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HOW SHOFCO KIBERA SCHOOL FELL ACADEMIC GIANTS IN 2020 KCPE



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SHOFCO wins big at second Quality Healthcare Kenyan Awards

Kamene recalls day she wept after presenting her first bulletin on TV

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Why 2020 KCPE results should be an eye opener for education stakeholders

The just released 2020 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) results were unique on the one hand and an eye opener on the other. The circumstances under which the candidates sat their examinations were challenging.

Covid-19 had ravaged all spheres of life with the education sector taking a serious beating. Indeed, 2020 was almost a lost academic year as schools closed indefinitely and when they reopened the conditions in institutions were unfamiliar to many.

However, the 1,179,192 candidates showed that determination and hard work are key to success. The results, for the first time in many years, showed public schools outperforming private ones and if the top 15 candidates are anything to go by the performance by the largely underprivileged institutions was way superior.

They scooped 10 out of the first 15 slots, a feat worth celebrating. The gender equation was almost at 50-50 with boys being more than girls by a paltry 2,000 candidates. In 20 out of the 47 counties, more girls were enrolled for the exam than boys.

This is an indicator females have finally caught up with the males. However, as pointed out by Cabinet Secretary George Magoha, the motivation should worry stakeholders as most efforts are channelled towards girls at the expense of boys.

The more than one million candidates will be absorbed into secondary schools making the transition rate the highest in the region. Lessons from the 2020 KCPE class should be picked by all and sundry.

If we all pull in the same direction, results will be seen in spite of conditions; that leadership is at the core of success; and that society can recover lost time if energies are channelled in the right direction.

The education sector is preparing for another challenging season with schools reopening on May 10. There are concerted efforts to have teachers and school workers vaccinated before the reopening.

This is a commendable move as the ministry pulls all stops to ensure learners are safe. The reopening should be devoid of the usual shenanigans from many quarters as children need to progress in life.

The teaching fraternity has done its part and a good turn deserves another; the government and other stakeholders should return favour by ensuring the necessary resources are made available for schools to run smoothly.

FROM THE EDITOR

SHOFCO wins big at second Quality Healthcare Kenyan Awards

By Sun Magazine Reporter

SHOFCO triumphed at the second Quality Healthcare Kenyan Awards after it emerged top in its category to win the Award of Excellence in Improving Access to Primary Healthcare Services.

On what was World Health Day, the awards ceremony, held virtually on Wednesday, saw Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO) trumped its rivals Tharaka Nithi County and Penda Health to win the award in the category.

The theme of the awards was Measuring Healthcare Quality for System Improvement and it is here that SHOFCO excelled due to their efforts in improving access to primary healthcare to the urban poor.

This has been possible through the establishment of two major Level Two facilities in Mathare and Kibera slums with the latter having four other satellite clinics through the initiative of the organisation's founder and CEO Kennedy Odede.

For Odede, this came from lived experiences, having endured and witnessed extreme poverty as a child while growing up in Kibera, Kenya and Africa's largest slum.



Pediatric care at SHOFCO Clinic. Image: Google

“The clinics were started from the idea that people should not die because of health care,” Odede said in February, while speaking to CNN's African Voices Changemakers, a programme that focuses on African non-profit leaders with localised solutions.

SHOFCO established the first clinic in Kibera in 2010 with just a handful of staff and volunteers to treat communicable illnesses but by 2014, the numbers became big, serving 300 patients per day, necessitating expansion.

That is when a major facility was set up in Kibera and in 2015, another one in Mathare. With the numbers rising, there was need to be closer to the community and that is how the Kibera facility gave rise to satellite clinics in neighbouring

Manatha (2014), Kianda (2015), Subra (2017) and Makina (2017).

These satellite clinics were closed temporarily last year due to Covid-19.

“Most of the people who live in Kibera and Mathare are low income earners and cannot afford health care that is paid for. Because there was no facility that offered a full range of primary health services, they would go to places like Kariobangi, Ruaraka and Pangani which is middle class or at times Muthaiga which is high class and very expensive,” said Emma Ingaiza, SHOFCO Health Director.

