transforming Kenya into a newly industrialised, middle income country providing better quality of life to all its citizens, by the year 2030.

"We must pull together and address all emerging challenges towards tourism growth and development such as insecurity, travel advisories, limited tourism offerings, poor road network and regional competition from our neighbours," says Odemba.

The Ministry of East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism is committed to develop, regulate and promote tourism through various avenues. With the lifting of travel advisories to Kenya by United Kingdom and others to follow soon, Kenya expects tourism industry to bounce back and claim its position as the leading sector of the economy.

A million pads for girls in Siaya

By OMONDI GWENGI

Siaya County first lady Rosella Rasanga is seeking to source for a million sanitary towels for schoolgirls in the region in a bid to encourage them to stay in school during menstrual periods.

Rasanga said that through her ambitious programme dubbed *A Million Pads (AMPAD)*, she intends to source for the items from well-wishers and the community at large to support the vulnerable girl-child in the region who undergoes many challenges during her menstrual cycle forcing her to stay out of school.

Initiative

The County's First Lady pointed that the initiative is driven by high levels of poverty experienced in the region that forces potential but bright and needy girls to skip lessons since they cannot afford to purchase the items.

"We intend to raise funds for the pads through support from mothers, especially those who have reached menopause and those who have additional stock with them," Rasanga said.

Her initiative is similar to the *Kenya for Kenya* which did not entirely depend on the Diaspora but received unwavering support from within. That initiative was to raise funds and foodstuffs for starving Kenyans living in the North.

She was speaking at the County Club Hotel after meeting key stakeholders who included Ministry of Health officials to get their support for the initiative.

"The University of Michigan has already expressed willingness to support the programme which is set to kick off any time this month," Rasanga disclosed.

Distribute

She added that the pads to be distributed to the beneficiaries will be inscribed with messages of hope in a bid to lure the girl-child to stay in school and perform well in examinations.

The session was officially opened by Siaya County Director of Public Health, Dr Samuel Omondi Owino and County Referral Hospital Nursing in Charge, Hellen Okwach, among others.

Residents of Kwale County happy to see the light

BY SHAKA MPEMBA

Over 1,000 villagers in Kwale County are set to benefit from solar powered lantern and lighting kits.

This is after a Non-Governmental Organisation which deals with conservation, the World Wide Fund (WWF) partnered with Bare Foot Power in a financial programme to benefit residents of Fihoni and Miyani village.

Dubbed Clean Energy Village Initiative, the pilot project is targeting 300 households in both villages.

According to World Wide Fund, the initiative is in line with its overall goal of achieving energy access in the world by 2050. It also seeks to also address energy poverty in the County through provision of clean lighting and cooking solutions using solar lighting, sustainable sources of wood fuel and improved cook stoves.

Energy

"The project will help reduce over-reliance on kerosene, which most villagers use for lighting lamps at night," said Mohamed Awer, WWF Country Director, during the launch.

It will also reduce pressure on biomass energy mainly from trees, which has led to de-forestation in most parts of

the country.

"About 80 per cent of the population in this area depends on kerosene and biomass for cooking. They spend about KSh30 per day on kerosene," said Awer. He added: "This totals to KSh900 per month, and if they acquire this new gadget, they will be able to save more money and promote the environment."

The residents can now acquire power sets of a 2.5 watts solar panel, a lamp and universal charger through a financial programme — Kaya Kinondo Financial Services Association which is a village bank.

The set costs KSh3,500 which can be paid through instalments of as little as KSh100 and to kick start it, World Wide Fund has given a grant of KSh1 million towards the project.

More than 50 households have so far benefited from the project which was unveiled at Kinondo location.

The portable lantern is mounted on a stand and placed on a table or can be suspended on a high position or ceiling to light up the room, depending on the user's need.

Charge

A solar panel is placed in the sun during the day and can be removed and stored in the house after charging.

The lamps, which can be used to

walk around the compound, lasts up to 60 hours when fully charged. The universal charger can also be used to charge mobile phones.

"I am very happy now that my children can study at night without worrying about kerosene consumption. They can do their homework as I cook at the same time," said Mbuhe Martin, a widow and mother of four. She added: "Before we used to use a kerosene lamp in turns which was affecting them."

The Kwale County government represented by Lands and Natural Resources Executive, Ali Mafimbo, pledged to support the project to increase its coverage in the County.

World Wide Fund Kenya has been operating and engaging in various projects in different parts of the country since the 1960s.

The Clean Energy Village Initiative (CEVI) in Kwale County is part of the sustainable energy project which aims at addressing energy poverty in the Kenya through a rights-based approach that encompasses both national and County governments, civil society organisations, community, research and learning institutions, and the private sector. World Wide Fund has identified Kwale to be the pilot County of the initiative.

What tax-payers paid towards 2013 General Election?

By JANE GODIA

Last year's General Election left Kenya a wounded country as winners celebrated while losers cried foul.

The Coalition on Reforms and Democracy (CORD) pitted against the Jubilee Coalition that they were denied a win that was rightfully theirs. The Coalition ended up at the High Court of Kenya where the Supreme Court ruled that Jubilee had won.

However, despite these challenges, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has not been able to come out and discuss what it did during that time.

Taking stock of what went on with the elections one and a half years later, the IEBC chair Ahmed Issack Hassan noted that the electoral body was faced with a number of challenges including working with a smaller budget than they had requested, but ensured everything was done to their ability.

Addressing the media in a post-election evaluation, Hassan said: "We asked for KSh38 billion, but we were allocated KSh24.2 billion. The Commission received a further KSh2.5 billion from donors in a basket funding giving us a total of KSh26.7 billion."

According to Hassan, of this amount KSh8 billion can be classified as capital investment because KSh6.8 billion was used on the controversial Biometric Voter Register and KSh1.2 billion on Electronic Voter Identification Device.

The chairman recalled that IEBC had the biggest responsibility in the history of the country dealing with a huge number of candidates and a bigger budget than ever seen before. Six seats were up for grabs, they were President, Governor, Senator, County Women's Representative, Member of Parliament and Member of the County Assembly.

General Election

At the March 4, 2013 General Election, there were about 21.8 million eligible voters as per the 2010 population census.

"We anticipated registering 18 million Kenyans for the elections with 15,894 Biometric Voter Register, but were only able to register 14,388,781. Of these 14,352,545 were voters with biometrics, 36,236 were without biometrics," Hassan explained.

He added: "It cost KSh3.8 billion to register 14.3 million voters, while the Diaspora voters cost KSh12 million. This translated to \$52 per voter in the Diaspora and \$3 per local voter," explained Hassan.

The Commission purchased over 240,000 ballot boxes for the 34,000 polling stations and printed over 100 million ballot papers. On Election Day, close to 80 million votes were cast.

According to the IEBC chairman, the actual cost of the polls was to be KSh26.7 billion less KSh8 million for the capital investment which comes to KSh18.7 billion. This when divided by the 14,388,781 voters comes to KSh1,299.6 (\$15) per voter.

There were 1,882 elective positions contested by 12,776 candidates. At the end of the Elections, there were 188 petitions challenging results, and out of these 163 were dismissed, while 25 were heard to their logical conclusion.

A total of 17 by-elections were held out of which 15 returned the same candidates with only two new candidates in Mathare and Nyaribari Chache.

Hassan noted that the media did its work by setting agenda for citizens who could vote for their preferred candidate as well as ensuring that the polls were peaceful.

According to Linus Kaikai, chairperson of Kenya Editors Guild, the 2013 elections



were the first time the media were taken care of with a well-established media centre.

High stakes game

Kaikai noted that the polls were a high stakes game and the biggest test for media. He noted that this is the time when the country is usually divided into two blocs.

"This is the time when media invest heavily in covering polls, including with outside broadcasting equipment," Kaikai said.

He added: "Most media houses intend to invest in the tallying process on the ground as well."

However, in the post-election evaluation Kaikai challenged the IEBC to ensure that the



Chairman of IEBC, Ahmed Issack Hassan

IEBC official helps voters to cast their ballot papers for the six seats during the last general elections. Picture: Correspondent

2017 polls is an improvement so that results are delivered faster.

"In 2013 there were system failures when we all expected results to be transmitted electronically," Kaikai recalled.

He urged the IEBC to ensure all questions that need to be addressed are addressed now and that all equipment needed must be bought early without the Commission waiting until the last minute.

