



UNiTE to end Gender Violence

There was a hive of activity in the morning of 29 November 2011 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, with the UN and its partners setting up stalls for an exhibition to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

The UN Joint programme on Gender



Staff members at the exhibition to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence © UNEP, 2011

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Equality and Women's Empowerment coordinated the exhibition targeting UN staff members. An amalgam of young, old men and women were engaged in a beehive of activities each showcasing their programmes geared towards a common goal of ending all forms of violence against women. The exhibition was also to raise greater attention to the challenge of gender violence.

All the exhibitors, most of whom were from the NGO fraternity attracted a lot of visitors who were eager to build their knowledge on the subject and explore ways to contribute to the end of gender violence. Competent representatives provided publications and also adequately answered the myriad of questions put to them. The most significant achievement running through all the stalls was that results

to end gender violence were being realized through both legal assistance and provision of essential services such as emergency treatment in cases of abuse. In addition, many people are now aware of where and how to access help.

One particular organization, Men for Gender Equality Now (MEGEN), comprising of mainly men, emphasized the need to include men in the fight against gender violence. According to the organization, "MEGEN does sensitize men to stop gender based violence... in the initial stages, usually, there is a negative reception from the men but after sensitization on MEGEN's vision, the men become more receptive and active in playing their part in ending the scourge of gender based violence."

Upcoming Events

12 January 2012: Launch of the report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability

27 January 2012: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

Working with the Government to address humanitarian needs in urban informal settlements in Kenya



Communities reconstruct shelters after the Mitumba demolition in November 2011
© Save the Children, 2011

The UN, through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UN-HABITAT is working with the Government of Kenya to strengthen response to urban disasters and humanitarian challenges in informal settlements/slums in the country.

2011 has been a year of major disasters in urban areas in Kenya. More fatalities and displacements were recorded in informal settlement/slums in Nairobi than any other part of the country.

Recent fires in Nairobi's slums led to over 100 fatalities, leaving more than 30,000 people displaced and homeless, destroying property worth more than US \$ 10 million. The Sinai slum pipeline explosion of 12 September 2011, for example, left more than 100 people dead in the inferno and another 350 people displaced. A total of 160 casualties were admitted in various hospitals. On 1 March, a fire in Nairobi's Mukuru Nyayo slums presented the Government of Kenya and humanitarian actors with the biggest caseload of internal displacement in one location at that time. More than 9,000 people were rendered homeless and displaced to nearby open school grounds after a ferocious fire razed their homes.

Since October, Nairobi's informal settlements residents have come face to face with numerous demolitions and evictions which have been increasing the humanitarian caseloads for Kenya.

These demolitions have caused fear, panic and confusion among the affected communities in addition to the threat of disease outbreaks and escalating personal insecurity.

Currently, there are over 168 informal settlements in Nairobi home to over two million people. Residents of Nairobi's informal settlements constitute 55% of the city's total population and yet they are crowded on 5% of the total land area in the city. These staggering statistics have their roots in the lack of availability of low-cost housing for the poor. As a result, thousands of residents of informal settlements in Nairobi have encroached on unoccupied land such as road reserves, railway lines, forests and public utilities.

Hundreds of shanties housing about 2,000 people were demolished in Mitumba slums near Wilson Airport in mid-November as part of the operation to reclaim land and clear structures situated next to vital installations. This was the sixth demolition in less than two weeks coming on the heels of those in Eastleigh, Kiang'ombe, KPA slums, Syokimau and Embakasi. Approximately 2,000 residents of Mitumba are now out in the open on semi-flooded grounds with no assistance (food and non-food items).

In spite of the recognition of the humanitarian impact of these disasters on the most vulnerable in urban areas in Kenya, response is ad hoc and in most

cases unavailable. A major challenge for humanitarian actors in Kenya is distinguishing between the ongoing chronic needs of poor urban households and the more acute vulnerability provoked by these recent disasters. The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) notes that the great majority of tools, approaches, policies and practices for humanitarian responses are designed for rural settings and not the urban context. Although many of these tools and approaches are being adapted for urban areas, their scaling-up and the development of new tools to fill gaps among humanitarians is essential to enhance the impact of assistance in urban areas.

In response, the UNOCHA partnership with UN-HABITAT has led to the establishment of the Urban Vulnerability Forum which is working with the Government, UN, Non governmental and Community based organizations in informal settlements to develop assessment tools and response strategies appropriate for humanitarian needs in urban informal settlements in Kenya.