As Level Two facilities, the Kibera and Mathare clinics offer maternal child health,

nutrition, outpatient child screening and HIV/AIDS testing, all which fall under health prevention and promotion.

SHOFCO's community health volunteers also conduct prevention and protection through door-to-door sensitisation campaigns, identify those with illnesses that need treatment or referrals as well as emergency cases.

What makes SHOFCO's clinics stand out is that they offer quality services at near zero cost as patients pay just Sh200 which covers consultation, lab tests and drugs.

“All those under five years, maternal services, TB and HIV/

AIDS are free, as well as nutrition,” added Ingaiza.

For a community that struggles to afford two meals a day, this is Godsend. Odede envisioned serving the slum dwellers but the clinic in Mathare is now providing health solutions to people coming from Kariobangi, Ruaraka and Githurai while those in Kibera get cases from Kawangware, Mukuru and as far as Kiambu and Kitengela.

Wednesday's award was for the specific efforts of the Kibera clinic in improving access to primary healthcare services and the team responsible for this could not hide its joy.

“I would like to thank the SHOFCO Kibera clinic team

who have showed immense support not only in this award but in the other key projects. We believe through what we do here, the lives of Kibera people have been impacted,” said Dalmas Omollo, the clinical officer in charge of quality improvement at the Kibera clinic, after the award.

Indeed, so many people have been impacted as before Covid-19 briefly slowed the numbers last year, the Kibera hospital had served over 800,000 people by 2019 with 40,000 new clients recorded every year. In Mathare, over 500,000 have accessed treatment since 2016 with an annual increase of 20 percent.

Omollo led the team that prepared the submission and launched a campaign that was key in convincing the judging panel to award SHOFCO. In its entry, the team showed how the Kibera clinic has been key in improving health outcomes in the first 1,000 days, strengthened preventive and health promotion interventions while also supporting community health volunteer strategy.

The impact of these efforts has been an increased number of women adopting long-term family planning methods, an increase in teen mothers coming together to talk about their challenges and solving them together, as well as monthly support groups to educate HIV clients and other discordant partners.



Doctors at SHOFCO Mathare Clinic



SHOFCO CEO, Kennedy Odede

Another major impact has seen the nutrition team provide curative and preventive services to malnourished children within Kibera, with a cure rate of 85 percent in 2019 for all malnourished children compared to 69.2 percent in 2018. Reduced cases of child mortality and increased awareness of the community on the factors that contribute to malnutrition are some of the other impacts that were key in swaying the judges' decisions in favour of SHOFCO.

“Quality primary healthcare still remains the low investment, high impact strategy that governments and partners need to invest in more to accelerate achievement of universal healthcare. Health promotion, prevention, early treatment and hence timely referrals is the way to go,” added Ingaiza.

When Odede started the clinics, winning awards was not part of the script, he just wanted to provide affordable and accessible healthcare to his community that had remained neglected. However, as they say, no good deed goes unrewarded.

This is just the latest on a number of accolades won by SHOFCO recently, the other ones being Conrad Hilton Humanitarian Prize Award 2018, 2018 and 2019 Quality Improvement participation in Nairobi county best practice and learning forum awarded Best Quality Improvement project at both Kibera-Langata sub-county level respectively and also awarded best QI/WIT file at Nairobi county.

Last December, Odede was also awarded a Head of State Commendation (HSC) for his

“

Quality primary healthcare still remains the low investment, high impact strategy that governments and partners need to invest in more to accelerate achievement of universal healthcare.

Ingaiza

incredible work in Kenyan urban slums during the Covid-19 period.

SHOFCO had installed 301 handwashing stations at entry points in each of the 14 slums they work in, sourced over 400,000 bars of soaps for distribution and reached close to two million households in slums with their free masks and sanitizers.

