



## United Nations System in Kenya commemorates International Women’s Day 2010

The eighth of March is International Women’s Day and is commemorated widely throughout the world. Women’s Day of this year held particular significance as it marked the 100th anniversary of commemoration. It also coincided with the 15 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

In Kenya, the UN System of organisations observed the Day in the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON) on 8 March 2010. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) took the lead in formulating the programme, and coordinated among fourteen UN agencies that are participating in the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.

The commemoration was



Poet Larry Liza performs at the International Women's Day ceremony at the UN complex in Nairobi.

attended by the diplomatic corps, non-governmental organisations, the media, UN and educational institutions as well as over 400 university students who were to start an annual session of the Kenyan Model United Nations on the same day.

In the UN Secretary-General’s message for the Day read by UNON Director General Achim Steiner, the Secretary-General pointed out the need for the United Nations to lead by example on the issue of gender equality and women’s rights. He emphasised further that women were central to peace and security.

On behalf of the UN Country Team, UN Resident Coordinator Aeneas Chuma highlighted how the UN system in the country was working through the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment to support

the Government to achieve its national priorities. He drew particular attention to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal 3 on empowerment of women. Chuma stated that the Joint Programme was a collective initiative of the United Nations System in Kenya, and that it would address the issues of gender-based violence, mainstreaming gender in all processes, policies, strategies and actions, as well as the empowerment of women to achieve economic and socio-political equality.

Referring to the theme of this year’s International Women’s Day, “Equal Rights, Equal Opportunities: Progress for all”, the incoming Chairperson of the UNIFEM-managed Gender

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and Governance Programme, Ambassador Heli Sirve of Finland, noted how the theme was most relevant and current to Kenya given the reform process the country was going through to “influence not only the status and rights of women but realisation of political and social justice in general”.

Along the line of this year’s theme, UNIFEM’s Regional Programme Director Meryem Aslan asked the people to stop using culture as an excuse for inaction and to recognise discrimination and violence against women as violations of women’s rights.

Students of the State House Girls High School presented dances on the theme of family violence and peace during the ceremony, while poet and performer Larry Liza added the colour to the ceremony with his performance highlighting the issues women often face in the society and in the governance arena.

One of the highlights of the Day’s activities was the expression of support of UN staff members in the empowerment of women. Prior to the ceremony of 8 March, the staff of UN agencies stationed in Nairobi had been asked why they thought it important to support issues of women’s equality and

empowerment, and how they would contribute to this process. Over twenty messages including “Around every empowered woman is an empowered generation”, “She cares”, “More women in decision-making positions means a fairer society!” were collected from the staff. The banners carrying these messages were placed at the UN Pavilion and at the entrance to the conference halls.

In addition, information materials on what the UN agencies and their partners are doing to empower girls and women were displayed and disseminated at the lobby throughout the day.

## UNICEF inaugurates Ksh 58 million project

Nineteen thousand people in the Rachuonyo North district will have access to safe water following the inauguration of a KSh 58 million project supported by UNICEF. This intervention was made possible by the generous contribution of the Government of the Netherlands to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) for a multi-year support to the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) programme.

The UNICEF Director for Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, Mr Elhadj As Sy, commissioned the Kanyadhiang water system when he visited UNICEF-supported programmes in Nyanza Province on 24 and 25 March 2010.

The project, which includes construction of a pipeline scheme with intake at Awach Kibuon River, a treatment plant and water distribution network, will serve 2,500 households, seven primary schools, two secondary schools, two health centres, an Administration Police station and two vocational training centres. It is expected to be completed in February 2011.

UNICEF is contributing 67 per cent of the total project cost, while the Government of Kenya and the



The Representative of UNICEF Kenya, Ms Olivia Yambi (left), is thanked by Rachuonyo MP, Engineer James Rege, following the inauguration of the Kanyadhiang Water Project in Rachuonyo North District. The UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Mr Elhadj As Sy, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Lake Victoria South Water Services Board, Engineer Michael Ochieng, and community leaders look on.

community are contributing 18 per cent and 15 per cent respectively.

Speaking during the groundbreaking ceremony, Mr As Sy expressed UNICEF’s commitment to work with the government and people of Kenya to improve the lives of children and women. Improving access to clean and safe water would increase the chances for survival and development for children, particularly in Nyanza Province,

which has the highest numbers of child deaths, he said.

According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2003, the Under-Five Mortality rate for Nyanza province is 206 per 1,000 live births compared to the national average of 115 deaths per 1,000 live births.

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UNICEF Kenya Representative, Ms Olivia Yambi, said access to clean and safe water by the local community would help to ease the disease burden in the area and provide the residents with time to participate in economic empowering activities. Easy access to safe water would also free the girls to go to school instead of spending hours on fetching water as was depicted by girls from the school in a skit “we are water bowzers”.

