The first Kwale County Business Development Centre has been launched and is now operational in Ukunda. The Biashara centre seeks to promote inclusive economic transformation that will enable youth, women and persons with disability to ably participate in economic activities and contribute to the attainment of the Vision 2030. County Biashara Centres will empower micro and small enterprises including the ‘jua kali’ businesses, and strengthen capacities of entrepreneurs to participate in productive economic activities.

“The ultimate goal is to transform the idle natural resources into wealth which is inclusive and beneficial to all citizens. As such the job searchers of today will be turned into job and wealth creators,” commented Ms. Nardos Bekele-Thomas, the UN Resident Coordinator.

To ensure proper services are offered based on most recent data, UNDP has teamed up with Strathmore University to identify, train, nurture and commercialize ICT talent from Kwale County. This partnership will link science and technology, innovation, job creation, education, and local development in a sustainable and inclusive way. The University will also carry out research that will be of critical importance to...

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
Mr. Ezra Pakter, holocaust survivor, lighting a candle during the commemoration.

(Photo by Tirus/UNIC)

Lest we forget the evils of the holocaust, 70 years on…

UNIC, in collaboration with the Embassy of the State of Israel in Nairobi, organized the observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The Day has been commemorated every year for the last ten years, on 27 January.

The theme for this year’s observance was “Liberty, Life and the Legacy of the Holocaust Survivors”, which marked the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations. Reflecting how deeply the Organization was shaped by the experience of the holocaust, the principle of human rights for all was enshrined in both the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The highlight of the commemoration...
in Nairobi was the presence of 87 year-old Mr. Ezra Pakter, a holocaust survivor, who narrated his personal experiences even though he admitted how the subject upsets him very much. “I was lucky enough to survive the holocaust the first three years together with my parents”.

Mr. Pakter said he was seventeen and a half years old when the holocaust ended seventy years ago and could vividly remember its horrors. His parents died of starvation and illness in 1945 while his younger brother died in 2006 at the age of 73.

The UNEP Executive Director, Mr. Achim Steiner, presented UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s statement which reminded the world that: “Today, we are being tested again. Minorities everywhere often face bigotry. Sectarian tensions and other forms of intolerance are on the rise. Anti-Semitic attacks continue, with Jews being killed solely because they are Jews. Vulnerable communities around the world continue to bury their dead while living in fear of further violence”. He reiterated: “The mission of the United Nations was shaped by the tragedy of the Second World War and the Holocaust. We are committed to protect the vulnerable, promote fundamental human rights and uphold the freedom, dignity and worth of every person”.

The statement of Ambassador Shalom Charles Cohen of the Embassy of the State of Israel, presented by his Deputy, Mr. Nadav Peldman, noted that: “This year is a special year as it is already 10 years since the General Assembly of the UN took a very important decision to mark a memorial day for the horrible genocide known to mankind as the holocaust… And on the same date, all around the globe, different people from all religions mark the “SHOA” the holocaust of the Jewish people... The world remembers the brutal systematic murder of six million men, women, and children.”

Other statements were from the Ambassador of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Andreas Peschke and the President of the Nairobi Hebrew Congregation, Mr. Albert Atias.

The observance was also attended by students from various universities in Nairobi, friends of Israel based in Kenya and UN staff members. A 15-minute film on the liberation of Auschwitz Birkenau was screened followed by the lighting of six candles and a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the holocaust. The ceremony concluded with the guests laying flowers in front of a UN70 symbol created from white roses and placed at the entrance of the venue of the commemoration.

Earlier in the week, UNIC coordinated and organized an outreach programme to a Kenyatta University campus based in Embu, about 170 Km away from Nairobi. The Deputy Ambassador of the Embassy of the State of Israel, Mr. Nadav Peldman, gave a presentation on the holocaust to a hundred students at the campus. The purpose of the outreach was to enable students understand the consequences brought about by intolerance and failure to embrace diversity.

The student outreach was also attended by the Deputy Governor of the Embu County, Ms. Dorothy Muchungu. Embu County is among the many partners of the United Nations in Kenya.

