Celebrating International Women’s Day in Kenya

THOUSANDS of people joined Kenya’s First Lady, Margaret Kenyatta on 8 March, 2015 in a half marathon race in Nairobi, to mark this year’s International Women’s Day. The race was part of the First Lady’s “Beyond Zero Campaign” to improve maternal health care in Kenya.

UN Women Kenya supported the First Lady’s Marathon to raise 600 million shillings (about USD 6.6 million) for mobile maternal health clinics for the counties. President Uhuru Kenyatta was at the finishing line at Nyayo National Stadium to receive the First Lady who was joined in the marathon by dignitaries including Deputy President William Ruto and his wife, Mrs. Rachel Ruto.

Other senior Government officials who took part in the marathon included Cabinet

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Secretaries Joseph Nkaissery (Interior Ministry), Amina Mohamed (Foreign Affairs), Anne Waiguru (Devolution), James Macharia (Health), Judy Wakhungu (Environment) and Hassan Wario (Sports). The United Nations was represented by the UNON Director-General, Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nardos Bekele-Thomas, UN Women Kenya Country Director, Ms. Zebib Kavuma and UNFPA Representative, Mr. Siddarth Charterjee.

“One of the things identified as a critical area during the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, was increasing women’s access to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services. I therefore, thank all those who have marked this year’s International Women’s Day by supporting and participating in this marathon in order to raise money to secure the future of our mothers and children,” said First Lady Margaret Kenyatta after the marathon.

The Cabinet Secretary for Devolution and Planning, Ms. Anne Waiguru emphasized the Government’s commitment to women’s empowerment. “The Government policy on gender is to empower women and we have been especially deliberate about women’s economic empowerment,” she added.

On 1 March, 2015, the Gender Directorate in the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, with the support of UN Women, held an International Women’s Day launch in Kisumu, Nyakach County. The launch was attended by over 4,000 people. Kisumu is the first county to have a female mayor.

“In Kenya, both at the national and county levels, there have been major policy and legal shifts that are major opportunities worth leveraging on to address some of the most deeply entrenched discriminatory practices facing women and girls in the country,” observed Ms. Zebib Kavuma, UN Women Kenya Country Director.

Ms Kavuma noted the need to celebrate some milestones like the passing of laws that promote equal rights; to matrimonial property and protecting the rights of women in marriage, and the Government policies on increasing women’s access to public procurement.

The Principal Secretary in the State Department of Planning, Ministry of Devolution and Planning, Engineer Peter Mangiti stressed the need for partnerships to ensure the engagement of men and boys to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The event was also used to encourage men and boys to be advocates for gender equality and women’s empowerment. The UN Women Country Director called upon them to sign up as HeForShe champions.
CHILD BIRTH should be a joyous moment for families and communities,” Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta said at a meeting with religious leaders on March 4.

“It is therefore a matter of great concern to my government that in this country, as many as 21 women die every day while giving birth,” he added.

As we commemorate International Women’s Day, it is crucial to take stock of progress and outstanding challenges that confront women and girls and rededicate ourselves to making a difference in their lives.

The theme of 2015 International Women’s Day, ‘Make It Happen’, resonates strongly in Kenya where unusually high levels of maternal deaths have given Kenya the dubious distinction of being one of the most dangerous countries in which to give birth.

Over 6,000 Kenyan women die each year at childbirth.

What is killing our mothers, our wives, our sisters and our daughters? They are dying because they have too many children too close together, or they live too far from a health facility, or because the health facilities are ill-equipped to handle complications during delivery.

In other cases, it is because harmful traditional practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage, complicate labour and delivery or because the women lack the knowledge and resources to take care of themselves during pregnancy.

But the crisis has unleashed a groundswell of action from a cross-section of actors which is already beginning to deliver results. The resolve to change the situation has never been stronger.

The number of women delivering at health facilities is steadily increasing, supported by a fast-expanding network of partners, since the government introduced free maternity services in 2013.

In August 2014, governors from the 15 counties where 98 percent of Kenya’s maternal deaths occur signed a communiqué to address the problem. This was followed by a commitment by parliamentarians from these counties in November 2014 to support the communiqué.

At the beginning of March, religious leaders committed to lend their moral authority, social and religious influence and resources to the cause. On 8 March, some 20,000 people joined the First Lady of Kenya in a half marathon which she set up last year to support her clarion call that “no woman should die giving life”.

We are witness an unprecedented unity of purpose around this issue. The United Nations, the World Bank, the development agencies of the United States, Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Japan and others, as well as local and international civil society groups, such as Kenya Red Cross, have come together to advance maternal, child and adolescent health.