Since October 2009 to date, the Urban Vulnerability Forum has facilitated three major consultations with over fifty agencies working to establish an appropriate multi-stakeholder partnership for urban emergencies. It has also supported the development of monitoring and assessment tools for emergencies in urban settings and enhanced preparedness among national and local authorities in urban areas. The work of the Forum is feeding into the IASC Strategy for Meeting Humanitarian Challenges in Urban Areas.

The Urban Vulnerability Forum through OCHA representation is also supporting the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Local Government to prepare the National Urban Development Policy. The policy seeks to strengthen governance, development planning, urban investments, and delivery of infrastructure and related services. It also aims to contribute towards poverty alleviation, economic growth and accelerated realization of Kenya's Vision 2030.

FAO launches KSHS 600 million plan to help pastoralists resist drought

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has launched an innovative five million euro (KSHS 601 million) programme to improve drought resilience of communities living in Kenya's arid and semi-arid areas. The four year programme is entirely funded by the European Union (EU).

Entitled "Improved Community Drought Response and Resilience (ICDRR)," the programme involves scaling up previous successful interventions, improving coordination in the sector in terms of economic development and early response at community and national levels.

"In the past, emergency assistance targeted immediate needs without addressing the core problem – poor people in drought prone areas are living just too precariously to the extent that when disaster hits they are unable to protect themselves," said FAO Representative to Kenya Dan Rugubira.

"The message of the Government and donors following the recent drought is clear – we need to concentrate on longer-term interventions that engage with communities and help to build sustainable, resilient livelihoods."

The FAO-coordinated programme is part of the EU's Kenya Rural Development Programme (KRDP) and contribution to the Government's agricultural strategy.

Although a handful of herders have become richer, climate change and a growing population in Kenya mean that hunger, destitution, and conflict amongst pastoralists in the arid and semi-arid areas are on the increase.



FAO aims to improve drought resilience of people living in arid areas © FAO, 2011

The FAO/EU project will study which drought interventions are working and scale-up those that are increasing the incomes and food security of poor pastoralists. Examples are increasing the practice of irrigated fodder production, including boosting the availability in Kenya of fodder seeds, and introducing an element of planning to pasture growth and consumption.

Strong emphasis is also placed on training. This includes an interactive radio course for pastoralists on milk marketing and hygienic production methods. The programme will also increase the number of master trainers for Pastoral Field Schools and expand the use of state-of-the-art drought and disease warning technologies such as the satellite monitoring of waterholes

and water pans.

The project is a direct continuation of the four million Euro FAO/Kenya EU Food Facility project which started in 2009 and ended earlier this year. This is a good example of continuity in development programme so that knowledge and capacity are recycled and expanded.

"Our objective is to develop a coordination structure for the KRDP which will ensure that individual projects are able to draw on the experiences of others and that each project contributes to the achievement of the overall goal of the KRDP. It is also to establish systems where key partners and information is shared between implementing bodies," said the EU Delegation Head of Rural Development, Peter Stuesson.

Water experts converge to discuss groundwater resources



Group photo of participants attending the Kenya National Consultation for the “Groundwater Resources Exploration and Capacity-building to Combat Drought in the Horn of Africa” © UNESCO/Tole, 2011

The drought crisis recently experienced in the Horn of Africa put some 12 million people in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia at the risk of starvation. In an effort to address the situation, UNESCO Nairobi Office, Water Science Programme, in partnership with the Kenya Ministry of Water and Irrigation brought together thirty water experts from the Kenya Government, UN agencies and other partners for the Kenya National Consultation on “Groundwater Resources Exploration and Capacity-building to Combat Drought in the Horn of Africa.”

The meeting, held in Nairobi from 9 - 10 November 2011, was in response to a formal request from the Kenya delegation to UNESCO following the drought crisis. The initiative is built

on the expertise and long experience of UNESCO International Hydrological Programme (IHP) on knowledge production and capacity-building on water sciences. UNESCO IHP is the only intergovernmental programme of the UN system devoted to water research, water resources management, education and capacity-building.

In his remarks during the opening session of the meeting, Prof. Joseph Massaquoi, the Director of UNESCO Nairobi Office stressed how the initiative was in line with the Nairobi Declaration of the Heads of State during their summit on the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

“The UNESCO action plan includes an immediate assessment of groundwater resources for emergency situations aimed at improving drinking water availability for the most

vulnerable populations in the current humanitarian crisis in the refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia, as well as internal camps in Somalia; a medium to long-term support in drought monitoring and preparedness and strengthening of institutional and technical capacities through a long term capacity-building for the region,” said Prof. Massaquoi.