In the end, it is not just coronavirus that these measures help curb but also saw upper respiratory tract infections and water-borne diseases reduce by close to 70 percent due to mask wearing and handwashing.

Incoming USAID boss talks to SHOFCO CEO Kennedy Odede By Sun Magazine Reporter

If Ambassador Samantha Power did not know much of what awaits her from the developing world as the new head of the world's largest foreign aid agency, she probably has a good understanding now, after a conversation with SHOFCO founder and CEO Kennedy Odede during the historic inaugural World Communities Forum held from March 23-24.

Power, who served as US Ambassador to the UN during President Barack Obama's second term, has been nominated by the Biden administration to be administrator of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and recently confirmed by the US senate.

Given empowering vulnerable communities will be part of her agenda, Ambassador Power could not have wished for a better teacher as she got to learn about the power of grassroots engagement and localised solutions from a man who has seen and done it all.

The two-day forum, organised and hosted by Odede, brought together global leaders who are driving community-based solutions with topics including



Ambassador Samantha Power. Image: Google

the empowerment of women and girls, economic recovery, coronavirus vaccine equity, the future of grassroots organising and the localisation revolution.

“

After attending elite conferences focused on solving different world challenges, I had a vision to create a new kind of space where those close to the problem are recognised as being in the best position to solve it.
Kennedy Odede

It was a first of its kind, attended by over 750 people virtually as it bridged the gap between philanthropists and grassroots leaders.

“After attending elite conferences focused on solving different world challenges, I had a vision to create a new kind of space where those close to the problem are recognised as being in the best position to solve it,” said Odede, co-author of the New York Times Bestselling book Find Me Unafraid: Love, Loss, and Hope in African Slum, in his opening remarks.

It could not have got off to a better start as Ambassador Power listened and learned from Odede how he beat poverty to turn a simple dream into a movement that has impacted over 2.4 million slum dwellers

in 22 informal settlements in Kenya through various causes such access to health, water, community advocacy platforms, education and leadership development for women and girls.

“Growing up in Kibera (Kenya and Africa’s largest slum), I experienced extreme poverty. But my life changed when I secured a scholarship to study in the US and that is when I decided when this is done, I have to go back to my community and make change,” Odede, winner of 2018 the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize, 2014 People’s Choice Award for Outstanding Social Entrepreneur and Muhammed Ali Humanitarian Award told Ambassador Power.

“It is from there that I got to learn from people like Dr Martin Luther King Jr who championed the civil rights movement from bottom up. Dr King started in small church but I started with a soccer ball. I bought a soccer ball, organised tournaments that brought people together and we started interacting and doing things together,” added Odede, on how Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO) came into being in 2004.

It is a story that intrigued Ambassador Power who sought to know how Odede’s causes achieved acceptability as she seeks to do the same in her next job.

“For real change to happen, you have to involve people. They are on the ground and understand the problem better. That is how to win their trust,” he said.

The SHOFCO boss also shared how Covid-19 has been a revealer of the inequalities that exist within various communities and countries around the world and not a great equaliser as many have termed it.

“Covid-19 has been an eye opener. What we see in Canada and US where they are buying more coronavirus vaccine than they need. We’re here talking about equality but when it comes to this, they do nationalism where they take so much and forget others,” Odede told Ambassador Power.

Always the solutionist, Odede shared how as a member of the National Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund board, he advised Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe how to fight the virus in informal settlements.

“The poor have trust issues with government. They never believed Covid was here and thought it is a white man’s disease and all government wanted was to make money out of it. So I told the Minister there is a disconnect. You cannot tell them to wear masks and social distance when they live in 10x10 rooms and share one toilet with with 50 others,” he said.

He went on: “Most of these people are casual labourers and lost those jobs when the pandemic struck. They would rather die of corona than hunger. That is how we devised ways on things like free soap, sanitizers, masks, cash transfer, free food and handwashing stations at every entry point in the slums. This calmed their fears while reducing new infections.”

