Kambi suspends Sh5b Tassia project

By GEOFFREY MOSOKU and JACOB NGETICH

Labour Cabinet Secretary Kazungu Kambi has now suspended the controversial Sh5 billion Tassia project to be undertaken by a Chinese firm.

The Cabinet Secretary made the move even as he is expected to expedite the appointment of new trustees to the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) board to evaluate the tender awarded to China Jianxi. Mr Kambi was quick to point out that he has not cancelled the tender but merely suspended it as

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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EXCLUSIVE

ROBBING THE POOR

A redesigned formula for distributing Sh12 billion meant for the poorest Kenyans risks turning the fund into a gravy train that will ensure even people who don't deserve to benefit get the cash and the richest counties take the lion's share STORY ON PAGE 2

Inside Today

Education Cabinet Secretary Jacob Kaimenyi addresses the Press at the launch of the Form One selection exercise at the Kenya Institute of Education, Nairobi, yesterday. He warned schools against raising fees. With him is Higher Education PS Colleta Suda. [PHOTO: BEVERLYNE MUSILI/STANDARD]

Schools warned on fees increases as 200,000 to miss Form One places

By FELIX OLICK

The Ministry of Education has warned secondary schools against charging unapproved fees, even as it was revealed that close to 200,000 pupils would miss Form One places this year.

Speaking at the launch of the Form One selection exercise yesterday, Education Cabinet Secretary Jacob Kaimenyi cautioned against the "unprofessional and illegal" practice of hiking fees, ahead of next month's new admissions.

"Boards of management and head teachers should adhere to ministerial guidelines on charging extra levies,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

CATEGORY OF SCHOOLS	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	STUDENT ADMISSIONS
National	78	17,175
Extra-County	303	53,625
County	1,330	121,902
Sub County	5,399	392,742
Private	933	61,334
Special	24	824

FUND FOR THE POOR | Help that takes eons to reach the desperate

More money for relief kitty, more

Although fund has received more cash, it takes six months for stipends to reach deserving Kenyans

BY PAUL WAFULA

For 20 years, Abdi Adow's life has been a painful routine. The resident of Wajir County suffers from paralysis as a result of a severe spinal injury.

He cannot stand upright. He struggles to wake up every morning in an empty one-room house.

The 54-year-old drags himself around his humble home doing basic chores. His life depends on a wheelchair, but he can only move the wheelchair on his own for short distances on flat terrain.

Mr Adow pays people to do his laundry, to push his wheelchair to the toilet at night or have a 20-litre bucket of water delivered to his house.

Thankfully, the weight he has shouldered for years was partly lifted by the Government in 2007, when it started giving people with severe disabilities, the elderly, the urban hungry, orphans and vulnerable children a Sh2,000 monthly stipend to help them buy food and meet primary healthcare needs.

Adow considered himself lucky to have made it to the list of beneficiaries picked from over 7,000 cases in his county.

But six years down the line, the Sh12.5 billion safety net programme, which has now been expanded to cover the entire country and received an additional Sh22.5 billion from the World Bank, is growing more unpredictable by the day over its increasing list of beneficiaries. It is also being choked by bureaucracy.

A new raft of reforms meant to streamline the programme to make it more accessible and effective seems to have failed in easing bureaucracy and reaching the most needy.

An analysis of the new distribution plan shows a programme that has ignored recommendations that the "programme scale-up should be based on an analysis of the poverty levels and be informed by clear objectives and an expansion strategy".

Official data from the Labour ministry shows that there are 236,700 beneficiaries currently in the programme. The Government plans to add 160,527 more in this year's expansion.

Under the old system, transferring cash to beneficiaries was painfully slow. The new system has also inherited these bottlenecks as it scales up to cover all the 290 constituencies.

For instance, it took the National Social Protection Secretariat half the current financial year to decide how counties should share the new slots provided for in the current budget.

Transferring money from the Government to the beneficiaries under the Jubilee administration also took six months.

Initially, beneficiaries would line up at Postal Corporation of Kenya outlets every two months to receive the stipend. Beneficiaries would be paid Sh4,000 at once to cover the two months. But the system has broken down this financial year.

When we visited his home early December, Adow had not received a single penny for six months.

"I have not been paid since Ramadan but in my state, who do I complain to? I cannot go to Nairobi to ask for the money; I only sit here and wait, hoping that soon, someone will release the funds," he said, tears welling in his eyes.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, when fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset. It was marked in July last year.

Adow is not alone. A number of beneficiaries we visited in Marsabit and Wajir – recently ranked among Kenya's top five poorest counties – shared similar experiences.

Mohammed Ibrahim Abdule, a caregiver of four orphans under the programme in Wajir, said it was difficult to provide for his family when payments are delayed.

"I have received the money for about four years now. The last time I received money was in July last year and I got Sh4,000," Mr Abdule said.

Beneficiaries under the programme in Marsabit County are also crying foul over the unexplained delays.

"The delays are killing us. Nowadays we can wait for seven months only to end up being paid for two months. Sh2,000 is no longer enough – the cost of living has risen significantly since 2007 and it is only fair that the cash is increased to match," Dullochi Roba, a beneficiary in the older persons category from Helu Village in Moyale, Marsabit County, said.