The area Member of Parliament, Engineer James Rege, thanked UNICEF and the Government for initiating the project, and promised to follow up and supervise the work to ensure timeliness and quality.

The project will be implemented by the government through the Lake Victoria South Water Service Board and managed by the Kanyadhiang Water Service Provider, a water user association.

UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation and other partners in five districts in Nyanza and one in

Western Province to address the twin challenges of poor sanitation and consumption of unsafe drinking water.

The Regional Director visited other programmes supported by UNICEF, including Promotion of Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage and Hand Washing for Cholera Prevention and Sustainable Child Survival and Development; Promotion of improved sanitation (latrines) at households level; and Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision and Peace Education in Schools.

## UNDP helps to reduce insecurity in Kenya

The Government of Kenya destroyed on 24 March 2010 over 2,500 illegal firearms surrendered by its citizens. This was part of the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to reduce and control proliferation of small and light weapons. The destruction was witnessed by Professor George Saitoti, Minister for Internal Security, UNDP Deputy Country Director for Programmes Alfred Teixeira, and the Police Commissioner, M. Mathew Iteere, among other dignitaries.

Speaking at the event, Mr Teixeira reiterated UNDP's commitment to assisting the government reduce armed violence in Northern Kenya through the armed-violence Reduction Project being implemented in the Isiolo, Marsabit, Moyale, Mandera, Wajir and Garissa districts.

Prof George Saitoti pledged to have a law enacted with stiffer penalties and sentences to curb illegal guns. Once enacted, “the law will provide for stiff punishment for possession, trading, conveying, and dealing in illegal weapons,” confirmed the minister.

Proliferation of small arms remains a major challenge to human development in Kenya. Most of the firearms were surrendered by

pastoral communities from the northern part of the country. The guns are used in cattle rustling in which many innocent lives are lost and livestock stolen.

UNDP is keen on promoting inclusive development through promotion of peace among all Kenyans. Northern Kenya is close to some of the conflict zones, and the country is challenged with the absence of effective border controls. This makes it easy for arms to be smuggled into the country for local use or for resell to other countries.

UNDP Kenya supports the government and other stakeholders on issues of conflict prevention and peace-building that advocate for and support harmonised national plans and policies related to peace-building and conflict management.

UNDP also promotes a culture of peace in Kenya through peace education. The programme helps in strengthening conflict early warning and response mechanism at local, national and regional level as well as managing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.



Over 2,500 illegal firearms go up in flames at the Uhuru Gardens in Nairobi. The weapons were destroyed by Hon. Saitoti, the Minister for Internal Security.

## IOM-assisted returnees to Kenya from United Kingdom create jobs back home

A Voluntary Return Project Officer of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) visited on 24 March 2010 George Gathoga, a beneficiary of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) in Kiambu, to evaluate his reintegration progress, following his return from the United Kingdom (UK).

George Gathoga had relocated

to the UK in search of better opportunities nine years ago. He successfully landed a job as a support worker in London where he helped people with learning disabilities. As he had hoped, he was able to take his children through school, build a house for his family, and purchase land back home. Unfortunately he lost his job in 2008, and the life in the UK became very challenging as

he even unsuccessfully applied for asylum. He could not sustain himself any longer. He wished to go back home but could not afford the trip, and worse still, the British immigration authority was catching up with him.

In the midst of searching for a way to return, George heard of IOM from his friends, and sought the organisation's assistance to come back home. Upon his arrival back in Kenya in October 2009, and with the help of the IOM London office and reintegration assistance from IOM in Nairobi, he managed to set up and stock his livestock business. He now has one permanent employee and two casual labourers. "I chose this business because there was a ready market for milk and the demand of rabbit meat from hotels", he said. His dairy business fetches at least Ksh 12,000 per month on top of what he gets from rabbit sales.

IOM, under the Assisted Voluntary Return Programme, facilitates the voluntary and orderly return of failed asylum seekers, detained migrants and irregular migrants from the United Kingdom. Failed asylum seekers and detained migrants receive reintegration assistance (formal education, vocational training, and a small business start-up or job placement), once they are safely back home. This programme is implemented by the IOM UK in collaboration with the IOM Kenya, and is co-financed by the British Home Office and the European Return Fund (ERF).



George displays his source of income during an evaluation visit by an IOM representative.

## World Water Day celebrated at UN office in Nairobi



Trevor Gitonga gives a speech on behalf of the children during the World Water Day celebrations.

In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly declared 22 March as the World Day for Water. This year's Day was celebrated at the United Nations Complex at Gigiri, Nairobi, on 22 March 2010. The focus of this year was "water quality" with the slogan "Clean Water for a Healthy World." The celebration of this year was jointly hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-HABITAT, the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation (UNSGAB) and the Government of Kenya.

More than 800 participants attended the event which had a capacity-building component for international and national journalists on water issues, including its MDG targets. The scientific panel and the political segments complimented well as a bridge among policy, aspirations and practice. The Prime Minister of Kenya honoured the event.

