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# REJECT

CELEBRATING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT



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

# Combating sewer farming

....various stakeholders are promoting a healthy, wholesome and cheap way for the urban poor to grow their own foods and even to sell the surplus, writes JOYCE CHIMBI

The government has been cracking the whip on urban farmers who have for many years resorted to using open sewer to grow a variety of vegetables.

A situation which has resulted in many unsuspecting Kenyans consuming contaminated foods.

Statistics show that there are over 30 percent urban farmers in Nairobi with a majority using sewer waste to grow their foods.

Fenice Oyiela has been growing a variety of vegetables for about ten years along a sewer line in Langata constituency.

According to Oyiela, she sells up to nine bags of these vegetables to buyers that distribute them across major markets in Nairobi.

"If you come to this farm at around 7am, you will find many buyers with lorries waiting to load the vegetables that they have bought from me. I grow kales, arrowroots and amaranth," she says.

## Connection

Asked whether she has any concerns regarding feeding unsuspecting consumers with vegetables grown with sewer waste, she says "am just a mother trying to survive in tough times. I have no other job. In any case, am just one among many such farmers."

She further says that "there is no difference between my vegetables and those grown with clean water. Sewer is fertilizer."

But the ministry of health and other health experts disagree, saying that food grown with sewer waste has serious health implications.

The rise in diseases such as cholera, typhoid, malaria, diarrhea, kidney failure and even cancer has led officials from the Ministry of public health and sanitation to crack the whip on urban farmers who are growing foods using sewer waste.

"It is very dangerous. More and more foods grown with sewer water is finding its way on people's dining table," says Patrick Mutua, a district public health



**A farmer goes about her business in a farm along a sewer line even as the government works towards destroying such farms. Below: Officials from the Ministry of health-publichealth and sanitation during a crack down on sewer farmers. . Pictures: George Ngesa**

officer in Kibra from the Ministry of health- public health and sanitation.

"We are not just talking about household sewer, but industrial waste too that is contaminated with heavy metals such lead and mercury. These are very dangerous metals with serious health implications," he adds.

Further, urban farmers using sewer waste are causing significant challenges for the Nairobi Water and Sewerage Company.

"These farmers cause artificial blockage along sewer lines so that waste does not move along the sewer system as it

should," Mutua explained.

According to Oyiela, they usually target inspection tanks "which have an inlet and an outlet. We focus on the outlet and block it using sacks, this means that the sewer water gushes out into the farm like a fountain."

Even more risky is the fact that these inspection tanks are left open and children can easily fall in-

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# Mothers need a strong support system to encourage breastfeeding

By **MERCY MUMO**

Every year, World breastfeeding week which runs from 1-7 August is celebrated. Despite breast milk being the most natural and free method of giving a baby immunity to diseases, new statistics indicate that the lives of 95 babies could be saved every hour - 830,000 a year around the world - if new mothers breastfed immediately after giving birth.

Infants who are not breastfed are 15 times more likely to die from pneumonia and 11 times more likely to die of diarrhoea than those who are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life.

Worldwide, 92 million children under six months of age - two out of three babies - are either fed artificially or through a mixture of breast milk and other foods like formula milk.

Debra Musembi, a working mother to 5-month-old baby boy, Jabulani Kivale, attests her baby's health to her exclusive breastfeeding. She is among millions of working mothers worldwide who strive to ensure the wellbeing of their children through exclusive breastfeeding with the support from their employers.

"My son has only had breast milk from birth and even as a working professional, which has not hindered me from ensuring that my baby is on breast milk only. At work I express the excess milk for him to ensure continuity of supply," she says.

Reports indicate that if every baby was fed during the first hour of life - what is called the "power hour" - it is estimated that up to 830,000 newborn deaths could be prevented every year; that's 95 babies every hour.

The theme for World breastfeeding week this year is 'Breastfeeding support: Close to Mothers' which highlights Breastfeeding Peer Counselling. Even when mothers are able

to get off to a good start, all too often in the weeks or months after delivery there is a sharp decline in breastfeeding rates and practices, particularly exclusive breastfeeding.

## Support

That time when mothers do not visit a healthcare facility is the time when a community support system for mothers is essential. According to the breastfeeding report by Save the Children dubbed Superfood for babies, there are four major barriers that prevent mothers from breastfeeding their babies. The report examined the reasons behind the lack of progress in improving breastfeeding rates in 44 countries across the world.

First on the list is shortage of health workers in health facilities that has contributed significantly to the decline of breastfeeding at birth. It is reported that one third of infants are born without a skilled birth attendant present. As a result, the chance of supporting and encouraging a new mother to breastfeed in the first few hours is lost.

Secondly, the lack of maternity legislation in areas of national policy like maternity leave, financial protection to help maintain family income while on leave and work place provisions to allow breast feeding to continue in some countries, makes it difficult for a mother to breastfeed especially after returning to work after the birth of a child.

Women who are in casual employment encounter a myriad of challenges with the birth of a child. Some employers do not have maternity leave provisions and at some point may not support the mother with her arrival of the bundle of joy.

Triza Mwangi who works in one of the salons at Reinsurance Plaza in Nairobi says a month to her delivery,

her employer informed her that she could only stay home with her child for a month if she intended to keep her job.

"Since I am not permanently employed, I did not have the luxury of staying home for the stipulated three months to breastfeed my child. That one month I stayed home I did not receive any income as I had not worked. I had to resume work immediately to secure my job," says Triza.

"I would get an off day once a week which I would use to look for braiding jobs for a commission in order to survive."

She adds that the availability of a private space to express milk while at work is also a challenge.

Community and cultural pressures are amongst the barriers to exclusive breastfeeding. The report indicates that mothers from poor countries are given misleading advice or are coerced into harmful practises like giving alternative foods or liquids in place of breastfeeding.

Many women are not free to make their own decisions on breastfeeding. In Pakistan, only 44 per cent of mothers consider themselves to be the prime decision makers over their child's wellbeing. Most of the times, it is often the husbands or mothers-in-law who decide how their children will be fed.

## Growth

The big business barrier has also been a major concern. According to the report, the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes has since adopted a number of subsequent resolutions that have developed and updated the original provisions. 'The Code' regulates marketing tactics that can undermine breastfeeding, including advertising, free samples, targeting mothers and health claims on packaging.



**A woman breast feeding her child. Community and cultural pressures are among the barriers to exclusive breast feeding.**

Picture: Courtesy Save the Children

The growth in the baby food market is increasingly dependent on emerging economies. Strong legislation is needed to restrict the marketing strategies and activities of breast milk substitute companies.

According to Save the Children East Africa Regional Director Halane Hussein, many governments across East Africa have shown their determination to increase breastfeeding rates.

"Countries like Rwanda where 85 per cent of children are exclusively breastfed for the first six months have shown success is possible, however other countries in the region have further to go. In Kenya, only 32 per

cent of children are exclusively breastfed meaning that too many children are missing out on vital nutrients they need in the first months of life," noted Hussein.

As the world marks this year's World breastfeeding week, it is important that we draw special attention to the importance of peer support in helping mothers establish and sustain breastfeeding.

Circles of support for mothers such as family and social networks, proper health care systems, work place and employment condition and government legislation all play a crucial role in the continuity of breastfeeding.

# Nairobi facing challenge of sewer farmers

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side, and drown in the open sewer.

The stench from the tanks is also overwhelming. Residents along the sewer line continue to complain of air pollution.

Sewer farmers are also not known to use gloves, "they just handle the waste with their bare hands."

The situation has also become a source of conflict between the district public health officers and the NWSC.

Public health officers are mandated to ensure that the environment is sanitized to prevent diseases such as typhoid, NWSC on its parts are kept on their toes by the urban farmers who relentlessly continue to compromise the sewer system.

According to various agricultural experts, human waste can be fertilizer but not in its wet form.

"In areas such as North Eastern that are very hot, human waste from a toilet that has filled up can be dried up under direct sunlight and become

a source of manure," explains Patricia Mwangi, a district public health officer in Lang'ata, also from the Ministry of health-public health and sanitation.

"But wet sewer, that is also drawn from the industries cannot be used to grow foods in the manner that these farmers are doing," she adds.

This comes even as various stakeholders take all precautions to ensure that Kenyans do not come into contact with heavy metals such as lead.

Petrol stations use unleaded oils such as unleaded diesel to ensure that

people are not exposed to lead.

According to health experts, children are particularly at great risk. Exposure to lead among children can cause permanent damage.

As an alternative to sewer farming, the government and various stakeholders are providing a practical solution, particularly among the urban poor.

It is estimated that close to one million people live on about 400 hectares in Kibera.

"Sack farming requires very little space, with a sack, stones and soil, one

can begin growing their own foods right at their doorsteps," says Atieno Omondi, a sack farmer in Kibera slums.

According to Atieno, one sack goes for KSh 15 or 30 depending on the size.

## Material

While some farmers have to buy the soil, others can simply collect it from their compounds.

"Some of us live in very congested compounds which provide no room to dig out the soil, in that case, we

buy the soil at about KSh 60 per sack. But the stones can be collected anywhere, even along the road," she says.

Once that is done, the farmer fills the sack with soil "but only half the sack. The middle area is filled up with stones which are then surrounded by soil all around. This is important for water retention and to ensure that plants are adequately supplied with water," Atieno explains.

Commonly grown vegetables by sack farmers include kales and spinach.

"Some of us grow to feed the family, but there are those who grow for sale. It is a cheap way of growing healthy vegetables, especially for those of us with no land," Atieno expounds.

Sack farming is essentially vertical farming and requires very little space. For the urban poor, this kind of farming will not only put food on the table, but may also be a source of revenue.



**"In areas such as North Eastern that are very hot, human waste from a toilet that has filled up can be dried up under direct sunlight and become a source of manure."**

— Patricia Mwangi

# Victim of PEV narrates her ordeal five years on

By ADAMS KIPROP

Strength and optimism are the two elements that have kept Joyce Cheruiyot hanging onto life over the last five years. Before the elections, Cheruiyot says that her and her husband lived a comfortable life.

The young couple who were married for only five years, had moved from the husbands' ancestral land in Bomet and had acquired a two acre piece of land in Kapsoi village, Molo. They had several properties on their name and had a home full of food.

However, on December 31, 2007 this changed after ethnic clashes occasioned by disputed presidential results broke out in the area.

With a disfigured face, widowed and with no property to her name, the mother of three has been a pariah to relatives and neighbours alike.