It is the same message Odede recently shared with Dr Willis Akhwale, the chairman of the Covid-19 vaccine Deployment Taskforce, on why slum dwellers need to be in front of the queue given their various vulnerabilities and how the government can deal with myths around the jab that has seen a slow uptake of the 1.2 million doses allocated to Kenya so far.

“**Most of these people are casual labourers and lost those jobs when the pandemic struck. They would rather die of corona than hunger...** Kennedy Odede

He has even expressed a willingness to use SHOFCO networks and database to help government effectively vaccinate slum dwellers.

Ensuring vaccine equity is one of the key deliverables tasked with the Global Alliance for Communities (GAC) launched at the two-day forum to drive targeted actions to end racial disparities in development and shift policy and funding to a more just world that values community-based leaders, who are often the people of colour.

A coalition of 160 proximate leaders stretching across the globe working on the world’s most pressing challenges, the GAC wants to ensure the poor get vaccinated and that the vaccine is acceptable especially after a lot of misinformation recently.

Odede, who was awarded a Head of State Commendation by President Uhuru Kenyatta last December for his incredible work in slums during Covid-19, also shared with Ambassador Power the efforts he has put in to empower women.

“My mother never went to school and got married at 16. She went through a lot of problems and when women were being beaten she would teach me about gender equity. In school, I could see more boys than girls and I said one day, I will have a school for girls here,” Odede told Power of how Kibera and

Mathare schools for girls were born.

The American envoy was in awe about the power of grassroots work. She is set to visit Kenya upon her confirmation after which Odede, using his extensive experience in assisting the poor, will be her adviser on how to reach grassroots leaders and the most vulnerable in slums.

Despite Odede’s efforts to empower women, it became clear that the issue needs a multi-stakeholder approach given they still lag behind to date.

This emerged during the ‘Power of She’ session hosted by philanthropist Chelsea Clinton, the Vice President, Clinton Foundation. Chelsea listened and learned from trailblazing community women leaders Adwoa Kwateng-Klavitse, Head Global Advocacy & Partnerships, Forward UK, Kenyan Winnie Obure, Founder, Director, Teenseed Africa and Brazilian journalist and activist Bianca Santana of UNEafro Brasil.

Chelsea heard the heart-wrenching stories of how Covid-19 has fallen heavily on women, who have had to deal with sexual and domestic violence, forced marriages, leading to teenage pregnancies and abortions as well as trading sex for food.

The forum also brought to the fore how governments across the globe have largely ignored

marginalised communities as key drivers of economic growth.

Hosted by former Nigeria Minister for Solid Minerals who is also a former Vice President of the World Bank Dr Oby Ezekwesili, stories of triumph amid adversity from former refugees Dr Quratulain Bakhteari, Founding Director Institute for Development Studies and Practices (Quetta, Pakistan) and Innocent Magambi, Founder, There is Hope Malawi were told.

Also on the panel was Kenyan George Gachie, who rose from Mathare slums to become Programme Assistant, UN Habitat (Participating Slum Upgrading Programme) and also founded Mathare Roots Initiative.

For Gachie, it is about empowering these communities. “I got a scholarship and did Development Studies. Today, through UN Habitat, I’m able to serve beyond my community of Mathare. We need more of that,” said Gachie, who through his Mathare Roots Initiative, has been able to mobilise talented youth to fight misinformation about Covid-19 through graffiti and art murals in Nairobi.

It is the State's duty to protect citizens from dubious vaccines

By Milliam Murugi



The rollout of the lifesaving Covid-19 vaccines in the country has attracted unnecessary controversy and, sadly, been immersed in the endless politicking that has been the bane of programmes meant to address the needs of the citizenry.

The manner in which the Russian's Sputnik V vaccine, whose efficacy reputable global health experts have questioned, was imported by private sector players was itself suspicious.

It was apparent that some players were out to make a kill by exploiting public anxiety to make obscene profits but doing so in a manner that did not raise any suspicions.

