

## QuickRead

**Free health camp for the less privileged in Nairobi**

Access to quality health services is still a major challenge to most people residing in the informal settlements. They continue to bear the burden of health conditions that can easily be treated or prevented and have fewer options than their affluent counterparts so most health conditions are either ignored or bravely borne. For such, the socio-economic status seems to be an inescapable life-long malady trap that binds even to the grave.

Africa Population, Health and Research Centre (APHRC) recently organised a free health camp in Viwandani, which is home to thousands of migrant labourers generally living from hand to mouth with no surpluses for even the very basic of health needs. Hundreds of people queued at the Star of Hope Primary School to get medical and curative services.

**Provide family planning to all, Government urged**

While Kenya has committed itself to ensuring access to family planning services for all, the reality is that many poor people, who form the majority of the population, are not using contraceptives.

Dr Alex Ezech, APHRC Executive Director, explains that "poor women have over 40 per cent more children than they desire, while rich women are able to have the exact number of children they desire". He adds that "on average, poor women in Kenya have more than two children than they actually desire to have". He blames this on inadequate access to family planning services.

Source: APHRC News

**NJOKI KARUOYA} GENDER AGENDA**

Bold, Provocative, Sassy, Insightful  
Write back on [nkaruoya@standardmedia.co.ke](mailto:nkaruoya@standardmedia.co.ke)

# In role models, women can chart path from poverty

**"Who is your favourite woman role model? Why do you like her so much? What does she do?"**

That is the question I have been asking for the past three weeks and will continue asking for the next two. You may wonder why I'm interested in lining up women role models who, in your opinion, are obvious to all.

My take is they are not that obvious since we are not all inspired by the same people. Just because a section of women are constantly in the limelight does not necessarily mean they are the only role models in society.

The woman who always inspires me is never in the limelight. Her name is Sophie Karanja, the Chief Finance Officer-cum-Company Secretary of Real Insurance Company (formerly Royal Insurance). She is also my cousin.

**INDEPENDENT WOMAN**

She is one of those strong, independent women and has always motivated me to be better. When I succeed, she is the first to congratulate me. When I fall, she does not berate me for my foolishness but provides a calm listening ear and a firm shoulder to cry on.

Sophie was the first financially independent woman I came across. She completely changed the perception I initially had that women were made for soft jobs. Sophie literally demonstrated that I can aspire for top jobs and work my way to the dream.

These are the kind of women I am looking for. Those that inspire us, directly or indirectly, to demand more from our-



**Women rejoice at the launch of Fewa Sacco at KICC, which took place last Monday. The Sacco will encourage women's entrepreneurial activities. The launch kicked off a series of activities spread throughout September to celebrate the Month of Women Entrepreneurs. [PHOTO: JENIPHER WACHIE/STANDARD]**

selves. The women don't have to be hot shots or high profile.

The role model can be the woman who began as a *mama mboga* in your neighbourhood but now owns her own shop or even a supermarket. Or the woman who started as an untrained teacher in a primary school but is now the principal or owns a college. How did they make it? These are the stories I seek.

Last week on Monday, women entrepreneurs under the umbrella group Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Association (Fewa) launched a savings, credit and co-operative organisation (Sacco) at KICC. Esther Murugi, the Gender minister, officiated.

The sacco is a vehicle for

women to expand their dreams and businesses through provision of loans and other benefits that include training and regular information on business forums.

What I like about Fewa sacco is that it encourages women to get together in groups of like-minded businesses as this gives them the critical networking necessary to push a business into success.

**FEWA SACCO**

Being in a group also gives individuals a platform to voice their fears, aspirations and joys. Together with other women who think alike, the entrepreneurs can plan together, use each other as back-up and develop their busi-

nesses to unimaginable levels. I know this for a fact because I have seen it work. Just ask the officials.

The launch of Fewa Sacco, together with a three-day exhibition that showcased the products and services of women entrepreneurs, was the first event to kick off festivities to mark this month's Month of Women Entrepreneurs (MOWE).

Today, the exhibition opens at the Nyeri Municipal grounds and women from this area will showcase their wares and services. A business clinic to educate women on how to be business savvy will also be conducted.

This activity will be replicated in Bondo in two week

**A SACCO FOR WOMEN**

The objective of Fewa Sacco is to encourage commercial activities and viable investments for women entrepreneurs; provide them with an opportunity to accumulate shares and deposits; pool funds to enable provision of loans; promote members' welfare; give women entrepreneurs ownership of a financial institution; and build linkages with like-minded organisations to build synergies on access to finance for women entrepreneurs through provision of gender-sensitive credit facilitation, financial services and eventually, building a capital base of and for women entrepreneurs in Kenya.

**Felicity Biriri, National Treasurer, FEWA Sacco.**

time at Chakruok grounds. And at Tom Mboya Labour College, a training for women in trade unions will be held.

Next week, a training for policymakers on creating an enabling business environment for women entrepreneurs will be held at the Aberdare Country Club. Towards the end of the month, Hot Tables that will pit corporate executives, ministers and other government officials with women will be launched.

MOWE will culminate with an award giving gala night that will honour women who have succeeded in their various businesses, from small enterprises to the large corporates. It is here that we shall also recognise the top women role models you nominate.

## Have Your Say

**KENYA'S TOP WOMEN ROLE MODELS**

1. Who is your favourite woman role model?
2. Why do you like her so much?
3. What does she do?

Gender Agenda is pleased to announce yet another exciting competition for the readers. Nominate the women who inspire you most and tell us why. The top women role models who receive the most nominations will be applauded on **Wednesday, September**

**30** during a gala ceremony sponsored by the International Labour Organisation Women Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (ILO - WEDGE) programme to celebrate the **Month of Women Entrepreneurs (MOWE)**.

The opportunity to send in your nominations will end on **Wednesday, September 23**.

Write to: [genderagenda@standardmedia.co.ke](mailto:genderagenda@standardmedia.co.ke)

Also to be feted at this ceremony will be the **winner of the essay competition** (launched earlier) on the development of women entrepreneurship in Kenya.