Even to her own children, she appears to them like any other creature but not a human being. Cheruiyot says that her younger son has been constantly asking her why she does not look like everybody else.

## Peace

And yet her fame as a peacemaker in the Rift Valley region, which was worst affected by 2007-2008 post-election violence has spread far and wide.

We came to know Cheruiyot through Mercy Corps, a non-governmental organisation that had been engaged in peace-building in the region.

On visiting her home in Londiani in Nakuru County, we found a jovial Cheruiyot eagerly expecting us in a small grass-thatched house which was a donation from one of her relatives.

Despite having lost part of her nose, eye lids and lips, Cheruiyot can still manage to smile as she begins to recount how the post-election violence changed her life.

It all started in late 2007 in Molo, Nakuru County where she was liv-

ing with her husband, the late Wesley Cheruiyot and their two children.

At the time, she was four months pregnant and was listening to a bulletin on presidential results with her husband on radio when all of over sudden, they heard screams in the neighbourhood and before they could venture out to find out what was going on, about eight men stormed into their house.

She says that the men, who were her neighbours, hacked her husband to death before they forced her to squeeze her face between the fire stones while they hacked her neck. Then they left her for dead.

## Change

However, Cheruiyot was lucky after good Samaritans found her and took her to Molo District Hospital where she regained consciousness a week later. She had to stay there for four months. She had first degree burns and only a plastic surgeon could reconstruct her face.

On being discharged, Cheruiyot who had already delivered their third child, Brian Kiplang'at, had to start life afresh at Mawingu IDP camp.

The good news was, their other two children who were playing with the neighbours' children when they were attacked survived and were staying with a good Samaritan.

But she faced another challenge.

"On seeing me, the children fled screaming that the 'creature' they saw was not their mother. They rejected me saying that the mother they knew had a human face. It took a lot of effort for them to accept and join me in the tent where I was a squatter," Cheruiyot recalls.

She adds: "Up to this date, the children are not convinced that I am their mother and they still pester me on whether I will ever look like the 'original' mother they knew. My youngest son is always asking me why I do not look like other people."

However, it is not only her children who are uncomfortable with her

looks, soon after she came out of hospital, Cheruiyot tried to reach out to her husband's kin who live at Ndanai in Bomet County, but they had immediately disowned her claiming she was not legally married to him.

She also became a pariah among her neighbours, who stigmatised her because of her looks.

"I have been like a health hazard to those around me and whenever we go to meetings on resettlement issues I am told to wait outside as 'people' discuss inside."

Beside a disfigured face, her right hand was also maimed and, therefore, she finds it hard to cook, wash utensils or even tend to her farm. Her eye lids were also burnt and this makes it impossible for her to close her eyes even at night when sleeping.

"My life has been a nightmare, despite having the will to move on after all that happened to us, the condition of my body and the rejection by the society have all conspired to make it difficult for me to cope with life," she says.

Cheruiyot who now lives in Londiani, has joined large number of widows who are rejected and denied inheritance after their husbands died. She says that she tried to contact the in-laws but her efforts have been fruitless.

## System

Her efforts to find a way through the justice system have also been a tall order as those concerned keep pushing her case forward. At the same time Cheruiyot lacks resources to travel on frequent basis to Kericho town where the government offices are based.

She is also unable to raise over KSh1 million fee required for plastic surgery.

However, despite her numerous challenges, Cheruiyot remains a strong and steadfast woman. She maintains that she has forgiven all those who killed her husband and meted the life changing injuries on



**Joyce Cheruiyot outside her house in Londiani Nakuru County. She survived first degree burns during the 2007 post election violence. Pictures: Adams Kiprop**

her. She is ready to meet them face to face.

For now, she has been going round schools preaching peace messages and also attending peace meetings where she impresses upon communities the importance of co-existence and political tolerance, herself being a testimony on how tribal clashes can impact on the lives of women and children.



# Tenants in Nairobi slums paying through their noses

By HENRY OWINO

The cost of housing in Nairobi slums is not a laughing matter as many people would imagine.

The structures in the biggest informal settlements of Mathare, Mukuru, Korokocho are either built by individuals or built by 'landlords' and rented to tenants.

Depending on the type and size of the semi-permanent structures, majority of them cost between KSh500 and KSh2,000 exclusive of water, electricity, and latrine/bathroom services.

Tenants have to deep digger into their pockets to pay for every trip to the latrine usage (KSh10) and Sh20 to Sh30 to use the bathrooms for cold and warm shower, respectively, owned by different people.

Among the city slums, Kibera is the biggest and most known and has a population of 500,000 people.

Majority of Kibera residents occupy government land where they have built shelters as one of the basic needs of human beings. Most of the shelters are constructed using iron-sheets to roof them and smeared by mud and or cemented walls.

In addition to the above, residents have to buy water separately which retail at KSh5 for a 25-litre jerry can.

This is why there are still so called "flying toilets" despite pee- People Company coming up with alternative polythene-bags to be used. Illegal electricity connections from the main power supply are the order of the day all over.

Those with the Kenya Power company meters, pay bills not used by them singly, the same happens to water. The few well off people with genuine appliances therefore carry the heavy burden of their neighbors.

## Repair

For any repairs of the house, it is upon the tenant to dig deep into his or her pocket to ensure the house does not collapse. The so called 'landlords' (structure owners) are never bothered on repairs but concerned with the end-month house rent.

During the long rainy season between April and May, tenants are always repairing, digging trenches and opening up grounds for overflow rain water to finds its way to the rivers.

These repairs residents do at

their own cost and risk. No one is allowed to make any repairs like replacing polls, iron-sheets, doors forget about blocking holes on walls by smearing. Everything to be repaired in the structures, the tenants must part with not less than KSh2000 as bribe to a youth group claiming to be the security agents in the slum.

The clay-soil is bought along the construction roads which one has to ferry to where his/her house is located. But this soil used to be free until recently when the area youths invaded it for sale. One full wheelbarrow goes for KSh50.

Depending on the size of repair, a wall or roof, the tenant must inform the youths or else be forcefully vacated through the area Chief.

This is how the youths in Kibera slums earn their living.

Fred Omondi is a tenant in Kibera and says structure owners are not sincere, they keep on alternating.

Omondi, who is a teacher, says: "I was sold a house here for KSh40,000 by a structure-owner who was relocating to another town. I did some renovations to make it look decent for my occupancy but after three months somebody came demanding

for KSh4500 rent for that period. I had to engage local youths who provide security to such matters to sort him out at a fee and up to date he has never returned."

He decided to reside in the slum because of the responsibilities he had at his rural home. He is the first born in a family of seven, four men and three ladies all depending on him fully.

He is married with one child, his wife is currently jobless and still takes care of his siblings; two in college, three in high school and one who lives with him at the primary school where he is employed. The parents are subsistence farmers in Ugenya Constituency, Siaya County.

A resident of the slum said she had lived in Gatwekera village for more than 20 years. The population has grown bigger and so houses are becoming scarce. Nyarose recalled when she first moved into Kibera, one would create space of her own and come up with a structure made of carton.

She said one would then renovate it gradually until such a time it is fully iron-sheet built. None is allowed to build a permanent structure as the

land belongs to the government. The government is upgrading it in sections and it is believed by the year 2030, Kibera will not have slums anymore.

"I remember all these space occupied by houses used to be bush. But now it is full of rusted iron-sheet structures. Things are really changing faster and I think very soon this place will be occupied by permanent houses as the Government plans," she said.

## Adapt

Nyarose admits that nowadays life in the slum is really expensive and challenging but people living there have adapted and do not think of vacating. This is so because, most of them run businesses and their businesses are thriving well. She stated that those who sell ready cooked meals make a tidy sum thus attracting more hoteliers.

Meanwhile, Nairobi County Governor Dr Evans Kidero has assured residents that the government will repossess all land that are lying idle. He said his plans were to continue upgrading houses in slums and make them cheap for residents to afford.

# Drug abuse wreaks havoc among young people

By BEN OROKO

Drug and substance abuse remains a serious challenge facing the youth in Kenya and threatens to deprive the country of its important human capital resource.

Various studies indicate that many youth in and out of school use and abuse drugs much to the detriment of their health and life careers.

The most abused substances among the youth in the country are tobacco, alcohol, khat (*miraa*), marijuana (*bhang*), glue and heroin.

Devina Nyamweya, a youth from Kisii County, concurs saying that drug and substance abuse continues to ruin vibrant careers of brilliant young people, not only in the County but across the country as well.

Nyamweya observes that persistent abuse of drugs among the youth leads to development of suicidal tendencies, school dropouts, irresponsible and sexual misdemeanour among other negative impacts of drugs and substance abuse.

"Various studies indicate that there is a close relationship between drug abuse, violence and irresponsible sexual behaviour among young people," notes Nyamweya.

## Challenge

His sentiments are echoed by Dennis Orioki, chairman Kisii County Youth Development Forum, who says that drug and alcohol abuse still remains a major challenge facing youth empowerment initiatives in the county. He notes that this poses a threat to the County Government's socio-economic development agenda and achievement of Vision 2030.

Orioki regrets that the drug and substance abuse menace has seen many lives of young people wasted, while others lost after succumbing to the side effects of excessive drug abuse.

"My experience of working with the youth in Kisii County reveals that drug and alcohol abuse is increasingly becoming a major challenge to socio-economic development in the area," says Orioki.

He noted that according to the 2012 Survey on the Rapid Situation Assessment of drug and substance abuse conducted by the National



**Youth marching in Kisii County streets to mark this year's World No Tobacco Day. The County Assembly has been urged to develop a Smoking Bill that, if passed, will control rampant smoking in public places.** Pictures: Ben Orok

Campaign Against Drug (NACADA), 34.8 per cent of all users of bhang and 32.9 per cent of tobacco-users have diverted resources in order to finance their addiction.

Orioki says a number of drug rehabilitation programmes and counselling centres are available in Kenya, though majority of them are situated in the urban areas making it difficult for majority of the youth in the rural

areas to access them.

"The County Government should consider incorporating anti-drug abuse and rehabilitation programmes in its projects and link local community-based groups and other partners in the fight against drug and substance abuse

among the youth in the area," observes Orioki.

Meanwhile, the General-Secretary of the Forum, According to Justine Omwenga Nyagami, the Kisii County Government should include the youth in County Drug and Alcohol Abuse Committees to ensure they act as change-agents and mentors to their peers.

