

COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF SAMBURU



THE HANSARD

Wednesday, 27th September, 2023

The Assembly met at the County Assembly Chambers at 9:00 a.m.

The Speaker, (Mr. Lenamarle Stephen), in the Chair

PRAYER

CONVOCAATION

The Speaker, (Mr. Lenamarle Stephen): Shaheen Nilofer, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Representative to Kenya, visiting dignitaries from UNICEF and representatives of other organizations with us today.

Hon. Members of the County Assembly, I take this opportunity to welcome you to this auspicious address of the County Assembly of Samburu by Shaheen Nilofeer, Representative to Kenya.

Hon. Members, this the second time we are being addressed by a visiting dignitary from UNICEF and the only dignitary other than the County Governor and the Senator. This address is clearly in line with our Standing Orders number 24 (1) and (2) and shall be kept in the record of this House and be dealt with as provided.

Hon. Members, on 25th March, 2021; Nicholas Wasunna, Chief of Field Operations, UNICEF Kenya made a keynote address to the Assembly on issues affecting children in Samburu County. Today, Shaheen Nilofer, UNICEF Representative is also addressing the House to highlight the progress made by the County with respect to social sector indicators for children and women and how to galvanize the Members of the County Assembly support to improve the welfare of children in Samburu County. I also take this opportunity to thank you again for your organization’s commitment to building constructive, complementary relations with Samburu County in particular the Legislative arm of County Government.

(Applause)

Your visit today is a milestone in the process of deepening cooperation and socio- economic relations that has been unfolding over the past few years, a process to which Samburu County Assembly has been a privilege witness.

In the past sessions, UNICEF and County Assembly of Samburu have partnered in matters concerning socio-economic development with great interest in alleviating the suffering of vulnerable communities that are not able to access essential healthcare services and in areas of child education, nutrition, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) among others. As a result Samburu

County has achieved encouraging results since devolution including increasing human resources for health, increasing child immunization rates, solid commitments to eliminating FGM and increasing the number of children enrolled in pre-primary learning.

On the same note, the County Assembly of Samburu has managed to pass several legislations which includes:

(Applause)

The Samburu County Community Health Services Act, 2021 and Samburu County Facility Improvement Act of 2022 which has only been possible through your continued support, which we must appreciate.

The principal object of these Acts are to provide for establishment and delineation of Community Health Units within the County for effective, efficient and sustainable delivery of community-based health services and establish the necessary institutional and regulatory mechanism to ensure functionality of community units in empowering households in health and for connected purposes.

Hon. Members, UNICEF recognizing the role the Members of County Assembly play to advance social indicators through strengthened partnership in the areas of child protection, education, health, Human Immune Virus (HIV), nutrition, social protection, water and sanitation in the County. Today, we will be signing a joint work plan with UNICEF. I believe that relations between County Assembly of Samburu and UNICEF are mature enough to take a qualitative leap and move towards a strategic partnership able to provide mutual benefits.

(Applause)

For all those reasons above, it is important for Samburu County to hear your message here today with a view of understanding UNICEF's short and medium term strategies.

Shaheen Nilofer, we look forward to your reflections on how to build an even closer and mutually beneficial relationship between us, especially the County Assembly in the coming years. Please know that you already have our firm commitment as the County Assembly.

Hon. Members, it is my singular honour and privilege to invite Shaheen Nilofer, UNICEF representative to address the County Assembly

(Applause)

I thank you.

(Applause)

Welcome

ADDRESS BY UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE TO KENYA

Ms. Shaheen Nilofer:

RGT Hon. Stephen Lenamarle; Speaker County Assembly of Samburu, Hon. Jackson Lelenkeju; Deputy Speaker, Leader of Majority; Hon. Christopher Lentukunye, Hon. Leleruk James Koileken; Leader of Minority, Hon. Members of the County Assembly of Samburu all protocols observed, Good morning.

Today, I stand before you with profound gratitude for the privilege of addressing this August gathering in the sacred halls of Samburu County Assembly. And I believe in this very hall, where the aspirations of County's citizens take shape and you gather not only as representatives of your people in the County but as stewards of the future - a future illuminated by the hopes and dreams of our most cherished asset and I call them asset of future; our children.

And I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak before you, before this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, as we are acutely aware of the immense influence wielded by this esteemed Assembly, and we recognize the limitless potential and possibilities of our collaboration for the betterment of Samburu's children and youth.

This moment is truly a cause for celebration, not merely because I stand before you, but because of who you Hon. Members are and the role you play in shaping the collective destiny.

