Kenyan use ICT in war against gender violence

Ms. Priscilla Nyokabi, Woman Representative for Nyeri County addressing participants © Venter Mwongera/IAWRT, 2014

UNESCO supported the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) to hold a two-day training workshop in Nairobi in June 2014. The theme for the workshop was: Technology Violence Against Women: Harm, Safety and Building Evidence.

The workshop attracted thirty women and men participants from women’s rights organizations, Kenya National Commission of Human Rights (KNHCR), Internet Service Providers (ISPs), the judiciary, Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet), Kenya police, journalists and women county officers.

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UN-Habitat Executive Director’s term extended until 2017

FOLLOWING the recommendation of the United Nations Secretary-General, after consultation with Member States, the General Assembly has re-elected Mr. Joan Clos of Spain as Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) for a term beginning on 18 October 2014 and ending on 31 December 2017. Nominated by the Secretary-General, Mr. Clos was first elected for a four-year term in 2010.

Before joining UN-Habitat, Mr. Clos was twice elected Mayor of Barcelona, serving two terms from 1997 until 2006, and Minister for Industry, Tourism and Trade of Spain between 2006 and 2008. He also served as Spain’s Ambassador to Turkey and Azerbaijan from 2008 to 2010. Mr. Clos has earned a reputation in public service and urban renewal projects, as well as for international empowerment of local authorities. He has received a number of awards, including a gold medal from the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1999 for transforming Barcelona.

Upcoming Events
15 September  International Day of Democracy
16 September  International Ozone Day
20 September  “He” for “She” campaign launch- Nairobi : UN Women
21 September  Cycle Share, UN Complex, Nairobi- : UN Habitat
26 September  International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons
UN Newsletter Kenya
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8 July 2014 will perhaps go down in history as a great milestone in the progress of women empowerment. UN Women, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) and Global Compact Network Kenya (GCNK) launched a joint partnership on Women Empowerment Principles, aimed at enabling the private sector to commit towards empowering women through corporate policies. The launch was attended by an audience of sixty five professionals from companies covering a diverse range of sectors.

(From left) UNDP Country Director, Maria-Threase Keating, KAM CEO, Betty Maina and UN Women Country Director, Zebib Kavuma © UN Women, 2014

Women Empowerment Principles - a blueprint for women advancement
UN Women and United Nations Global Compact developed Women Empowerment Principles (WEP) which offer business guidance on how to empower women in the workplace and community. These Principles are a seven step blueprint for the global and national business communities.

Ms. Zebib Kavuma, the UN Women Country Director noted during the launch how the Women Empowerment Principles were important to assist women gain economic significance, given that they comprise 51% of Kenya’s population.

In remarks at the launch, Ms. Maria-Threase Keating, the UNDP Country Director emphasized how women continued to confront discrimination, marginalization and exclusion, while Ms. Betty Maina, the Chief Executive Officer of the Kenya Association of Manufacturers stated that the implementation of the one-third principle of gender equality remained a challenge.

Contemporary examples of why women empowerment was important and necessary added weight to the significance of the launch.

Special Envoy Mary Robinson bids farewell to her staff in Nairobi

The UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region of Africa, Mary Robinson, was in the Kenyan capital in July to attend the Extraordinary Summit on Youth Unemployment organized by the leaders of the region. The five-day summit, which started on 19 July aimed at addressing the challenge of youth unemployment and recommending how to mitigate its effects on individual countries and the region as a whole, where over half of the population is made up of young people and the unemployment rate is significantly high.

In her address to delegates from the thirteen countries of the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson praised the leaders of this region for convening the assembly to reflect on how to make good use of the great potential that the youth represents. “This extraordinary Summit represents the culmination of much hard work and reflects progress in regional cooperation, which I am very pleased to see. I congratulate the Heads of State and Government for dedicating time and resources to reflect on youth employment, a critical requirement for conflict reduction and economic development,” she said.

On the question of peace and stability, which is the cornerstone of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region signed by the leaders of the Great Lakes region in Addis Ababa in February 2013, the Special Envoy remained extremely clear in reminding the signatories about their commitments: “Nobody, not the Special Envoy or the Secretary-General, can ensure that peace and stability prevail. The civil society, the leaders of the region can and must do it.” Indeed, by signing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement, the signatories committed themselves to a series of actions both at the national and regional levels. As Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Mary Robinson’s mandate focused on
stimulating the parties to the Framework to deliver on their commitments and supporting efforts to reach durable solutions for the region.