Private sector organisations, such as Kenya’s largest mobile phone company Safaricom and technology company Philips, have also begun programmes that are making a difference.

The curtain will fall on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in just nine months and it will be time for nations to table their report cards.

Kenya has done quite well on many of the MDGs. But on MDG 5 - to reduce the number of maternal deaths by three quarters - it will be lagging.

Globally, about 200 women die per 100,000 live births. In Kenya, the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is 488 deaths per 100,000 live births. For remote northern counties, such as Mandera and Wajir, it is a staggering 3,795 and 1,683 respectively, higher than wartime Afghanistan or Somalia.

We believe that with our collective efforts, Kenya will cross the line. The foundations have been laid.

It will be difficult but we can all learn from Kenyan athlete Hyvon Ngetich in February’s Austin Marathon. Metres to the finish line, her feet could not carry her anymore. Rather than lie down, she bravely crawled over the line, coming second in the race. “In running, you have to keep going,” she later said.

We have to keep going. We have to advance the rights of every woman and girl in Kenya.

Educated and healthy women and girls will be the wind beneath the wings of our nation as it takes off politically, socially and economically.

Happy International Women’s Day!

Siddharth Chatterjee is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative to Kenya. Ruth Kagia is a Senior Adviser in the Office of the President of Kenya.
THE United Nations system in Kenya has unveiled a Joint Programme for Turkana County aimed at creating a collective and sustained improvement in the lives of the local community. The three year project (2015–2018) will ensure the Turkana County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) is achieved.

To help realize the CIDP, the UN has projected to invest in health, agriculture, environmental management, human rights, water, sanitation and education.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, the Governor of Turkana, Mr. Josphat Nanok, noted that this programme, a first of its kind, provided an interesting and innovative implementation coordination model which will offer gainful lessons that will inform future partnerships especially at the local level.

Ms. Nardos Bekele-Thomas, the UN Resident Coordinator, emphasized the importance of efficiency in programme work. “Recognizing the enormous development challenges facing Kenya and in particular regions such as Turkana, and coupled with limited financial resources to meet these challenges, the UN family, the Government and development partners must be effective in delivery of development programmes.”

The Joint Programme for Turkana is the first of its kind, bringing together the County Government and the UN agencies with development projects in the County to work collectively. This novel approach to development programming in Turkana serves to add value to development assistance and account for results to all stakeholders.

The United Nations family assisted the County to develop its CIDP which aims at making Turkana a prosperous, peaceful and just County with an empowered community enjoying equal opportunities. The CIDP is a comprehensive blue print that will guide the County Government and development partners’ engagement in Turkana County in order to realize the social economic transformation of its people. The plan was developed through a consultative process to address the glaring levels of underdevelopment in the county. Through this blue print, the Turkana County Government has identified 10 sectors within which the 2013/14-2017/18 development agenda will emphasize on.

In Kenya, the vision for effective aid delivery was articulated way back in 2010 by the Government of Kenya requiring that the UN and government put in place systems and mechanisms for “Delivering as One” (DaO). The DaO strategy therefore requires the establishment of One Programme for development, under One Leader, with One budgetary framework, One Office and Communicating as One. This is achieved through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

The following UN agencies/entities will participate in the Turkana programme implementation: FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UN WOMEN, WFP and WHO.
UNON Director-General attends the 16th Summit of the East African Community Heads of State

The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde and the Department of Political Affairs Liaison Team attended the 16th Summit of the East African Community (EAC) Heads of State, in Nairobi, Kenya on 20 February 2015. All five Heads of State of the EAC region- Presidents Kagame of Rwanda, Kenyatta of Kenya, Kikwete of Tanzania, Museveni of Uganda and Nkurunziza of Burundi- were in attendance. President Salva Kiir of South Sudan also attended the Summit as a "special guest".

The Summit, held under the theme "Deepening and Accelerating Integration: Towards Political Federation", witnessed the handing over of the chairmanship of the Community from President Kenyatta to President Kikwete of Tanzania. It considered the Annual Report of the Council of Ministers for the period between December 2013 and November 2014, and noted steady progress made in the implementation of programmes of the community, including progress towards initiating the process of drafting the Constitution for the EAC political federation.

On peace and security, the Heads of State affirmed their support to the peace processes in Somalia and South Sudan and called for all parties in the South Sudan conflict to respect the terms of the agreement signed in Addis Ababa on 2 February, 2015. They approved the modalities for the appointment of EAC Eminent Persons and Special Envoyos, who will be appointed whenever need arises.