Nyagami proes that the County Assembly should develop a Smoking Bill that, if passed, will control rampant smoking in public places. H notes that it is smoking in public that has encouraged drug and substance abuse among youth.

"Other than the Smoking Bill, I am challenging the County administration to designate smoking zones in Kisii town to protect young people from drug abuse temptations," reiterated Nyagami.

He asked the County Government to consider putting in place legislative measures on the abuse of drugs and alcohol among under age children as a stop-gap measure.

## Survey

According to the Kenya National Human Development Report 2009 survey, *Youth in Peril: Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Kenya*, which was the first baseline survey on substance abuse among the youth aged 10-24, the rapid spread of substance abuse can be traced to the breakdown of indigenous culture and introduction of foreign influence.

Substance use by the youth implies a breakdown of family values earlier present in indigenous societies and a loss of parental control.



**"My experience of working with the youth in Kisii County reveals that drug and alcohol abuse is increasingly becoming a major challenge to socio-economic development in the area."**

— Dennis Orioki

## Call for more rehabilitation centres for addicts

By ROBERT NYAGAH

The Government has been challenged to fund the establishment of rehabilitation centres to cope with growing number of people addicted to drugs and alcohol.

According to Sheikh Juma Ngao, national director at the National Agency for Campaigns Against Drugs and Alcohol (NACADA), central and county governments should partner to at least launch a fully-fledged rehabilitation centres for victims of drugs and alcohol abuse.

Ngao noted Coast region has some of the worst cases of drug and substance abuse and warned that failure to initiate adequate rehabilitation facilities would make the country's campaigns for the 2030 development goals unachievable.

He noted that hard drugs and other substances which were normally considered lighter were destroying

an entire generation of young people aged between 18 and 25 years, majority at the prime school and college age and this was dangerous for a nation interested in securing its future.

"How can we keep on saying that we are on the path to achieving the 2030 development goal when our young are being destroyed by narcotics, *miraa* and alcohol?" posed Ngao.

Ngao expressed these concerns during an interview at the Sai Eden Roc Hotel in Malindi. He also expressed sadness that the fight against drugs had not gained the momentum needed to ensure the vice was eradicated once and for all.

### Cases

The Coast region would require a number of rehabilitation centres with a capacity to handle at least 100,000 addicts to be able to deal with growing cases of drug abuse, especially among the youth.

"The Coast region has some of

the worst cases of narcotics and substance abuse in Kenya with young people aged between 18 and 25 years old being dominant among the culprit," noted Ngao. He added: "To successfully undertake real rehabilitation, we will require adequate centres with a capacity for 100,000 patients."

Coast Province is reeling under the vices of drug trafficking and abuse among the youth. Ngao noted that a huge number of school going youth easily access bhang, heroin, cocaine, kubel, alcohol and *miraa*.

He praised those who had volunteered to fight trafficking and abuse of narcotics in Kilifi County and Coast Province in general adding that research conducted by the United Nations last year indicated that out of 49,000 drug abusers who use injections, 26,000 were from the Coast.

At the same time, Ngao challenged the Government to intensify campaigns against narcotic traffick-

ers in private villas, cottages and godowns within the Coast. "There should be legislation allowing the police, NACADA officials and volunteers from the community to raid villas, private houses and godowns owned by foreigners through major and well-coordinated security crackdowns," he said.

### Destroyed

At the same time, Ngao expressed suspicion at the way the police handled drugs and wondered why the huge number of hard drugs netted frequently at the various airports and during police raids in traffickers' dens were not being displayed to and later destroyed in public.

He called for an audit system independent from the police forces to verify what types of drugs were netted, their storage and destruction because the present ways of dealing with drugs were shrouded in mystery.

"We need a clear system on how netted drugs are handled. There should be an independent audit system which should specifically deal with the netted narcotics to ensure that they did not return to the market," reiterated Ngao.

Chairman of Omar Project Drugs Rehabilitation Centre Hamid Mudaris appealed for initiation of government funded rehabilitation centres for addicts because the private ones operated with a tight budget.

The Omar Project with a capacity for 25 inmates managed to fully rehabilitate at least 30 addicts every year and would do better if it was expanded and supported by the Government.

On his part, Malindi MP Dan Kazungu pleaded with the youth in Malindi to avoid drugs and called on the residents to be at the forefront of rejecting drugs to ensure that the region regained its glory as a tourist's destination.

# Kilifi youth trained on entrepreneurship

By YUSUF AMIN

As Kilifi County government takes shape, business experts are now educating the youths on how they can seize the opportunities that have arisen in the region.

The experts want the youth in the county to exploit their potential in business by sharpening their entrepreneurial skills.

According to Prof Ross Stewart, an entrepreneurial expert from Seattle Pacific University that is working in collaboration with Pwani University and United States of America Embassy, Kilifi County has many resources that can help youth start their own businesses.

Stewart urged the youth not to fear acquiring loans from financial institutions to start their own businesses, saying days of over reliance on getting white collar jobs are a thing of the past.

"Kilifi County government should come up with strategies of making sure that more entrepreneurship skills are given to the youth so that they can succeed in their businesses," explained Stewart.

He called on local leaders to ensure that they have set aside a special kitty to help finance small scale businesses for the youth in the area.

## Priority

"The youth should be given opportunities to conduct their businesses since it is the only solution to the biting poverty in this region," he reiterated.

Stewart asked the youth to register their companies and apply for tenders in the county government to enable them be given preference in line with the policy of reducing unemployment.

His thought were echoed by William Kingi, chairman Kilifi County Strategies Think Tank Organisation, who noted that the youth had been marginalized for a long time in terms of development and the only solution was to have them engage in businesses.

"The youth are experiencing many challenges and the Kilifi County government should focus on the problem in time as it begins to take its shape," said Stewart during a youth seminar on business issues.

Speaking at the same event, Amason Kingi who is the Kilifi Governor said they will give youth projects a priority.

Kingi promised the youth that his government will ensure that more opportunities are directed at them so that their businesses take off.

He asked the youth to cooperate with the county government to have the right information on the available youth projects in the county.

During a stakeholders forum recently, Kingi revealed that his County government will make sure that youth are fully involved in their projects.

"There are investors who have shown an interest in investing in Kilifi County and the youth should be ready to cooperate with them by making sure that they have their own companies and businesses," Kingi noted.

Linnet Shaha, community development leader, said more sensitisation programmes will be conducted for the youth since they had more fresh ideas and energy to offer the County.

Shaha said that she has been conducting some barazas for the youth, especially in Kilifi, Mtwapa, Malindi, Kaloleni, Ganze and Maharini to edu-



Entrepreneurship expert from Seattle Pacific University Prof Ross Stewart (Left) in cooperation with Pwani University and US Embassy are educating youth in Kilifi County on how they can invest in businesses at a workshop held in Pwani University. Picture: Yusuf Amin

cate them on the importance of self-employment.

## Intervene

"I am calling upon the Kilifi leadership to intervene and help the youth register their companies since most of them do not know where to start from," noted Shaha.

However, according to the youth, lack of funds remains their biggest challenge.

Youth leader Asili Abala Randani said that some of them have been involved in selling fish in the towns and got money but the challenge was how to manage the businesses.

More effort was needed to make sure that the youth were empowered and equipped with business management skills.

"Financial institutions should lower their interest rates on loans so that more youth can take benefit to boost

their respective businesses," urged Randani.

However, Ezra Khoi a community leader in Ganze asked youth to come out and invest in agriculture so that they could supply vegetables and other farm products to the hotels and colleges in the county.

"The youths should be more involved in agricultural activities instead of depending on white collar jobs that do not exist," Khoi said.

# Fund helps pull orphan out of poverty

By GILBERT OCHIENG

For the past eight years 22-year old Denis Bwire Wabidonge has literally turned his life upside down.

Despite dropping out of school in class seven in 2005 due to lack of school fees following the death of his father, Bwire has every reason to wear a smile.

Since then Bwire, a resident of Buyende Village in Bukhaya West Location, Matayos sub-county says his father was a statistics officer based in Narok until his death in 2003. This curtailed Bwire's dream of proceeding to the university to pursue electronic engineering.

The sixth born in a family of nine — four brothers and five sisters — Bwire recalls that his father's sudden death plunged the family into abject poverty considering that he was the family's sole bread winner.

"I had to cut short my education in order to give my other siblings who were ahead of me and already in secondary school a chance to complete their education taking into account the meagre resources we had," Bwire explains. He notes that his siblings were also forced to drop from school due to lack of fees.

With no formal employment, Bwire had no hope of securing a job within the county government of Busia for lack of academic qualification and professional experience. Instead he opted to venture into a unique income generating activity that has transformed his socio-

economic well-being, thanks to the Youth Enterprise Development Fund.

In order to become self-reliant and improve on their standards of living, Bwire and his colleagues put their heads together and unanimously resolved to register with the Department of Social Services under Busende Empowerment Youth Group in 2009.

In 2012, the group members applied for a loan of KSh100,000 through the Busia District Youth Department to enable them invest in various income generating activities of their choice.

## Generate

According to Gabriel Ojiambo, the group's chairman, the money was later loaned to the members who are undertaking various income generating activities such as poultry keeping, table-banking, tailoring and dress-making, brick-making and horticulture among others.

"Since the formation and registration of the youth group four years ago, the living standards of the group members has improved as they are now self-reliant unlike before when they used to be idle," says Ojiambo.

Among the key members of the vibrant youth group who have set a precedent worth emulating due to total commitment aimed at transforming their lives is Bwire who has defied all odds to dissociate himself from the culture of dependency.



Denis Bwire who is making a living by making lanterns operated by keys. He is encouraging the youth to engage in self employment. Picture: Gilbert Ochieng

He took a loan of KSh5,000 from the group's revolving fund which he pumped into the lantern making business.

"With the loan I took from the group, I invested the same into the lantern-making business I had started but stopped briefly due to lack of capital," he explains.

He makes lanterns fitted with internal and external loud speakers and wall lanterns that use dry cells and operated by a key as well as repair of damaged re-chargeable spotlights.

The quality lanterns have attracted scores of

clients who come from as far as Kisumu, Kakamega, Siaya and Busia counties.

"Lanterns fitted with radios are sold at KSh1,500 whereas those fitted with internal and external loud speakers are being sold at KSh1,000," says Bwire. Since he started the business, his standard of living has changed a great deal.