"The IEBC can address the negative issues by living its core values day by day," Kaikai said.

There were 1,882 elective positions contested by 12,776 candidates. At the end of the Elections, there were 188 petitions challenging results, and out of these 163 were dismissed, while 25 were heard to their logical conclusion

"The Commission should not be characterised as pro for certain group, but must be seen to be independent because image matters," the KEG chairman said.

Kaikai noted that when the Commission is seen to be divided, it leaves room for speculation.

Even as the IEBC shared what went on in 2013, it notes that voter registration is ongoing. As at October 15, 2014, there were 12,123 new voters who had been enrolled in the continuous voter registration exercise. Hassan says North Coast region (Kilifi, Lamu and Tana River) had registered 975; South Coast (Mombasa, Kwale, and Taita Taveta) 905; Garissa County 100; Wajir and Mandera Counties 87; Upper Eastern region (Isiolo, and Marsabit counties) 776; Central Eastern region (Meru and Embu) 655; and Lower Eastern (Machakos, Makueni and Kitui) 1,799; Nairobi region which includes Kajiado County 82; Upper Central (Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Nyandarua) 648; Lower Central (Murang'a and Kiambu) 598; South Rift (Narok and Bomet) 308; Central Rift (Nakuru, Kericho, Samburu, Baringo and Laikipia) 671; North Rift (Uasin Gishu, Elgeyo Marakwet, Nandi, Trans Nzoia, Turkana and West Pokot) 1,112; Nyanza South region (Kisii, Nyamira and Migori) 1,070; Central Nyanza (Homa Bay, Kisumu and Siaya) 1,559; Lower Western (Kakamega and Vihiga) 435 and Upper Western (Bungoma and Busia) 1,043.

The IEBC is calling on all Kenyans, who have attained voting age, to go to their offices at constituency level and be registered.

"In this exercise the Commission is targeting three groups; those who recently attained voting age; those who were qualified but did not manage to register before last General Elections and those who wish to transfer voting details to new stations of their choice," says the IEBC chairman.

Slum's environmental face-lift

Kibera sparkles as clean-up initiative comes with good tidings for young people

By HENRY OWINO

The many unemployed youth in the sprawling Kibera informal settlements are smiling, though not all the way to the bank, but because they are now engaged with something that is keeping them busy.

Their actions have made residents of Kibera a happy lot with the on-going environmental clean-up being done by young people in the area led by National Youth Service (NYS).

Although it was first opposed by the local political leaders, the exercise has gone on smoothly as residents welcomed it.

According to those who live in the sprawling slums, the clean-up exercise is for their own benefit and not Members of the County Assembly, whose agenda is driven by personal and selfish political interests.

The new look National Youth Service was officially launched by President Uhuru Kenyatta in September and has picked up in earnest.

Embrace

The over 600 service men and women are helping clear blocked drainage and collecting garbage to help improve sanitation and the environment as a whole. The National Youth Service men and women are sweeping the streets and clearing bushes in the area.

The ambitious exercise has shown some of the actions that the youth can take up to keep themselves busy and ensure that Kibera, the biggest and most talked about slum in the country, is tidy.

During the launch, President Uhuru Kenyatta announced that the NYS exercise was aimed at improving the drainage systems and sanitation in the six villages within Kibera.

The President added that the project would later be rolled out to other parts of the city and the country as a whole.

There are 300 NYS

Half of their wages are also being deducted and saved into a fund to enable them continue with income-generating activities when the programme ends.

"We want to improve Kibera slums, which had been neglected for a long time. The residents also have a right to better services," said the President. He added: "We will open up the roads cutting across the slum to enable residents access to services, including fire-fighting equipment in case of a fire."

The Head of State urged leaders to work together in delivery of quality services to Kenyans and also cautioned them not to politicise the noble cause.

"Please cooperate with the National Youth Service and security agents by exposing bad elements in your midst. The national and Nairobi County governments will work together to install street lights in the slum," Kenyatta assured Kibera residents.

He was accompanied by Devolution Cabinet Secretary Anne Waiguru, Nairobi Governor Evans Kidero, and National Youth Service Director Nelson Githinji, who commended youth in the area for abandoning unlawful activities to engage in productive work.

Kidero welcomed the clean-up programme noting that it will improve on sanitation in the slums in addition to creating employment for the thousands of unemployed youth in the area.

Project

Waiguru said the clean-up exercise was part of National government project to create job opportunities to jobless youths in the country. She disclosed the project would involve slum civil works, and integrated dam construction units in Kibera.

Others projects to be rolled out in parts of the country are integrated road construction, vector control, *huduma* kitchens, traffic control, public security and agriculture units.

About 3,000 local youths will be recruited to work along with the National Youth Service team



for three months after which they will be left to work on their own," explained Waiguru. She added: "The first three months, the local youths are required to form groups from each sub-estate or village so that each group becomes responsible for cleanliness of their own estates."

"We will be paying every individual KSh350 per day that they work every week. However, every person will receive KSh250 in cash while the other KSh100 will be saved in banks for groups formed to be given at the end of this project as a capital to open up entrepreneurship projects of their interest," Waiguru announced.

She added that the Nairobi County government was part of the project and so, local leaders should support it.

According to Waiguru, this is a transformation programme that started with graduation of 10,000 National Youth Service recruits after a pass out in Gilgil, in Nakuru County.

Pillar

"The whole idea behind national service is for them to give back to Kenyans by focusing on self-employment under the Enterprise and Youth Economy pillar instead of being dependent on government," said Waiguru.

According to Joash Omollo, a resident of Kibera's Makina Village, the clean-up exercise is good for all of them. He said drainage systems that had blocked for years on end are now flowing and mountains of garbage which had never been collected as well as wrong disposal places are now history.

Omollo even joked that even the air the residents are now breathing is fresh. He dubbed the clean-up exercise as "Kibera environment facelift".

"I am a happy man because Kibera now looks like a place where human beings live in. In fact someone who left Kibera a few months ago will be surprised if he comes back now and sees the new look," Omollo said.

Businesspeople are also happy since their trade has found new customers ready to buy their commodities.

Dorine Anyango, is a fish seller in the slum and says life has turned for the better due to the National Youth Service project.

"Indeed these young men and women have put a smile on our faces especially the small-scale entrepreneurs," said Anyango. She urged: "I plead with residents to change their careless habit of dumping litter anywhere and instead help us



Top: Lorry load of NYS staff arriving in Kibera for the ambitious clean up and rehabilitation programme. Below: Men at work: NYS staff in Kibera during the clean up exercise launched by President Kenyatta. Pictures: Henry Owino

maintain this neatness."

Though a few opinion leaders from Gatwekera are opposed to the clean-up exercise due to selfish personal interests, majority of

residents have welcomed the initiative. Local youths are now earning from this environmental clean-up and it is anticipated crime rates will go down.

Fighting within County leadership a loss to the electorate

By HENRY OWINO

The devolved system of governance is slowly and effectively taking root in the country despite teething problems, a public forum in Nairobi was told.

Majority of Kenyans voted for the Constitution in 2010 hoping that it will benefit them in terms of bringing power, resources and development projects closer home.

So far, there are signs of success with new roads being constructed, irrigation schemes being initiated and, markets, hospitals as well as schools among other social amenities being built.

Implement

Initially, such initiatives had to wait for the central Government to implement and, depending on the region's political party affiliation. Opposition zones and far flung regions suffered as they were excluded from enjoying the national cake.

The current Constitution ushered in the 47 County governments and things are changing for the better.

However, these efforts are being frustrated by some Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) who have kept the County Chief Executive Officers (Governors) on their toes by holding them at ransom over demands for huge allowances and frequent foreign trips.

This is a factor that is derailing development in many Counties as Members of the County Assembly spend millions of shillings from the exchequer on controversial foreign trips.

Currently, most counties have Members of the County Assembly who are at loggerheads with their respective Governors over allowances at the expense of development.

As these wars of words continue, the electorate is suffering. According to Oloo Janak, chairman Kenya Correspondents Association (KCA), the impeachment process has been hijacked by malicious politicians, especially Members of the County Assembly to undermine devolution.

Janak urged all the 47 County Assemblies not to use impeachment as a tool for selfish interests, but to deliver development to their respective wards for voters.

He challenged Members of the County Assembly to prove to the electorate that their first mandate is to deliver services and projects to them.