While the Russian embassy in Nairobi disowned the imports

from Moscow, Kenya using the laid down international mechanisms has already received a total of 1.1 million AstraZeneca Plc doses from the Covax initiative. This is in addition to another consignment donated by the Indian government.

The vaccine, which is being offered through the Ministry of Health and other public facilities, is ideal for ordinary citizens since it is free of charge.

While the available doses are a drop in the ocean, they provide a milestone promise for a better tomorrow following an otherwise difficult year in dealing with the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic, as recently noted by WHO.

This is because the Covax

facility is a global initiative working with governments and manufacturers to ensure Covid-19 vaccines are available worldwide to both higher-income and lower-income countries.

The AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine was manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and made available to the Covax facility thanks to an advance purchase agreement between Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and SII. The doses were procured and transported by UNICEF's Supply Division in Copenhagen.

The consignment already received by Kenya is part of an initial allocation to Kenya of 3.56 million doses. In addition, Covax is providing 1,025,000 syringes and 10,250 safety boxes to the country via a global stockpile funded and supported by Gavi. Kenya, however, already has enough in-country stocks of syringes and safety boxes for the first phase of vaccinations.

On Saturday, the National Emergency Committee on Coronavirus noted that the AstraZeneca vaccine is being made available to the public not just through the Covax facility but also through the Africa CDC and bilateral platforms as opposed to the Russian vaccine.

The Pharmacy and Poisons Board had allowed private sector imports on the basis that Covid vaccines were being hoarded on the world market and yet the



country was keen to ensure they were readily available even outside the priority groups such as security officers, teachers and persons over 58 years of age.

But as the committee pointed out, unregulated private sector imports not only threatens the gains made in the fight against Covid-19 but also puts the country at international risk should counterfeit products gain entry into the local market.

Since the safety of the Russian vaccine is yet to be subjected to international protocols, the government was, therefore, right to warn that there was a need to urgently close the window for private importation of Covid vaccines in order to ensure transparency and accountability in the programme.

Even worrisome was the obscene profits the importers stood to rake in from selling the

“**While the available doses are a drop in the ocean, they provide a milestone promise for a better tomorrow following an otherwise difficult year in dealing with the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic, as recently noted by WHO.**

Milliam Murugi

vaccine, which was going for an average of Ksh 8,000 per dose.

The government was thus right to not only align the country to global Covid 19 procurement mechanisms but also to protect Kenyans from exploitation. It is a pity that the ban on private sector imports has been taken by the DP's surrogates as targeting him. The fallacy is that there is a plot to use the Covid vaccines as a political weapon and that part of it involves ensuring he does not get a second dose of the Russian vaccine.

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2020-2021



TOP STORY

How SHOFKO Kibera School fell academic giants in 2020 KCPE

By Special Correspondent

In a year when girls outshone boys in the 2020 Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exams, SHOFKO Kibera School was not left behind.

Out of the top 100 candidates in Nairobi county, SHOFKO's two top girls Mellisa Chenziz and Michelle Nawire, who both scored 410, were ranked seventh and eighth respectively in the capital and 52 and 53 nationally while Belynn Omido (400 marks) was 23rd in Nairobi and 202 countrywide.

Only Nairobi Primary School (five) and White Star Academy Lang'ata (three) had students in the top 10 in Nairobi, meaning little SHOFKO felled giants such as Aga Khan Academy, Consolata School, The Arya Vedic School, Makini School and many others who have hogged the limelight down the years.

SHOFKO Kibera School had three students posting over 400 marks, 14 scored between 350 and 399 with just five below 350 among the 22 candidates of 2020 for a mean score of 365, the highest ever.

With girls performing better than boys in languages nationally, the Kibera school stayed true to the script, posting a



Top performer being celebrated

mean score of 80 in Kiswahili, a first for them in a subject, while English (78), Social Studies/CRE (72), Mathematics (70) and Science (64) followed each other in that order.

Compared with 2019 when they recorded a mean score of 349 with just one student getting over 400 marks while three got below 300 marks, the class of 2020 hit all but one of three targets the teachers had set.