The Heads of State also launched the EAC telepresence video conferencing system and directed the council to expedite implementation of the framework for harmonized EAC roaming charges by July 2015. Finally, they noted with delight the increase in trade across the EAC region from 3.5 billion to 5.8 billion dollars, but decried the continuous presence of some non-tariff barriers in the region and promised to promptly eliminate them.

Ms. Zewde attended the Summit in line with her responsibilities as representative of the UN Secretary-General in respect to regional organizations and efforts aimed at contributing towards enhancing the UN’s performance in preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention in the East African Region. In this regard, the Office of the Director-General, in collaboration with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), has been working to strengthen cooperation between the UN and the EAC in the area of peace and security.

Young reporters and producers celebrate World Radio Day 2015 in Kenya

UNESCO partnered with the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) and Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) to mark the World Radio Day 2015 at the United Nations Complex in Nairobi, Kenya.

The theme for the Day was “Youth and Media” and was marked by two key activities: Youth Mentorship training on the Media Code of Ethics and Media Literacy held on 12 February followed by the official celebrations on 13 February 2015.

The celebrations brought together 55 participants working in community radios, university radio stations, youth and media organizations, and the United Nations. The two-day event aimed at increasing the level of participation of young people in radio,
taking into account media ethics and literacy skills. It also encouraged mainstream media and community radios to promote access to information, freedom of expression and youth empowerment through young people’s programmes.

During the opening of the celebrations, Nasser Ega-Musa, the Director of UNIC noted why it was important to focus on youth and media. “It’s important to note that the youth are a critical constituent in our society and therefore we should never ignore them. It is my sincere belief that this year’s celebrations will amplify youth voices and increase their level of participation in radio and other forms of media in Kenya and the world”.

At the training on 12 February, Victor Bwire, the Deputy Director for the Media Council of Kenya, took participants through the code of ethics for journalism practice in Kenya, principles of ethical journalism and media literacy skills.

Anthony Arusi, a Producer and Reporter at Mwanedu FM in Voi County expressed his appreciation for the training: “I would like to sincerely thank UNESCO for inviting me to attend the World Radio Day celebrations and also for offering me training on the media code of ethics and media literacy. I believe the knowledge that I have gained from the training will greatly assist me to ethically generate and package content for broadcast at our radio station”.

On the second day of the celebrations youth participants presented their 5-7 minutes pre-recorded radio programmes from their stations on issues affecting young people in their geographical areas of coverage. The programmes included themes such as: Stigmatization – the Dilemma faced by young mothers in Kenya; Youth and Drugs; Youth empowerment; Youth and Democracy and Clutches of extremism, among others. The programmes were produced in English and Swahili.

A plenary discussion was held after the presentations where participants engaged with a panel comprising of representatives from UNESCO, the Media Council of Kenya, UNIC and Kenya National Commission for UNESCO - on youth perspectives of the media in Kenya.

Salome Ayugi, a fourth year journalism student at Maseno University commented: “I am happy to have been invited to the World Radio Day 2015 celebrations. It provided me with an opportunity to share my experience and challenges of working as a producer and reporter at my university’s radio station in Kisumu County”.

Nyondo Nyae Kengo, a Producer and Reporter at Kwale Ranet FM stated: “I wish to thank UNESCO for inviting me to attend the training workshop and the World Radio Day celebrations. It’s now my duty as a journalist to go and apply the knowledge that I have gained at my radio station in Kwale County”.

The World Radio Day 2015 celebrations focused on young women and men with a call for greater social inclusion of the generation under 30 years old, which accounts for more than half of the world’s population, and underlined the power of radio to contribute to this objective. It advocated for inclusion of young people in conceiving and producing radio programmes. This activity was organised as part of the UNESCO’s on-going SIDA funded project in Kenya titled: “Empowering local Radios with ICTs”.

Ministers of Social Development for Eastern Africa adopt Nairobi Declaration on Global Justice

The First Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Eastern Africa, organized under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, and hosted by the Government of Kenya, ended with the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on Global Justice. The Declaration was adopted by Ministers (or their representatives) from 13 Eastern Africa countries, namely Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. The Forum, which took place in
Deputy President William Ruto officially opens the 1st MOST Forum of Ministers of Social Development for Eastern Africa. (Photo by Masakazu Shibata / UNESCO)

Nairobi, Kenya, was officially opened on 25 February, 2015, with the Kenya Deputy President William Ruto, as the Chief Guest. In his address to the Forum, Mr. Ruto commended UNESCO for working closely with the Government of Kenya in facilitating dialogue and sharing of knowledge among policy makers, researchers and other stakeholders, including youth groups and civil society organizations, on the challenging issues of social development in the region. He assured participants of Kenya’s commitment to continue its collaboration with other countries in the region to address the problems of poverty, inequalities and related issues.