In his remarks, UNEP Executive

Director Achim Steiner said that at the Shimo la Tewa prison at the coastal city of Mombasa, inmates were involved in a wetland development project. This project was to purify waste-water from the jail while delivering important economic, social and environmental returns. Inmates were also using the project for fish farming and food. At the same time, they were harvesting natural gas for electricity generation. Steiner mentioned further that the scheme was among a raft of projects being undertaken under the Addressing Land-Based Activities in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO-LaB) initiative which forms part of the UNEP-brokered Nairobi Convention Treaty, a regional seas agreement. It is hoped the lessons learnt could be applied to other parts of the world so that the multiple challenges of sanitation and pollution could be viewed in part through a nature-based lens.

Mr Steiner also applauded the

public-private partnership between UNEP, UNIDO, Government of Kenya and private sector efforts to develop a biogas plant that turns waste into energy. A state-of-the-art Biogas Project has been developed to ensure slaughterhouse waste that pollutes the Nairobi River system is contained within areas of generation. The biogas powers the lighting system in the slaughterhouse, the cold rooms, the compressor for animals skinning, water pump and methane gas for the community kitchen.

Prior to the Water Day ceremony in Nairobi, participants in the ceremony were invited to guided visits of three sites on 21 March. One group went to the Nairobi River basin and Kibera. The main focus of this visit was the observation of water quality in an urban and peri-urban setting. The participants were shown ongoing efforts to rehabilitate the river and to provide sanitation and clean water.

Another group went to the Lake Victoria basin, where the visitors examined water quality in the context of trans-boundary waters, and they were shown efforts carried out to control the water hyacinth, problems of sewage disposal, water quality, and monitoring status and challenges.

The third group visited the Kaloleni constituency at the Kenyan coast. The focus of the visit was rural water supply, freshwater-coastal linkages, and wastewater treatment using constructed wetlands.

## UNHCR strengthens women empowerment programmes in Kakuma



Women at the Kakuma camp attending a tailoring course to gain skills for income generation.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and partners in the Kakuma camp joined refugees in celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March 2010. Highlighting the importance of the Day, the refugee women expressed appreciation of the strides made in empowering themselves.

In 2000, when English classes were introduced by the Windle Trust Kenya (WTK), only 30% of the women were enrolled and the completion

rate was dismal. But in 2010, 51% of the 300 enrolled are women who are encouraged to attend classes through awareness programmes undertaken by UNHCR.

Amid the dust storms and scorching sun, Somali refugee Amina Mohamed Hussein attends classes for at least two hours daily to learn basic words that would enable her communicate easily. She said, "I want to know English so that I can become a medical assistant at the refugee hospital run by the International

Rescue Committee (IRC)."

The determination in Mary Gim, a Sudanese woman in the camp since 1999, is admirable. She has a month-old baby, but continues counseling gender-based violence victims. Women now report Sex and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) cases without a translator.

Women also engage in formal employment, voluntary work, bead-making, and production of peanut butter, among others. These income-generating activities have reduced commercial sex work among young refugee women.

The demand for life skills training in tailoring has increased to 150 applications per year, which is thrice the capacity from a paltry 20 women in 1992 when tailoring classes were mooted by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Currently, with funding from UNHCR, 102 women are engaged in the production of sanitary wear and panties, and 100 more will join them when a second centre opens this April. The peanut butter industry initiated in 2009 with funding from UNHCR in partnership with the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) has products with the standard certification.

## UN agencies, Kenyan partners set up a biogas plant in Nyongara, Dagoretti

The Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Nyongara Slaughterhouse cooperated to install a biogas plant in Dagoretti to showcase the possibility of turning a waste disposal problem into a useful

energy resource. Animal wastes are being converted into methane rather than being discharged into the river system. Along with newly installed solar panels, enough biogas-electricity is being generated to power the slaughterhouse including its cold storage facilities.

Management of slaughterhouse waste has been a major problem for the operators, and has been

the main source of pollution to the Nairobi River system. The National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) closed all slaughterhouses on 13 August 2008 that did not have waste containment structure, thereby violating Water Quality regulations. But they were later re-opened.

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On 3 March 2010, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr Aeneas Chuma, led a UN delegation to visit the project. The UN delegation included representatives from UNIDO, IOM (International Organization for Migration) and UNEP. The Government of Kenya was represented by two permanent secretaries, Dr Edward Sambili of the Ministry of Planning and Vision 2030, and Professor Loyangapuo of the Ministry of Industrialisation.

This project could be a blue print for slaughterhouses across the African continent, as it is an example of how to reduce water pollution from the industrial sector. It is also an addition to the path towards an industrialised Kenya by 2030. At the same time, the project demonstrates the partnership between the private and public sectors, and it is a showcase of the UN system organisations “delivering as One” on the technology front.



The Nyongara Biogas plant

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