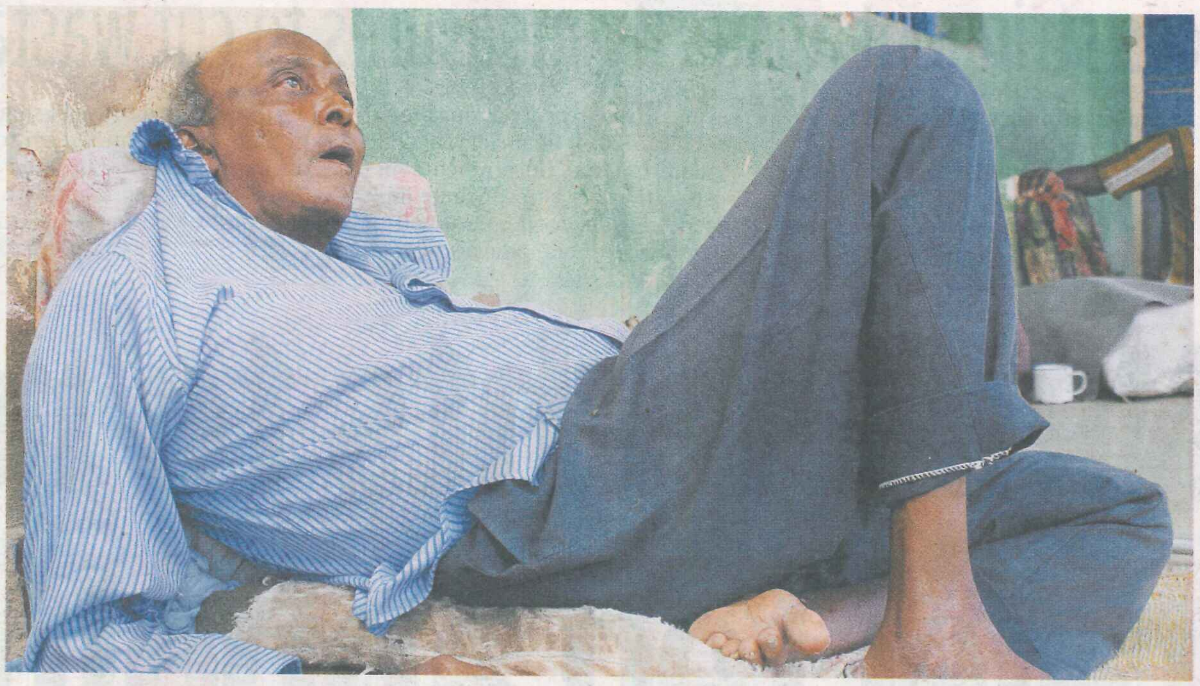
Mr Roba has been on the programme for five years. Whereas the cost of living has nearly doubled during the period, the monthly stipend has only been increased by a third, from Sh1,500, when it started, to Sh2,000. It cost Roba Sh53 to buy a 2kg packet of maize flour in 2007, today the same retails at Sh105.

"If you depend on this money, you are forced to live in debt when it is delayed because people no longer help you as they think you are being taken care of by the State," Adow adds.

Fifty-year-old Ahmed Mahmoud understands only too well the pain of missing out on the payroll. Polio-stricken Mahmoud has been applying unsuccessfully to be listed on the cash transfer programme.

Rukia Ali, Wajir County Co-ordinator for Social Services, however, says that it is impossible for the programme to reach every needy case.

"Limited resources cannot allow us to reach everyone who qualifies to be on the programme. The vastness of the land, poor road infrastructure and the pastoralist nature of some of the communities here also makes reaching all the deserving cases a real challenge," she said.



Abdi Adow (left), 54, has not been paid his stipend for six months. ABOVE: Rukia Ali, Wajir County Coordinator for Social Services. [PHOTO: PAUL WAFULA/STANDARD]

Process for cash transfer

Abdi Adow, a beneficiary of Sh2000 cash transfer program. Photos. Paul Wafula

This is a national programme, funded by the government of Kenya and the World Bank.

Amount paid

= Sh2,000 per household per month delivered bi-monthly.

Who is eligible?

Households with a person with severe disability, elderly, hungry, orphans and vulnerable children

Other eligibility conditions

- Household must be poor
- Beneficiary household must not be enrolled in any other cash transfer programme
- A member of the household must not be receiving any pension and regular income.
- No member of the household is in any gainful employment.

Payment points

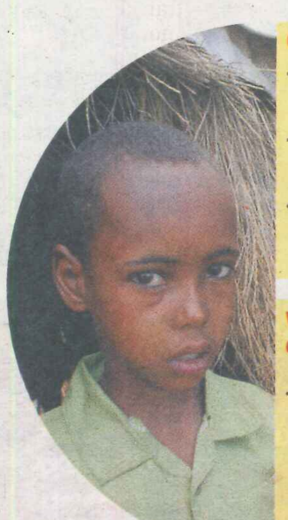
At the moment, payments are made through the countrywide outlets of the Postal Corporation of Kenya.

Payment conditions

- Caregivers can collect their payments within 10 working days from the date of commencement of a payment cycle.
- Payments are only made on production of a valid and original national identity card.

Discontinuation

When a beneficiary fails to collect his/her cash for three consecutive payments without a valid explanation, payment to such a beneficiary is stopped immediately.