"We wanted to beat our mean score record, achieve 100 percent pass which happened and beat the 431 mark set in 2019 which we couldn't considering the top student nationally managed 433 added to the standardization done to subjects like Science and Mathematics," a delighted Hecky Odera, the

Education Director at SHOFKO told this writer at the school on Friday.

However, with everyone blaming the disruptions caused by Covid-19 for a drop in performance, SHOFKO Kibera School had no such troubles.

Odera credits a number of strategies for this success, such as embracing community learning, where a select group would be called in for a few hours during lockdown, while teachers would also set questions and send to the students at home.

But given the students here come from the slums where they are subjected to extreme poverty and other forms of emotional and physical abuses, the teachers knew this was not

enough and took full advantage following the partial reopening of schools where Grade 4, Class 8 and Form Four were ordered to return by the Ministry of Education last October.

“Initially, we used to do boarding but they would go home after two weeks. After reopening, we agreed they would be here full time. Because the other classes were not back, we divided them into two streams of 11 and brought in Grade 7 teachers to increase the student-teacher ratio. That close interaction and personal attention from teachers helped us cover the syllabus,” remembers Odera.

He went on: “Full boarding was also there in third term and we changed the learning times from 7am-7pm to 6am-9pm. This would not have happened without the sacrifices from our teachers, some who stay as far as Ongata Rongai but were here at 5.40am and left past 9pm the security situation here notwithstanding.”

“The teachers set two tests every week and low performing students were paired with stronger ones...so that peer support from girl-to-girl was important in lifting the mean score. We also introduced rewards for various standards if met and this increased competition where no one consistently nailed down the top position. It was always among the top seven,” added Odera.

For the two top girls here, a desire to lift their families out of poverty fueled their drive to perform better. “My mother sees me as her only hope, one who will change her situation in future and that is why I had to make sacrifices for these results,” said Michelle, who wants to be an interior designer to change people’s perceptions about Kibera.

Mellisa, wants to be a psychiatrist to provide solutions to mental problems for others after dealing with the same following the death of her mother, said: “I have been taking care of my little sisters and life is not easy. I compare our life with

“**My mother sees me as her only hope, one who will change her situation in future and that is why I had to make sacrifices for these results. Michelle, Top performer**

those doing well and I want to make sure I reach that level.”

Under the Girls Leadership and Education Programme, the Kibera school, alongside another one in Mathare, are a brainchild of SHOFCO founder and CEO Kennedy Odede, who set them up as a way of empowering girls from the slum community.

Odede grew up in Kibera, where poverty was his second name, and witnessed first-hand how girls from the slums were marginalised while suffering various forms of abuses.

So far, the school in Kibera, which has over 350 students, has had students sit for KCPE in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 while in Mathare, 250 students from pre-primary to Grade 5 are already on their books.

To get admission at the schools, a through vetting process takes place to ensure only the needy get the once in a lifetime opportunity.

Once admitted, the girls have access to a full scholarship. Uniform, fees, medical and food is all catered for and all they have to do is focus on their education.

It is an opportunity like no other and Michelle and Mellisa believe their story would have been different had SHOFCO not come to their rescue.

“With all the help SHOFCO has given me and my family, I have



Parents and candidates celebrating in Kibera

been able to learn that there is another side to life other than being poor,” added Mellisa.

Michelle concurs: “Without them, I wouldn’t have gone to school and accessed basic commodities. I expect them to continue holding my hand and catering for my needs.”

The two can rest assured that their welfare beyond primary is taken care of given the organisation has structures that ensures their students complete the journey.

“We have a director of future education who focuses on them when they go to high school. We offer continuous mentorship which helps when they go to a new environment and our gender department also offer counselling,” said Odera.

“We also have a policy that a certain level of performance has to be maintained to stay in the programme so knowing their backgrounds, the girls work hard not to lose it. Those here go to great schools while some who get scholarships to the US come back and the performance speaks quality,” he added.