Nairobi Governor Evans Kidero says he is using devolved funds well to improve healthcare facilities and to expand and upgrade roads in the city. Picture: Courtesy

"Voters will judge all political leaders based on their development record and not on how many foreign trips they made," Janak said.

He noted: "It is up to Members of the County Assembly to ensure devolution succeeds because they are directly linked to people in the ground who need their services."

Caution

His sentiments were echoed by Wanjiru Gikonyo, national coordinator The Institute of Social Accountability (TISA), who cautioned that if the devolution process is not fully implemented, Kenyans are the ones who will suffer despite voting for the Constitution.

"Devolution came to allow regions that have been neglected and marginalised for long by the central Government to have a say in their own and progress," said Gikonyo. She added: "Some politicians are opposing it not knowing that era (centralised system) is long gone."

According to Gikonyo, the health sector, agriculture, natural resources and water have not been properly devolved.

Gikonyo noted turf wars between the Counties and the national Government of who should be in charge is derailing the Constitution implementation process.

Those views were expressed during a media briefing at a Devolution Forum held in a hotel in Nairobi.

Addressing the same meeting, Elgeyo Marakwet Senator, Kipchumba Murkomen, accused Governors of misappropriating funds allocated to Counties for developments.

As a result, he noted, they must account for their County budget expenditure by appearing before the Senate and giving a breakdown.

Murkomen clarified that the Senate's intention was not to humiliate Governors or to kill the spirit of devolution as is being claimed in some quarters.

"The Upper House wants to ensure funds given out to the Counties are well spent and utilised for planned projects," Murkomen explained.

He also defended the Senate saying their role was to ensure that public funds were used transparently and for projects approved by

County Assemblies.

"The Senate is being blamed for undermining devolution yet we are charged with the oversight duty to ensure that it succeeds," Murkomen said, and added: "We don't want to frustrate anybody, but we are after accountability and transparency on how Governors spend public funds allocated to Counties."

However, Isaac Ruto, Bomet Governor, who doubles as the chairman of the Council of Governors, defended devolution saying it was here to stay and politicians who were out to frustrate it will not succeed.

He appealed to Members of Parliament and Senators to support devolution by defending it.

Ruto said Counties have Chief Financial Officers who are mandated to handle all funds allocated in the County and are answerable on its expenditures.

He clarified that Governors were "just overseers of the County financial budget disbursement" whose duty is to ensure adequate funds were allocated.

"Senators are fighting a superiority war with the Governors so that they can have control of County finances," said Ruto. He noted: "Senators should ensure devolution works as it is in the spirit of the Constitution by supporting and defending it since they represent Counties."

Expand

However, a cross-section of Nairobi County residents said they want devolution to succeed especially in their home Counties. They said Nairobi, as the capital city, had been built and fully developed and what remains was expansion of roads to accommodate more vehicles, street lights in the residential estates for security purposes and enough clean drinking water in their taps.

The city residents said if the Constitution was implemented fully, devolution would succeed and 'home counties' would also improve in terms of job opportunities.

Nairobi Governor, Evans Kidero, in his address, promised residents better health care facilities, expansion of roads with more traffic marshals to enhance quick flow of vehicles, street lights in estates especially informal settlement areas to improve security.

Kidero also vowed to work with the national Government to ensure adequate service delivery, job creation for the fast-growing population and enhanced security.

Despite the health hazards, Kakamega miners are not giving up anytime soon

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By 8am the gold-diggers will be found at the sites from Monday to Saturday. Usually working in groups of five, others dig for gold while the rest concentrate on the washing until 3pm in the afternoon.

Once the miners have drilled, they place the soil in a basin and water is poured on it for it to sieve. The miners then keenly look for gold particles which may not be visible to someone who does not have the experience to detect.

The expertise needed here requires years of experience and as Makaka puts it: "We pour a drop of mercury on the soil to separate the soil and the metal to enable easy detection of the metal."

Once they have separated the gold particles from the dust, all they do is wait for gold merchants from as far as Nairobi to come and buy from them.

Despite the hard work that they endure to get gold particles, they earn very little money. For 0.1 gram of gold, they are paid KSh100 and KSh1,000 for a gram of the mineral.

This money is not taken by one person but is instead shared by the team of five who worked together.

"Many people think that we have a lot of money, this business has no money, we stick to it because we do not have any other business to depend on," says Makaka.

However, gold-digging is not easy and the side

effects of it leave the miners weak from infections.

The most common condition they suffer from includes chest infections. Makaka, like the others, has been diagnosed with a lung disease, as a result of exposure to dust on the mines.

"When I cough, I experience a lot of pain and dryness, but this does not stop me from going to the site because I need the money to take care of my family," says Makaka.

He explains: "When we drill, there is a lot of pressure with smoke and dust coming from the machine and rocks. The smoke makes a cloud, and we inhale it. This is what causes the lung problem."

His recent trip to the hospital shows that Makaka is suffering from Silicosis, a chronic lung disease caused by breathing in tiny bits of silica dust. When the miners blast, crush and move the rock, they inevitably generate very fine particles of silica dust.

Silica is the second most common mineral in the earth's crust. It is a major component of sand, rock, and mineral ores like quartz. People who work in jobs like sand-blasting, mining, construction and many others are at risk of silicosis. When people breathe the silica dust, they inhale tiny particles of silica that has crystallised. This silica dust can cause fluid build-up and scar tissue in the lungs that cuts down one's ability to breathe.

Makaka is not alone in his suffering. His village mate Otiato Osundwa suffers from a similar problem. He lives in a deplorable state, but says mining

is the job he knows and cannot leave it despite the rough conditions.

Unemployment has been a challenge to many young men in this village. When they attempt to get jobs in the urban centres, they always return to the mines because the centres do not offer them comfort.

Otiato first ventured into the mines in 1992, and his work was to dig the soil and detect where the mineral was located.

It wasn't long before he started getting sick. "When it rains, we step on stagnant water while working and this comes with several diseases like pneumonia and bilharzia," says Otiato, who was recently hospitalised for one month because of pneumonia.

"I have been having problems with my chest and lungs since then. The doctor said my chest had dust and instructed that I get myself a dust-mask, which is very expensive," he says.

Despite the health challenges, Otiato has never given up on mining. "This is where I get my children's school fees, it will be very difficult for my family if I were to abandon this work," he says.

While Kenya has been said to have several minerals, the miners suffer in silence and have to bear the burden of disease from mining.

They say they have heard that there is a Ministry for Mining, but do not know how it can help them.

The miners are also exploited by middlemen

who leave them earning peanuts despite the hard work that they put in to extract the minerals.

They have limited opportunity to participate in collective bargaining processes since they have no formal association. The buyers who get to the mining sites make huge profits at the expense of the poor miners.

Despite knowing that they are being exploited, they opt to sell the mineral to the middle men because they are able to get their pay at once, and quickly.

"We know very well that they pay very little, but because it's done at once, we do not have any other means but to sell to them," says Otiato.

They are hopeful that the Mining Bill 2014 that is currently before the Parliament will be passed to protect small scale miners like them.

According to Dr Marco Sheria, a pulmonologist at Aga Khan Hospital, Kisumu, there are thousands of fatal diseases that come from pollutants released into the air during the mining process.

The doctor notes that Arsenic from mine tailings can be very dangerous in a many ways.

"Arsenic poisoning includes thickening and discoloration of the skin as well as numbness in one's hands and feet," explains Sheria. She adds: "There could also be partial paralysis and blindness among other complications."

She notes that miners are also exposed to mercury which leads to decreased visual fields and renal damage.

Children living in fear now more than ever before



By ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Cases of fathers and or mothers turning against their own children and maiming them or sending them to an early grave are starting to be common in the mass media now more than ever before. House-helpers and other farm workers are not left out of the list of perpetrators.

The main forms of violence against children are physical, sexual and emotional and take place where they are supposed to be most secure like in their homes, school and community.

To make it worse for the children, perpetrators include close family members, intimate partners, teachers, neighbours, other children and strangers.

Perpetrator

This situation has left children living in fear now more than ever before with nowhere to hide. The situation is compounded by the fact that most parents are spending most of their days at work away.

The media has also not spared the children as it is flooded with talk shows, movies and television programmes that are not children-friendly.

According to a new report on sexual violence, some 120 million girls worldwide (one in 10) reported to have experienced forced sexual intercourse. It further indicates that 10 per cent or more who faced forced sex were found in 13 of 18 countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

At the same time, one in every five girls aged between 10 and 14 in some 16 countries reported to have experienced sexual violence.