Orphan

Conditions for exiting the programme

- Where the economic condition of the household is considered to have improved
- When a household voluntarily chooses to withdraw from the programme
- When it is proved that a household has given false information

When the beneficiary changes locations

- When the person with severe disability dies, in which case, the household continues to receive the cash for the next three payments only, after which they are required to exit...

Complaints procedure

Beneficiaries and other members of the public may report their complaints, grievances or seek information through any of the following channels located in national and county levels

The numbers

4 out of 10 Kenyans are food poor and cannot meet the cost of a basic food bundle

13% is the reduction of benefiting orphans and vulnerable children saw in poverty levels

Sh274 is the amount consumption levels raised per adult

3.3% is the reduced child labour of beneficiaries

At the end of this financial year, 2% of the poor population will be covered by the cash transfer program.

Sources: Kenya Social Protection Sector Review Report, June 2012, Ministry of Labour National Social Protection Secretariat, Census 2009, Kenya Integrated Household and Budget Survey of (2005/06), The Kenya National Safety Net Program for Results, April 2013, National Report, Exploring Kenya's Inequality: Pulling Apart or Pulling Together? Graphics: Rene Martin

Help that takes eons to reach the desperate | FUND FOR THE POOR

problems for suffering Kenyans

How greedy people shamelessly filch cash meant for poorest of the poor

BY PAUL WAFULA

Unscrupulous caregivers, inclusion and exclusion errors are robbing Kenya's neediest population of money meant for them.

An audit of the National Safety Net Programme, which has spent billions of shillings meant for poor households, has revealed that weak monitoring has subjected the vulnerable to untold suffering, as the money sent to them gets diverted midstream or is delayed so much that it fails to meet their needs on time.

The report, which supports an independent data analysis by this newspaper, reveals several loopholes through which people with severe disability and older persons "are robbed of their money".

"In some cases, post office workers collude with caretakers to defraud the beneficiaries," the report, *The Kenya National Safety Net Programme for Results*, reads in part.

The report prepared by Mary Amuyunzu-Nyamongo of the African Institute for Health and Development notes that in Bondo, one person collected two payments using the same identification document.

This year, the programme will spend Sh12.5 billion. The Government also recently received an additional Sh22.5 billion from the World Bank to boost the programme. The money will cover a group of about 400,000 beneficiaries, drawn from a mix of orphans and vulnerable children, the elderly and people living with severe disability.

Beneficiaries are picked from poor people in urban areas, who are now recognised as being among the neediest in society. After selection, they receive a Sh2,000 monthly stipend paid after every two months.

They use the money mostly to buy food and clothes and to pay for healthcare when needed.

Some caretakers collect the cash from the post office without informing the beneficiaries; some of the people living with severe disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children may not even realise that the cash has been collected.

Abdi Hussein, who is both a beneficiary and the committee chairman of the relief programme in Wajir. [PHOTO: PAUL WAFULA/STANDARD]

"In addition, the district gender and social development officer reported that he had received several complaints from beneficiaries who went to the post office only to find that other people had collected their money," the report says.

The report also cites compensation demands by people who are nominated to collect funds on behalf of beneficiaries, among other loopholes.

A visit to parts of the country also revealed major conflict of interest, where some beneficiaries were also part of the team that decides who gets onto the programme.

For instance, in Wajir County, a beneficiary also doubled up as member of the committee and some children in his household receiving the Sh2,000 monthly stipend.

Though he said he did the job as a volunteer, the position exposes him to allegations of conflict of interest, given that he also wants more of his beneficiaries listed.

Due to low literacy levels among some of the beneficiaries, the caretakers also lie to them about the value of the transfers and pocket the rest of the money.

> "It should be noted that the visibility of these groups (minorities) is often lost within larger communities — **Report**

CLEAR OBJECTIVES

An analysis of the distribution shows that it ignored recommendations of the report that the "programme scale-up should be based on an analysis of the poverty levels and be informed by clear objectives and an expansion strategy".

The main objective of the National Safety Net Programme is to improve the welfare and resilience of beneficiaries, with the aim of reducing poverty and vulnerability in Kenya. There are currently five main cash transfer programmes operating in all parts of the country.

The report evaluates whether there is equitable access to the existing cash transfers and whether the programmes are meeting the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

"These issues were assessed by paying attention to how poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups are included in, and therefore benefit from, the five cash transfer programmes, specifically through the targeting of the transfers," the audit notes.

There are also a number of requirements that can cause eligible households to be excluded.

"These include the requirement for applicants to have birth and death certificates and/or notifications, the absence of nomadic communities during registration, inadequate communication of information about the programmes, and stigma (especially regarding disability). The requirement for medical certification was identified as a key challenge for people with severe disability," it reads.

According to the audit, marginalised groups that have not been captured in these programmes due to limited coverage include the El molo, Ogiek, Ilchamus, Sanye and Aweer (originally known as Boni).

"It should be noted that the visibility of these groups is often lost within larger communities or due to their residency in remote or marginalised areas."

It recommended that special attention be paid to marginalised groups that could be inadvertently left out of the programmes.

"This could be achieved using affirmative action, for instance, by ensuring that they are represented on local committees, including the rights and beneficiary committees."