However, with the latest twist in her rich career, which saw her being appointed as the new UN Special Envoy for Climate Change, Mary Robinson took advantage of her visit to meet with her staff in Nairobi and wish them well as she prepared to take on her new responsibilities. The bulk of the staff supporting the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes is based in Nairobi with a liaison team in Kinshasa, the Congolese capital, as per the decision of the UN Secretary-General.

During her meeting with her staff, Mrs. Robinson fought hard her emotions. “The Great Lakes is in my heart. The people of the Great Lakes are in my heart… There’s sadness as I prepare to leave, but I expect to be back in the region soon as I take on my new responsibilities as Special Envoy for Climate Change,” she said. Her successor, Mr. Said Djinnit of Algeria, was announced early in July. “I am asking you in a challenging way to be even better with the new Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and to support him fully in his endeavors to fulfill his responsibilities,” she told her staff as she bade them farewell.

From ethnic violence to seeds of peace: IOM conducts inter-community peace building in Northwestern Kenya

NORTHWESTERN Kenya has been a theatre of violent conflict pitting the Pokot, Samburu and Turkana communities against one another in a fierce and deadly competition. This has been catalyzed by diminishing pasture and water resources, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, political incitement, disputes over land and ethnic boundaries, the absence of adequate state security, and the commercialization of cattle rustling.

There is a state of helplessness amongst the pastoralist households, which has led their youth to turn to violent means. Youth from these communities partake in cattle raids against neighboring communities. Cattle raids have been attributed to various factors such as lack of education, unemployment and the cultural obligation for young men to partake in the cattle raids. Acquiring cattle during such raids is a sure way of enhancing the young men’s status in society: the raided cattle can be used to pay bride price during marriage and thus move the donor up the social ladder.

IOM attempts to promote peace and prevent recurring conflict among targeted communities through the provision of early warning information and peace building activities. The agency has initiated peace building initiatives in an endeavor to end ethnic hostilities among warring communities. In May 2014, two warring communities came together for the first installment of a “Sports for Peace” initiative. The two communities jointly held football and volleyball matches to demonstrate peaceful co-existence.

The two youth teams from Pokot and Turkana Counties promised to preach peace along the disputed border of the two counties. The initiative created a platform for dialogue amongst the youth in order for them to appreciate peaceful coexistence. IOM plans to continue the initiative in order to show solidarity for peace.

After the games, the youth not only reiterated their commitment to live peacefully but declared to enhance trade among the two communities. One of the youth leaders went as far as requesting both the national and county governments to re-open and repair the road linking the two communities to demonstrate their determination to enhance trade.

Shortly after, IOM organized two peace dialogues in the month of June. The first meeting was conducted on 12 and 13 June between Pokot and Turkana Kraal elders and women crusaders. The main purpose of the meeting was to have Kraal elders, who are the pastoral community leaders at the grassroots level, to have dialogue towards coming up with common strategies and approaches for sustainable peace.
The meeting set off with the intention to ensure the grassroots leadership had common priorities on issues of security. The meeting was deemed to have been successful as Pokot and Turkana communities agreed to share their resources by opening up the market at Loya (a similar idea to the youth proposal). Furthermore, the Pokot community agreed to provide agricultural products while the Turkana would sell their livestock at the market.

The second inter-community peace dialogue was held on 27 June in North Pokot. The dialogue was a continuation of the first one on 12 and 13 June. It aimed at strengthening the resolution to be more inclusive and have communities be more committed to the peace process. The meeting was attended by Government officials, heads of security agencies from Kenya and Uganda, Ugandan Army and Kenyan Military Defence Forces, as well as Liaison Officers from Uganda. The Deputy County Commissioner for Pokot North, Turkana County Peace Ambassador and various UN agencies and NGOs also attended.

Kraal elders and women representatives from Pokot, Turkana and Tepeth were also present as they discussed the challenges facing the peace processes in the region. They outlined the presence of small arms on the Kenyan side, radical youth, lack of infrastructure and displacement of communities as the main factors impeding the peace process. They argued that both governments and other stakeholders need to involve the youth in such dialogues, as well as hold similar initiatives in other areas.