To ensure quality, the level of performance has to continue being high and this is the challenge Odera and team faces going forward now that they have set the bar so high.

“The challenge with doing well is that these schools around that can pay better will come for our teachers. We also want to analyse where we didn’t do well and work on it even if it means change in manpower. The advantage we have is that Class 8 will not be there next term so we want to start boarding early for Grade 7 so by the time they get into Grade 8, they gain a lot of support and attention away from family distractions,” he said.

Odede’s vision was to use education to eliminate poverty within the slums and the hope is that once done, these girls will return and sit at the policy making table where decisions about their community are being made.

“Look at the level of change Kennedy has brought here. What if we had just three Kennedys?” poses Odera, before concluding, “Whether that happens or not, if a girl is able to change their family, that would be enough.”

BUSINESS

Trade activities fall as pandemic continues to disrupt businesses

By Steve Umidha

Trade activities in Kenya's private sector fell to a nine-month low in March with a slower pace of output growth and sales as rising fuel prices increased production costs. According to the latest report by Stanbic Bank, Kenya Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 50.6 from 50.9 in February, in what was a two-month downward rally.

Readings above 50 signal an improvement in business conditions on the previous month, while readings below 50 show a deterioration.

"Businesses highlighted that cash flow problems linked to the Covid-19 pandemic meant that households often limited spending to essential items," said the PMI report.

The latest reading points to just a marginal improvement in the health of the private sector, and the weakest since the recovery from the initial impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) last July.

"The pace of output growth among Kenyan companies remained subdued in March, and softened to the weakest in the current nine-month sequence of expansion. Where a rise was recorded, firms linked

this to higher customer orders," read the report.

The survey noted that Kenyan businesses raised their workforce numbers again during March 2020, with the rate of hiring accelerating slightly compared to the previous month. However, it remained modest and slower, which according to latest findings show rising workloads in a bid to reduce backlogs, underpinned by job creation during the month under review.

"Output prices continued to rise, driven by higher input prices, and employment levels increased to clear backlogs of work. Firms' outlook for output worsened on account of the resurgence in Covid-19, which is expected to affect demand," said Kuria Kamau, Fixed Income and Currency Strategist at Stanbic.

The index counters World Bank's recent predictions that projected, in January, Kenya's economy would expand by 6.9 per cent, the fastest growth rate in Africa, and government's estimate of 6.4 per cent economic growth for 2021.

Kenya's economy was hard hit by the pandemic for larger parts of 2020, affecting incomes and jobs, with the Bretton Woods institution estimating that Kenya's GDP contracted by 1 per cent last year.

For most part of 2020, the economy was exposed through the dampening effects on domestic activity of the containment measures and behavioral responses, and through trade and travel disruption, affecting key foreign currency earners such as tourism and cut flowers.

The month of March however saw Kenyan vendors make quicker deliveries, as latest data signalling a solid reduction in overall lead times. "The rate of improvement strengthened to a five-month high, but remained below the series average. High levels of competition among suppliers were often linked to the improvement, as well as a good local supply of inputs," said the panelists from the report.

Meanwhile, input prices across the country rose sharply during the month, with the pace of inflation accelerating from the previous month on higher purchase prices, owing to the rise in fuel prices and a recent increase in value added tax (VAT).

Petrol prices hit a nine-year high on rising crude costs in the global market, piling inflationary pressure on the country's economy. The hike saw the price of petrol shoot above the Sh120 mark per litre in Nairobi, the highest in almost a decade at a time when Kenyans are grappling with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic amid a third wave.



ENTERTAINMENT

Kamene recalls day she wept after presenting her first bulletin on TV

By Walter Mbita

Kiss 100 radio presenter Kamene Goro has opened up about the day she wept in the washroom immediately after presenting her first ever bulletin on Ebru Television.

While appearing before Churchil Show recently, the radio personality narrated that even though she studied law in school, she has always wanted to be in the media industry and she looked up former Citizen TV News Anchor Julie Gichuru.