In his speech, Mr. John Nyaoro, the Director of Water Resources in the Ministry of Water and Irrigation noted the increase in competition for water resources in Kenya. “Stakes are high and therefore far-reaching measures need to be taken before Kenya’s water situation turns irreversibly unmanageable.” Mr. Nyaoro explained how Kenya’s Water Policy provides for the promotion of scientific research in water matters as a basis for sustainable development and management of water resources.

Mr. Omondi Juma, the IHP Vice Chair for Africa hailed the creation of UNESCO Category II Regional Groundwater Training and Research Centre at the Kenya Water Institute. The centre will contribute to the achievement of IHP objectives, particularly those related to groundwater and as well as address the specific needs of the sub-Saharan Africa region.

Various presentations were made during the two-day meeting among them - Policy perspective on groundwater exploration and exploitation in Kenya, Mapping, assessment and management of regional transboundary water, Current government efforts in addressing drought and famine, and Existing expertise and research in hydrogeology and related issues.

Monitoring water holes from above

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is working with the University of Nairobi and the Texas A&M University to expand a monitoring program of water-levels in boreholes and water pans in order to help pastoralists protect themselves when drought hits.

The monitoring system uses satellite images and remote sensing to show the trends in water levels, the health and availability of pasture, how much rain has fallen and how much water has evaporated into the atmosphere.

The EU/ECHO funded project, which also builds on research from the International Livestock Research Institute, will be rolled out in Turkana County in north-west Kenya, one of the areas worst hit by the recent drought.

“The problem is, there are no meteorological stations in many areas to gauge rainfall, so this will fill the gap in a highly cost-effective way,” said Joseph Matere, FAO Kenya’s Geographic Information Officer.

“It will allow us to do projections of forage and water situation at waterholes, two to three months into the future, which will enable us to respond in a timely and appropriate way to avert losses of livestock.”

If the pastoralists know that water levels in one area are low, they can move their animals to areas that still have sufficient water and pastures. In cases of extreme drought, humanitarian actors will be alerted to intervene to offset a major crisis.

The information provided is in real time, using smart phones, which means



The FAO project introduces satellite monitoring of waterhole levels © FAO, 2011

once monitors report water levels from a particular site the information arrives immediately at the database monitoring centre. This means a response can be very fast.

“The great thing about this monitoring system is that it allows us to link early warning and response, which, as the recent drought showed, is a vital element that has been missing,” said Mr. Matere.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed, and this early warning system will allow for pasture production, establishment of new water sources and other risk-reduction measures. The database also gives an opportunity for the studying of drought trends and history which are useful in the fight against climate change.

“For a very long time we just relied

on emergency food aid distributions once drought had hit because we did not plan ahead for the availability of water and other resources of the pastoral communities in these areas,” acknowledged Laban Macopiyo, a range management expert at the Nairobi University.

The project, which builds on the one started four years ago in north-east Kenya and southern Ethiopia by the University of Texas and the United States Geology Service, has been well received by the Government and local actors.

FAO plans to roll out satellite waterhole monitoring to other areas of Kenya as part of a four-year, five million euro project financed by the European Union to increase drought resilience and preparedness in Kenya.

Migration mapping service between Somalia and Dadaab in Kenya highlights need for better protection of drought and famine victims



An aerial shot of the IFO 2 East Camp in Dadaab © IOM and UNHCR, 2011

A mapping technique commissioned by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has found that 85% of drought-affected Somali refugees and host pastoralist communities are using nearly 1,230 kms of unofficial border routes to reach help at Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp, highlighting the many dangers faced as a result.

The aim of the assessment using the Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping technique was to identify the routes taken by refugees and pastoralist communities to reach Dadaab, located 100 kms inside the eastern Kenya/Somali border.

Carried out in late September, the assessment was also to identify measures needed to counteract the rape, theft, extortion and sometimes death faced by the refugees and pastoralist communities due to dehydration and lack of medical attention along the route.

According to UNHCR, about 152,000 Somali refugees have fled to Dadaab since January this year. Only 10 per cent or 120 kms of official routes – which lie along the main road from Harar to Garissa - was being used by the refugees to reach Dadaab.

However, both unofficial and official routes lacked requisite water provisions, medical facilities, rest points

or security monitoring centres, leaving refugees and pastoralists at the mercy of unscrupulous guides who extort large sums of money to provide navigation services.

