Every year on 24 October, the UN family in Kenya comes together as One to commemorate the day that the United Nations was formally established.

This year, the UN Day activities in the country kicked off with the UN4U Outreach programme coordinated by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), on behalf of the UN Communications Group (UNCG) Kenya. This is the fifth year in a row that the UN4U programme has been carried out around the world. The initiative launched in 2008, gives an opportunity to UN officials and staff to establish a dialogue with students to inspire them to take an interest in global issues.

In Kenya, the target audience for this year’s programme was the out-of-school youth. About 430 youths from Baba Dogo, an informal settlement area in Nairobi, and Ruiru on the outskirts of the city were visited on 17 and 18 October by UNIC, UNESCO, IOM, UNHCR, and UNICEF. The youth were represented by various groups, all with one objective geared towards pushing the agenda of peace, security, development and human rights.

The UN staff shared their experiences and gave information about the United Nations agencies and its diverse activities. In turn, the youth talked about their engagements in pushing the agenda of peace, especially given the post election violence that rocked the country in 2007/8 and the forthcoming elections. This was followed by interactions between the two groups through questions, answers and ideas.
for the way forward. The youth, mostly working on voluntary basis, showed great interest in global issues and involvement in UN activities.

The outreach campaign climaxed at the UN complex on 24 October with an exhibition showcasing the work of the UN through pictures, posters and videos, and various youth organizations’ activities. Through this collaboration the youth and the UN staff had an opportunity to network and exchange views on various issues.

As has been the tradition since 2002, the UN family honored the Winner and Runner-up of the 2012 UN in Kenya Award. The Award recognizes an organization or an individual that has made an impact on the people of Kenya and succeeded in contributing towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

This year’s Winner is Gudliye Farm which was awarded the prize for its outstanding effort to eradicate food insecurity through embracing modern dry land farming as an alternative means of livelihood in Dadaab, North Eastern Province, a predominantly dry area. The farm is directly and slowly transforming the lives of hundreds of beneficiaries affected by the Horn of Africa drought.

The Runner-up of the Award is Ms. Lydia Njuguna, a committed advocate against gross abuses on children living with disabilities. She was recognized for her efforts to help poor, disabled and less privileged children from a town known as Nanyuki, to have access to an education and rehabilitation through a school she founded called Likii Special School for the Mentally Challenged.

The guest of honor at the commemoration was the Minister of Foreign Affairs Professor Sam Ongeri, who underlined the importance of the UN4U programme: “I am pleased to note that the United Nations has established the UN4U, an outreach programme to inform and educate the youth who are the leaders of tomorrow, on the importance of the United Nations in the international system. Informing the youth is the pathway to a better future. It is my hope that the UN will widen this programme in Kenya by partnering with secondary schools to inspire our children by exposing them to the role, and more importantly, the objective of the United Nations”.

In his message delivered by UNON Director-General Sahle-Work Zewde, the UN Secretary-General took stock of the global development agenda: “with the 2015 deadline for the Millennium Development Goals approaching, we must intensify our efforts to reach all these lifesaving targets. We must prepare a bold and practical post-2015 development agenda”.

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Aeneas Chuma, qualified the special significance of this year’s UN Day: “as it comes at a time when the country faces various challenges related to internal peace, national cohesion, human rights, the rule of law and the empowerment of Kenya’s women and youth”.

On the other hand the Executive Director of UNEP, Achim Steiner emphasized: “Perhaps the time has come to recognize that both the UN-- as an institution and as a forum to resolve tensions and provide solutions between nations-- and its member states need to pull together if the challenges and the opportunities of the 21st century are to be realized.”

The UN Day commemoration was attended by over 500 guests comprising of Government officials, Permanent Missions accredited to Kenya, heads of UN agencies, Civil Society Organizations, Youth groups and UN staff. Entertainment was provided by Sauti Sol, a group of young musicians and Lynette Kanana, a poet.
Traditional dances, songs by a local choir as well as a march past by Kenya’s National Youth Service Band marked the international celebrations of this year’s World Habitat Day that were marked in Embu town, some 110 kilometers to the east of the capital Nairobi.

In a message read on his behalf by the Director of UN-Habitat’s Regional Office for Africa Ms. Axumite Gebre-Egziabher, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said good practices of managing urban development existed in all regions.

“But we are a long way from turning the ideal of sustainable inclusive cities into reality. Urban areas are responsible for most of our waste and pollution... and while we have achieved the Millennium Development Goal target of significantly improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers in 10 years in advance of the 2020 deadline, absolute numbers continue to grow,” he said.