He is now calling upon fellow youth from the area to join and form groups that will enable them to apply for loans and engage in any business of their choice.

# Siaya youth change their fortunes by farming

By OMONDI GWENGI

It sounds like a cliché to say that the youth can be drivers of development in this country. For sure the youth have the energy and zeal.

Young people can still take risks that most people past the age of 40 would not. This is the typical example that a group of youth in Siaya offers to develop the region as well as improve their living standards and that of the community towards achieving Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) on eradicating poverty and extreme hunger as well as meeting Vision 2030.

Following the depletion of fish stock in Lake Victoria, a group of youth decided that there was life beyond fishing and, therefore, hatched a plot that saw them resort to farming as an alternative source of livelihood.

This is what mooted the idea of forming *Kanyibok Farmers' Group* in West Yimbo Location, Siaya County where they started by small scale horticulture and local poultry farming.

"Fish was the only available source of protein for this community and with the depletion of the stock; we decided to go for the alternative in the form of poultry and pork," explains Jared Owuor.

Five years ago, Owuor could not pay his bills, give a decent life to his family and even save. However, that was before he and other youth realized that the lake could no longer sustain their livelihoods.

Owuor is not looking for a job and if he is forced to look for one, he says he can only go for farming and nothing else.

According to him, this is an irreversible move in his life and he has no regrets following their venture into farming because it has proved to be a reliable source of livelihood.

"Most of the crops take up to three months to mature and this, therefore, enables one to plan adequately unlike fishing which is compounded by numerous challenges," Owuor explains.

From their small farms, they have been able to produce crops for domestic consumption

and surplus for local market.

"Given that we are still doing it in small-scale, we are only able to serve the local market but we are hopeful that with financial assistance and acquisition of adequate skills, we will be able to feed a bigger population."

## Venture

According to Stephen Jaoko, whose life has been totally detached from the lake, farming is the new goldmine for the youth if well employed.

"I was left with my siblings after the death of my parents and I have been able to give them a decent living all from farming proceeds," says Jaoko.

Despite the milestones that they have made in terms of farming and community development, the group is faced still by numerous challenges. However, they are hopeful that an individual will come up to midwife an idea that will not only improve their standards of living but the community at large.

Lack of information has been a hindrance to development and prosperity especially for the rural youth who more than often miss important opportunities.

"In order to tackle this challenge, the county government of Siaya should establish various resources centres to enable the youth interact and gather information on matters related to development," suggests Jaoko.

On his part, Owuor says the government should enhance field days for farmers in order to motivate and impart adequate knowledge and skills on them.

Another big hurdle that most of the youth

**"Most of the crops take up to three months to mature and this, therefore, enables one to plan adequately unlike fishing which is compounded by numerous challenges,"**

— Jared Owuor



Jared Owuor and Stephen Jaoko tend to capsicum crop at their horticulture farm in Bondo, Siaya County. Picture: Omondi Gwengi

especially those planning to start up any business face is lack of funds. They are unable to purchase farm inputs as well as use modern farming technology.

"Farm inputs are unaffordable to most of us and this makes most of them dependant on rain-fed agriculture using old methods of farming which in turn lead to poor and low yields."

Most of the loans attract high interest rates and this, therefore, discourages them from borrowing. However, they are suggesting that the interest rates be made favourable for the youth.

For the indigenous poultry that the group keeps, a challenge they are facing is the persistent

outbreak of poultry-related diseases in the region.

Competition from large scale farmers in the region like the Dominion Farms is also a major threat to development as cited by the group.

"Large scales farmers are a threat to us since they produce crops in large scale and, therefore, flock our local markets making us sell our produce at a throwaway price."

With the challenges and achievements that they have witnessed, Owuor notes with concern that some youth groups are formed because there are some funds available somewhere and not because they have an idea that could transform into something viable for them and the community.

"We should be focused and development-minded when forming groups because this will make us reap the fruits of those funds and not use them for luxurious purposes."

However, they are calling upon the leaders to encourage the youth to adopt modern farming technology such as greenhouse farming, irrigation, use of improved seeds and animal production through zero grazing.

## Blind man is promoting ski-training on Mt Kenya

By JOSEPH MUKUBWA

Look no further if you want to be trained to ski on snow.

Twenty-three-year-old Peter Wambugu Ndirangu is a household name in Tetu District, Nyeri County where he has started a training centre to assist those keen on alpine skiing, a sport that is common in Europe and America.

However, despite taking this unique sport Ndirangu, though visually impaired, is determined to train as many youth as possible to learn and enjoy the sport.

Ndirangu hails from Kiawaithanji area where he has taken all his time to train local youth who have interest in the sport for free.

He has put aside his challenge of not seeing well to train the youngsters from his area. He argues: "It is not a must to have snow in Kenya for the youngsters to be trained on alpine skiing."

"My aim is to enhance development of talent among youth. My eyes do not deter me from what I am determined to do," explains Ndirangu.

He notes: "It has come to my attention that most young people in the area should be given an opportunity to develop their talent."

He says they should also be guided positively to make them achieve their goals in life.

Ndirangu says the trainings he holds has helped many local youth who are less than 25 years old keep away from drugs and illicit brews through his group named Tetu United

Athletics and Alpine Skiing team.

The international Paralympics star has trained about 20 youngsters including students from the area and hopes that one day they will get a chance to fly to snow-capped countries or continents like America, Australia and Europe.

The last born in a family of 10, Ndirangu was born with good eyesight and attended the local Kiamburi Primary School in Tetu. However, while in Standard Four, he started experiencing problems with his eye.

He was in and out of several hospitals and many of his friends thought that his life had been dimmed.

"Doctors told me that I had pressure in my eyes veins which affected my seeing. I thought that it was the end of the world but later discovered that God had better plans for me," he says.

## Learn

Ndirangu later joined Thika School for the Blind where he learnt up to Standard Eight and Thika High School for the Blind where he sat for his Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examinations.

He was a fast runner and would regularly represent Kenya in the Paralympics team.

It was during this time in school that the Government of South Korea sponsored him for the alpine skiing sport after he performed well as an athlete of the Kenya Paralympics team.

"I passed well in the national interview since I had certificates of athletics in both short and long races, marathon

and field events like ball games this was to my advantage," he explains.

Ndirangu has been training in South Korea over the last two years after he got a full sponsorship of seven years that will take him until 2018. He has also represented Kenya in Tunisia, South Africa and Brazil as an athlete in the Paralympics team.

The youth now say they are very happy with the initiative since many of them are even ready to travel to the countries with snow for the game and improve their skills.

## Factfile

### About alpine skiing sport

Alpine skiing is a sport that involves sliding down snow-covered hills on skis with fixed-heel bindings. It is also commonly known as downhill skiing, although that also incorporates different styles.

Alpine skiing can be contrasted with skiing using free-heel bindings; ski mountaineering and Nordic skiing such as cross-country, ski jumping and telemark.

The sport is popular wherever the combination of snow, mountain slopes and a sufficient tourist infrastructure can be built. It is common in parts of Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, the South American Andes and East Asia.

Alpine skiing began as a club sport in 1861 at Kiandra in Australia and a number of similar clubs in North America as well as within the Austrian and Swiss Alps.

Today, most alpine skiing occur at a ski resort with ski lifts that transport skiers up the mountain. The snow is groomed, avalanches are controlled and trees are cut to create trails.



Visually blind Peter Ndirangu (left) with friends during a training in South Korea. He is currently training youth in his home area on the sport. Picture: Joseph Mukubwa

"This is a very enjoyable game. It is not like football or volleyball where we are more used to. We are very proud of Ndirangu," says John Maina who has been in the training for the last one month.

## Stigma

Another youth Joyce Njeri says she never misses a lesson and would wish that the training is conducted in an area that has snow.

Area sub-District Commissioner Herman Shambi says this is a very positive move by a youth who is visually impaired and encouraged others to join Ndirangu.

"We have seen many youth who are physically fit but instead engage in alcohol and drug abuse. We need more Ndirangus in this area," reiterated Shambi.

He warned the community should not stigmatise those living with disability since they can shine in other ways like Ndirangu.

However, Shambi lamented that Ndirangu lacks enough equipment and resources to train the youth and wishes the young man could get a sponsor

who can take over so that the youth can be trained outside the country.

He says although Tetu is hilly, there is no snow to enable them train well.

Many resorts also include snow making equipment to provide skiing when the weather would otherwise not allow it.

Alternatively, alpine skiers may pursue the sport in less controlled environments. This practice is variously referred to as ski touring, backcountry skiing or extreme skiing.

In competitive alpine skiing races four disciplines exist: slalom, giant slalom, super giant slalom, and downhill.

Slalom ski races have courses that require short tight turns, whereas giant slalom races have courses which are set with more widely spaced turns.

Super-giant slalom and downhill have few turns, the courses have gates spaced widely apart and skiers often reach 100 kilometres per hour.

It needs equipment such as seek or skiing boat and heavy uniforms among others. The skiing techniques are important due to balancing and other techniques.

# Health facilities ill-equipped to provide post-abortion care

By FAITH MUIRURI

The hope of reducing morbidity and mortality from complications of abortion has remained elusive due to institutional weaknesses that have characterised most health facilities in the country.

While the new *Standards and Guidelines for Reducing Morbidity and Mortality from Unsafe Abortion in Kenya, September, 2012*, seek to enhance the provision of Post Abortion Care by both public and private health facilities, the service still remains inaccessible to most women in urban slums and low income areas that include rural areas.

District Hospitals where majority of women with incomplete abortion can access care at low costs are ill equipped and understaffed.

According to Dr Joachim Osur, Director, IPAS Africa Alliance Programs only 20 per cent of health facilities in the country can effectively provide post-abortion care services leaving women seeking to be attended to in these areas forced to go neighbouring districts.

"This exposes women to delayed treatment which in most cases leads to death. Women with incomplete abortion come with severe infections, complications, injuries of the uterus and any delay can be fatal," Osur explains.

## Infrastructure

He says that providers have not been adequately trained by the Government to provide safe abortion services.

"As a result, access to safe services by trained providers particularly in rural areas is limited," he laments.

Osur says that the situation has been compounded by lack of trained personnel in the provision of post-abortion care.

"Although the national health network provides a primary health facility within five kilometres radius, staffed by nurses and clinical officers, a large percentage of this cadre of personnel generally have not been trained to manage emergency post-abortion care," he reiterates.