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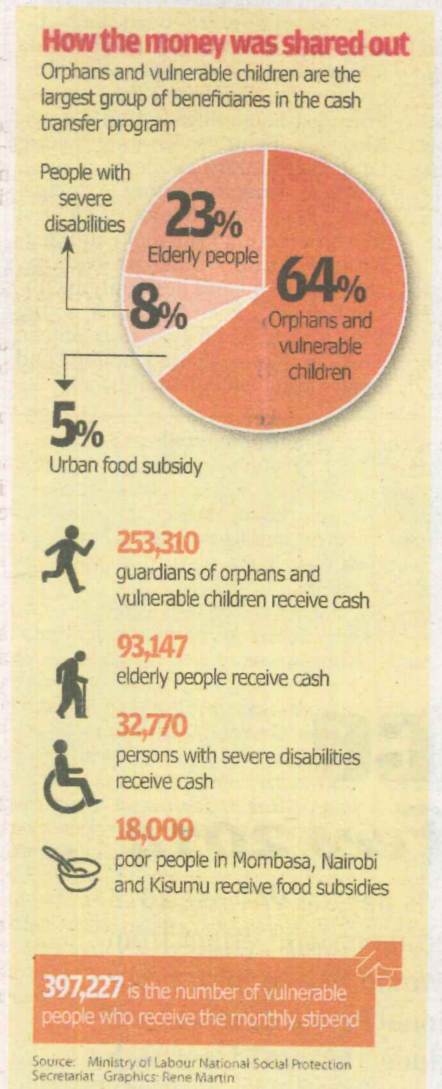

FUND FOR THE POOR | How cash will be distributed

MPs change rules on sharing kitty for poor

The new formula assumes that all constituencies have uniform poverty indicators, contrary to available data

By PAUL WAFULA

Legislators have changed the distribution formula for allocating Sh12.3 billion to the poor in what may see the most deserving cases miss out.

The distribution formula preferred by MPs ignores an earlier model that relied on indicators of poverty as released by the government in two of its major reports. It means that the poorest counties will still have the poorest people, while the wealthier ones race further ahead, worsening inequality in Kenya.

Seeking to score political points with their constituents, politicians demanded the funds be allocated equally across board, departing from a nuanced criteria designed to meet the most extreme needs in the nation, which had been used during the pilot phase of the initiative.

On the face of it, the new formula assumes that all the constituencies have uniform poverty levels, the same number of orphans, elderly and vulnerable children. However, available data disputes this. Different constituencies have varying degrees of poverty and different burdens of the food poor, elderly, orphans and vulnerable children.

Collating of these numbers at county levels paints a clearer picture of how skewed this formula is after the most deserving counties — those with the largest burden of the poorest and most vulnerable populations — ended up being short-changed by the formula.

MONTHLY STIPEND

Kenya has had a fund meant for the poor and vulnerable population since 2007 in which beneficiaries get a Sh2,000 monthly stipend to cover food and medical needs. Until this year, the safety net cash transfer programme has been on a pilot phase, but with an additional Sh22 billion this year from the Word Bank, it will be scaled up to cover all the 290 constituencies.

It targets the elderly, people living with disabilities, the food poor, orphans and vulnerable children.

In a sharing plan seen by The Standard, politicians have struck a deal with the national secretariat implementing the programme to distribute available slots using a formula that will have constituencies, also known as sub-counties, to have almost equal numbers of beneficiaries without considering poverty levels and other indicators such as population, HIV prevalence, and distribution of orphans and people living with disabilities, to determine who deserves more or less.

The breakdown shows that about 400,000 households will benefit from the fund this financial year. Lamu County's poor have emerged the biggest winners while Mandera became the biggest loser. This is because Lamu is set to have 6.4 per cent of its poor and vulnerable population on the programme this year, compared to Mandera's 0.8 per cent.

The sharing plan from the Labour ministry shows that Sh8 billion will go to 253,310 orphans across the 290 constituencies, Sh3 billion will be disbursed to the elderly while people living with severe disabilities and the poor people in urban areas will take Sh770 million and Sh580 million respectively.

The programme will use 15 per cent of the whole kitty, which translates to Sh1.8 billion, on operations. Beneficiaries receive Sh4,000 after every two months through the countrywide outlets of the Postal Corporation of Kenya.

But this breakdown is yet to factor in the Sh22 billion ($250 million) concessional loan from the World Bank meant for cash transfers to poor households. If this is brought on board, the number of beneficiaries is expected to double to 800,000. The loan was tied to a condition that the Treasury releases its portion of Sh13.5 billion to the Ministry of Labour. Already the government has cut its allocation to Sh12.5 billion.

Although Lamu County will have a total of 2,338 vulnerable households on the Sh2,000 monthly stipend, a breakdown of the numbers in relation to the population of the poor has seen the coastal county beat Nairobi and the rest of the country.

According to Ms Winnie Mwasiaji, the national co-ordinator for the Social Protection Secretariat, when MPs pushed to amend the distribution formula, it was proposed that the 290 constituencies share 30 per cent of all the available slots equally. The remaining 70 per cent would then be used for equalisation, where those with the least were to get more to bring them at par with the rest.

But this did not satisfy the MPs. The formula was further amended to 40:60, increasing what all counties will get by 10 per cent and reducing the equalisation kitty by a similar margin.