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**UN staff members’ family and friends take a tour of the UN complex**

THE Visitors’ Service office was abuzz with activities end of December 2014.

Smartly dressed young ones and teenagers, accompanied by their parents started trickling into the office as early as 7:30 AM! What was the occasion? The Visitors’ Service had organized a promotional tour for staff members’ children at a discounted fee of Ksh.200 per child.

The group was eager to learn more about the Organization which their parents worked for. Some were accompanied by their friends who had
only heard of United Nations and had probably only seen the massive walls of the complex. Finally the day was here for them to experience the UN! They had set foot inside the only headquarters of the United Nations in Africa.

Within no time, over 90 students had presented themselves in the office. After a brief introduction of the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON) at the karibUNi sign, the group was divided into two. Ms. Rebecca Gakonyo took the older kids above 12 years, while Ms. Jue Wang took the younger ones.

The groups were then led to conference room 1 where they learnt about the structure of the Organization through a power-point presentation. An air of excitement filled the room as scores of teenagers took ‘selfies’ inside the room. Most were amazed by the grandeur of the room. They enthusiastically participated in the discussion and asked questions.

There was more in store for the group! They were informed that they would have the privilege of taking a photo with the Director-General of UNON, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde. After the photo opportunity, they were taken for a complex tour which included stops at various gifts donated by member states. The groups also paid a visit to the VIP tree-planting area and the memorial garden, where there is a peace pole. They took a walk-through the ‘green building’ commonly referred to as NOF (the new office facilities).

The visitors were happy to have participated in the tour and the Visitors’ Service received positive feedback from the parents.

One student, Mark Karia, who was accompanied by 12 of his friends, had this to say: “I am glad I came for the tour. Now my friends and I know the role of this Organization, and we look forward to another visit in the future”.

A staff member, Gertrude Ochowa from ICAO, brought her kids for the tour and later expressed her appreciation on email: “Thank you very much for last week’s tour. The kids enjoyed very much, having been their first time to visit the complex. Please continue doing this repeatedly during holidays”.

The Service conducted two other successful promotional tours in December for staff members’ family and friends. The tours collectively attracted 200 persons.

The Visitors’ Service organizes guided tours of the complex from Mondays to Fridays at pocket-friendly prices. A request can be forwarded to: UN.TOURS@UNON.ORG

Following UN General Assembly’s resolution A/60/248 of 23 December 2005, a Visitors’ Service was established to open-up the UN complex in Nairobi to the public through guided tours.
A national strategy to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation in Kenya

By Dr. Christian Turner & Siddharth Chatterjee

On December 12, 2014, hundreds of young Samburu girls held a march in Maralal to protest against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Meanwhile, just a few kilometers away, a delegation of elders from Samburu came together to voice their total opposition to any efforts to end FGM in their community. Unfortunately, this remains a common refrain. Within many ethnic groups in Kenya, as elsewhere, FGM is a practice deeply embedded in traditional and cultural norms.

Female Genital Mutilation has numerous harmful effects on the physical, sexual and psychological health of girls and women. In the 21st century, no woman or girl should suffer or die due to FGM. Any effort to eradicate it must involve uncompromising political will and leadership, backed up by strong measures and collective actions at community level. The good news is that this is happening in Kenya, where FGM is a declining practice.

FGM rates among 15 – 49 year olds have declined from 37.6% to 27.1% over a ten-year period. However, with one in four girls in Kenya still being cut, the percentage remains too high, and efforts to end the practice need to be stepped up. With increasing numbers of Kenyan women and girls calling for an end to FGM, their voices must now be heard.

6 February is World Day for Zero Tolerance to FGM. The UK Government, together with the United Nations Joint Programme on FGM/C (UNFPA-UNICEF) wish to take this opportunity to recognize the achievements to date of the Government of Kenya towards eradicating female genital mutilation, and to reaffirm our commitment to supporting them in their efforts to end FGM within a generation.