The Secretary-General said that with predictions showing that at least 60 percent of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18, it was essential that those young people have access to decent employment and quality education.

In his message, UN-Habitat Executive Director Dr. Joan Clos said UN-Habitat chose the theme “Changing Cities, Building Opportunities” for this year’s event because cities are the engines of growth. “It is in the cities that millions realise their dreams of a better life. Even if they fail, cities still attract thousands more seeking the same goal. Some achieve this by either getting jobs or by starting businesses which benefits employers and employees thus creating jobs, “he added.

In a message read by his Assistant, Bishop Margaret Wanjiru, Kenya’s Housing Minister Soita Shitanda noted that the theme of this year’s celebrations was important as the country was embarking on devolving Government functions to the county level. “It therefore accords us an opportunity to the city and urban area managers to reflect on how to make our urban areas liveable in a sustainable manner,” he explained.

Kenya’s Deputy Permanent Representative to UN-Habitat Ms. Wanja Michuki said that Kenya expected half of its population to live in cities by 2050. “For this reason, the development and management of cities affects national prosperity and the wellbeing of all Kenyans, no matter where they live,” she stressed.

On his part, Embu Mayor Peter Muriithi Nyaga promised to be in the forefront of ensuring that the residents’ rights are respected, in line with the country’s constitution.

First International Day of the Girl Child observed at UNON

The United Nations Information Center (UNIC) staff observed the first International Day of the Girl Child at UNON together with disadvantaged girls from Kiambu County. The commemoration gave an opportunity to the girls to interact and share ideas on how to address their current plight led by UNFPA, UNEP and UNIC.

The group of twenty five girls known as Sports, Cultural and Environment Youth Association was first given a tour of UNON by the Visitors Service before being treated to a wealth of UN information by the staff.

In her address, Batula Hassan Abdi, a UNFPA Programme Specialist on..
Reproductive Health told the girls: “Not every one is old but everyone has been young” emphasizing that the problems the girls might be facing are common to many girls at that age. She explained how UNFPA works with young people on sexuality matters referring to Kenya’s Sexual Offences Act and the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Bill. “These are tools that provide an enabling environment for young people to exercise their reproductive rights”, she stressed.

Other speakers included staff members from UNEP, who, besides explaining the youth programmes carried by their agency also revealed their experiences as young people.

UNIC referred to the resolution that established the Day and the Secretary-General’s message, underlining how it was important to raise awareness on the situation of the girls in order to change their plight.

Three young ladies from the Ghetto Radio in Nairobi also interacted with the girls and advised them to keep focused on their dreams while defining who they are.

Linda Ochanda, a presenter with Ghetto Radio described the acronym GHETTO as “Get Higher Education To Teach others”. She and her colleagues did not only inspire the girls but also the United Nations staff who were present.

The function ended with a lot of interesting interactions between the UN staff and the girls sharing life’s challenges and looking for ways of moving on positively.

UNV supports students’ volunteer training

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Kenya has teamed up with Uwezo Youth Trust to facilitate training of university students in volunteerism as part of the Kura KwaAmani project.

The brainchild of Kenyatta University student Kevin Kimani, Kura KwaAmani (Swahili for “A Peaceful Vote”) seeks to recruit hundreds of students from both public and private universities to serve as volunteer peace ambassadors in their universities and communities. Kevin points out that he was motivated by a desire to see students do something to prevent a return to the post-election violence witnessed in 2007/2008:

“At the end of the day, we as students are the ones who are used to perpetuate violence, and we are the ones who can make a change. This campaign and training is to help all of us appreciate how volunteering for peace can make a real difference this time round,” says Kevin, who is part of the management team at Uwezo Youth Trust.

To ensure that students got exposed to best practices, the Trust requested UNV to facilitate training in basic principles of volunteerism as well as hold discussions on volunteering for peace. The first training took place at Kenyatta University on September 14, facilitated by UNV’s George Oloo. As part of the discussions with the students, UNV Peace Monitor Jeremiah Mzee also got to share his experiences and the challenges faced in volunteering for peace. About 200 students from various universities in Nairobi attended, many of them citing a desire to make a meaningful volunteer contribution to peaceful elections.

The second leg of the training took place at Moi University in Eldoret, with about 100 students drawn from universities in the Western part of the country. The third and final training took place in Mombasa, with over 200 students involved, representing six different campuses based in the coastal city.

At the end of the trainings, almost all the universities in the country had been covered, either through their main centers or regional campuses.