According to Osur government priorities are wrong and budgetary allocations to the health sector are sparingly low despite the high rates of maternal deaths which currently stand at 488 deaths in every 100,000 births. Unsafe abortion accounts for 2,600 deaths in the country.

"Unless this touchy issue is addressed, Kenya's goal to reduce maternal deaths by 75 per cent in 2015 in line with the Millennium Development Goals may not be achieved," he observes.

Osur's sentiments are echoed by Dr Simon Mueke, a senior Director of Medical Services, who notes that provision of post-abortion care in the country has been marred by a myriad of challenges that range from wrong health-seeking behaviour by women with such cases, inadequate numbers of service providers and inadequate skills.

"Inadequate infrastructure, late presentations at health facility, late referrals by incapacitated facilities, lack



**Mothers share beds at a public hospital. Inadequate infrastructure, late presentations at health facility, late referrals by incapacitated facilities, lack of essential medical supplies, including family planning commodities have further complicated post abortion care. Pictures: Reject Correspondent**

of essential medical supplies, including family planning commodities have further complicated the situation," Mueke explains.

Osur says that abortion is still rampant in the country and cuts across a whole spectrum of women within the reproductive age group with 48 per cent occurring among women aged between 14 to 24 years.

## Prevalence

The World Health Organisation estimates that 316,560 abortions occur in the country annually with an estimated 20,893 women being hospitalized with abortion related complications in public hospitals.

Induced abortion accounts for 44 per cent with 80 per cent of women ending up with incomplete abortion. About one per cent of women admitted to hospital die from abortion related complications which translates to 2,000.

Until recently, the policy in Kenya was that only doctors could be trained in providing comprehensive post-abortion care services especially emergency care.

A study by Guttmacher Institute in Kenya reveals that doctors constitute only four per cent of all health workers in Kenya, and are mostly in urban areas. With a doctor: population ratio of 1:10,000.

According to Shem Opiyo, a community health worker in Mathare slums the poor status of the economy has made it impossible for most Ke-

nyans to pay fares for long distances to public hospitals where doctors are found in addition to cost sharing that is now expected of them in the health facilities.

## Guidelines

However, in an effort to address the rising morbidity and mortality from unsafe abortion, the Government has come up with comprehensive standards and guideline.

Developed by the Ministry of Medical Services, the *Standards and Guidelines for Reducing Morbidity and Mortality from Unsafe Abortion in Kenya, September, 2012*, do not restrict providers of comprehensive post-abortion care services to specific cadres of health providers.

The scope has now been expanded to incorporate registered, trained and skilled health professionals who include registered clinical officers as well as nurses and midwives.

The guidelines lay emphasis on the need to ensure that all facilities that provide post-abortion care services meet the minimum health standards and are equipped with the necessary infrastructure, adequate space, light, privacy and running water.

The Government also has an obligation to ensure that healthcare professionals are adequately trained to offer abortion services and that facilities have the appropriate equipment and supplies to provide quality services.

The policy sets out basic procedures for strong referral linkages to help miti-

gate against delays and enhance survival of patients with complications.

Under the new rules, communities are to be trained to recognize and refer abortion cases and hospitals are to be equipped with appropriate means of transport for referring patients from one facility to another

More significantly, all patients are to receive timely care. The time of registration, attendance and intervention should be recorded.

## Handbook

The Government has also come up with handbook to guide in the implementation of the National Post-Abortion Care Curriculum for Service Providers.

The handbook makes explicit references to barriers to quality comprehensive post-abortion care services and cites negative provider and community attitudes among factors inhibiting access to care.

The handbook seeks to destigmatise abortion and calls on both service providers and community at large to encourage women faced with complications to go to a facility where they can get appropriate life-saving services.

Further, the national curriculum on the Management of Unintended, Risky and Unplanned Pregnancies has been revised and focus shifted towards destigmatization of abortion which remains sensitive and controversial in the country.

Health workers have also been trained on the need to discard rumours, misconceptions, untruths, myths and assumptions.

"Due to the pervasive stigma surrounding abortion, providers may intentionally refuse to offer services out of fear of condemnation from other providers. In addition, women or girls may be afraid to seek such services out of fear of reproach from their communities," says Alisha Bjerregaard from the Centre for Reproductive Rights.

## Shame that is Busia District Hospital

By GILBERT OCHIENG

Residents of Busia County are thinking twice before heading to the district hospital because of its growing list of problems.

According to Jane Rose Ambuchi, Medical Superintendent, the list includes an acute shortage of medical personnel and lack of an ambulance as well as a mental unit.

"Lack of adequate medical staff, low bed capacity, shortage of drugs and lack of an anatomy laboratory facility has hampered the elevation of the facility to level five status," noted Ambuchi.

## Provide

This was supported by Dr Assumpta Matekwa Busia County Nursing Officer, who said the hospital has been unable to provide effective service delivery due to lack of doctors and nurses.

The two officers spoke during a stakeholders' forum at a Busia hotel. They appealed to the authorities for help to save the agony and frustrations of patients using the health facility.

According to Ambuchi, Busia County has 220 health workers out of whom 120 are nurses based at the Busia District Hospital and four medical officers of health. The hospital has a bed capacity for 189 patients.

She further reiterated the need to expand Busia District Hospital's mortuary which she noted had the capacity to accommodate only 12 bodies adding that the facility is overstretched and is currently holding up to 45 bodies.

## Appeal

Matekwa appealed to the county government to consider allocating part of its budget to enable the hospital acquire a cancer treatment centre. She noted that at the moment cancer patients visiting the health facility for treatment were forced to go to Mulago Hospital in Uganda.

"Patients seeking admission to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) are always being referred to either Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret or Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Provincial Hospital in Kisumu, a distance of over 100 Km away," said Matekwa. She noted the urgent need to decentralise the Kenya Medical Supplies Agency (Kemsco) to county level.

The stakeholders said it was high time the hospital was elevated to level five since it was serving the whole county.

**"A community health worker in Mathare slums the poor status of the economy has made it impossible for most Kenyans to pay fares for long distances to public hospitals where doctors are found in addition to cost sharing that is now expected of them in the health facilities."**

— Shem Opiyo,



# Communities to benefit from accessible health care



By HENRY OWINO

When the Government announced free delivery services for expectant women, some men and young boys complained that the Government was side-lining them.

Now the Ministry of Health has come up with an initiative to reach out and provide better and quality healthcare services in all the 47 counties.

Many people living in rural areas are forced to travel to major towns or regional (provincial) headquarters for better healthcare services.

The amount of time and money spent traveling to seek treatment for ailments that could have been taken care of at nearby local health facilities can be avoided if the county community health facilities are well equipped and have enough staff.

Lack of Government support as a result of a centralised system of Government must have rendered several dispensaries run short of supplies forcing them to shut down.

Imagine a patient with a wound or suffering from Tuberculosis and such like ailments travelling for over 10 kilometres just to seek medical attention.

How many trips would he/she make before they give up due to lack of bus-fare among other difficulties before getting treatment?

## Trips

To ensure these dispensaries health facilities come back for the services, the Ministry of Public Health has announced the completion of the development of a Scheme for Community Health Extension Workers that will see their number increase from the current 2,100 to 25,000 by 2017.

Speaking during the launch of the Community Health Services an Economic Stimulus Programme Products, James Macharia, Cabinet Secretary for Health, said this would assist the new County governments in managing community health services.

He emphasised the Government's commitment to focus on preventable healthcare based on networks of village level community health workers.

The minister said the new

**One of the initiatives through partnership with other organizations towards Community Health Strategy program in Kibera slum. There has been a significant improvement in the health sector since the implementation of the program.**

Pictures: Henry Owino

scheme of services once approved would enable the Health Ministry to increase the number of Community Health Extension Workers in the county and allow them to intensively focus on providing preventive, promotive and first-line curative health services in the entire country.

Macharia noted that healthcare at the community level is an important platform for achieving the Kenya Essential Package for Health. He pointed out that it encompasses preventive, promotive and a first line curative health services that shall contribute towards achieving universal health care efficiently and effectively.

"The 14-page document I have launched is very important in guiding the counties for effective implementation of Community Health Services," Macharia said.

The Kenya Health Policy Framework 2012-2030 and Kenya Health Sector Strategic and

Investment Plan 2013-2017 recognise the community as the first level of formal health service delivery.

According to Prof Miriam Were, Community Health Strategy goodwill ambassador, there was significant improvement in the health sector since the implementation of the Community Health Strategy in 2008.

## Implementation

"Community Health Services in collaboration with other partners had successfully established over 2,500 community units by July 2012, but targets 8,000 units by 2017. To achieve this target, recruitment and training of health workers at the community level must be scaled up," Were noted.

The programme is expected to guide counties towards effective implementation of health services. It is a step that will address inequalities in access to healthcare and strengthen the country's health systems at all levels.

According to Were, the first and most important level of health care in any society is the community often referred to as Level One which is the foundation of the national health system.

Were commended the Government saying the more effective it is, the better the chances of it providing the basics for all the other levels of health services across the board.

"As a mother I understand what it means to have affordable, accessible and trained health workers to offer health care services for the family in the local community," Were noted.

## Call for change of attitude regarding midwives

By DAVID NJAAGA

African women leaders are urging respective governments to on the continent to embrace midwifery as a policy to save lives of pregnant women and their babies.

They identified Kenya together with the 39 countries represented from Africa to embrace midwives as professionals.

Speaking at a three-day conference that sought to integrate the African midwifery practice through provision of satisfactory knowledge in Nairobi, James Macharia, Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Health said training of midwives in the country will help avert deaths that would be preventable if patients visited the right professionals.

He noted that though maternal mortality in most African countries is not improving, Kenya together with the rest of the world will need to work hard to meet its Millennium Development Goal Five which is pegged to be at 155 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births by 2015.

"Midwives are better placed to empower and educate the communities, especially women, on health seeking behaviour and how this single delay problem is caused and can be resolved," said Macharia.

He assured women of supplementing initiatives through placing motor-cycle ambulances within under-served communities saying they were faster and more reliable than the wheel barrows and bicycles used in some places.

"Looking back to 2006, the Government had directed that all deliveries to be conducted in dispensaries. Time has now come for us to take stock of achievements in this intervention seven years down the line," noted Macharia.

He urged women to have a positive attitude towards themselves and the medical staff saying it would lead to timely attention and quality care while in health facilities.