The UK Government supports the UN Joint Programme on FGM/C in 17
the Africa-led movement to end FGM. Both programmes are active in Kenya and work closely with the government here. The UN Joint Programme works with local partners to deliver community education programmes to highlight the issues around FGM and to advocate for ‘Alternative Rites of Passage’, in which the girl experiences all the elements of the ceremony marking the transition to womanhood, but is not cut. This approach can be highly effective, as evidenced by declining rates of FGM in Kenya, including in Meru County.

The challenges facing eradication remain significant, and many now believe the time has come for a National Strategy to end FGM within a single generation. But what might such a strategy look like?

First and foremost, it must reflect the voices and efforts of those women and communities already speaking out against FGM. It must be country-led and have the full support of all parts of the government, and political will down to the county level. The county Governors must be at the vanguard, as many have committed to be. The reach of governmental bodies together with civil society partners would enable greater dissemination of information, especially by the use of public broadcasting services such as television and radio. Political will could also be expressed through the institutionalization of a wide range of measures targeting the elimination of FGM. A National Strategy should seek to bring all players together, so that we all speak with one voice.

Kenya is a country that represents a challenge of size and diversity of ethnic groups. The Government of Kenya took a very positive step in the formation of a dedicated Anti-FGM board, with the sole focus of eliminating female genital mutilation from Kenyan society. To enable it to carry out its remit, that body should now be given the full weight of the law, including on measures of enforcement, which would require strong national and county level political support.

FGM as a practice is strongly tied to tribal and religious traditions. It is a community norm, a social contract that the entire tribe or village undertakes together. This is an important factor to consider and understand. Eliminating FGM would therefore require the endorsement of the entire community, women and men alike. Any national strategy must work on a community-by-community basis. There will be no ‘one size fits all’ solution, and the influencers will differ across communities. We must also be clear that it is possible for community traditions to be honoured in ways that do not endanger the health, basic human rights, or even lives of the girls and women within that community.

The aim of a national strategy will ultimately be not only to eliminate FGM, but in doing so to empower millions of Kenyan girls and women, enabling them to play a full and unhindered role in society. In the words of Professor Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), “human development cannot be fully achieved as long as women and girls continue to suffer from this human rights violation or live in fear of it”.

The First Lady of Kenya, Margaret Kenyatta, has herself said: “we as a country must aspire to achieve a zero FGM status where every girl can go to school, find and fulfil her destiny, enjoy her rights and contribute to nation building.”

On 6 February we celebrate Zero Tolerance for FGM. It is a time for partners to stand together and be counted, for all of us to come together behind the Government of Kenya and to support their efforts to end FGM in a generation.

Female Genital Mutilation has no role whatsoever to play in the 21st Century. Together, we can consign it to the history books once and for all.

The representative of the Kenya Country in facilitating the knowledge

Open Access for Africa Consultative Forum held in Nairobi


The two-day consultation which took place on 29 and 30 January 2015, brought together some forty five high-level policy makers and experts representing twenty countries of Africa.

Speaking at the conference, Dr Indrajit Banerjee, Director of the Knowledge Societies Division of UNESCO, highlighted Open Access and its context within the broader significance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the Knowledge Societies framework. He stressed the roles that Open Access can play to foster four pillars of the knowledge societies.

The representative of the Kenya Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, expressed the fundamental relevance of Open Access for the country in facilitating the knowledge flow between and among all relevant stakeholders.

The representative of the Kenya National Science Foundation stated the significance of Open Access to foster the core values of the Constitution of Kenya. Reiterating their commitments to Open Access, other delegates urged the need for redefining the context of advocacy, networking and capacity development for Open Access in the continent.
UNESCO promotes Open Access with particular emphasis on scientific information (journal articles, conference papers and datasets of various kinds) emanating from publicly funded research. Working with partners, UNESCO aims to improve awareness about the benefits of Open Access among policy makers, researchers and knowledge managers.

Through its global network of field offices, institutes and centers, UNESCO facilitates the development and adoption of Open Access-enabling policies. In addition, UNESCO engages in global Open Access debates and cooperates with local, regional and global initiatives in support of it.

Participants at the Consultative Forum on Open Access, Nairobi, Kenya (cc by SA)
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