George gives his assessment of the student trainings:
Students from various universities in Nairobi on the sidelines of training on volunteerism at Kenyatta University © Uwezo Youth Trust

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“These sessions with students are illustrating two very important points for me…one is that young people are passionate about not being bystanders anymore in meeting some of these societal challenges head-on, and two, youth volunteerism is a real means to seeing meaningful impact in communities on pretty much any issue, and particularly, peace and development.”

After the trainings, the students will organize activities and forums to help them share the message of peace with their fellow students at both university and national levels. This kind of initiative could very well be the means to ensure community-wide participation in ensuring peaceful elections.

UNV’s participation in this initiative was informed by its mandate on youth volunteerism and the desire to encourage and invest in student volunteerism activities. During this November, the second annual Students Symposium on Volunteerism will be held at the University of Nairobi, once again to encourage student volunteer voices in meeting peace and development challenges.

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Eradicating HIV and AIDS discrimination through legal frameworks in Kenya

According to the National Aids Control Council, Kenya is ranked fourth in the world amongst countries with the highest HIV and AIDS prevalence rate at 6.3%. South Africa tops the list with Nigeria and India coming in second and third.

In Kenya, approximately 1.5 million People are Living with HIV (PLHIV), out of which 8% are women and 4% are men. South Africa has a population of 5.6 million PLHIV, while Nigeria has 3.3 million and India has 2.6 million. Nearly 30 years into the epidemic, however, there are many countries in which negative legal environments undermine HIV responses and punish, rather than protect, people in need.

To address this gap, UNDP, in conjunction with the Ministry of State for Special Programmes, UNAIDS, NEPHAK and KELIN, held the first national symposium on HIV, Law and Human Rights from 30 to 31 October, 2012. The main objective of the symposium was to initiate a dialogue among legal professionals, law enforcement agencies, communities of PLHIV, service providers, Government officials and institutions mandated to protect and uphold human rights, on how to utilize the law and human rights to create an enabling environment for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. This inaugural symposium attracted the participation of over 250 national and county stakeholders.

Although Kenya boasts a vibrant national HIV response, the programme addressing HIV, law and human rights has not received adequate attention. There exist gaps in knowledge between the law implementers, enforcers and affected communities even where appropriate legal provisions are available to protect their rights.


“In more than 60 countries, it is a crime to expose another person to or transmit HIV. In effect, these laws and practices discourage people from seeking an HIV test and disclosing their status. Additionally, more than 100 countries criminalize some aspect of sex work hence preventing these sex workers from accessing essential HIV
prevention and care services”, said Ms. Keating.

The report incorporated testimonies of more than 700 people most affected by HIV-related legal environments from 14 countries.

A majority of Kenyans do not have access to the formal and informal justice system. The Government is yet to actualize the provision on legal aid services in light of the contents of Article 48 of the Constitution that obligates it to provide access to justice to all citizens. Legislation required for the enforcement of Article 43 of the Constitution, which is the enabling provision for the enjoyment of socio-economic rights has not been enacted. As a result of this, PLHIV often lack access to adequate and quality legal services.

The impact of the HIV prevalence in Kenya is profound and an impediment toward the achievement of Vision 2030. According to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of State for Special Programmes, Andrew Mondoh, “HIV/AIDS contributes to 29% of all deaths in Kenya – higher than cancer and malaria.” This presents a public health and social economic challenge not only to Kenya, but the rest of the world. The high HIV prevalence rate in Kenya has led to numerous human rights abuses against PLHIV and HIV affected families.

However, gains have been made in providing legal redress for cases of discrimination against PLHIV and HIV affected families. Kenya is the first country in the world to operationalize an HIV Equity Tribunal in 2011. The Tribunal has the power of a court and can receive evidence, hear witness accounts, conduct full hearings and pass judgments on matters that focus on the protection of human rights of people living with HIV. It therefore encourages those infected with and affected by HIV who have been violated in any manner in breach of the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 2006 to come forward and air their grievances. “To date, the tribunal has undertaken 16 cases of which six have been concluded and 10 are currently on-going,” mentioned Mr. Mondoh.

Outcomes from the symposium included recommendations that will inform a sustained momentum of advocacy on confronting HIV in the context of law and human rights, as well as a creation of strategic linkages that will facilitate a rights based approach of dealing with human rights issues relating to HIV.

The two day symposium ended with an award ceremony recognizing the continuous work of individuals and institutions in eradicating the stigma toward the HIV infected and affected population in Kenya. These national heroes included: David Mbote Kuria who received the Most at Risk Populations and HIV Award; Ambrose Rachier was honoured with the Advancing HIV non-discriminatory practices in the workplace Award; recognition of Ann Soy-Mwendia with the Human Rights and HIV Award (Media Category); the National Empowerment Network of People Living with and affected by HIV and AIDS in Kenya (NEPHAK) also with the Human Rights in HIV treatment Award; and the Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN) with the double Advancing Children Rights in HIV and The cross between Culture and HIV Awards.