The result of this is that a constituency like Nyeri town, which has 471 orphans on the program will receive an extra 103 that all the 290 constituencies will get this year. It will then receive equalisation slots for 205 more beneficiaries to bring the number to 779.

Similarly, Tetu constituency which has 487 children on the program already will also get slots for 103 orphans and an additional 189 from the equalisation slot to bring this number to 779, at par with its neighbouring Nyeri town constituency.

From June to December last year, no money had been released to the beneficiaries identified in the 2012-2013 financial year.

Said Ms Mwasiaji: "Parliament wanted us to share the slots equally across board. The delay was mainly because Parliament wanted to see the list of beneficiaries before they approve. But now we have agreed and we hope to roll it out in January."

"In the new formula that the MPs agreed to, 40 per cent of the slots will be distributed equally and 60 per cent will be for equalisation where the sub counties that have fewer eligible persons will be brought at par or as close as possible with the rest," she said.

The same formula will be used to calculate how many people living with disabilities will be recruited in each constituency.

CHOKED BY BUREAUCRACY

Labour Cabinet Secretary Kazungu Kambi said the government is now ready to roll out the entire programme, which is being choked by bureaucracy and slow disbursement to the rest of the country.

"We have been accused of not spending the money but now we are ready. We are also looking at suggestions that we use mobile money transfer services as a means to pay the beneficiaries but this will wait until the necessary structures are put in place," Mr Kambi said. To qualify, households must have a person with severe disability, elderly, hungry, orphans or vulnerable children.

Other eligibility conditions for one to be enlisted on the programme are that the households must be poor, the beneficiary household must not be enrolled in any other cash transfer programme, a member of the household must not be receiving any pension and regular income and no member of the household should be in any gainful employment.

"We are also planning a fresh vetting exercise to ensure that we retain on our register only the most deserving cases," Mr Kambi said.

Orphans and vulnerable children will take the biggest chunk of the money. About 253,310 are set to benefit this year, and this translates to 64 per cent of the total beneficiaries.

The elderly, who account for 23 per cent of the beneficiaries, will be the second biggest group of beneficiaries, with a total of 93,147 households listed. People with severe disability and the urban poor take the remaining portion of the pie.

The distribution has been broken down by constituencies. Some of the 290 constituencies who did not have any beneficiary will in coming weeks recruit beneficiaries of the cash transfer programmes for orphans and vulnerable children, persons with severe disabilities and older persons of 65 years and above. Those constituencies with less have also been given extra slots to bring them at par with the rest.

On its part, the urban food subsidy programme that was being implemented on a pilot basis in Mombasa in four constituencies – Mvita, Changamwe, Likoni and Kisauni covering 10,000 households – will be scaled up to cover Nairobi and Kisumu towns.

According to the government plan, 4,000 urban poor in Nairobi will be recruited this year, and another 4,000 will be enlisted in Kisumu.

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To be continued tomorrow

Top ten counties, average poverty level = 37%

The ten counties with the highest proportion of poor receiveing cash have less poverty compared to the 10 counties with the lowest percentage of beneficiaries

County	Poverty (%)	Percentage receiving cash (%)
Lamu	32.3	6.4
Isiolo	65.3	3.7
Nyeri	27.6	3.6
Kirinyaga	25.9	3.4
Kiambu	24.2	3.2
Taita Taveta	50.4	2.9
Tharaka - Nithi	41.0	2.9
Murang'a	33.2	2.9
Vihiga	38.9	2.9
Embu	35.3	2.8

Bottom ten counties, average poverty level = 67%

There is twice as much poverty in the counties with the lowest proportion of poor receiving cash compared to the top ten counties

County	Poverty (%)	Percentage receiving cash (%)
Nyamira	50.7	1.6
Bungoma	47.3	1.6
Kitui	60.4	1.5
Makueni	60.6	1.4
Kilifi	58.4	1.4
West Pokot	66.3	1.3
Wajir	84.2	1.2
Kwale	70.7	1.1
Turkana	87.5	0.9
Mandera	85.8	0.8

Sources: Kenya Social Protection Sector Review Report, June 2012, Ministry of Labour National Social Protection Secretariat, Census 2009, Kenya Integrated Household and Budget Survey of (2005/06), The Kenya National Safety Net Program for Results, April 2013, National Report, Exploring Kenya's Inequality: Pulling Apart or Pulling Together?
Graphics: Rene Martin

Eroding buying power

2007	Commodity	2013
8kg	Maize Flour	4kg
8kg	Wheat Flour	4kg
2kg	Loaf of Bread	1kg
4 litres	Cooking Kerosene	2 litres
80 litres	Water	40 litres
4 litres	Milk	2 litres
8kg	Rice	4kg
2 Crates	Eggs	1 crate
4kg	Tomato	2kg
4kg	Potato	2kg

Sources: KNBS & Standard **Graphics: Rene Martin**

> "We have been accused of not spending the money but now we are ready. We are also looking at suggestions that we use mobile money transfer services as a means to pay the beneficiaries
> **– Labour Minister Kazungu Kambi**

Kambi: Government ready to roll out programme.

THE**INVESTIGATION**DESK
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NOT ADDING UP: KRA, Treasury reports show variation in Government revenue, P.6

PULSE

CHURCHILL IN TROUBLE?