## Access

Touching on the delays that are sometimes associated with accessing most health facilities, Macharia said the Government was working on improving the infrastructure as well as educating mothers on early birth preparedness.

He said it was very important for women who are pregnant to prepare themselves early citing desperate cases of some women being transported to health facilities on wheelbarrows and or bicycles when in labour.

Macharia expressed confidence that the public-private partnership would help to a large extent in addressing the challenges facing the healthcare sector in the country.

"The Government, its partners and all stakeholders should pull together to address these challenges that contribute to the delay in accessing quality maternal care and impacting negatively on maternal health," he said.

He urged every Kenyan to mobilise and lobby for allocation of substantial resources to enable the Ministry of Health across the globe implement comprehensive child-maternal health care services.

"We cannot afford to stand and look at the alarming rates of maternal deaths in our country without taking any action," Macharia reiterated.

He attributed low access to healthcare services in Kenya to financial constraints saying the Government was addressing this need.

The event was attended by over 30 African countries and aimed at looking for ways to improve the provision of maternal and neo-natal health services so that deliberations are taken on board in policy development. The theme of the conference was "Midwives impacting on maternal and child Health in Africa: Evidence and opportunities for improvement."



**"Community Health Services in collaboration with other partners had successfully established over 2,500 community units by July 2012, but targets 8,000 units by 2017. To achieve this target, recruitment and training of health workers at the community level must be scaled up."**

— Prof Miriam Were



# Cattle raiders leave Laikipia residents living in fear

By JOHN KINYUA

Grace Njeri, a Standard Eight pupil at Mbogoini Primary School in Laikipia West, is a tormented girl.

The sound of gunfire that took away her younger sister's life seems to have left disturbing memories and echoes that drive her into tears whenever she recalls the ordeal.

The crime was perpetrated by cattle rustlers who raided their home at Mbogoini over two months ago.

It was around 11 pm when the gang struck the home of Patrick Mathenge in Ng'arua division, Nyahururu District in Laikipia County.

They sprayed bullets on a glass window of the bedroom where the two sisters were sleeping. The first bullet hit Joyce Muthoni aged 10, in the stomach while the second hit went through the wall.

Njeri's grandfather says he heard the commotion and woke up thinking elephants had raided his compound as was usual.

He beamed his torch through the window to check on the route the elephants had decided to take so he could alert his neighbours as this is the practice with farmers in the region.

Little did he know that the raiders spotted the light and to stop him they sprayed the window with bullets taking the life of the innocent girl sleeping in the company of her elder sister who escaped death by a whisker.

The gang then broke into a zero-grazing dairy goats' pen and made away with five.

Njeri says her sister was crying loudly so she pulled her out of the bed onto the floor. She told her to stop screaming so that the raiders could stop shooting.

## Appeal

"I pulled her out of the bed and we lay on the floor as her voice died down. Little did I know that she was on her last breath. I touched her nose and it was like she was not breathing. She was not speaking either but her body was warm," recalls Njeri. She explains: "I called grandpa when the criminals had gone and we looked at her. She was bleeding profusely and her insides were spilling out. She had died."

Police officers came hours later and took the body to Nyahururu District Hospital mortuary.

Speaking to the Reject, Njeri is calling on the Government to mop up illegal firearms that are in the hands of cattle rustlers.

"We cannot concentrate on our studies because of these kind of attacks. Most of the time we go to school without doing our homework because we do not want to light lamps that will attract raiders," she says.

Indeed, Muthoni is not the only pupil who has met her death through the bullet. A month before the incident, a six-year old Standard One pupil at Kamwenje Primary School in the same division was shot dead by raiders while asleep.

The raiders while passing by from East Pokot heading to Mochongoi division, Baringo County at 6am in the morning, sprayed bullets through the window which killed the innocent girl.

## Helplessness

A few metres from the girl's home they shot dead a 50-year-old man who was responding to the early morning distress call. They also made away with five goats, slaughtered one in a nearby bush and ate the meat as villagers watched helplessly.

The incident generated a heated debate in Laikipia County Assembly with Peter Thoni, County Representative Githiga Ward and Paul Ndegwa, chairman of the County Parliamentary Security Committee paralysing operations of the assembly until the issue of insecurity in Laikipia West was addressed.

Before the dust could settle, a 58-year old woman was shot by armed cattle raiders who invaded their home at Mutaro village in Ol-Moran division of Laikipia County before making away with 38 goats.

Ann Akiru was coming out of her house in response to a distress call from a neighbour when she was shot.

She sustained serious hip-joint injuries during the midnight attack and was taken to Nyahururu District Hospital by good Samaritans.

According to Susan Lokiya, Akiru's daughter-in-law, the raiders were shooting indiscriminately and that is when one of the stray bullet hit her.

Security officers assisted by youth from the area tracked down the raiders to the nearby Laikipia Nature Conservancy where they recovered the stolen goats.

Ol-Moran Ward Member of the County Assembly John Ndegwa, who was among those who accompanied Akiru to hospital condemned the incident terming it as unfortunate and unwarranted.

"Rising cases of banditry attacks in the area



From top: Ann Akiru recuperates at the Nyahururu District Hospital ward after she was shot by raiders at Mukaro Village in Laikipia County. Grace Njeri narrates the ordeal of her sister's death to the press amidst tears. Pictures: John Kinyua



have left the area residents living in fear while others have left their homes to safer areas," noted Ndegwa.

He observed that for the last three months six people had been killed by suspected cattle raiders. He called on the Government to move with speed to curb the situation and deploy Kenya Police Reservists in the area to help in fighting crime.

Ndegwa took issue with security officers whom he accused of laxity in responding to distress calls from members of the public. He also accused them of failing to act to crucial information provided to curb crimes.

Ndegwa observed that the division lacked police vehicles that could be used in tracking down criminals saying this has been a stumbling block to ensuring security patrols are done at all times.

His sentiments were echoed by local village elder Paul Njagi who called on the government

to disarm communities in possession of illegal firearms.

"Officers from Ol-Moran Police Station lacked serviceable vehicles to help in patrols," said Njagi.

He observed pastoralists were invading their farms with impunity and they were also to blame for the perennial cases of cattle rustling. He challenged leaders in the region to team up in the fight against criminals.

# Victims of skin disorder appeal for help

By NZINGA MUASYA

Albinism is a genetic condition characterised by partial or complete absence of pigment in the skin, eyes and hair. The dark pigment — melanin — helps protect the skin from the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

This means that in places where temperatures are too high, albinos suffer skin burns more easily from prolonged exposure, which can result into skin cancer. The heat can also lead to blindness if the person is not well protected.

According to Joshua Mutunga, coordinator for people with albinism in Kitui County, majority of albinos come from poor backgrounds. This makes it impossible for them to afford gear needed to cushion them from adverse effects of harsh weather.

"Albinos require sunscreen lotion, special hats and sun-protective clothing, however, acquiring these items is a dream for many because sunscreen lotion costs KSh2,000, which is way out of reach for many," Mutunga said.

He added: "Albinos need to apply sunscreen and wear protective clothing to protect their skin from damage. If these are not available they are likely to develop skin cancer," Mutunga said in Mwingi town.

He was addressing guests during the National Albinism Day celebrations in Kitui town. Mutunga appealed to the Government to equip every district hospital with a cancer screening machine for early diagnosis.

## Integration

Mutunga said he developed skin cancer that left an ugly scar on his head while at St Charles Lwanga High School in Kitui while in form two. Luckily for him, a well-wisher who transferred him to Mang'u High School paid for his specialised treatment at Kenyatta National Hospital.

"How many of our members can be that lucky? The Government has a duty to ensure people with albinism get the requisite help in order to lead normal lives. It is their right," said Mutunga, a father of four.

The guests included people with

albinism from Kitui, Masinga and Mwingi regions. Also present was Isaac Mwaura, ODM nominated MP who is also the National Coordinator for the Albinism Society of Kenya.

About 100 pupils with albinism have been integrated into Central and Muslim primary schools in Kitui Town under a special programme.

Mwaura said so far they have been able to lobby the Government to allocate KSh100 million to buy sunscreen lotions for people with albinism in all parts of the country.

However, he described the amount as negligible considering the high cost of the protective gear required by members.

Mwaura regretted that every year people with albinism from poor backgrounds lose their eyesight and lives due to skin cancer because they lack medical care.



National Coordinator for Albinism Society of Kenya Isaac Mwaura (C) holding an albino child in Mwingi town during the National Albinism Day.

Picture: Nzinga Muasya

"I will champion for a comprehensive health scheme for people with albinism irrespective of their employment status. It is the only way to ensure our members fully enjoy their rights like other Kenyans and actualise their dreams," said Mwaura.

He vowed to fight for the reintroduction of The Persons with Disability Amendment Bill 2010 so that people

with the skin disorder can be accounted for and a specific budgetary allocation set aside for their needs.

"It is unfortunate that 50 years after independence the Government does not have data on the population of albinos in the country yet they have statistics on wildlife. We need a special census on our members," Mwaura reiterated.

# Charcoal traders in collaboration with forest department

By YUSUF AMIN

Kache Katana is among hundreds of peasant farmers in Kilifi County who are to benefit from an ambitious partnership between Kenya Forestry Service and local charcoal traders.

The project aims to support the charcoal dealers in the business while at the same time promoting afforestation programmes in the County which is on the shores of the Indian Ocean.

Katana, a resident of Vitengeni would like Kenya Forestry Service to ensure that more sensitisation campaigns are carried out at the grass-roots.

Since joining the programme her business has been boosted since harassment and arrest by forest guards has also reduced.

"I am glad that the Kenya Forest Service has come up with this initiative and it has really helped me," Katana said during an interview with the Reject.

She noted that many women in Vitengeni Village depend heavily on charcoal business as a source of livelihood.

She expressed hope that the new partnership will help her raise more money for her children who are in school.

The project also targets the river banks where charcoal burners have cut trees but not replaced them.

The conflict that had been there between charcoal burners in Ganze District in Kilifi County

and the Kenya Forest Service is reduced drastically as it strives to create awareness on the importance of conserving forests.

With support from the Kenya Forest Service, area residents have formed the Kilifi Charcoal Producers Association that will build the capacity of charcoal burners on how to conserve forests as they continue with their business.

## Form

According to Christopher Maina, Coordinator Kilifi County Forest they came up with the idea to resolve the conflict between forest officers and charcoal burners in a move that will see them come to a middle ground.