The IOM assessment recommends establishing mobile water points, particularly along official tracks, to address the dehydration suffered by the refugees and pastoralists. In addition, it recommends active and passive disease surveillance during and after the migration process to curb the spread of diseases amongst accompanying livestock.

To address the rape and extortion of refugees, the report recommends the establishment of a police task force in partnership with host communities along the pastoralist migratory routes.

With rising tension, and at times conflict between host pastoralist communities and refugees over scarce water resources, the assessment recommends the establishment of an effective early warning system to mitigate the impact of drought and to learn more on available water sources used by both groups.

“This has been an extremely valuable exercise as it will enable not just IOM but also other humanitarian and Government agencies to identify areas that need urgent assistance and resources,” says IOM Chief of Mission, Ashraf El Nour.

UNHCR introduces ethanol stoves to refugees in Kakuma camp

Household energy supply is of importance to refugees in Kenyan camps mainly for environmental protection and enhancement of peaceful coexistence with the host community. With more than 500,000 refugees in Kenya depending almost entirely on fuel wood for their domestic energy needs, stakeholders in the refugee programme are constantly engaged in identifying alternatives sources of efficient energy use for cooking.

It is with this realization that UNHCR, in partnership with the German International Cooperation (GIZ) are currently piloting ethanol stoves in Kakuma as an alternative or to complement wood fuel energy in the camp with a population of close to 84,000 refugees. The stoves are powered by bio ethanol gel. The gel is smokeless, clean (no soot), non toxic and non explosive. Although various solar energy resources as well as different types of energy-saving stoves have been piloted in the camp, there has not been meaningful success so far. Efforts to identify efficient and acceptable energy resources for cooking have continued for the last 20 years that the camp has been in existence.

In November 2011, GIZ, which implements environmental conservation programmes on behalf of UNHCR, conducted its first assessment on the use of ethanol stoves among the 70 households identified. The households identified in August 2011 have undergone training on the use of the stoves and given a period of three months to enable the families to conduct a comparative review between use of ethanol and wood fuel.

Nyalinglat, a Sudanese that has been



A refugee girl lights up an ethanol stove, beside her is the ethanol gel (yellow)
© UNHCR / Caroline Opile, 2011

issued with the stoves says, “An ethanol stove is convenient for preparing light meals due to its small surface area and complements use of firewood for our family”. Samaat Basazi, an Ethiopian student in Kakuma camp adds, “It has become easier to make breakfast before going to school as ethanol gel lights faster unlike firewood”. The sampled households indicate that the stove is effective, efficient, and convenient since the gel lights easily and the stove can fit in a small space. The refugees reiterated that the stoves were environmentally-friendly, and easy to light and extinguish.

Miski Mohamed, a Somali refugee however notes that the cost is still prohibitive for most refugees as five litres of gel costs KES 650 in Nairobi and lasts for only six days. Therefore many of the refugees may not be able

to afford and would largely depend on GIZ for supply. Implementation of this form of cooking energy will require funding to upscale its utilization in the camp considering that one stove costs KES 1,500 and gel for a month would cost approximately KES 3,000.

In the long run, the use of ethanol stoves to complement wood fuel will meet the gap in meeting firewood needs. Refugees receive 0.2kgs of firewood per person per day which is below the recommended standard of 1.5kgs per person per day. Use of ethanol stoves alongside other coping mechanisms among refugees will reduce the energy needs among refugees, reduce malnutrition rates and also mitigate conflicts between hosting and refugee communities during their search for more firewood.

Including communities in County governance

Local communities should be incorporated in governance management in the new counties. This is according to UNDP which launched the Access to Rights Knowledge Tools to be used by local communities across the Machakos County. The Access to Rights project ran from October 2004 to June 2010 and aimed at enhancing the realization of gender equality, empowerment of women and realization of human rights. These tools developed out of the project include a best practice video and handbook that will be accessible to all communities at the grassroots level. The two products were launched in Mwala District, at the St. Josephs Catholic Church.

Speaking during the launch Mr. Aeneas Chuma the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator affirmed that the Access to Rights project had enabled communities to champion their needs and foster accountability in the disbursement and management of devolved funds. “The new found awareness will set the tone for grassroots involvement in the decentralization of Government to the 47 counties. The achievements of the Access to Rights Programme is a pointer to the fact that we have to keep looking at how to adopt new forms of action that have important practical implications for human rights and for organizations working in this sector who wish genuinely to become more relevant and useful to the large numbers of Kenyans who remain powerless, marginalized and poor”, Mr. Chuma explained.