The Peace Ambassador informed the communities of plans to replicate the dialogue process that has been implemented in Pokot, Turkana and Tepeth, transcending the “triangle of death” to the “triangle of peace.” The meeting emphasized the need for the Government of Kenya to adopt disarmament across the region.

The meeting ended on a high note with the adoption of a collective agreement to establish a working group to jumpstart the processes of the peace accord. All the stakeholders were appreciated for their support in the peace initiative.

S TAFF of the United Nations in Nairobi, joined by representatives from the South African High Commission, commemorated the Nelson Mandela International Day by offering their services for half-a-day to a local Children’s Home. This was in line with the challenge set by Nelson Mandela for the international community to provide 67 minutes of public service on his birthday.

The tasks performed at the Nest Home included cleaning, cooking and interacting with the children. Various gifts ranging from food, clothes, detergents and books were also collected by the UN and donated to the home.

The Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), Nasser Ega-Musa led the UN staff in sharing with the children and their officials information about Nelson Mandela’s values and dedication to the service of humanity.

An Official from the South African High Commission, Christian Kriek, noted: “One important thing Nelson Mandela taught us is that we can all help one another by doing small things to transform lives. We are so excited this year that many people are celebrating the Day in all communities all over Kenya.”

The Coordinator of the home, Moses Omwange commended the United Nations and the South African High Commission and said: “The sacrifice by the staff to spend time with the children will go a
long way in impacting the lives of these needy children".

In response, UN staff acknowledged the Secretary-General’s message which stated: “Nelson Mandela day is a call to action. Each of us can celebrate this Day by helping to address real problems in our communities. Together we can give great meaning to our celebration by paving the way for a better future.”

The Nelson Mandela International Day has been commemorated since 2009 when it was officially adopted by the United Nations to inspire individuals worldwide to participate in positive transformation in their communities in reflection of the rich legacy left behind by Mandela.

The event was organized by UNIC.

Children in Kenya now better protected from severe diarrhoea

KENYA has taken exceptional steps to protect children from diarrhoea by introducing the rotavirus vaccine into its immunization schedule. This will reduce the number of children contracting diarrhoea by over 40 per cent.

The vaccine, which was launched on 16 July by First Lady Margaret Kenyatta in Machakos County, is given at six weeks followed by another dose four months later.

The rotavirus vaccine will protect children from severe diarrhoea and is given orally. It can be given alongside other antigens at six and 10 weeks respectively.

Tens of mothers with children below...
one year gathered at the Machakos people’s Park where their children were vaccinated.

Mrs. Margaret Kenyatta who took time to meet parents and vaccinate some of the children also visited Machakos hospital where other mothers and children were gathered.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mrs. Kenyatta called on parents to take advantage of the free provision of the vaccine which had been beyond the reach of many families. She reiterated her commitment to mothers and infants health, adding that she was prepared to do anything within her power to sustain safe mother and child care. Her Beyond Zero Campaign champions an end to maternal and infant mortality.

Addressing guests, the WHO Country Representative, Dr. Custodia Mandlhate hailed the introduction and launch of the vaccine as an exceptional milestone for the protection of Kenyan children from severe diarrhoea which is the commonest cause of child deaths. Dr. Mandlhate noted that diarrhoea was one of the leading infants’ killers in the world accounting for an estimated 751,000 children deaths each year. Rotavirus, she added, was the leading cause of severe childhood diarrhoea in both developed and developing countries and results in more than 450,000 deaths each year. It causes not only diarrhoea, but also irritation, vomiting, abdominal pain, flatulence, skin inflammation, fever and loss of appetite.

The use of the rotavirus vaccine should be part of a comprehensive effort to eliminate diarrhoeal diseases, she said. This was because the use of the vaccine alone was not enough to completely eliminate other diarrhoeal diseases, she added. “The strategy should include other interventions including promotion of early and exclusive breastfeeding for six months, improvement in quality of water, hygiene, better sanitation, community-based administration of the oral rehydration solution, supplementation with zinc, and overall improvement in management of sick children with diarrhoea,” she concluded.

UNESCO provides a platform for dialogue to safeguard Kenya’s national treasure - traditional folk music in Kenya

UNESCO and the Goethe Institute in Nairobi organized a seminar bringing together national and international cultural actors to develop a strategy for the promotion and preservation of traditional folk music in Kenya. The seminar was organized to establish the status of traditional music in Kenya and facilitate information exchange that would lead to developing a strategy for promoting and safeguarding this music genre through efficient identification, documentation, protection, transmission and accessibility.