"This initiative will make sure that the residents burn charcoal while at the same time they plant trees to replace them," explained Maina.

He noted that the residents also received training on how to burn charcoal without cutting down a whole tree. This they would do by only cutting branches so that the tree could continue to grow as a move to conserve the forests.

"Charcoal burners are sensitised on how they can cooperate with the Forest Service so that they can engage themselves in tree planting projects to areas where there has been massive



Bamba residents together with the Kenya Forest Service officers engage in tree planting to conserve forests. Picture: Yusuf Amin

cutting of trees especially in Bamba division," explained Maina.

According to Rama Mwalimu, chairman Kilifi Charcoal Producers Association, there were many areas which would benefit from the project. He cited places like Vitengeni, Goshi and Chakama where people depend on charcoal burning for their livelihood.

Mwalimu said that the forest department has given the association a mandate to issue licenses to charcoal burners and dealers so that they can stop massive charcoal burning.

"We appreciate that Kenya Forestry Service has given this association the mandate to issue licenses," Mwalimu noted during a tree-planting day in Chapungu Village, Bamba Division.

Maina urged those engaged in charcoal burning business not to run away from forest

officers but instead cooperate with them to ensure that the project bears fruit.

"We are going to train more groups in the county so that we can fight desertification in this region," Maina pointed out.

On the other hand, Mwalimu urged officials of the association to ensure that licenses are only offered to people who follow the condition of planting trees in areas that have been affected by massive cutting.

He noted that many people were sneaking into Arabuko Sokoke Forest to harvest trees for charcoal burning. He expressed optimism that the problem would be addressed with time.

Maina lamented that many residents had been arrested cutting trees in the forest illegally and revealed that due to the new initiative the number of culprits had reduced.

# Maasai women gain financial independence through milk

By LARRY KIMORI

Women dairy farmers in Kajiado County have been empowered through cooperatives societies that will enable them sell their products at a good price.

However, for many others in the county, the traditional system of property ownership based on patriarchy is still intact.

Indeed, most properties like land, livestock and houses are entirely owned and controlled by men including any finances arising from their sale leaving the women as passive participants.

Things are changing and they can now have women's groups and associations working through the Ministry of Social Services and the cooperative development sector. They are now playing a vital role in boosting the family's financial freedom.

## Rake in millions

Members of such a group are Maasai Kajiado Women Milk Cooperative Limited that has managed to rake in millions of shillings annually.

With 1,600 members registered, the cooperative, under the patronage of Helen Nkaissery, the women are drawing the attention of many others by using milk, which is the only resource their spouses and brothers allow them to control and manage.

According to the cooperative's secretary, Phyllis Matampash, they have registered over 3,000 women who deliver over 19,000 litres of milk to Kenya Cooperative Creameries for processing during peak periods. However, the output drops drastically to 10,000 litres during low seasons such as the

dry spells after short rains.

"This output is still low and can be improved by sensitisation to the women on better feeding practices," says Matampash.

The cooperative has seven collection centres spread across the county. These are Nareto in Maili 46, Kipirash and Oloililai 1 in Bissil, Oleleshwa in Kajiado town, Oltarakwai in Sajiloni, Oloililai 2 in Namanga and Sotua in Sultan Hamud.

The milk sales records show that dairy farmers get an estimated KSh15 million per month during peak periods and KSh6-7 million during low times.

## Realise

The current output in February and March was about 10,000 litres per day realising about KSh300,000 daily.

The cooperative ownership consists of shares where registered members buy shares at KSh500 per share. Each member is allowed to buy a minimum of four and a maximum of 10 shares.

Matampash says they started in seven individual groups that had been operating independently until last year when they were brought

*"This output is still low and can be improved by sensitisation to the women on better feeding practices."*

— Phyllis Matampash,

together as a Sacco so as to have better bargaining power on the price of their milk.

In addition to fairer prices, the group is now able to fight the existing threat of milk hawking that lowers their bargaining power.

When asked to explain why some people are still selling their milk through middlemen or directly to consumers, Matampash says it is because some members want immediate cash payment and do not want to go through the bureaucracy.

According to the manager Jackson Dikir, the cooperative faces a great challenge of ensuring the quality of milk in the area is to the required standards.

## Improve

"Field-days for members in association with officers from veterinary and livestock have greatly improved the quality," notes Dikir.

He singled out extension services of livestock production as having improved production through enhancement of feed preservation to overcome persistent droughts that plague the area.

Another challenge for the Sacco has been how to ensure that members have bank accounts. Payment for the milk is done through the bank as opposed to cash. This, according to Dikir, is to ensure that members are able to plan, control, use and save their finances well.

The Sacco aims at recruiting more members to its register and generate an estimated KSh800,000 so as to beat competition from hawkers.

According to David Wainaina, Kajiado Central District Cooperative



Members of the Maasai Kajiado Women Milk Cooperative Limited Sacco delivering their milk at a collection centre.

Picture: Larry Kimori

Officer, this could greatly enable them engage in product-processing so as to gain from value addition.

The Sacco aims at using the proceeds from membership to avail animal husbandry supplies at a cheaper price.

"We plan to start a savings and finance scheme for Sacco members to enhance financial independence," notes Wainaina.

He says this will reduce members borrowing from banks whose rates are quite high.

# Fishermen cry out for help to boost their catch

By JOY MONDAY

A dream by Turkana pastoralists to embrace fishing to as a meaningful source of living is yet to bear fruit due to poor infrastructure and lack of storage facilities.

Many fishermen who tried their hand in the activity have little to show for it. It is a hand-to-mouth and the fishermen hardly raise money to send their children to school despite the potential at Lake Turkana.

James Ekidor has for two decades braved the scorching sun to thrive in fishing but has a sad story to tell.

"We are frustrated lot. We continue to soldier on to make ends meet but it is a painful venture. Some of our colleagues have called it quits due to the challenges," laments Ekidor, from his favourite spot at the Kalokol fishing landing bay North of Lodwar.

He says: "Our major challenge is lack of storage facilities and good roads to access markets."

Ekidor, like other fishermen, has nothing to celebrate about since all he encounters are obstacles as he tries to fend for his family and save them from starvation.

"There is no storage facility for the fish. We have to wait to sell the fish to brokers," he explains.

Ekidor had expected to earn good returns from fishing to enable him

educate his children, but that never materialised. All his four children are at home and cannot access secondary education, because of lack of fees.

Though there is a beehive of activities at Kalokol fish-landing bay, the lives of Ekidor and other fishermen has not changed for the better.

"There is no good price for the fish and middlemen from Kitale and Nairobi have taken advantage to exploit us. We sell it at a throw away price," laments Elimlim Ebei.

Ebei who is in his early 50s says that lack of storage facilities at the lake forces them to dispose of their catch promptly to avoid going to waste.

This is where the youth who have dropped out of school join their parents in fishing to supplement family needs.

## Challenges

According to the fishermen, the problem does not end with the lack of storage facilities and poor roads, the costs are also substantial.

"I pay for the fishing boat. The nets get worn out and require replacement every month and I also engage men to help me fish," says Rebecca Tioko, who has been in the fishing business for nearly a decade.

Tioko has to face off all shortcomings to make ends meet and keep the family to survive the hard times.

"It is difficult for us to catch fish

when it is windy and our families end up sleeping hungry. Fishing is the only source of livelihood and we have to overcome such challenges," she says.

According to Tioko, several fishermen have been forced to abandon the activity due to investment involved.

Ezekiel Epus is among many fishermen who almost quit fishing but poverty in his family forced him to change his mind.

"There was no food on the table for my family the day I quit. Poverty stared at me and I had no option but to resume work," Epus says.

It is no better for the fishermen during the rainy period. "When it is wet, drying the fish under the sun becomes difficult and the fish rot," notes Ekidor.

At Eleyi Beach, things are not different. Fishermen strive with the hardships to support their families.

Six years ago, the fish business was booming after the fish market was closed due to insecurity.

"We dry the fish and sell in bulk to traders who access the beach using a boat," observes Isaac Lumasia.



Fish mongers weighing dried fish at Lake Turkana. Lack of storage facilities, good roads and poor prices have inhibited their growth in the industry.

Picture: Joy Monday

Fishermen fetch little from the sale of fish. "We sell one Kilogramme of fish at KSh40 but bulk buyers make a lot of money in markets within Kitale and Eldoret towns," observes Tioko.

Brokers from Kitale who travel for about 400 kilometres to get to Lake Turkana spend days on the road to reach the fishing ground due to the poorly maintained roads. Indeed, Turkana has been one of the marginalised counties.

Fishermen depend on traders with refrigerated trucks from Nairobi and towns in North Rift to buy the fish.

They are now urging the County

government to install storage facilities next to the lake and to also tarmac the Lodwar-Kitale road to boost marketing of the fish.

Meanwhile, fishing at Lake Turkana is also posing challenges to fishermen following the declining water levels due to perennial drought and damming activity on the River Omo the main river supplying water to the lake.

Environmentalists led by Friends of Lake Turkana have continued to raise concern over the negative impact of the damming of River Omo which is posing a big threat to the livelihood of more than 5,000 people.

# Kwale women irked by ring-net fishing method

By OMAR MWALAGO

Fishmongers in Kwale County are an unhappy lot. The operators especially women who mostly depend on selling fresh and fried fish as a business to eke a living have complained that the use of ring-net fishing method has caused reduction of the catch.

They say this has forced them to travel from one landing site to another in search of fish for their business.

Fatuma Masoud, one of the victims, says that they are forced to travel all the way from Shimoni to Kinondo fish landing site via Mwambao, Kiwambale, Bodo and Gazi landing sites that is too expensive for them.

She added that the fish catch is very small compared to the previous years because the local fishermen are forced to travel up to Tanzania for it.

"The fish we are getting now is less compared to previous years, it is only rabbit fish that you can get in a sizeable amount so fishermen are forced to go deep into the sea as far as Tanzania and this has seen prices to go up," said Masoud.

She added: "Right now the price of fish has hit the roof and goes for between KSh250 and KSh300 per kilogramme depending with the type of fish one wants."

However, Mwanakombo Mwinyi, another fish vendor, says the Fisheries Department was responsible for the decline in the catch by failing to taking action on those who violate the rules.

Mwinyi expressed fears saying they were worried that they might lose a lot of money as it is one of the major sources of income and a busi-

ness that sustains their livelihoods.

