Human Rights now a Compulsory Course in Kenya

Laikipia, a public University, in collaboration with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), developed and adopted a human rights curriculum as a common and compulsory course for all undergraduate students. This program was a result of a one year joint effort between the University and the UN.

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Kenya Open Day 2013- Partnership for Peace; “Perspectives of Refugee Women on Voluntary Repatriation as a Durable Solution”

On 10 December 2013, UN Women, in collaboration with IOM and UNFPA, under the auspices of the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (JP GEWE), together with UNHCR and members of the Urban Refugees Network, held an Open Day entitled “Partnerships for Peace”. The theme of the Open Day was “Perspectives of Refugee Women on Voluntary Repatriation as a Durable Solution”. The Day was in recognition of the 13th anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 and in response to the call urging ‘consultation with local and international women groups’. The occasion also commemorated 65 years since the inauguration of the Human Rights Day.

The objective of the Open Day was to ascertain women refugees’ perspectives on the repatriation of Somali refugees in Kenya and in recognition of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and the essential role of women in conflict prevention, recovery and peacebuilding.

The Day sought to deepen dialogue and cooperation between the Governments of Kenya and Somalia, the United Nations and refugees. This would facilitate the repatriation process which provides an opportunity for refugees willing to return in safety and in dignity, with the full respect for national and international standards on voluntary repatriation, and for all parties to appreciate their respective roles and responsibilities.

This year’s Open Day was attended by both women and men refugees from urban areas and the Dadaab camp. The event which was held in Nairobi gave the refugees an opportunity to amplify their voices and speak openly about...
their fears, hopes and concerns on the repatriation process.

Some of the issues raised included: the current insecurity that continues to overshadow Somalia, lack of basic services such as health care, education, access to shelter, nutrition, clean water, etc; socio-economic gender-related issues (change in social status); lack of inclusivity in the repatriation discussions; and uncertainty and lack of awareness on repatriation among refugees.

The UN delegation was led by the Director-General of the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON), Sahle-Work Zewde. Also present was the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Mohamed Ali Nur, Commissioner of the Department of Refugees, Badu Katelo, UN Women Country Representative, Zebib Kavuma and the UN High Commission for Refugees Country Representative, Raouf Mazou.

“We are from Somalia and we love our country” said Fadumo Hassan Dahur, a refugee from Dadaab Camp. “We want to go back when we are fully equipped with skills, knowledge but our major concern is: are there structures already in place for us in Somalia?”

African Countries Call for Partnership on New Urban Agenda

From 4-6 December 2013, UN-Habitat hosted the ‘Strengthening Partnerships for a new Africa Urban Agenda’ conference. A total of 110 delegates from 37 countries, including 34 organisations, 13 of them media, attended the conference at UN-Habitat’s headquarters in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

The conference saw housing ministers from across the continent convene to discuss how they could work together to address urban challenges and help to take advantage of the opportunities posed by urbanisation.

In his opening address, Mr. Akwasi Opong-Fosu, Ghana’s Minister for Local Government and Rural Development said that African urbanisation had reached a critical phase and required concerted efforts from both state
International Volunteers Day marked in Nairobi

UNDP and UNV Kenya joined the world community to mark the International Volunteer Day (IVD) 2013. Following this year's theme, “Young, Global, Active”, the UN volunteers in Kenya celebrated the Day by engaging in a number of environmental activities to ensure enhanced awareness and demonstrate volunteer contribution to the environment.

The volunteers marked the Day by planting trees during their annual Retreat in Voi near the Tsavo National Park in Kenya, and extended it to the natural environmental trail located next to Karura Forest Natural Reserve, which is close to the UN Complex.

The UNDP Kenya Officer-in-Charge, Mr. Thomas Ole-Kuyan officiated at the tree-planting ceremony and presented UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s message for the Day.

Mr. Ole-Kuyan appreciated the work of the volunteers in offering sustainable solutions to daily local challenges. He acknowledged the passion and dedication of the volunteers noting how volunteerism has no borders and limitations.

“I appreciate the work and service offered by the UN volunteers in Kenya. You may not know but you contribute much to the UN programmes and development of the world,” he said.

Mr. Ole-Kuyan was joined by the youngest volunteer from a local University, Ms. Masae Ochai, to plant the first tree at the natural environmental trail.

and non-state parties to address the challenges. Some very well thought out initiatives had failed on the continent in the past because they were conceived on the narrow perspective of governments only, locking out the citizens, he said.

In a speech presented on her behalf by Principal Secretary Mariamu El Maawy, Kenya’s Lands, Housing and Urban Development Cabinet Secretary, Ms. Charity Ngilu noted that the country had developed a national urban policy to mitigate the effects of rapid urbanisation.

“Some of these measures include infrastructural development in urban areas, seeking ways of reducing electricity costs, as well as slum upgrading programmes,” she added.

Nigeria’s overseeing Minister of the Federal Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Mr. Musa Sada talked of an urban crisis mainly reflected in lack of adequate shelter, among other issues. He however stated that the Government of President Goodluck Jonathan was tackling these issues effectively.
Visitors’ Service Partners with Kenyan Celebrities to Promote the UN Tour

Opening up the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) complex to the public is one of the main goals of the Visitors’ Service. As part of activities to achieve this goal, the Visitors’ Service crowned 2013 by organizing a series of promotional tours with Kenyan artists and celebrities that attracted more than 100 visitors to participate in the UN Tour. The first among them was held on 3 December 2013. The Service organized a promotional tour featuring Miss Tourism Kenya delegates from 27 counties in Kenya. The models adorned in red sashes and 6-inch stilettos drew a lot of attention as they did a “flag walk,” which led them to the Visitors’ Service office. Some UN staff could not resist pulling out their camera-phones from their pockets and handbags to capture the colourful but rare moment. A Kenyan television station, K24-TV filmed every step that the ladies took during their 2-hour visit to UNON. At the end, one of the delegates stated, “I will definitely promote the UN in my county. This is truly a hidden jewel.” The delegates’ visit, which was part of their activities to promote tourism in Kenya, was aired twice on K24-TV, on 5 and 7 December 2013 and can be viewed on YouTube at this link <http://ow.ly/rNxd4>.

To reach out to those in inner cities, especially the slums of Nairobi, the Service also worked with artists from such places. One such group was the Sawasawa Acrobats, (a group of young talented rehabilitated street boys) from Huruma and Korogocho slums. The promotional tour organized with the group attracted 15 fans from Nairobi. After the guided tour on 6 December, the group performed acrobatic stunts for the fans and 40 staff members who watched the performance.

LEFT: Sawasawa Acrobats perform stunts for the audience after the tour. RIGHT: On the tour: Octopizzo strikes a pose at the “Polar Bears Statue,” which cautions visitors about the effect of climate change on wild-life. © Visitors Service, Nairobi

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In the same vein, the Service organized a promotional tour for Octopizzo, Kibera-born hip-hop artist on 10 December. “I have never in my wildest thoughts imagined that people can actually tour the UN!” the artist remarked after the guided tour.

The last in the series of promotional tours featured “Rabbit” (known as Kaka Sungura and originally as Kevin Ombima), a hip-hop artist from Eastlands on 27 December. Having been impressed by the tour, Rabbit, who also hosts “Tubonge,” a talk-show among the youth, plans to collaborate with the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Nairobi in telling the UN story to external audiences.
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