Controversy over pay and high turnover of comedians said to be dogging the funny man

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ROBBING THE POOR

Poverty Fund: Sh600m paid to 'ghosts'

Kambi

Cabinet Secretary Kambi says an audit has revealed that Sh120 million has been lost annually in the past five years

By **PAUL WAFULA**

The Government's fund for the poor and vulnerable has lost about Sh600 million to ghost recipients in the last five years.

The fund, which has been allocated Sh12.5 billion in the current financial year, has been losing Sh120 million annually meant for the poor, Labour Cabinet Secretary Kazungu Kambi has said.

Mr Kambi said an ongoing audit started late last year on the national safety net fund has already flushed out 1,400 ghost beneficiaries from the disability component of the fund. "We have already struck off 1,400 ghost recipients from the disability fund and the vetting is ongoing to cover the rest of the

STORY ON PAGE 6

Now Golden girl Lupita bags Oscar nomination

Lupita Nyong'o has been nominated for Best Supporting Actress for her role in the film '12 Years a Slave'. This is the highest nomination for the 30-year-old who has been on a rollercoaster since winning the New Hollywood Award in Beverly Hills last October. STORY PAGE 3

Confusion as Western leaders fail to reach consensus on ODM positions

Meeting to agree on who will gun for which post ends in disarray as Budalang'i MP Namwamba walks out.

STORY ON PAGE 2

Marende

Raila

EMPLOYERS FACE HURDLES IN IMPLEMENTING NEW NSSF LAW, PAGE 8

Kambi: Sh120m stolen from fund for poor every year

Mr Abdi Adow, 59, who suffers from severe spinal injury, has not received his Sh2,000 monthly stipend for the last six months from the Government's cash transfer programme for people living with disabilities. [PHOTO: PAUL WAFULA/STANDARD]

Continued from P1

programmes, including orphans and vulnerable children," he said. Mr Kambi told *The Standard* yesterday that his ministry had established vetting committees that are interviewing recipients in the counties "to ensure that only those who merit under the set criteria remain on the programme".

This comes a day after *The Standard* ran a data-driven investigative series on how inclusion and exclusion errors are robbing Kenya's neediest population money meant to alleviate their suffering.

Started on a pilot basis in 2004 as a donor-funded initiative for orphans and vulnerable children, the programme was upgraded in 2007 when the Government took it over and expanded it to cover the elderly and people living with disabilities.

Last year, the Jubilee administration doubled the number of beneficiaries from 226,839 to 444,096 households. The Sh12.5 billion is scheduled to be disbursed from this month, through the post office network, to support a scale-up to all the 290 constituencies.

Also, the programme this year got a Sh21.5 billion ($ 250 million) boost from the World Bank to be distributed over the next four years.

"Disbursements will only be done directly to the National Treasury upon achievements of agreed targets," Kambi said. The fund, known as Cash Transfer Programme, gives a Sh2,000 monthly stipend to people living with severe disabilities, the elderly, orphans and vulnerable children to meet their food and healthcare needs.

Kambi said to improve the administration of the programme and to seal loopholes that he blamed for the loss of cash, his ministry had established three levels of co-ordination and implementation to ensure effective cash transfers.

He said he had appointed a ministerial social assistance steering committee at the national level and set up an administrative structure for co-ordination comprising the County Social Office and County Children's officers at the county level.

VALIDATION EXERCISES

In addition, a 17-member committee to be presided over by the area MP will be formed at the constituency level.

"The role of this committee will be to ensure that the targeting of the beneficiaries is done in accordance with the eligibility criteria to ensure transparency and accountability. This is further enhanced through community validation exercises for all the potential beneficiaries," Mr Kambi said.

The ministry invited the Parliamentary Committee on Labour and Social Welfare to Mombasa last November to discuss and agree on a way forward for the national roll out of the scaled up programme.

Kambi explained that at the end of the deliberations, the ministry and the parliamentary committee resolved that the targeting and scale-up during this financial year be based on a 30:70 ratio where 30 per cent of the funds shall be shared equally to all 290 constituencies and 70 per cent shall be equitably distributed — to enable constituencies that had no beneficiaries, or fewer, be at par with the rest.

With this method, all constituencies will end up getting almost the same number of beneficiaries this year. On the face of it, the new formula assumes that all the constituencies have uniform poverty levels, the same number of orphans, elderly and vulnerable children. However, available data disputes this. Different constituencies have varying degrees of poverty and different burdens of the food poor, elderly, orphans and vulnerable children.

> "We have already struck off 1,400 ghost recipients from the disability fund and the vetting is ongoing to cover the rest of the programmes — **Labour Cabinet Secretary Kazungu Kambi**

Collating of these numbers at county levels paints a clearer picture of how skewed this formula is after the most deserving counties — those with the largest burden of the poorest and most vulnerable populations — ended up being short-changed by the formula.

The investigation by this paper revealed that most counties ranked in the 2013 national inequality report as having the highest population of its people living below the poverty line will reach the fewest deserving beneficiaries.

The inequality report 'Exploring Kenya's Inequality: Pulling Apart or Pulling Together' was conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) in conjunction with the Society for International Development (SID).

According to the new distribution plan, a poor person in Lamu is eight times more likely to receive cash than the poor in Mandera.