Boys are not any better either and the study

reveals that they are also experiencing sexual violence, but less than girls.

In Mozambique, only three per cent of boys reported experiencing sexual violence as compared to nine per cent of girls, during the same period.

The shocking information was made by Dr Philista Onyango, Regional Director African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) during a two-day forum whose theme was: *Strengthening National Child Protection Systems*.

According to Onyango, these are the realities that must be face and accepted. These include the international goal set of reaching 100 percent Universal Primary Completion by 2015; and of eliminating worst forms of child labour by 2016.

Boost

Says Onyango: "The aim of the meeting was to boost programmes and services around children's nutrition, healthcare, early learning and violence prevention."

The event brought together representatives from Government Ministries and Departments, Civil Society Organisations, and key Institutions from seven countries in the Eastern

The aim of the project is to improve services provided to children by strengthening the key pillars of child protection system, which include; coordination amongst actors, laws and policies, the human and financial resources and data collection.

DANGER AHEAD: A pupil crosses the Nairobi-Kisumu railway line in Kibera Slums over lunch break oblivious of the danger lurking in the horizon. Picture: Odhiambo Orleale

Africa region; namely Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan, South Sudan.

The objectives of the meeting was: to share the progress made and the identified gaps during the implementation of the project in the seven countries; and to identify and map out some strategies that will strengthen National Child Protection Systems with the ultimate goal of effective provision of services to children.

The other was to foster collaboration and partnership between state and non-state actors to address emerging issues in National Child Protection Systems.

ANPPCAN has been implementing a three-year project called National Child Protection Systems Strengthening (NCPS) in countries with the financial support from Save the Children International (SCI).

The aim of the project is to improve services provided to children by strengthening the key pillars of child protection system, which include; coordination amongst actors, laws and policies, the human and financial resources and data collection.

The project has engaged strategic players, such as the relevant Government departments and civil society organisations operating at regional and national levels, to strengthen child protection systems in the aforementioned Countries.

Those efforts have led to review of national laws and policies; national institutions, human resources, as well as, initiating Technical Working Groups (TWGs) on child protection in each of the seven countries. Those engagements have continuously shown that for child protection systems to be effective, the Government must take the lead role in coordination of the efforts, while other strategic actors play complimentary roles.

Protect

ANPPCAN is a pan-African child rights organisation concerned with the status of children in general, and, in particular, those in need of protection. It is registered as an international NGO in Kenya and has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, and also has observer status with the African Union (AU) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights based in Banjul, Gambia.

The forum resolved to fund some activities including national data base to track indicators of children's health and welfare; set up fellowship to support emerging champions for children; set up a pilot challenge fund to build evidence-based programmes for children between zero to eight years that are most affected in Eastern Africa; and finally to set up a corporate challenge fund to boost businesses that are children-friendly.

Experts decry rise in child abuse cases

By CAREN NASIMIYU

Cases of children being abused in their homes and schools where they feel most safe are worrying.

A study by UNICEF shows that the main forms of violence against children are physical, sexual and emotional. These happen in the home, school, the community or via the internet

Abuse

Indeed, it seems nowhere is safe for children and most perpetrators have been identified as family members; intimate partners, teachers, neighbours, other children and/or strangers. This leads to their being kidnapped, harmed, humiliated and/or killed.

These shocking revelations were shared at a public forum in Nairobi organised by the African Network for the Prevention against Child Abuse and Neglect.

According to statistics of a study done in 2012, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report reveals that about 95,000 children and young adolescents of 20 years and below were victims of homicide, with 85,000 living in both low and middle income countries.

It also states that 85 per cent of deaths of nine-year-olds and below resulted from communicable and non-communicable diseases.

The report says that six in ten children of ages two to 14 are subjected to corporal punishment globally, 17 per cent in 58 different countries experience harsh punishment which include cutting of head, ears or hitting repeatedly and 23 countries where children are punished severely with others exposed to infections.

The report notes about 120 million girls worldwide, one in every ten, have experienced forced sexual intercourse and sadly, nearly half of the victims never reported to anyone. Boys on the other hand are unlikely to seek help and those who did went to their families instead of to conventional institutions which would have maximised the possible actions.

Protect

During the review meeting, participants discussed ways and means of strengthening national child protection systems in Eastern Africa region.

The meeting's aim was to share the progress made in the implementation of child protection systems, identify the gaps, map out strategies that will strengthen the National Child Protection Systems (NCPs) and foster collaboration with state and non-state actors to ensure this vice is tackled effectively.

It involved representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs), Government ministries and departments as well as key institutions from seven countries in the Eastern Africa.

They were Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda and Sudan.

"We seek co-ordination from all the stakeholders involved in children protection, and we should be able to bring in all the pieces together if we want to achieve this," said Jecinta Mugo from the Children Services of Kenya.



Participants from six East African countries who attended the Child Rights Conference in Nairobi. Below: Philista Onyango, Regional Director of ANPPCAN. Picture: Courtesy

In a speech read on his behalf, Ahmed Hussein, Director of Children Services of Kenya, noted that there was a huge risk of violent exploitation of children despite the stringent laws and the new Constitution.

"We are somewhere, but not yet there," Hussein said. He added: "The Government has a critical mandate to ensure services to children were well monitored and that legal and policy reforms were children-focused and friendly."

Hussein called for planning and budgeting of children in the economic budget of the country to take care of their interests.

"Child survival, development, protection and participation are critical; we need intensive and consultative process to scale up its scope," Hussein said.

Initiative

He noted that there should be synchronisation among key people to ensure validation of child system strategies, consolidation of future actions and creation of linkages was followed to achieve the common goal; child protection.

However, according to Philista Onyango, Regional Director African Network for the Prevention against Child Abuse and Neglect, this initiative has been there for ages, with extreme numbers of homicide, sexual violence, child labour as well as violence among intimate partners and peers being reported.

"It's not something new, we have all heard similar cases before," Onyango observed.

However, Jane Wambui of African Network for the Prevention against Child Abuse and Neglect said that National Child Protection Systems approach could be defined as distinctive set of laws, policies and services to monitor and regulate social welfare of children, in order to prevent and respond to protected related risks addressed to them.

"It aims to support and strengthen families so that there should be reduction of social exclusion and by also lowering the risk of separation, violence and exploitation," Wambui said.

However, the system has been faced with drawbacks that have slowed down its effectiveness.

"We are somewhere, but not yet there. The Government has a critical mandate to ensure services to children were well monitored and that legal and policy reforms were children-focused and friendly."

— Ahmed Hussein, Director of Children Services of Kenya



ANPPCAN, which is a registered international NGO in Kenya, has been implementing a three-year project on national child protection systems within Eastern Africa. The mandate of the project aims at co-ordinating key pillars of child protection, laws and policies as well as human and financial resources plus data collection.

The Ministry of Labour Social Security and Services led by Hussein have also come up with Kenya County Child Protection Systems Guidelines which were developed in response to limitations of issues based on child protection work for all formal and informal actors.

— Additional reporting by Odhiambo Orlale.

Tribalism remains the monster eating Kenyans

By ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Ethnicity remains Kenya's biggest headache 50 years after independence.

According to Francis ole Kaparo, chairman National Integration and Cohesion Commission: "In Kenya, we are living in denial. Tribalism has taken root and is dividing our country. There is a cycle of violence with every election because tribal chiefs rally their 'people' around them to block or to gain power."

Kaparo who served as Speaker of the National Assembly, says the best and most effective way to deal with the vice is by promoting nationhood.

The former Cabinet minister and MP for Laikipia East recalled how the clamour for and re-introduction of multi-partyism in 1990s revived tribalism as each tribe voted for their own son in the winner-takes-it polls under the old Constitution.

"Politics of ethnicity and fight for resources reared its ugly head," Kaparo told a media breakfast at a Nairobi hotel attended by members of the Kenya Editor's Guild, led by chairman, Linus Kaikai, who is also the Managing Editor Nation Television.

Ugly head

In subsequent polls except 2002, when Mwai Kibaki (NARC) stood against Uhuru Kenyatta (KANU), the tribal card was supreme. The climax of tribalism was in 2007 when post-elections violence left over 1,000 people killed and 300,000 others displaced in one of the hottest contested polls in the country's history.