According to Athman Fadhili, a member of Shimoni Youth Private Boat Operator, companies that have been fishing and packing the fish in plastic bags and later dumping the same into waters are to blame. He noted that apart from littering the beaches, this has also seen huge stocks of fish die mysteriously.

"When these plastic bags are dumped in the ocean it looks like a jelly fish because of its white colour and when Dolphins or big fish passes by they eat it up knowing it is jelly fish," Fadhili explained. He added: "The plastic will stay in their stomach blocking the digestive system and leading to death."

## Outcry

He noted that this also led to reduction of fish in the Kenyan side of the Indian Ocean. "We have raised it with the Beach Management Unit but no action has been taken," said Fadhili.

Shimoni Central Beach Management Unit wants the Government to ban the use of ring-net fishing.

The executive secretary of the unit, Rishad Iki said the ban will benefit local fisherman.

He lamented that they had received complaints from local fisherman that the use of ring-nets destroys their fish traps along the shore.

"As management, we have received complaints from our fishermen that their fish traps were being destroyed by those who use ring-net fishing, most of their traps were also being destroyed because they were being dragged away," noted Iki.

He accused the Government of

temporarily lifting the ban of ring-net fishing, a decision that had been reached in 2011.

"The Government should not have lifted the ban ring-net fishing because it destroys corals along the shore which are the breeding areas for fish," said Iki. He added: "This type of fishing has caused fish to migrate to deep waters making it difficult for many fishermen to sail in deep sea."

According to Iki, ring-net fishing was banned in 2009 by the Government because it destroyed fish breeding grounds and this affected the livelihood of the small-scale fisherman. However, the ban was lifted and the use of ring-nets for big boats was put in action along Shimoni beach of the Indian Ocean.

It was then that the small-scale fishermen started complaining that they were incurring huge losses because the use of ring-net led to fish overstock forcing prices to drop.

However the local fishermen are complaining that ring-net fishing along the shore reduces the catch forcing them to go deep into the sea using their small boats and this puts their lives at risk.

## Methods

Fisheries officer in Shimoni, Charles Odindo, noted that poor fishing methods, especially the use of ring-net, limited the catch as it destroyed breeding grounds.

He noted that poor fishing methods reduced the catch in the Indian Ocean compared to Lake Victoria.

"According to our research, only six per cent of the catch comes from Indian Ocean while 94 per cent of fish supply in the country comes



Fishermen at the Shimoni Channel. Below: A fisherman prepares his spear gun ready for fishing.

Pictures: Omar Mwalago



from Lake Victoria and this has been caused by poor fishing methods," explained Odindo.

He confirmed that ring-net fishing was banned after the local community complained that fishermen from Tanzania, especially from Pemba Island, were depleting fish stocks in the Kenyan waters.

"The use of ring-net fishing method was banned in 2009 when fishermen complained that their counterparts from Pemba troll in

Kenyan waters using big boats and nets that destroyed local traps and breeding grounds," said Odindo.

He reiterated the need for the Government to ban use of ring-net fishing method to avoid destruction of fish breeding grounds.



## Baskets and leather sandals help women make inroads in the tourism sector

By **ROBERT NYAGAH**

More than 100 women who dominate the operations of business stalls at the Malindi Tourist Market are winning the hearts of many lovers of decorated handmade baskets across the country.

This has helped to spur the involvement of the women in tourism oriented commerce now penetrating the wider African and European markets.

The innovative brains are producing a wide variety of attractive artistic decorations that include leather sandals and traditional baskets.

Creative, self-trained but mainly female artisans inspired by growing interest and demand for the two items are giving them a face lift by use of beads, colourful cloth materials, coral stones, pieces of broken sea shells, leather and other decoration materials to literally conquer space in the shelves of local and international beauty salons and boutiques.

A visit to the Malindi Tourist Market which lies at the Malindi Bay Beach, the most popular and main source of curios and other products associated with decoration and beauty, reveals that the beaded leather sandals and decorated baskets made from a wild palm straw dominate space in 200 stalls.

Young and old stall owners can be seen busy either knitting pieces of well selected decoration clothes into the baskets or generally doing final touches on the various designs of leather sandals and baskets.

### Stall owners

"The leather sandals and straw baskets have become a real phenomenon in the area of commerce in Malindi's curio tourism sector, which today remains the main source of income for the more than 200 traders who own stalls at this market" says Joshua Musili, chairman of the tourist market.

Just like Malindi pioneered the marketing of curios locally and internationally in the early 1970s stocking some of the best pieces and attracting notable curio carvers from Tanzania and Wamunyu area in Machakos Dis-

trict, Musili says hard work, competition and innovation among artisans has seen the area become the main source of sandals and baskets across for wholesale and retail customers from across east and central Africa as well as in many parts of Europe.

Musili explains that with a concentration of more than 100 wood carvers and other artisans waking up every day to innovate new items and styles in the curio industry which controls a turnover of KSh45 million at town's two curio markets and workshop, local and international customers have been trooping to Malindi to acquire their supplies, thus inspiring more creativity.

The Malindi Tourist Market has continued to gain fame in the commercial landscape. According to a pioneer stall owner Margret Popp, a keen baskets' decorator, the 300 stalls alternate operations depending on availability of stocks and owners' capacity. The curios and artefacts are valued at KSh45 million and hires small scale assistants earning at least KSh400,000 every day.

More than 2,000 people, majority of who are women depend directly on the trade for their income while it is known internationally for some of the best well finished, small size but easy to package and transport curio items.

Although competition for customers among traders and the challenge posed by hoteliers who stock curios is causing jitters among stall owners, innovative minds have helped them to always attract customers.

According to Popp, Malindi hosts the three best artisans in the supply chain of baskets and sandals in Kenya, East Africa and Europe. "The best and most innovative designer for the decorations for baskets and sandals has been Elena Kadzo Ngona," says Popp.

Although self-trained, Ngona is popular at the Malindi Tourist Market stalls as one of the most creative artisans. "She comes up with some of the most fresh and innovative designs and even when the other artisans copy them, she moves on to surprise many with newer designs, making her a source of inspiration to other basket decorators," says Magdalene

Apondi, also a basket decorator.

At her shop, where she displays very little of decorated items for fear that they will be easily copied by colleagues who flood the market and end up lowering demand and prices, Ngona confesses that she is self-made but has always been keen to create designs which end up being put on the sandals and baskets.

"I started with designing necklaces and simple decorations for flowing dresses before I moved into creating decorations for baskets," Ngona explains as she displays some pictures of her latest designs hidden in a file on her cell phone.

### Innovation

Ngona does not mind that most Malindi basket decorators copy her designs and explains that she is happy that some creative and innovative young men and women provide some of the best decorations for the huge consignment of simple baskets which are brought to Malindi from Kwale District and other villages within the Coast.

"I am happy that I am playing a part in popularizing Malindi as the source of some of the best and most well decorated baskets in Kenya and East Africa," says Ngona. She adds: "We have been getting customers from as far as Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as Italy in Europe, which is a clear indication that our competition to create the best is good for our products."

The artist burns midnight oil trying new designs and has managed to attract special clients mainly from Italy and a handful of boutiques in Malindi. At her shop near the Malindi Museum, there are no baskets on display apart from one which she has been working on for the last two days and which she has adorned with a block cloth with the trimmings already starting to take shape.

According to Mariah Dannat, a stall owner at the Malindi Tourist Market: "At the moment, competition for Malindi made and finished sandals and baskets is too high with orders coming in from Mombasa, Nairobi

and Kampala among other East and Central Africa markets."

Dannat indicates that Malindi has been gaining popularity for introducing newly designed sandals which have been earning the artisans and traders attractive income.

Stall owners agree that Malindi baskets and sandals are the most popular items in Kenya's curio market industry with each trader stocking at least 20 to 50 pieces.

Ann Wanjiru, a stall operator explains: "The baskets and beaded leather sandals' industry started slowly around 2000 and has gained popularity in markets across Kenya, in the neighbouring East and Central African countries as well as parts of Europe leading among them Italy."

She says: "I have in the past received orders from wholesale buyers from Nairobi and neighbouring countries such as Tanzania and Uganda. I must say sometimes incomes from the business are attractive and satisfactory."

Wanjiru notes that she once in a while receives boutique owners from Senegal and Ghana seeking to acquire sizeable consignments of sandals and baskets.

Although baskets and sandals remain the main fast moving items in the market, stall owners say that business has not been good generally and each still hold assorted stocks worth between KSh100,000 and KSh120,000.

Jimmy Safari, a stall owner who has operated curio business since 1975 says that sandals and basket making have indeed won the hearts of many customers and traders at the market.

He recalls that the sandals were the first to penetrate the market after an innovation launched by Barawa artisans from Somalia who first started making the simple undecorated pairs of the sandals before they were quickly joined by an innovative Italian investor who made the first designs of the beaded sandals working with ordinary Kenyan bead decoration creators mainly on leather.

Safari says that in subsequent years, self-trained artisans in Malindi took over the art and since then, the

**From top: Malindi Tourist Market curio shop owner Mariah Dannat arranges various baskets and well decorated baskets in her shop. African Basket maker and decorator Mweru Katuti displays finished baskets at her stall at the Malindi Tourist Market. Artisan and curio dealer Salma Abdalla doing final touches on baskets before decoration.**

Pictures: Robert Nyagah

beaded sandals industry has expanded to huge levels.

"Today Malindi has more than 50 outlets stashed in residential and commercial buildings where groups of artisans churn out colourful and innovative designs of sandals," says Safari.

Demand has created a whole chain of creative teams starting with the rubber shoe sole makers, creative artists who stick the beads on the leather sandals after the designers have made them, those who undertake the final touches of smoothing the products and polishing them before sending them to the outlets for sale.

"Although curio products mainly target visitors from European, Italian tourists who dominate bed occupancies in Malindi have almost religiously remained the main customers for Malindi outlets," Safari says.

### Outlets

Majority of the Malindi outlets stock between 20 to 50 pieces of sandals and baskets although, in some instances financially capable traders stock up to 200 pieces depending on the prospective orders from East African countries such as Uganda and Tanzania.

According to Musyoki Ngui, most traders prefer small stocks because majority of clients arrive at the market to first sample the varieties and end up buying between one and five pieces from each stall depending on their requirements.

"We target tourists who mostly buy a single item, but when wholesale buyers visit the market, they buy from different stalls, hence collecting a variety of designs, a practice which ensures that most stall owners benefit generally," explains Ngui.



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