The data shows that 64 out of every 1,000 poor people will receive the Sh2,000 monthly stipend this year while in Mandera, just eight out of every 1,000 poor people will benefit.

This is because according to the latest poverty data, Mandera County has almost three times the number of people living below the poverty line than Lamu, but does not receive proportional funding to meet these needs.

SCALE-UP

In her recommendations to the World Bank, the Government and other stakeholders involved in the programme, Dr Mary Amuyunzu-Nyamongo of the African Institute for Health & Development advised that poverty should inform how it is scaled up.

"The programme scale-up should be based on an analysis of the poverty levels and be informed by clear objectives and an expansion strategy," Dr Amuyunzu-Nyamongo notes in her audit report on the programme, The Kenya National Safety Net Programme for Results.

THE STANDARD
Kenya's Bold Newspaper

Save key social aid programme from thieving hands

There are well-founded fears that the much-touted National Safety Net Programme might fail to accomplish its objectives of reducing poverty and vulnerability of low-income Kenyans by improving the welfare and resilience of its beneficiaries.

The National Social Protection Secretariat should, therefore, move quickly to up its game before the creeping practices of robbing the poor — that have already been noted — become the norm. That would be unfortunate.

At the very least, the secretariat needs to benchmark its operation costs against the national, if not the global, best practices. Clearly, swallowing up to 15 per cent — about Sh1.8 billion — of the funds allocated for disbursements to the poor and most vulnerable members of society is not acceptable. The levels of bureaucracy should be pared to the bone. In the event that the secretariat cannot reform itself, the Government, not just the parent ministry, should move quickly to get the job done. The programme should also be audited with the view of ensuring that the money gets to the intended beneficiaries — in time. Incidents whereby Post Office employees are reported to be colluding with unscrupulous individuals to steal from the intended beneficiaries should be investigated and the culprits brought to book.

Experience shows that impunity will only increase the number of individuals masquerading as beneficiaries and swelling the amounts stolen. Plans to roll out the distribution of these funds through the already existing mobile money transfer platforms should be speeded up. Indeed, there is no reason why these platforms were not used from the very beginning.

It is regrettable that Members of Parliament were the first to tinker with the formula designed to distribute the Sh12.3 billion the Government set aside this year. Now counties with the largest number of poor people will get almost the same amount of money as those with few, widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

The bigger challenge facing these cash transfer beneficiaries now is that some of the people or institutions they depended on quickly abandon them and move on with their lives. This means any hiccups over disbursements hits these beneficiaries very hard. Together with ensuring that the receipt of these funds is more predictable than they have been in the past, there is an urgent need to ensure that some of the more-able beneficiaries start income generating projects to cushion them against any future developments.

This is one of the areas where innovative county governments can have a direct impact on the lives of their more vulnerable citizens. The governors could kick off these projects in their respective counties by employing social workers trained in the identification, launching and running of micro-businesses.

Whatever amounts these new recruits would receive in salaries and other emoluments, the counties would get their money's worth in terms of higher revenues. But, perhaps, the greatest benefit would be the rebuilding of human dignity among a group that would have lost a sense of personal worth. ■

Ministries enjoy too much leeway on funds

Government plans to reduce its expenditure by between Sh10 billion and Sh13 billion would have been welcomed with greater warmth if it had a track record of being able to trim its appetite for public funds. Instead, the National Treasury Cabinet Secretary Henry Rotich's timing could not have been less auspicious.

The announcement was made six months after the beginning of the current financial year. Skeptics cannot help noting that this is when ministries pile pressure on Treasury to approve their supplementary budgets meaning that they have already exhausted the allocations made during the budget presentation in June.