From 2007 to 2013, the former Kaparo recalled, battle lines were drawn and Kenyans sharpened their weapons for the next polls. However, the 2013 General Election, the first under the new Constitution, polls were relatively peaceful because there was no violence as the two coalitions — Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) and Jubilee Alliance — faced each other at the ballot leading to the latter being declared victor by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) with a narrow win.

Kaparo, who was chairman of United Republican Party (URP) during the last polls says: "Psychologically, people were not at peace. The social media was used to spew hate speech and to divide the country along ethnic and political lines." He adds: To tame this animal, job recruitment must respect tribes and gender."

Latest report by NCIC shows that only three of the 10 parastatals have respected the ethnic balance of 30 per cent in recruiting staff. The 47 County governments, created by the new Constitution in 2010, have not fared any better.

Kaparo notes the country's problem started at independence in 1963 when leaders did not prioritise promoting a unitary state, but left the 42 tribes to have their mini states.

In contrast, in neighbouring Tanzania, founder of the nation Julius Nyerere, promoted statehood to a level that Tanzanians today identify with their country first and tribes second.

Turning to the rising cases of security in Northern Kenya and parts of the Coast region, Kaparo pointed an accusing finger at ethnicity, clanism, terrorism, fight over watering holes and pasture and creation of devolved Governments across the country.

Insecurity

So far the most affected in the past year have been Mandera, Samburu, Wajir, Baringo, Lamu, Tana River and Mombasa County. Over 21 armed policemen were ambushed and killed last month in Kapedo in Baringo County by so-called bandits, who double as cattle-rustlers.

Says Kaparo: "From border point number one to Turkana, we are in trouble. I know because I have been there. The people out there say they are not in Kenya." He observes: "I am worried. If we do not do something now to tell Kenyans of the way forward as a nation, we are sitting on a volcano that is likely to erupt."

Kaparo recalls how he was asked by a jour-



Armed youth causing mayhem during 2007/8 PEV in Kenya. Picture: Courtesy

nalist recently when he will wipe out tribalism.

"My answer was that I didn't start it, but we can start by fighting it together as a team. We are selfish and promote our selfish interests; we as a nation have a serious self-preservation problem. I cannot do it alone. No single person or organisation can successfully fight it (ethnicity) alone," notes Kaparo.

On his new job, the former Speaker says if



"Psychologically, people were not at peace. The social media was used to spew hate speech and to divide the country along ethnic and political lines. To tame this animal, job recruitment must respect tribes and gender."

— Francis ole Kaparo

he is shown the door, he will simply go back to his ranch in Dol Dol in Laikipia County and herd his cattle, "which are less vicious than the public!"

Asked whether NCIC is a public relations exercise outfit for the Jubilee Government, Kaparo denies saying he was a publicity shy person and has never been a publicity seeker.

"I'm already a household name and I don't need publicity. I'm in this Commission because I have a passion to promote national integration and cohesion."

PR exercise

He reiterates: "It is not when but how. We are breaking this country piece by piece. Let us think together. I don't believe in censorship."

Kaparo took issue with the media for giving "one mad villager prominence as he spews malice, hatred and incitement at the expense of those working on promoting peace and security."

He regretted that even a number of Governors were at war with each other over border disputes citing Meru and Isiolo.

In his brief remarks, Kaikai noted that as a country, "we are living a lie. There is a national malaise. We have set up national institutions, which failing to deliver."

As media, the KEG chairman said, our training is to ask questions. The public wants to see an effective NCIC.

Says Kaikai: "Even in NCIC, commissioners were split on eve of the last polls. It's difficult to get rid of tribalism, I see us wasting time talking to the ordinary people instead of the politicians."

Tribalism

According to Kaikai tribalism is rife during polls and "NCIC must talk to the politicians to tone down tribalism like Nyerere did during his presidency."

He says elections have been turned into a fight between communities and Government appointments left to reflect the tribes of the winning tribal chiefs.

"We will be in a vicious cycle for a long

time. We are degenerating as a country. During our school days, the school was the face of Kenya in terms of teachers from across the country. Even universities are doing the same (promoting tribalism) with job recruitments and their satellite campuses," says Kaikai.

He says that though the 2013 General Election was not physically violent, it was emotionally violent.

According to Kaparo, NCIC is working closely with Ministry of Education on the syllabus to promote national cohesion and integration.

During the question and answer session, Dorothy Kweyu of National Media Group told Kaparo that he will not go far unless he works closely with Gender Commission.

"If we create violent homes, we will not have a peaceful nation," Kweyu said.

On his part, Hassan Kulundu, a media consultant, took Kaparo to task with the question: "Are you set to fail by the template you are using? Case of Mpeketoni attack in Lamu County, security committee was overhauled to replace them with people they could trust. Security positions and issues should be held by people from across the country?"

However, in his defence, Kaparo clarified that security operations was not their mandate, saying that as a lawyer and leader, he was opposed to community punishment.

Kaparo, said his belief is that what destroys a society is the feeling of exclusion and inequalities.

"What is creating conflict in Northern Kenya? It is local politics. Who wields political power and resource allocation from which clan and which parts of the county are major issues? It is all about political power and resources. As a chief scout, I believe, I will do my best," said Kaparo.

He notes social media is one of the biggest problems they are facing in promoting national cohesion and integration because of the venom, hatred and malicious messages that are being sent via SMS, Facebook, and Tweeter among others.

High infant mortality remains a challenge in Embu

By ROBERT NYAGAH

Parents in Embu County have a duty to improve their children's nutritional and health care in the wake of growing incidents of infant mortality and stunted babies.

Experts have many reasons for the present scenario with an indication that a high percentage of mothers with low levels of education or completely illiterate do not start breast-feeding their babies within one hour of birth.

Statistics

A survey by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) indicates that the under-five and infant mortality rate in Embu County stands at 41 per 1,000 live births and 37 per 1,000 live births, respectively.

According to the survey, about 10 per cent of children aged six to 59 months in Embu are moderately underweight, while 24 per cent are moderately stunted.

A high percentage of mothers who did not attend any school or have not attained any level of education, the report sadly revealed, did not start breast-feeding their new born within one hour of birth as stipulated by health experts in order to give them natural immunity to various diseases.

The Embu District Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), conducted by KNBS and which was designed to provide estimates for a large number of indicators on the situation of children and women, revealed other interesting statistics.

The survey captured information from a set of issues mainly affecting children and women.

Some of the areas covered in detail included reproductive health, child mortality, health, nutrition, and protection as well as water and sanitation, education, HIV and AIDS. It also captured the topical issue of orphans and vulnerable children.

Described as perhaps one of the largest district representative sample surveys conducted in the area, the study covered 1,200 households selected using appropriate statistical procedures of which 1,154 were successfully interviewed.

It is expected that the County government, under Governor Martin Nyagah Wambora, will use the information to enable policy-makers,

planners, researchers and programme managers take action based on credible evidence.

Support

The survey was conducted through funding from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which also provided technical support, further revealed that almost all children — 97 per cent — aged 12-23 months actually received both BCG vaccination and the first dose of DPT by the age of 12 months.

The Embu District Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey notes that 94 per cent of the children received Polio 1 by age 12 months, while the coverage for measles vaccine was at 96 per cent. Seventy four per cent of children received all the recommended vaccinations by their first birthday.

Only eight per cent of children under the age of five had diarrhoea in the two weeks preceding the survey according to the report and the largest proportion of diarrhoea (11 per cent) was recorded among children aged 12-23 months.