“The law alone cannot stop AIDS. Nor can the law alone be blamed when HIV responses are inadequate. However, the legal environment can play a powerful role in the well-being of people living with HIV and those vulnerable to HIV… this is a basic fundamental right of every citizen in Kenya and across the globe today”, concluded Ms. Keating.
R
eforms in criminal justice are necessitated by the ever-
increasing demands by the public for improved services, efficiency
and accountability which if effected, would bring the much needed public
confidence in the sector.

The improved services also become imperative with strengthened legislation, especially with the enactment of the 2010 Constitution which has heralded unprecedented changes in the way litigation is to be conducted in Kenya. The expanded bill of rights incorporating explicit provisions for rights of the accused person and the need to place victims centrally in criminal justice has seen tremendous drive towards providing better services to the citizenry. The problem of high incidence of petty defendants, penal overcrowding particularly in remand homes and offender reintegration brings about the desire to develop proactive initiatives among concerned agencies.

It is in this regard that the UN Human Rights Unit in partnership with the Kenya Probation Office undertook a capacity building exercise for probation officers on human rights. The objective of the exercise was to create enabling capabilities and competencies within this Office that can meet service delivery demands and add value to target outputs and create greater impact to the people, courts and other criminal justice agencies.

Thirty five probation officers from all over Kenya attended the five-day training where they were taken through an introduction to human rights and how to mainstream human rights into their work. This training is expected to continue and to target all probation officers who will also undergo a similar training.

UN-Habitat staff members donate soap to schools to celebrate Global Handwashing Day

O
n 15 October, 2012 UN-Habitat joined schools in the Lake Victoria region for soap donations and demonstrations to celebrate Global Handwashing Day. Children at the schools had the opportunity through their health clubs to learn the importance of hand washing with soap as one of the most cost-effective ways of preventing diarrhoeal and acute respiratory diseases which account for the majority of all child deaths.

In Kisumu, Ragumo Primary School was joined by three neighbouring Primary schools - Ogango, Kunya and Mbeme - while Nyalunya and Ofunyu Primary joined Tido Primary School to mark the Day. The highlights of the Day were demonstrations from the health clubs on the five occasions to wash their hands and the correct procedure to do so which then encouraged more than
A student at Ragumo primary washing her hands with soap
© A. Musotsi/UN-Habitat

2,400 students to wash their hands with soap at various hand washing points within the school. The message given was: “Wash your hands with soap: before eating or handling food; after using the toilet; after handling rubbish; after changing a nappy, and; before and after touching an injured person.”

The Kisumu East Public Health Officer Mr. Nicholas Onako, thanked the head teachers of the schools who attended for allowing their students to participate in the event. In his message he encouraged the students to make a habit of washing hands with soap in order to keep away diseases that might lead to school absenteeism.

As part of the I’m a City Changer campaign, staff from UN-Habitat and the Lake Victoria Water and Sanitation initiative also contributed soap to enable six UN-Habitat project Schools in Rarieda, Kisumu and Kisii celebrate this year’s Global Handwashing Day.

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ICAO hosts the Africa-Indian Ocean Flight Plan Transition Task Force Meeting

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) convened the sixth and final Flight Plan Transition Task Force Meeting (FPLT TF/6) in Nairobi, Kenya, from 3 to 5 October 2012 in order to facilitate and coordinate final preparations for the implementation of the new (2012) flight plan provisions in the Africa-Indian Ocean (AFI) Region.

The meeting assessed the status of readiness of AFI States, identified critical areas needing urgent attention and provided updated guidance in order to facilitate regional harmonization and implementation of the new ICAO Flight Plan format.

During the meeting, on-going developments towards the regional implementation readiness of the new ICAO flight plan format were reviewed; information collected through questionnaires that were circulated to AFI States and from other sources was reviewed and updated. Additional guidance on measures to be taken by States that were not ready was provided. States were reminded of their obligations under relevant provisions and specific advice was provided to those that faced significant delays. Most AFI States were assessed as being on target with regard to their readiness to implement the new flight plan format. However, a few were still experiencing delays, some of which were significant.

A schedule of follow-up actions with specific timelines was established particularly for those States regarded as experiencing significant delays.

Fifty-eight participants attended from twenty-two States and three organizations.

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