Addressing delegates at the same Forum, Mr. Getachew Engida, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO, highlighted both the significance of the meeting and the relevance of its theme, Global Justice, especially at a moment when the post-2015 development agenda is being deliberated on by UN Member States. Mr. Engida paid tribute to the Government of Kenya for taking the leadership in bringing together countries from the Eastern Africa region, to deliberate on the challenges of poverty and inequality, with a view to finding common approaches to addressing them.

Other high level speakers at the opening ceremony included three Cabinet Secretaries from the Government of Kenya, namely Professor Jacob Kaimenyi (Education, Science and Technology), Professor Judi Wakhungu (Water, Environment and Natural Resources) and Ms. Ann Waiguru (Devolution and Planning). Furthermore, the African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs, Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko and Kenya’s former Ambassador to UNESCO and Vice President representing Africa Group V(a) in the Bureau of the MOST Intergovernmental Council (IGC), Mary Khimulu, also spoke and emphasized the significance and timeliness of the Forum.

On his part, the Keynote Speaker, Mr. Pierre Sané, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Dakar-based Imagine Africa Institute and former Assistant Director General of Social and Human Sciences at UNESCO, identified three key pillars towards achieving global justice. According to Mr. Sané, the first pillar is poverty which “is a silent killer and a violation of human rights” and hence must be completely eradicated to achieve global justice. The second is creation of decent jobs,
and in the particular case of Africa, he argued that industrialization was key to overcoming the continent’s dependence on extractive products which, “add no value” to the export of raw materials from Africa to the outside world, whether they be in the agriculture or mining sectors. Last, is inclusion, where diversity of religions, race and ethnicity, among others, are celebrated as potent forces for building socially cohesive and prosperous societies in Africa, rather than being used as sources of division and discord among diverse communities. He stressed the relevance of UNESCO’s mandate towards the achievement of global justice.

As a flagship activity within the MOST Programme, one of the main objectives of the MOST Forum of Ministers is to provide a regional platform for high level decision-makers to share experiences on policymaking in the area of social development, as well as interact with researchers who share knowledge (through research) that could contribute to good practices in social development policymaking. By so doing, the forum also provides UNESCO and its partners, an opportunity, both in the UN System as well as in the academic and research communities, to contribute to shaping both regional and ultimately the global agenda in social development.

The Nairobi Declaration, a concrete outcome from the Forum, committed the Eastern Africa countries to a wide range of measures to be undertaken, individually and collectively, to tackle the challenges of injustice and inequalities, including a strong and urgent call on “the international community to place poverty eradication and the reduction of inequalities at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are expected to form a key component of the Post-2015 Development Agenda”. A four member bureau comprising Kenya (President), Tanzania (Vice President), Djibouti (Rapporteur) and South Sudan (Vice Rapporteur) was elected.

**All In Campaign to end adolescent AIDS**

President Uhuru Kenyatta announced that Kenya will lead by example by increasing domestic resources for the AIDS response and improving HIV prevention, treatment, essential health care and counseling services for adolescents. The President tasked the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, Professor Jacob Kaimenyi, to re-examine the education curriculum to better engage adolescents living with HIV and eliminate stigma and discrimination in schools. He also asked for improved access to antiretroviral treatment for children and adolescents living with HIV. While 78% of adults living with HIV in Kenya have access to antiretroviral treatment, deaths are declining in all age groups except among adolescents.

On 17 February, 2015 at the All In campaign launch in Nairobi, a new global initiative to end the AIDS epidemic among adolescents,肯尼亚总统乌胡鲁·肯雅塔表示，肯尼亚将带头采取措施，通过增加国内资源来应对艾滋病的反应，改善HIV的预防、治疗、基本医疗服务和咨询等服务。肯尼亚总统要求教育、科学和技术国务大臣雅各布·卡梅尼，重新审查教育课程，以便更好地参与HIV和艾滋病的歧视和歧视。他还要求建立获得抗逆转录病毒治疗的儿童和青少年获得抗逆转录病毒治疗机会。
African Region marks ten years of tobacco control

Delegates from African countries who recently met in Nairobi to mark and review 10 years of tobacco control in Africa have resolved to accelerate comprehensive measures which will save the lives of innocent children, youth and adults from harmful effects of tobacco.