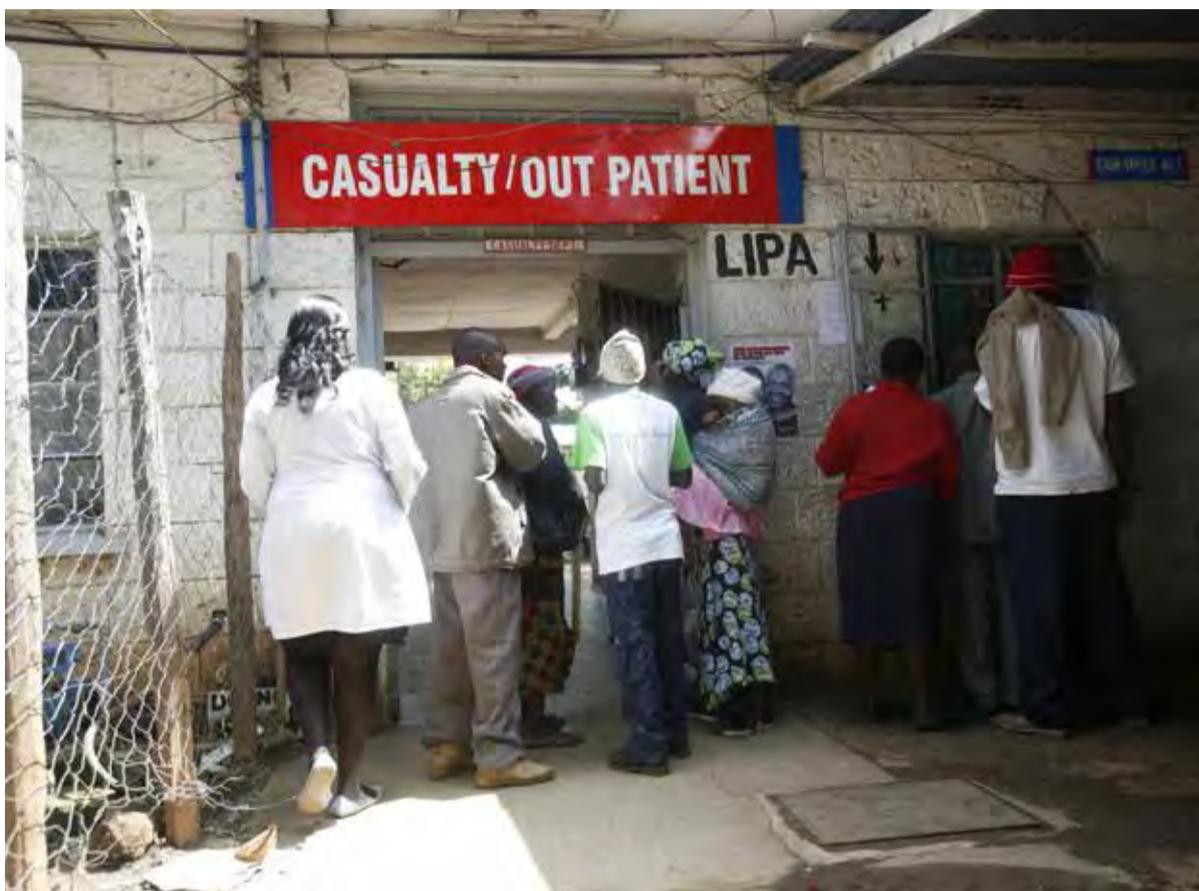
It further indicated that about 38 per cent received fluids from ORS packets, while 49 per cent did not receive any treatment while 11 per cent of children under five were reported to have had symptoms of pneumonia during the two weeks preceding the survey.

Among those surveyed, 73 per cent were found to have been taken to an appropriate health service provider with majority of them being attended to at public health facilities.

Result

The survey results also indicated that 63 per cent of households had at least one insecticide treated net, 37 per cent of the households had two or more mosquito nets with the mean number of nets per households in the district being two.

Overall, 64 per cent of the population was found to be using an improved source of drinking water with



Parents and medical staff mingle at a health facilities seeking services. In Embu County a red flag has been raised because of the rising cases of infant mortality. Picture: Correspondent

the main modes of water treatment at the household level being boiling at 36 per cent followed by addition of chlorine or bleaching at seven per cent.

Close to 42 per cent of the population, the survey noted, drunk appropriately treated water and on sanitation, over 47 per cent of the population live in households with improved sanitation facilities.

On reproductive health issues, the total fertility rate stood at 2.8 children per woman for the three-year period preceding the survey and it peaks at ages 20-24 years.

Education remained a challenge with only 35 per cent of children aged 36-59 month found to have been attending early childhood education, which is important for preparing children for school.

Sixty-seven per cent of children of primary school entry age, the survey said, were found to have been attend-

ing Standard One in primary school education while the secondary schools net attendance rate stood at 40 per cent.

The survey also shows that 81 per cent of the births in area were registered, with 11 per cent of children aged between the ages of five to 14 falling victims of the illegal child labour in various sectors of the economy mainly coffee, tea and miraa (khat) harvesting.

A big number of the children sampled were found to be domestic workers, but interestingly though among the 12 per cent of children classified as child labourers, majority of them — 99 per cent — were found to be also attending school.

Transmit

Sixty seven per cent of the interviewed women rejected the two most common misconceptions about HIV and AIDS with 89 per cent of women

confessing that they knew that HIV could not be transmitted by super-natural means.

The report said 89 per cent knew that HIV could not be transmitted by sharing food while 98 per cent knew that a healthy-looking person could be carrying the virus.

The survey found out that almost all (99.6 per cent) women were aware that HIV could be transmitted from mother-to-child. The percentage of women who know that HIV could be transmitted during pregnancy, delivery and through breast-feeding from mother-to-child stood at 52 per cent.

At least 61 per cent of children aged zero to 17 years were found to be living with both parents with one out of five children (21 per cent) living with only the mother though the father is alive. Some 10 per cent of the children, the survey indicated, were orphans and vulnerable children.

Mysterious disease afflicts elderly Kilifi man

By YUSUF AMIN

For many years pain has been the order of the day for Mzee Ziro Nyanje.

The pain and discharge coming from his body's swelling nerves have given him sleepless nights and he does not remember any day that has passed without him experiencing the hurting.

Treat

Eight-four-year old Mzee Nyanje, is a widower with no one to help him. He is appealing to well-wishers to assist him in getting medical treatment for the disease that has left his body swollen with his fingers and toes discharging water all the time.

Mzee Nyanje, who hails from Lango Baya Village in Jilore Ward,

says his son who is the sole provider has been unable to raise funds to take him for further treatment. His sickness has confined him to live in the village as an outcast.

"My wife died a long time ago and I depend on my son who does casual work in Malindi town. Apart from him, I have two young daughters, Sineno Kahindi and Zawadi Kahindi, aged 14 and 15 respectively. They are the last born who stay with me as their brother is in Malindi," he said.

Many times the girls have been forced to abandon classes to work in other people's farms to get their daily food. He says this is also affecting their education.

"My son, I am in problems. Sometimes these young girls opt to go and work in other people's farms so that

we can get something to eat. When that happens, they miss school. My illness has even complicated matters here and this is very sad," says Mzee Nyanje.

Difficulties

Nyanje's misery started seven years ago when he fell ill with a strong cold that he thought was abnormal. After two days, he developed a severe headache and his nose partly blocked and breathing became difficult.

"Soon, all of my body was in pain and the swelling started. I did not know what to do because it was all strange to me," recalls Mzee Nyanje.

However, he decided to go for treatment at Ramada Medical Centre, but could not afford to buy the

prescribed drugs.

"I decided to try a traditional herbalist instead hoping that they would be cheaper, but that was not to be," the widower recalls.

Tired and suffering for years, the elder man now wants his son to take him to hospital at whatever cost.

He does not feel happy being in a situation where he cannot wear shoes due to his bleeding and swollen feet which also discharge water. Nails from both his fingers and hands are pulling out.

Pain

"I feel as if my body has been immersed in hot water. At night it is difficult for me to sleep because of the pain," says Mzee Nyanje.

His life is full of misery and is un-

comfortable, he now needs urgent medical attention.

According to Mashaka Kazungu, a village elder at Lango Baya, he says the situation that Mzee Nyanje is going through is a clear indication that elderly people have been abandoned in the society.

"This man has suffered for a long and the only remedy is for him to be enrolled in the cash transfer programme," says Kazungu.

He noted that they have been trying to have his name registered so that he can benefit from the national cash transfer fund for the elderly people so that he can meet his daily needs.

"We shall make more efforts to benefit from the cash transfer programme," says Kazungu.

Experts Warn of rising pressure on small scale farms

By ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Food security in the country is threatened by the increasing change-of-user from farm land to residential for speculative reasons in the country.

Experts in the land sector have expressed concerns that the number of small-scale farmers, most of who are women, who used to produce most food crops, are being displaced as parcels of land that they have been tilling have either been sold or been further sub-divided making them uneconomical.

Interest

"Most of our land used to be owned by small-scale farmers, but this has changed and we now have more middle scale farmers whose interests is either to turn them into residential areas and-or use them for speculation purposes," said Odenda Lumumba, coordinator Kenya Land Alliance.

Lumumba cited Kajiado, Machakos and Kiambu Counties as examples where the elite had bought prime farmland, sub divided it to sell and/or put up residential flats and homes at the expense of farming.