He also expressed the challenge all human rights practitioners must address, bearing in mind the provisions under Chapter Four of the new constitution. “More effort should be made to understand how the poor and marginalized communities cope, how



From left to right: UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Aeneas Chuma alongside a community paralegal officer and the Deputy Head of the Swedish Embassy, Mr. Björn Häggmark, review the Access to Rights handbook at the launch in Mwala District, Machakos© UNDP, 2011

to use local procedures - including traditional structures, to resolve disputes and meet their needs, and why they are often reluctant to use official institutions... New forms of action will be required to augment accountability and participation, challenge discrimination and strengthen grassroots social movements”. He further praised the progress of Amkeni wa Kenya, a UNDP civil service democratic governance facility, that is at the forefront in building the capacity of local community groups nationwide to ensure participatory governance practices.

The Access to Rights programme was initiated to address key areas of legal and human rights education and advocacy. These key areas include: access to justice and enhancement of human rights network through the paralegal networks; policy and legal

reform; communities engagement in management of devolved funds to address inequalities in accessing and benefiting from state resources, in tandem with socio-economic empowerment, with a strong focus on marginalized groups - including women, and persons with disabilities.

UNDP is committed to support the rights holders to examine why large numbers of people across Kenya still do not enjoy rights to which they are entitled, even when laws and policies exist to protect those rights and when official institutions do not seek to discriminate against, or deprive them of their rights. This is the phase that the agency would like to undertake to ensure that the new constitution does not remain a piece of paper for the majority of the population.

A visit to Aberdares: Where humans are now in harmony with habitat and wildlife



(L) Mr. Michel-van Winden –left, and Mr. Ferdinand Francken visit one of the tree nurseries in Kereita. (R) Group photo at the Aberdares © UNEP, 2011

Some years ago, there was ruthless poaching in the Aberdare mountains of Kenya for the black rhino's prized horn. The absence of a barrier gave poachers easy access into the forest. Wildlife from the Aberdare national park frequently invaded farms and destroyed crops, resulting in loss of revenue and sometimes lives. The Aberdare Range was also characterized by illegal activities such as charcoal burning, hunting of wildlife and fishing, just to mention a few.

This resulted in the building of a 400-kilometer protective electronic fence to protect the black rhino in its natural habitat and minimize human-wild life conflicts. The fence has also contributed to improved forest cover, safer living conditions for local communities and greater security for wildlife.

In order to witness the work of UNEP in the field, the embassy of the Netherlands First Secretary and Deputy Permanent Representative to UNEP and UN-HABITAT, Mr. Michel-van Winden, and Mr. Fernard Fracken from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited Aberdares. Present during the visit were Mr. Moses Mbego and Ms. Emah Madegwa of UNEP, the hosts Ms. Leah Mwangi and Joe Thuku both from Kijabe Environment

Volunteers (KENVO).

Located in the central Province of Kenya, the Aberdare forests are one of Kenya's five main "water towers" and play a critical role in supporting the country's economy. Aberdares is the main water catchment for Sasumua and Ndakaini dams, which provide most of the water for Nairobi. It hosts a rich diversity of vegetation and plant species, thanks to the altitude and rainfall.

Included in the visit was Kikuyu escarpment forest which lies 30 km north-west of Nairobi, and covers the southern slopes of the Aberdare escarpment. To the far south, the forest has been greatly fragmented leaving only scattered remnants of indigenous trees. In order to facilitate management of the forest, the Kikuyu escarpment forest, which covers an area of 37,620 ha was divided into six major blocks, each under the auspices of a forest officer and several subordinate staff. The blocks are: Kereita, Uplands, Kinale, Kamae, Kieni, Raggia and the Kijabe Strip under Kinale and Uplands stations.

Ms. Leah Mwangi, the chairperson of KENVO and runner-up to the UN award for 2011 conducted the tour to Kereita forest which lies to the southeast of the Kikuyu escarpment, largely within the

Kijabe location. The visit included tours of the "Greening Kereita Initiative" a tree-planting initiative, tree nurseries, a rehabilitation site in the Aberdares and Sasumua Dam.

UNEP's work in the Aberdares comprises:

- A partnership with KENVO to replant trees in Gatamaiyu, Kereita and Kinale forests (inside the fence) in proportion to the number of reams of papers UNEP uses every year. This initiative has lasted ten years (2001-2011).
- An aerial survey of the Aberdare forests (2002). A report was produced and it has assisted in promoting conservation measures in the Aberdares.
- An environmental, economic and social assessment of the fencing of the Aberdares. A report was launched (2011) and will assist in securing Government funds.