Through the Nairobi Declaration, the delegates from 39 of the 47 WHO-Africa region countries requested member states to strengthen and enforce comprehensive tobacco control policies, legislation and regulations that fully incorporate the obligations of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and its guidelines.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) meeting heard that 41 countries had established measures to protect the public from harmful effects of tobacco smoke by banning smoking in public places, and seven had comprehensive bans. Furthermore, 32 had established measures to ban advertisements, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco and tobacco products, while 14 had adopted a comprehensive ban.

The decade celebration was also marked by the launch of a publication: “The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: 10 years of implementation in the African region”.

The publication outlines the status of implementation of each member state, what they have achieved and what still needs to be done. Three countries, Malawi, Eritrea and South Sudan have yet to ratify the Convention. Mozambique is a signatory.

The WHO Africa Regional Director, Dr. Tshidi Moeti commended member states for the measures that they had taken including the banning of advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco and tobacco products, as well as smoking in public places. In his message...
Cabinet Secretary James Macharia hands over the FCTC publication to Dr. Custodia Mandlhate, WHO Kenya country Representative to celebrate Africa’s decade implementation of tobacco control. (Photo by WHO)

presented by Dr. Custodia Mandlhate, the Kenya country Representative, Dr. Moeti called on member countries to be prepared for the tobacco industry which was well-resourced and doing everything they could to stop progress in the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

“The next ten years are going to be critical if we are to achieve the objectives of the WHO FCTC. We need to secure our gains and use them as a strong base for further success,” Dr. Moeti warned.

He called on member states “to expand the circle of tobacco control advocates and involve more sectors, including trade and commerce, public finance, customs, agriculture and foreign affairs, among others”.

The meeting was also addressed by Health Cabinet Secretary James Macharia, on behalf of Deputy President William Ruto, who urged governments in the region to consider ratifying the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products to help stop the growing international illicit trade in tobacco products. These, Mr. Ruto said, posed a serious threat to public health, increased the accessibility and affordability of tobacco products and fuelled the use of tobacco, while undermining tobacco control policies.

The Deputy President acknowledged that member countries had worked hard but had also been confronted by gross interference from the tobacco industry and challenges to implement the law and the enforcement of the regulations as well as numerous conflicts of interests.

“The gains we have made to control tobacco use are however evident and worth our efforts,” Mr. Ruto noted adding that there had been a decline in tobacco use in Kenya, both among the adults and youth, due to the efforts and mechanisms put in place to control tobacco use.

The Kenya Demographic Survey had shown that tobacco consumption had declined from 23 per cent in 2003 to 19 per cent in 2008 he said, while the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) had shown a decline from 15.1 per cent in 2007 to 9.9 per cent in 2013.

This, he added, was evidence that sustained surveillance and control measures can lead to a decline in tobacco consumption.

On his part, Mr. Macharia stressed that the sole motivation to fight tobacco use should be about saving lives of innocent children and adult smokers. “Our motivation must be the fact that we have conviction that we are doing the right thing and not because it is a job description”.

THE Kenya National Volunteer Policy was recently drafted and submitted to the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services on 3 March 2015 by the national working group. The working group consisting of officials from UNV Kenya and volunteer-involving organizations was officially appointed by the Ministry of Labour in February 2014 and tasked with ensuring the finalization of the draft policy.

The policy development process started in 2007 through to 2012 when UNV Kenya funded workshops and meetings to set up mechanisms and
systems for its progress. In 2014 the process attracted massive attention from stakeholders in the volunteers and private sectors, as well as the Government. A series of workshop and public participation forums were carried out to collect views to add to the draft Volunteer Policy which had been developed by a consultant through UNDP Kenya’s USD 20,000 funding.

The national working group compiled the views from the forums for a draft which was presented before the stakeholders at a National Volunteer Policy validation workshop, courtesy of funding from UNDP, UNV and VSO Jitolee in January 2015. A summary of the draft policy was published in local daily newspapers through UNDP and UNV Kenya support and funding, for public scrutiny.

With views from the public, the draft policy document was then finalized by the working group and presented to the Ministry of Labour. The policy is expected to be adopted and launched in Kenya in 2015.

“I wish to sincerely congratulate this team for your dedication and expertise in developing this draft policy. You have demonstrated a true spirit of volunteerism. Despite your busy normal official duties you went ahead to give your best in this process. This document will go a long way for many years to guide the country in its programmes coupled with the volunteerism spirit,” said Mr. Ali Noor Ismail, the Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Labour.

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