Lumumba was addressing a national land conference in Nairobi organised by Kenya Land Alliance and Michigan State University, in the United States.

The report was launched on a study done by Michigan University researchers Thomas Jayne and Milu Muyunga, on specific areas touching on the land question.

One of the papers was on the Effects of Rising Rural Population Density on Small Holder Agriculture in Kenya; while the other was on Land Pressure, the Evolution of Farming Systems and Development Strategies in Africa. A Synthesis.

Meanwhile, Lumumba said their research had shown that money-laundering and corruption in the civil service was driving the cost of purchasing land to unaffordable rates.

"We need to appraise land use policy afresh. In Karen, minimum acreage at independence was 25 acres because it was an agricultural land, now it is a residential area and costs KSh50 million per acre and rising," said Lumumba. He added: "Women are at a cross-road. Most small-scale farmers are women. In some Counties, women are told to get married or be killed."

According to Lumumba, exodus to the Counties is massive and in places like Kitengela, in Kajiado County.

According to Lumumba the land question must be addressed urgently because it had a direct impact on food security in the 47 Counties and the country as a whole. He also noted that County governments are spending a lot of money buying land for the leadership.

"Governors are being bought land and official residence worth KSh100 million and above. Land in Kisii is in millions per acre because of land pressure and speculators. Land has

gained a lot of currency," Lumumba noted.

He regretted that the turf war between the Lands Cabinet Secretary, Charity Ngilu and chairman of the National Lands Commission, Mohamed Swazuri, was not helping ordinary land owners, or those keen on investing in farming.

The theme of the one-day conference was: Emerging Land Issue in Kenyan Agriculture and their implications for food security and institutional reforms.

According to Jayne, rural populations in Africa exhibit high degrees of spatial clustering.

Holding

"In 2010, 90 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's population was concentrated in less than 21 per cent of its land surface areas. For the region as a whole, 82 per cent of the rural population was found to reside in only 20 per cent of total land area and 62 per cent reside just within 10 per cent of this area."

The most revolutionary change in farm structure has been among the medium-scale farm holdings in Uganda, Kenya and Zambia where it exceeds that of foreign and domestic large-scale holdings combined.

According to Jayne, land holdings between five hectares (10 acres) and 100 (200 acres) hectares now account for more land than small scale farms (zero to five hectares) in two of the three countries examined, namely Ghana and Zambia.

In his paper titled: Effects of Rising Rural Population Density on Small Holder Agriculture in Kenya, Muyanga, noted that reducing poverty and hunger has been an overriding policy concern for the past half a century in sub-Saharan Africa.

"More than 70 per cent of the poor live in rural areas and derive more than half of their livelihood from farming," Muyanga said.

Earlier, Prof Karuti Kanyanga, senior research fellow, Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, asked a rhetorical question: "Why is it that Africa is not benefiting from agriculture? Is it because the issues we discussed in the 1960s are still what we are debating today? Is it because we have not addressed the land question among others?"

Revise

According to Kanyanga, elsewhere on the continent people were revising their Constitution to address the land question decisively and were not asking the same question over and over as Kenyans seem to have been doing.

"In the 1960s and 1970s our Government's focus was on export cash crops like tea and coffee; this changed to cereal farming in the 1980s and 1990s under President Moi's regime. We must appreciate the real value of land in agrarian aspects," Kanyanga observed.

Other major areas of conflict that were raised included land registration



Top: Michigan State University's Prof Thomas Jayne, presenting his paper on Land pressures, the evolution of farming systems, and development strategies in Africa: A synthesis. The Professor of agricultural economics is also a co-author of another study on Effects of rising rural population density on small holder agriculture in Kenya with Milu Muyunga, who is an Assistant Professor of International Development at MSU. Below: Kenya Land Alliance chairman, Lumumba Odenda, addressing the media on the sidelines of the national conference on emerging land issues in Kenyan agriculture and their implications for food policy and institutional reforms held at a Nairobi hotel last month. Picture: Courtesy

process, graft and under-utilisation of land, and rise in gated-communities which have moved from big cities like Nairobi to neighbouring Counties of Kiambu, Kajiado, Machakos and even Muranga.

It was further noted that although about 80 percent of small-scale farmers are women, the data is not official. Prof Kanyanga said: "Some women in Nyeri County are now paying dowry to their parents in order to get inheritance from them (parents)."

According to Jayne, there is a ris-

ing interest in Africa's arable land by multi-national firms and foreign governments to use it for large-scale farming. Locally, those who are emerging farmers are urban farmers and relatively highly educated professionals.

Issues that arose during the open session included: Is our problem land use or land production? Who determines livestock size? Are we doing farming because our neighbour is doing it or is it because we have done research and have a passion for it?

However, former Wundanyi MP, Mwandawiro Mghanga, proposed that the Government considers returning to use of the traditional/indigenous land tenure system where people lived in villages and farmed elsewhere. These villages could easily grow into urban centres.

"How does a plan to issue four million title deeds in next four years by the Jubilee Government translate into effective land use?" posed the former legislator.

Smallholder farmers in Africa to benefit from fund investment

By HENRY OWINO

Most African countries are facing farming challenges due to climate change caused by degradation, de-forestation of catchment areas, poor agricultural practices, and inappropriate land use systems.

These incidences have contributed change in disaster patterns of weather-related natural phenomena like drought, floods and soil salinity leading to repeated loss of lives, property, infrastructure and other elements of development.

Failure

Every year disaster causes immense suffering to millions of Africans. This has resulted in frequent low crop harvests or simply production failures. At the end, communities within countries compete among themselves over natural resources increasing insecurity within and along borders.

To address food insecurity and economic crises in the continent, a group of African leading entrepreneurs and investors have united and decided to support farmers financially.

The Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF), a multi-donor funded financing vehicle that provides grants and interest free loans to business oriented activities, has assured farmers of their support.

The investors wish to support groups of farmers' organisation who want to implement innovative, commercially viable and high impact agri-business projects in Africa.

The Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund generally supports businesses working in agriculture, financial services, renewable energy and technologies for adapting to climate change. It also supports initiatives in media and information services where they relate directly to these sectors.

The aim of Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund is to encourage private sector companies to compete for investment support for their new and innovative business ideas. These include small and large scale farmers all over Africa.

Income

Agriculture in most African countries is seen as a reserve for old people, retirees or done to pass time. In reality, farming provides a source of income, employment opportunity for thousands and feeds millions in the world.

This long term perception among Africans must change now and see farming as normal work. To achieve this goal, Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund aims to sustain private sector investments and support smallholder farmers in organisations with innovative agri-business ideas that are beneficial to the poor in rural areas.

This in the long run would reduce rural-urban migration among the youth seeking for employment yet they leave huge chunks of land behind.

It will offer job opportunities, increase incomes for the large population and reduce poverty and hunger.

African Enterprise Challenge Fund was launched in 2008, and is currently supported by the governments of Australia, Denmark, The Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom as well as by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). It works with other like-minded organisations like Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) among others.

According to Prof Rudy Rabbinge, chairman of Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund Committee, the current size of the fund is \$250 million (KSh21.25 billion) that is ready to drive various key agricultural businesses and technologies in-



Good news for farmers as officials of Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund, a multi-donor funded financing vehicle, announce plans to implement agri-business projects in Africa. Picture: Courtesy

cluding provision for essential farm inputs. So, it is up to African governments to provide supportive environments for farmers and related projects.

Grant

Successful organisations are co-funded with grants and interest-free repayable grants between \$250,000 (KSh21,250,000) and \$1.5 million (KSh127,500,000). However, applicant organisations are required to match the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund funding with an amount equal to or greater than 50 per cent of the total cost of their projects.

These were disclosed during a two-day conference held in Nairobi, that brought together; African and international leaders, policy-makers, development specialists, scientists, farmers organisations and representatives of agri-businesses to discuss agri-business developments for African small-holder farmers.

Rabbinge noted that today agri-business is the way to go for most farmers venturing into agriculture so governments must invest in capacity-building, research and the dissemination of research results.

He challenged African governments to play their role fully by ensuring they uphold their commitments to Maputo Declaration on Agriculture in 2013. The Heads of State committed themselves to spending 10 per cent of their respective national budgets on agriculture.

According to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), under the compact agreed 10 years ago, countries were to commit to using 10 per cent of their national budget for agricultural development and to ensure growth of the agricultural sector of six percent annually in order to reduce food insecurity and poverty; only nine countries have exceeded the targets so far.

Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Tanzania have exceeded this target and most countries have made significant progress towards that goal.

Target

In addition, Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme also has an agricultural growth target of six per cent. To date nine countries have exceeded this target; Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso,

Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Senegal. Four others have achieved growth of between five and six per cent.

"Private sector is already playing its task of; provision of fertilisers, mechanisation, irrigation, improved seeds, agro-chemistry and now mobile phones connectivity," Rabbinge said.

He explained: "Most African governments are still stuck in politics forgetting that they should provide farmers with strong links to foreign markets."

These markets are essential for investments in productivity growth from farms to make financial sense. Access to markets is about the ability to sell crops and other products and buy off-farm inputs. In good measure, this is conditioned by transport, storage infrastructure, information and logistics, which African governments must improve.

Indeed, African output markets are dynamic as consumer demands for more and better goods at home and abroad to create opportunities for farmers and businesses along the supply chain.

For example, Kenyan smallholder farmers earn good money from "flying vegetables" sold in United Kingdom supermarkets.

Access to markets becomes "deeper" when farmers deliver value-added chain products in time.

Invest

Africa is full of opportunities waiting to be seized by hard-working farmers and investors willing to take on primary production risks. The setback is productivity gap in agriculture, unprecedented domestic and international demand growth, and breakthrough technologies.

Hugh Scott, Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund director, foresees the scope of agri-business intensification and value addition in the food supply chain as huge. He said small family farmer organisations are included in this dynamic agri-business investment to show them how they can make profit with adequate mentoring and financial support.

"Today one of the most challenging problems in plant breeding is that of improving drought tolerance crops. This is one way of minimising dependency on rain-fed agriculture and sticking to certain variety of seeds and crops every season," Scott said.

Youth advised to venture into farming

By WANDERI NJENGA

A Non-Governmental Organisation has partnered with universities in Kenya to address food crisis in the country through teaching students to embrace farming.

Pan African Agribusiness and Agro industry Consortium (PAN-AAC) has seen the need for the country to equip itself with better farming skills and address food insecurity, hunger and poor standard of living, especially in rural population by involving the students.

Options

According to Lucy Muchoki, Chief executive officer PANAAC, the country is faced with hunger because most youth have shunned agriculture and opted for white collar jobs in the urban centres.

"We are targeting the youth in private and public universities to encourage them to embrace agriculture so that they can appreciate the benefits," said Muchoki.

She regretted that the educational system had misled Kenyans to think that farming and agriculture as a whole was not for graduates and professionals.

"There is much more financial and economic gain in agriculture than young people think," said Muchoki.

So far, the organisation is approaching universities and identifying students to teach them Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) programme.

This is in line with recommendations by the African Union to strengthen the linkages between universities, research and business sector.

So far, the said students have taken part in various farming activities around the country in Kiambu, Murang'a and Kisii Counties.

Boom

According to James Nyingi, regional youth programme coordinator at PANAAC, the Government should put more emphasis in agriculture as it used to do a decade ago so that the agricultural sector can boom and create more jobs and wealth as well as make the country self-sufficient in food supply.

Nyingi challenged the youth to break away from pursuing only white collar jobs and instead venture into agriculture.

He cited greenhouse farming, which is not very capital intensive, yet it has good returns at the end of the day.

The project is being funded by the Royal Danish Foreign Ministry and implemented by the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) through the on-going Universities, Business and Research in Agricultural Innovation (UniBRAIN) programme. Muchoki admitted that there are some challenges, but noted that they have success stories and models to be emulated as well.

"If the country does not invest in food security, the consequences will be big and that is why the youth must get involved in agriculture fully, use modern types of farming. If we do that, we will never go hungry again as a county," Muchoki asserted.

Isiolo pastoralists use goat intestine to predict weather

By MARY MWENDWA

After a daylong recent camel caravan trek in the hot, dry and dusty weather, everybody received a hot cup of tea as other team members prepared their tents to rest for the night.

In high tones, women and men talk in their local dialect, as one man shouts on top of his voice: "Please guys, today we want to eat early, who is in charge of slaughtering the goat? Come over and do your work."

A dark tall man with a sharp sword and a long shuka (cloth covering) tied on his waist grabs a white and black headed goat and within a flash of a second, blood is seen oozing from its throat.

The goat is carefully skinned and meat split in two large pieces. The shiny white slippery stomach is carefully removed and placed on a wide tray.

Predict

"Now you will be able to see how we predict drought and conflicts using animal intestines. At times we use those from the cow but the most common is goat intestines because we cook it more often than that from the cow," he says.

Apart from being a delicacy, goat intestines have since time immemorial helped to predict drought and conflict among pastoralist communities.

Scientific knowledge on weather is common all over the world to predict weather changes and patterns, but not for the Borana community in Merti, Isiolo County.

"We hear about the scientific weather forecast from the media, but at times they are not very accurate. Last time they predicted El Nino rains we did not experience much rain. Now there is another alert again, we are yet to see," says Dabaso Halkano, an elder in Gorbasa village. He adds: "Here in the village we heavily rely on indigenous knowledge which is very close to the truth and people here believe in it."

Dabaso confirms that the last intestine prediction revealed no El Nino rains.

"According to our wise men they have predicted rains in April 2015, that is what our people know as per now, anything else from the Meteorological Department does not make any sense to us," Dabaso says.

Sign

Dabaso delicately displays the intestines on the plate, black dotted marks surrounding white patches around the intestines are visible like

a map, and he touches them as he sighs: "This shows that we will have drought, the black dots symbolise homesteads with pasture, here they are few meaning we will have a drought soon."

Dabaso also confirms the same technique is used to predict conflict.

On his part, Peter Ambenje, Deputy Director in charge of Forecasting and County Metrological Services: "Scientific data is the main input into predicting climate conditions. The process basically involves putting current observational climate or weather data into mathematical models. The models are then run to give predictions. The kind of mathematical model used depends on the time scale of the prediction. There are predictions in the short range (up to 24 hours ahead); there are predictions in the medium range (up to five days ahead) and there are long range predictions (upto three months ahead). The models adopted in many cases have to be tested to ensure that they replicate history fairly well. Historical data is key in the whole process."

According to the deputy director, in the tropical regions the long range forecasts (predictions) are based on statistical models that relate the climate variable, say rainfall, to certain predictors. This calls for systematic observations that ensures long series of scientific data of both the predictors (inputs) and the predicted variable.

Model

He explains there are also models used for predicting climate change scenarios in the years to come. Such models use the parameters that have been established to be influencing climate. A case in point is the Green House Gases such as carbon dioxide among others. Various scenarios of how the predictors are likely to be used to make the projections. Many models are run and the model outputs compared to see those that are converging (giving almost similar results).

However, in another scenario in Isiolo, Amina Kambicha from Merti

"We hear about the scientific weather forecast from the media, but at times they are not very accurate. Last time they predicted El Nino rains we did not experience much rain.

— Dabaso Halkano, Elder, Gorbasa Village



narrates how women use ropes to predict drought and to trace lost livestock in the community. She tosses a brown knotted rope in her hands and says they use this to track livestock lost to cattle-rustlers. "We toss the rope in the hand and we chant a prayer, when it falls pointing in a certain direction, it indicates where the direction of the stolen livestock have gone, it never goes wrong, we get accurate results," she says confidently.

Ambenje concurs saying indigenous knowledge is important in climate change matters. There is vast knowledge out there as to how the climate used to behave. The changes that have taken place can also be well articulated. Adaptation strategies that used to be adopted in case of certain extreme climate



Two men slaughter a goat in Isiolo County shortly before they remove the intestines and give it to a 'weather' expert who ties it like a rope and uses it to predict the weather forecast, the traditional way. Below: Amina Kambicha from Merti illustrates how women use ropes to predict drought and to trace lost livestock in the community. Picture: Mary Mwendwa

events such as droughts and floods also exist.

"This knowledge, if blended well, with science yields very good results, especially on issues of climate change adaptation. The process also ensures stakeholder involvement and acceptance of new initiative," says the weather expert.

Indigenous knowledge among pastoralist communities where Da-

baso and Amina hail from, have helped them to predict impending disasters, especially those related to climatic conditions. These regions continue to face harsh climatic changes which leave devastating effects when communities lose their livestock enmasse. It is this kind of indigenous knowledge that helps them to prepare and put in place adaptive measures for their survival.



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The paper is supported by:

