‘Justice for Liz’ Campaign Exposes Obstacles in Ending Violence against Women

Members of Africa UNiTE Kenya chapter together with other protestors last month mounted one of the biggest campaigns against sexual violence ever seen in the country. This followed the gang-rape of a 16-year-old girl in Busia, whose attackers were set free after being made to slash grass by the police.

Liz* (her real name concealed to protect her identity) was walking home from her grandfather’s funeral when six men attacked, raped and then threw her, brutalized and unconscious, into a pit-latrine to conceal the crime. As a result, Liz broke her back and developed fistula. She is now confined to a wheelchair and cannot control her bladder and bowels.

Following media reports, Africa UNiTE members and AVAAZ launched a campaign seeking justice for Liz. Africa UNiTE is the regional component of the UN Secretary General’s global UNiTE campaign to end violence against women, launched three years ago during the African Union Heads of State Summit in Addis Ababa. The UNiTE campaign seeks to build on commitments on Gender Equality in Africa. The Kenya Chapter of Africa UNiTE is made up of over 20 stakeholders representing the civil society, private sector, Government, UN agencies and the media. It is supported by UN Women.

In seeking justice for Liz, hundreds of protestors petitioned the Inspector...
Although a woman is raped every 30 minutes in Kenya, and eight out of 10 Kenyan women suffer physical violence or abuse during childhood according to a 2006 report of the National Commission on Human Rights, sexual violence cases are often times hushed among family members.

Ms Said Ali, the Executive Director of the Coalition on Violence Against Women, a key member of Africa UNiTE, has called for the arrest of Liz’s rapists. “The police need to arrest the rapists, prosecute and eventually punish them… What we are demanding for is justice,” emphasized Ms. Ali.

Global Community Gathers to Tackle Development Challenges at UN South-South Expo held for the First Time in Africa

The sixth annual Global South-South Development Expo was held in Nairobi from 28 October to 1 November 2013.

This was the first Expo to be held in the south in a developing country. Hundreds of high-level delegates from 150 countries and across the United Nations system gathered at the headquarters of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in Nairobi to tackle development challenges by harnessing and exchanging innovative solutions developed in the global South.

Organized by the UN Office of South-South Cooperation and hosted by UNEP under the theme “Building inclusive green economies,” the Global South-South Development Expo is the world’s biggest stage for development solutions created in the South for the South.

High level participants included former President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, Vice-Minister of Environmental Protection of China, Wu Xiaoqing, Vice-President of the High-Level Committee of the UN General Assembly on South-South Cooperation and Deputy Permanent Representative of Hungary to the UN, Zsolt Hetesy, Ambassador of Brazil to Kenya and Permanent Representative to UNON, UNEP and UN-Habitat, Marcela Maria Nicodemos, Chairman of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD, Erik Solheim and UN Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson.

For the past five years the Expo has grown in importance and scope and will build on commitments that were made in Nairobi: to improve South-South and triangular cooperation through investment, dissemination of results, sharing of lessons and good practices and replication.

In his opening speech, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said: “The South-South Expo is important in itself. It is an important factor in the world economy and the world’s politics, especially in this period of hesitant economic growth. It is related to the global efforts to achieve sustainable development goals. In the past there was a contradiction between poverty eradication and sustainable development. What the South-South Cooperation can achieve is to send the message that you cannot isolate the fight against poverty and sustainability. In today’s world we need to make sure that we have a unified comprehensive strategy.”

The UN Under Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner reiterated that: “The transition to inclusive green economies is essential to the economic and social development of countries all over the world. However, no one nation, community or agency has all the answers”.

He noted that so many inspirational initiatives were gathered at the expo—a mirror to the collective creativity of nations, cities, companies and citizens—
to galvanize action that will place the Global South on the pathway to a sustainable, low-carbon and green future.

Kenya Cabinet Secretary for Devolution and Planning, Ms Anne Waiguru said: “Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions to global climate change. Hence, we must address growth side by side with environmental sustainability and lower carbon emissions”. She added that Kenya was a strong believer in green economy which could have sustainable growth with poverty reduction, yet without endangering the environmental heritage currently or in the future. “As a result, Kenya’s Second Medium Term Plan of Vision 2030 covering the period 2013 to 2017 is based on a low-carbon, sustainable and climate resilient development pathway”, she expounded.

A total of 15 Partnership Forums were held, with topics ranging from youth volunteerism to China-Africa business in support of green growth. More than 50 exhibitors showcased their innovative Southern-grown solutions in the Expo’s eco-friendly pavilion.

The Expo concluded with more than $450 million pledges between investors, green businesses, governments and other parties as hundreds of participants exchanged Southern-grown ideas, solutions and technologies throughout the week-long event.

Among the many agreements made were projects ranging from building organic fertilizer factories and clean energy projects in Kenya, to solar power plants in Uganda and green businesses for women in Egypt.

For the first time in its history, the Expo garnered a strong online presence with the help of volunteers who collaborated remotely around the world on social media. The event was so popular that it trended on Twitter in Kenya, meaning that the message of the value and growing scope of South-South cooperation reached the next generation of development practitioners, entrepreneurs, environmentalists, thinkers and leaders.

Among other outcomes of the Expo were several major announcements by governments. At the UN Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) Forum, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) pledged to host the first global PAGE conference in March 2014 in Dubai. The PAGE partnership, launched earlier this year, assists participating countries in shifting investment and policies towards clean technology, more resource-efficient infrastructure and sustainable natural resource management.

In addition, the annual South-South Cooperation Awards were presented during the closing ceremony to individuals and organizations that have been prominent champions of South-South cooperation throughout the world. The next Global South-South Development Expo in 2014 will be held in New York.

UN in Kenya Award Winner Fights Harmful Cultural Practices on Samburu Girls

The UN’s 68th anniversary, UN Day, was celebrated on 24 October in Kenya by over 500 guests. Chief guests were UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Amina Mohamed.

Prior to presenting the Secretary General’s message for the Day, the Deputy Secretary-General said “there can be no peace without development, there can be no development without peace and there is certainly no lasting peace or sustainable development without respect for human rights”. He encouraged the winner and everyone else not to despair in their quest for peace and development and added that “nobody can do everything but everybody can do something”.

The climax of the event was the award presentation of the UN 12th Award winner, Ms. Josephine Kulea Leseita, a child...
KaribUNi: Connecting Kenyans to the United Nations

On 24 October, UN staff and visitors to the UN Gigiri Complex in Nairobi, Kenya, were met by a 2m high, 12m long and 80 cm deep shiny 3-D structure that read karibUNi, playing on the famous blue UN symbol and the popular Kiswahili greeting.

In Kiswahili, the East African region’s main language, “karibuni” means “welcome.” What better word to welcome visitors to the United Nations Headquarters in Africa.

The “karibUNi” sign, a symbol of the UN in Kenya, was unveiled on UN Day by the Government of Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Amina Mohamed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, the Director-General of UNON Sahle Work Zewde and the UN Resident Coordinator Nardos Bekele-Thomas.

With the Deputy Secretary-General’s lecture entitled “The United Nations in the 21st Century: Challenges for Peace Development and Human Rights to over 500 students from six universities. The lecture was followed by a myriad of questions and comments from the students.

From left: Nominees for the Award; Mr Daniel Juma Omondi, Country Director for Global Peace Foundation, Dr. Paula Kahumbu, Sarah Olang’o and the Winner, Ms. Josephine Kulea Leseita © Josephat Kariuki /UNEP 2013

Rights activist and founder of Samburu Girls Foundation, for her relentless fight against a harmful cultural practice involving the beading culture, early marriages and Female Genital mutilation, among the Samburu girls. Ms. Leseita was awarded her prize in a colorful celebration escorted by her family and the Samburu traditional dancers, some of whom were the girls she saved from the dreaded cultural practice.

Other nominees presented with certificates in recognition for their contribution to the community were Mr. Manu Chandaria, Founder, Global Peace Foundation; Dr. Paula Kahumbu, wildlife conservation campaigner in Kenya and founder of “Hands off our elephants campaign”, and Sarah Omega-Olang’o, a survivor and advocate against obstetric fistula.

The winners’ efforts were lauded by Mr. Eliasson, UNON Director-General, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, and Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed, who congratulated and encouraged them for the good work they are doing.

The UN Day activities were concluded with the Deputy Secretary-General’s lecture entitled “The United Nations in the 21st Century: Challenges for Peace Development and Human Rights to over 500 students from six universities. The lecture was followed by a myriad of questions and comments from the students.

KaribUNi: Connecting Kenyans to the United Nations

Kenya’s Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Amina Mohamed, the UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, the Director-General of UNON Sahle Work Zewde and the UN Resident Coordinator Nardos Bekele-Thomas cut a ribbon to unveil karibUNi sign. © Julius Mwelu, UN-HABITAT 2013

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Nardos Bekele-Thomas as part of the activities marking UN Day.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Ms. Zewde said, “We hope that visitors will feel at home when they visit the UN Headquarters in Africa with this karibUNi sign.”

The welcoming effect was spontaneous! The sign sat on the grass at the central roundabout of the UN complex. Even jaded staff could not resist digging into their pockets for their phone cameras.

Much of the credit goes to the UNIC Nairobi’s Visitors’ Service team who came up with the idea to place it on the 140 acre campus. Inspired by the “I amsterdam” sign that Marian Aggrey saw when she visited Amsterdam in 2012. “I hope this will enhance the visitors’ experience and attract more people to take tours of the compound,” Marian Aggrey explained further.

The concept initially started as “Karibu UNON,” which means “Welcome to UNON.” However, that meant that visitors were only welcome to UNON. It was then changed to “karibUni,” which welcomed people to a campus that has 27 UN agencies and programmes as well as two headquartered agencies (UN Environment Programme, UNEP, and UN Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat).

Majority of the visitors participating in the guided tour programme organized by the Visitors’ Service very often request a tour at UNEP and not at the UN, UN-HABITAT or UNON when making reservations. This is because UNEP was the first UN organization to be located on the complex and is how the complex was first identified. In addition, many people in Nairobi saw the UN premises as “forbidden” and “off-limits.”

“We need to break that thought and demystify the Organization,” remarked the Director of UNIC-Nairobi, Nasser Ega-Musa, “and the karibUNi sign goes a long way to do exactly that.”

The Visitors’ Service was established on 1 January 2012, following UN General Assembly’s resolution A/60/248, which requested the Secretary-General to organize a guided tour operation at UNON. The operation is mandated to generate income in the same manner as the other three headquarters operations in Geneva (UNOG), Vienna (UNOV) and New York. The Service is managed daily under UNIC-Nairobi and administered by UNON.

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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has set interventions to alleviate food shortages in Kenya. These interventions include promotion of drought resistant crops, up-scaling nutrition intervention, and nutrition and disease surveillance, among others.

Speaking at this year’s World Food Day celebrations held on 16 October 2013, Mr. Robert Allport, Assistant FAO Representative in Kenya observed that the programme has aligned to the national priorities enshrined in vision 2030, which aims to improve and sustain the food and nutrition security of vulnerable people for progressive realization of their right to food. “FAO is championing a nutrition initiative in conjunction with six other UN agencies and the Government of Kenya,” he said.

The national event which took place at Mrs. Gladys Muyundo’s farm in Bungoma County brought together farmers, agro-processors, farm input suppliers and Government experts among other stakeholders to a platform where they could network and exchange knowledge and information on best farm practices. This year’s theme focused on “Sustainable Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition”.

The Government of Kenya is also in the forefront of alleviating food shortages in the country. Mr. Felix Koskei, Cabinet

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Secretary for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries who was the Guest of Honor said that the Government had set aside more than Ksh. 3 billion for a fertilizer and seed fund and that his Ministry has dispatched 42,000 metric tonnes of fertilizer to farmers for use during the October–November planting season.

“My County government has set aside Ksh. 840 million to support various programmes and interventions to alleviate food shortages, enable farmers’ access to productive resources and strengthen institutions that support farmers in the County,” reiterated Mr. Kenneth Lusaka, Governor of Bungoma County.

Meanwhile, crop performance will be below average between January and June next year according to the Long Rains Assessment (LRA) released by the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG). Mr. Simon Muhindi, FAO’s National Food Security Officer, advises Kenyans to diversify the crops they plant to avoid cases of food shortage. Mr. Muhindi says Kenya is highly reliant on maize yet there are many other healthy crops that mature faster and can be planted instead.

A case in point is Ms. Rose Mutuku’s initiative of improving livelihoods of farmers in arid and semi-arid areas by supporting sorghum farming in various parts of the country. Rose has been mobilizing farmers to cultivate sorghum in parts of Eastern, Western and Nyanza regions of Kenya. Sorghum is a drought resistant crop that was on the verge of extinction due to lack of a ready market and the fact that many farmers viewed sorghum as a traditional crop with no place in the modern world. “I run Smart Logistics Solutions, a business that empowers and organizes rural communities and farmers into groups and helps them access farm inputs and equipment such as seeds and threshing machines,” says Ms. Mutuku. “We team up with agricultural officers to educate the farmers on farming methods and practices that guarantee high yields,” she adds.

The company works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries to ensure that farmers are supplied with certified Gadam sorghum seeds, a hard, high-yielding sorghum variety which performs well in arid and semi-arid areas. Smart Logistics is just one of many small and medium agro-enterprises that are being supported under the Agribusiness Support for Smallholders (AbSS) project. Financially supported by Germany’s Ministry of Agriculture, the initiative has been implemented by FAO over the past three years in close collaboration with the Kenya Agriculture Ministry.

Eminent African Judges Dialogue on HIV related stigma and Discrimination

As the HIV epidemic continues to affect millions of people in developing countries especially in Africa, judiciary is now being seen as having a powerful role in ending stigma and discrimination for people living with HIV and Aids (PLWA).

During the first ever dialogue on HIV, human rights and the law in Eastern and Southern Africa, held in Nairobi, delegates who included judges, lawyers, and people living with HIV from various African countries heard how punitive laws deny PLWA basic rights and access to justice.

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The meeting, convened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Judicial Training Institute and Human Rights NGO Kelin, discussed how populations that are at highest risk of HIV infection, including sex workers, people who use drugs and men who have sex with other men face stigma, discrimination, arrest and even violence since the legal issues raised touch upon societal values and notions that are still controversial in many countries.

South African Judge of the Constitutional Court, Justice Edwin Cameron, gave his personal testimony of how difficult it was for him to deal with stigma and discrimination. “At least for me I was able to buy my medication, but I kept thinking of those women who are disinherited and discriminated against. Where do they get help from?”

Acknowledging their critical role in interpreting the law and finding a balance to uphold the rights of people living with HIV, the judges asserted that the critical role of the judiciary is in ensuring that the application of the law is based on scientific evidence on HIV and uphold the principles of justice for all.

The Kenyan courts, have already developed enabling jurisprudence on HIV-related issues such as non-discrimination, autonomy on testing, confidentiality and access to affordable medicines. The country has also established an HIV & AIDS Equity Tribunal which is a novel initiative and a pioneer globally.

UNESCO, together with UNISDR and UNIC, highlighted the role of the media in disaster risk reduction under this year's theme - Living with Disability and Disasters for the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction (IDDR). The event was organized in Meru, Kenya, as a satellite event within the framework of the SIDA
Project: Empowering Local radios with ICTs, in building a sensitized network of stakeholders to improve local knowledge on disaster risk and information management.

The workshop aimed to increase the capacity of community media practitioners in raising awareness on resilience planning. UNISDR and the National Disaster Management Centre highlighted the importance of the framework of action of the National Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction and its coordination mechanism pertaining to disasters that facilitate collaboration among national and local government institutions.

The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) provided insights on governance structures and guidelines pertaining to rapid reporting mechanisms and the ethical role of the media during emergency situations. Mr. Henry Makokha, the KBC Radio Programmes Manager, also highlighted that “more pronounced partnerships between the public broadcaster and the County Governments are needed in repositioning regional radio programming resources, as well as a deeper working relationship with community radio stations for authoritative grassroots interventions in disaster related matters.”

BBC Media Action stressed the importance of establishing an alliance between government, aid responders and the media in providing lifeline communication platforms. Rober Powell, a Senior Advisor on Resilience and Humanitarian response emphasized that “local radio stations have an important role to play not only in giving disaster-affected communities a voice to make themselves heard, but also in bringing timely, accurate and useful information to people affected by emergencies.”

Participating community radio stations prepared for the event by producing radio programmes that represent the views of local authorities, elders, women and youth on disaster awareness. Their programmes on Disaster Risk Reduction were presented and aired during the IDDR celebration. Sophie Sangalia, a Radio Presenter with Mwanedu FM, reflected on their experience producing local radio content and the participation in the IDDR event as “not only having created more interest and professional understanding pertaining to issues related to natural hazards and human caused disasters, but also on the importance of the role of the media in communicating with the communities to inform, warn and help during disasters in view of the vulnerable.”

The training also sensitized the participants to learn more about People with Disabilities and their plight during disasters. CBM and Sparks emphasized the importance of promoting an inclusive society in creating a dialogue and having significant representation in the planning processes to reduce disaster risks, prevent disasters or build resilient societies and communities through practical demonstrations. Mary Casiraghi from Community Media Support, highlighted one of the experiences as, “understanding the challenges of the people living with disabilities. Information on disaster preparedness and during emergencies has to be in the language of the disabled and we all need to be responsible in making a safer society.”

The lack of inclusion and participation in DRR processes means that the needs and possible contributions of persons living with disabilities are often overlooked by planners.

UNESCO has been supporting community radio practitioners across Kenya through the SIDA Project entitled “Empowering Local Radios with ICTs” to improve the quality of radio programming and act as debate platforms on local development issues. The media also have an important role to play in creating awareness and disseminating information about disasters and natural hazards. By building the capacity of community radio practitioners with knowledge and skills on the role of the media pertaining to disaster risk, media practitioners can make a real difference in the way people think and act, especially now when climate change is recognized as a major challenge that will aggravate vulnerability to disasters.
International Volunteer Managers Day Launched in Kenya

The United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme in Kenya initiated and joined other stakeholders, Government, academia, volunteer involving organizations and student volunteer initiatives to launch the first ever celebration of the International Volunteer Managers Day (IVM Day) in the country. The theme of the event was “Young; Peaceful; Inspired”.

The IVM Day was first founded and observed in 1999. It is celebrated globally every 5th of November. IVM Day serves to bring recognition to individual Managers of Volunteer Resources and to promote a greater awareness of the catalytic role that volunteer managers play in the mobilization and support of the world’s volunteers.

On 5 November 2013, UNV Kenya gathered with partners at the St. Paul’s Children’s Centre, to appreciate the role of volunteer managers and volunteers in the promotion of peace and development through volunteer actions. The event was driven by a joint celebration of the Day with volunteer managers and youth at the Children’s Center, enjoying the activities with children and presenting donations.

The UNV Programme Officer, Frischin Dimitry officially launched the day together with Government officials, deans, students and volunteers represented from VSO Jitolee, Kenya Red Cross, the President’s Award Kenya, Technical University of Kenya as well as universities of Nairobi, Kenyatta, Mount Kenya and United States International. Other participants were from Change Mind Change Future, Kenya Youth Empowerment Programme, Youth TV Kenya, the host, St. Paul’s Children’s home and officials from Karen.

The volunteer managers and other participants were involved in a painting activity, demonstrating peace and solidarity, as well as encouraging young people to experience volunteerism and its impact.

“I appreciate your presence, donations and more so, your volunteer work to the nation. Our home has been in existence for 30 years and we purely offer ourselves as volunteer teachers and guardians to give these children an opportunity to have a home. It is a challenge but with such initiatives the task is a bit lighter, let God bless your work and organizations.” said Ms. Jayne Mutahi, the Children’s Home Director.
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