About fifty participants interested in...
Ms. Mulekeni Ngulube, Programme Specialist for Culture from UNESCO facilitates the discussion on safeguarding and promoting traditional folk music. ©UNESCO, 2014

traditional music gathered at the Goethe Institute. These included Government officials, representatives from international and national cultural institutions and associations, ethnomusicologists, musicians, mainstream media and community media practitioners as well as civil society organizations.

UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture contributed to the seminar by providing the current context of traditional music and the existing legislative framework touching upon the Kenyan constitution, national policies concerning traditional music and international conventions.

Methods of collecting and archiving traditional music were shared by German ethnomusicologists who have been working in many countries in Africa including Kenya. Their presentation focused on effective identification, documentation, protection, transmission, promotion and accessibility of the traditional music.

Curriculum for schools and universities on music education were also examined in order to establish whether and if they cover traditional music.

The media, music producers and artists also contributed by exploring ways aimed at raising awareness and interests among youth and allowing them to act as vehicles of cultural exchange.

Ms. Annette Klein, Programme Officer from Goethe Institute, explained that: “All the participants, local as well as international, are partners and collaborators, and their participation will facilitate and bring about positive change in managing and promoting traditional music”.

Mr. George Litywa from the Ministry of Culture introduced several governmental initiatives on the conservation and promotion of traditional music and dance forms. He expressed that: “These art forms do not only have cultural values that contribute to our cultural identity, but also incorporate socio-economic values where they act as tools for educating people not only on morals and traditions for social well-being, but also contributing to the creation of creative industries”.

Makadem, an acclaimed Kenyan artist specializing in Benga music, expressed the urgency needed in the field: “Our traditional music has disappeared and people who know about it are aging and may not be able to pass on their knowledge and skills before they are all gone”.

Mr. Gregg Mwendwa, a DJ and music producer reflected on the seminar saying: “It has provided an opportunity for those interested in traditional music to share know-hows and expertise surrounding the traditional music scene”. He also noted: “Although there is an urgent need to preserve and promote traditional music, there is need to consider fusing it with modern technologies and aesthetics to popularize it among the youth”.

Ms. Mulekeni Ngulube, Programme Specialist for Culture from the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, emphasized the importance of safeguarding and promoting traditional music: “As it is Kenya’s living culture representing a snapshot of the unique diversity and intricacy of the Kenyan culture”. She highlighted how safeguarding and promoting traditional music is in line with the principles of the 2003 and 2005 Conventions. Turning to the seminar she explained: “The task at hand calls for collaboration among stakeholders, backed by a solid policy foundation to ensure that traditional folk music is safeguarded, documented, taught, promoted, and transmitted so that it becomes the foundation on which the national music genre should be based”.

In the discussions that followed several issues were emphasized upon, namely the need for proper archiving of the traditional folk music; undertaking programmes to popularize traditional music in schools and universities; adopting innovative methods of teaching, focusing on both traditional and contemporary music; and allocating subsidies that support musical creation and promotion.

A strategic document is being elaborated with concrete recommendations to facilitate collaboration and synergies among critical stakeholders in order to ensure policy development and implementation for the safeguarding and promotion of traditional music across all sectors.
UN-HABITAT partnered with the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) in July to offer Masters and Doctorate degrees in urban studies.

The first students are expected to begin their courses in the new semester starting in September for the Masters Degree in Sustainable Urban Development, as well as Doctoral programmes by research and thesis in areas of urban studies.

The course will be offered under the Centre for Urban Studies established in 2013 by the School of Architecture and Building Sciences, in partnership with UN-Habitat, to guide in research, training and development of innovative ideas that will help tackle the inherent complex and diverse issues in urban settings.

The University has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nairobi City County that will enable postgraduate students from the Centre for Urban Studies undertake minimum three-month internships among other collaborative activities.

More than 50% of the global population lives in urban areas. In 2009, Africa’s total population for the first time exceeded one billion, of which almost 40% lived in urban areas. There is, therefore, an increasing need for professionals in urban studies – in private companies, public agencies at all levels of government, as well as within non-governmental organizations – to tackle various challenges of urban development.

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