All these activities aim at conserving the Aberdares ecosystem and securing its environment services, in particular its water services.

IYV+10: Kenya Model UN holds special session on Volunteerism



UNDP Country Director Maria-Threse Keating poses with KMUN Officials at the Special Session © IYV+10, 2011

The Kenya Model United Nations (KMUN) held its first ever special session this November as part of celebrations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV+10). Held on 10 and 11 November 2011, the session mirrored the UN General Assembly (GA) special sessions devoted exclusively to volunteerism this year in New York, and was hosted by the UNV Kenya office.

The special session was held at the UN Complex in Gigiri with over 400 student delegates from various universities participating. Speaking

during the official opening of the session, UNDP Country Director Maria-Threse Keating lauded the work done by KMUN in sensitizing students on the work of the UN and expressed optimism that their involvement in volunteerism and with UNV would expose them to yet another important part of UNDP and the UN System.

Led by Secretary-General Joseph Kahinda and GA President Abdallah Salim, the delegates spent the two days discussing the global volunteering climate with presentations from different countries, as well as exploring ways to

give students a greater involvement in volunteering both within and without the UN system.

At the end of the sessions, the students drafted a resolution on volunteerism that will inform their activities over the next year. The KMUN Secretary-General termed the sessions as a great success, observing that IYV+10 had provided an excellent opportunity for KMUN's first ever special session, as many of the students were being exposed to the work of UNV for the first time.

This special KMUN session was the second of extraordinary student activities for IYV+10 planned by UNV, being preceded by an Academia Symposium held at the Strathmore University on 9 November 2011. The Symposium provided a chance for about 200 students to share experiences on their own volunteering endeavors. Themed "Student Volunteerism & the MDGs," the Symposium also had a panel of discussion comprising deans from the Kenya College of Accountancy (KCA) and Strathmore Universities exploring the role of student volunteerism in achieving the MDGs.

Universities represented at the two meetings included Strathmore, Nairobi, United States International, Daystar and Africa Nazarene.

“Let peace begin with me”

The United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Nairobi initiated a Peace Campaign through mobile phones from 13 September to 31 October 2011. The Initiative was to encourage and remind as many people as possible from all over Kenya of their responsibility to maintain peace in the country.

UNIC, in collaboration with a local

Information Technology company, organized an event on 10 November 2011 to review the Campaign and have first hand information on how the Initiative impacted on the population. In addition, the event was meant to appreciate, acknowledge and encourage various partners and the public to play their role in creating peaceful communities for a better future.

During the event, UNIC reiterated how peace was the UN's mission and its day-to-day quest and thus the campaign was a way of emphasizing the importance peace. Without peace there is no development and without development there is no peace. One participant agreed, "...without peace, our lives are very limited... Peace gives hope".

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According to statistics revealed at the event, for a period of two months in which the initiative was scheduled, a total of 47,300 people were reached on all the four local mobile phone networks in Kenya. Apart from the messages provided by UNIC to all participants through the number “2090”, the initiative had a warm reception with the public actually sending their own peace messages that they wanted to also share with others.

During the event, three participants were picked from the floor to share with others what the initiative meant to them. All of them referred to the initiative as a healing process following the post election violence in the country in 2007-2008. Peace, they reminded everyone, should start within and underlined the role of the social media as a catalyst of peace.

Mr. Dickson Magotsi from the National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management Secretariat in the office of the President talked about the new platforms that the Government is using to maintain peace. The platforms include the use of social media in the provision of early warning on impending conflict by texting messages through the number “108”. The number is toll free and any message should be able to provide enough information to enable an easy response.



Some of the invited guests at the review meeting at UNON. © UNEP, 2011

He expressed the Committee’s and other stakeholders’ interest to continue with UNIC Nairobi’s peace initiative at another level.

Through a poem by Christopher Sakwa which was recited by a representative from the Mwelu Foundation, a rhetoric question was posed, “what is peace?”

The peace messages initiative coincided with the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Peace which falls on 21 September each year. The International Day of Peace was designated by the General Assembly in

a resolution in September 2001, when it was decided that beginning in 2002, this Day would be observed as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence, and an invitation to all nations and people, to honour a cessation of hostilities during the day. The resolution invited all Member States, organizations and individuals, to commemorate the Day in an appropriate manner, including through education and public awareness and to cooperate with the United Nations in establishing a global ceasefire.