"My mother drove me into Ebru TV offices that Saturday morning, I did not even know how much was going to be paid. I started working as a field reporter," she recalled.

Kamene noted that she was extremely nervous at first and was mentored by a manager at the then newly launched station where part of her duties was to write scripts and do screen test.

"He trained me every day. I would write 10 scripts a day and he would go through all of them. I did screen tests until he told me you're now okay," Kamene added.

Goro recalled that when she hosted her first bulletin her mentor and best friend, who also worked as a news anchor, died.

"The first day I ever went on screen in Kenya, is the day she passed away. The first news item

I ever had to read the day that my dream was coming true, was that of the death of my mentor and one of my very best friend. It was one of the hardest bulletins. I remember I left the bulletin, went to the bathroom, sat on the floor and I cried. I could not believe, how my dream was coming true on the day of my biggest tragedies,” the radio presenter said.

The media personality noted that the experience was especially tough simply because while on TV, she was expected to maintain a straight face. She was aged 21 years at the time and was youngest news anchor in Kenya. The media star, however, overcame the challenge and was the sole new anchor at the station for a while in which she would read both the 1p.m, 7p.m and 9p.m. news bulletins. Kamene Goro rose to become a head anchor at the station after its expansion and had a prime time news slot but walked away from it all after falling in love.

The most celebrated media personalities in Kenya advised the young girls who are inspiring to be journalist that to always work hard for their dream and go for their passion.

“It is possible and that no one will ever bring it to where you are. You need to work hard. Your dream will never be handed over to you and nobody can give you your dream. It is all about hard work. Your goals should not be a sponsored base thing,” she advised.

She added: “Look up to the right people. Read and invest in your mind, your most precious commodity should be your brain.”

The emcee, product promoter, and event host has been in the media industry for nine years something that she really appreciates and thanks the Almighty for the good journey because it has not been easy.

Before joining media sector, Kamene worked as a paralegal at Simani and C Advocate from February 2013 to July of the same year. She then developed interest in media and never looked back.



SPORTS

Corona puts SHOFKO Mathare FC's unbeaten run on hold

By Felix Omondi

Supporting activities countrywide have yet again been suspended indefinitely, following President Uhuru's directive on 29th March. On his 15th National address on the Coronavirus, the President issued a directive suspending all sporting activities until otherwise directed.

This comes in as the country battles a serious third wave of the virus with the positive rate being placed at 14 per cent since last year November and the official death toll placed at more than 2200.

Following the government directive, Football Kenya Federation (FKF) put out a statement suspending all FKF Leagues and competitions, which include but are not limited to the FKF-PL league, National Super League, FKF Division 1, FKF Division 2 leagues, all FKF women Leagues, all FKF branch, and grassroots leagues as well as all FKF national and grassroots tournaments, until further notice.

This is the second time in barely 12 months that sporting activities have been suspended countrywide following a similar directive in early March of last year as the government tried to curb the spread of the virus while it was still in its early stages. The indefinite suspension comes in at the wrong time as the local football teams try to find their footing in the sporting arena. The local leagues had already kicked off and were gathering speed with teams in the top tier football league having played 16 games and were heading to the do or die second league – the teams were also working tirelessly to try woo back sponsors who had pulled out last year during the ban.



“With many local players losing their sole source of income, I'm afraid some of them may resort to crime to try make ends meet or drugs as a coping mechanism during this period,” said Dominic Omondi Shofco Mathare's team manager.

“I am afraid the players will not be able to maintain their fitness during this suspension period as sporting activities have been suspended,” added Dominic Omondi.

Shofco Mathare had kept a perfect unbeaten run in their Nairobi West League run – drawing one game and winning three, before the league was suspended.

Local football fans, have urged the government to factor in the financial losses set to be experienced by teams and the players themselves as sporting activities are suspend and therefore reconsider its ban as the games were already being played behind closed doors and teams observing all the set health rules and regulations during training sessions.



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