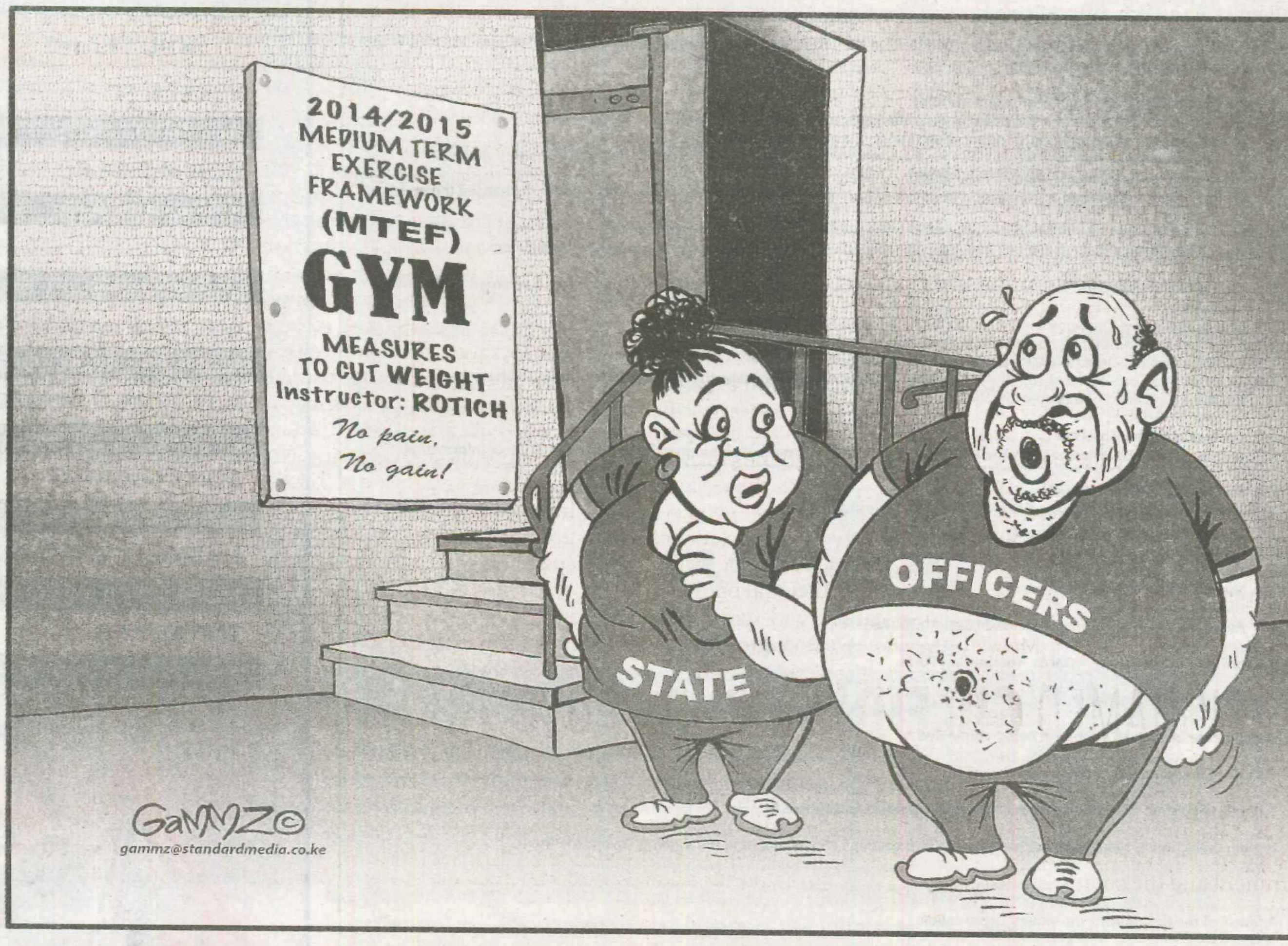
The result is that although the ministries might indicate they have reduced expenditure in their books, this would be an accounting fiction since a number of them would already have overdrawn their accounts.

Perhaps, a more realistic way to go would be for Treasury to issue strict guidelines on the preparation of the next year's budget directing all ministries to cut out wasteful and unnecessary items. In the meantime, Treasury would do well to strengthen the offices of the Controller of Budget and the Auditor-General to ensure they have what they need to monitor the expenditure real time.

Past experience has shown that carrying out audits months — or years, as has been the case — after the money has been spent is akin to locking the stable doors after the horse has bolted. It serves very little, if any, purpose.

What is even worse, the impunity those who have misused public funds enjoy emboldens them — and their ilk — to go on spending binges in the knowledge that the worst punishment they can suffer is a slap on the wrist.

Treasury might also consider refusing to sanction any supplementary allocations unless the funds are being moved between ministries or sub-heads within the same ministry. ■



WHAT OTHER MEDIA SAY...

人民日报社 PEOPLE'S DAILY

Afghanistan: Reconstruction has many uncertainties: After more than a year of wrangling, the United States and Afghanistan recently reached an agreement on the final language of a bilateral security agreement.

However, Afghan President Hamid Karzai made a new request to postpone the signing of the agreement. The US responded by threatening to withdraw its troops completely and cut off aid to Afghanistan unless Karzai signed the agreement as soon as possible.

On the one hand Karzai believes the US will not abandon Afghanistan in a bid to fight for more rights; on the other hand he needs to rid himself of his tainted reputation as a 'traitor'. The probability is that both sides will sign the agreement, but if the US starts to implement full withdrawal from Afghanistan, there will be an intensification of unrest in the country. ■

the guardian

Who's to blame for the crisis, bankers or benefit claimants?: Class is the real dividing line in British politics, but politicians only talk about the middle class. That will have to change. David Cameron's is a government of naked class interest. Its leading party is the political wing of the City of London. For all its Liberal Democrat fig leaves, it is waging war on the poor while slashing taxes for banks, corporate giants and the richest people in Britain. Its cuts have hit the most deprived, the disabled and women hardest.

In crucial ways – the scale of its attacks on social security, service privatisation and falling living standards for the majority – Cameron's coalition has outdone even Margaret Thatcher. Its austerity programme halted recovery for four years and has cut most people's real terms pay deeper and over a longer period than at any time since the 19th century. ■

THE INDEPENDENT

A 25 year gap between the life expectancy of rich and poor Londoners is a further indictment of our unequal society : One of the greatest determinants of a person's health is their income.

And a separate analysis by The Equality Trust discovered that the gap in life expectancy for those in different UK local authority areas has increased 41 per cent for men and 73 per cent for women in the last 20 years.

Wherever you look, there are huge life expectancy differences between rich and poor neighbourhoods. The solution to health inequalities is not to try and change people's health-related behaviours – a crass, ineffective approach that often fails to address why they have them in the first place. The key is to deal with the underlying issues of economic inequality. ■

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