You are the advocates for your citizens, including the most vulnerable among them; our children. But you are also the resounding voices that echo their hopes, dreams and aspirations.

You are the guardians of your County's resources, entrusted with the solemn duty of scrutinizing and passing legislation and budgets that directly impact the lives of the residents, particularly the voiceless and the marginalized.

Most importantly...

(Power went off)

Thank you and this is very alright because it is the reality in real life situations.

Most importantly Hon. Members you are the sentinels of oversight, ensuring that the Executive branch of our Government delivers services as promised within reasonable time but also of acceptable quality that every precious Shilling is deployed with utmost integrity and efficiency. Therefore, the mandate you shoulder is substantial but it is also profoundly noble.

Hon. Members, as we gather here today, I implore you to take a moment to reflect on the significance of our collective mission; a mission that transcends politics, that transcends ideology, and personal interests and that the future resides in the very hands of our children.

Our children, the embodiment of our hopes and aspirations, they undoubtedly look to us, trusting that we will steer the course of their lives towards prosperity, equality, and justice. They trust that we will provide them as the adults with the tools and opportunities to build a brighter and a prosperous tomorrow. They trust that we will protect their rights and nurture their potential.

Mr. Speaker and distinguished Members, today as we convene, it is with immense pride that we reflect upon the remarkable journey your County has embarked upon since the inception of the devolution process just over a decade ago and it is only recently that we celebrated ten years decade of devolution and the progress we have witnessed is a testament to our collective resolve and unwavering commitment to the welfare of our people.

For over a decade of devolved system of Governance in Kenya, UNICEF has been working closely with Samburu County and during this time, we have seen firsthand the County Assembly's commitment to children and young people from improving the health of new mothers and their babies to supporting young adults as they enter the youth world of work,

Mr. Speaker and Hon. Members, you should all feel very proud that Samburu has achieved encouraging results since the onset of devolution ten years ago. Let me take a moment to run over the achievement that the County has achieved and please bear with me.

Over the last five years, the number of health care workers has significantly increased to 789 across different cadres and the construction of an additional 28 health facilities that has improved access to health care services and the percentage of the children who have been fully immunized against childhood diseases rose from 63% in 2014 to 66% in 2022.

The proportion of live births delivered by skilled healthcare providers improved from 29 % in 2014 to 57% in 2022.

In education; I am impressed to note your consistency in funding school feeding programs in at least 550 Early Childhood Development Education Centers across the County. We cannot underestimate the contribution of school feeding and nutrition of young children and their early learning. The single effort has contributed to enrolment of more than 43,000 learners in pre-primary institutions. In addition, over 7,000 out of school children have enrolled back to school and in 2020 the gross enrolment rate at the primary and secondary level was 68.9% and 40.2% respectively. In addition, over 7,000 out of school children have been enrolled back to school and in 2020 the Gross Enrolment Rate at primary and secondary levels was 68.9 percent and 40.2 percent respectively!

This is steady progress towards attaining 100 per cent access, retention, and completion of school education. These are real and meaningful improvements in the lives of children and their families in Samburu, and I commend you for that. Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members, I am aware of the concerted actions Samburu County is taking, including plans to develop a policy to address harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage that have close linkages to the triple threats to adolescents, namely - teenage pregnancy, HIV and Gender Based Violence - in the county. As a result, it is notable that the FGM rate decreased to 76 per cent in 2022, down from 86 per cent in 2014.

These achievements, dear members, are not just numbers on a page; they are tangible indicators of our dedication to the well-being of our constituents, particularly the most vulnerable among

us, our children. Honorable Members. While this is good progress, more needs to be done to accelerate the desired change for children and women, almost twice as many children — nine out of ten — are living in poverty in Samburu, compared to the national average of five out of ten. These children are classed as being multidimensionally poor, meaning that they suffer from multiple disadvantages at the same time, such as a lack of access to safe water, education, and nutritious food.

One of the tragic consequences of multiple deprivations is the high mortality rate of children before their fifth birthday. In Samburu County at least 38 children under five years of age die, out of every 1000 live births. This is almost twice the target set by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. We could prevent high mortality levels through evidence-based planning, strategic investments, and deliberate actions. While we take pride in the strides we have made, it is equally crucial that we remain acutely aware of the journey that still lies ahead. There is urgent need and vital work to be undertaken for the challenges we face demand our unwavering attention and commitment. In Samburu County, the rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV stood at 15 per cent in 2019, Many of such avoidable infections are being transmitted by adolescents and young mothers.

In nutrition, Samburu County is suffering from a triple burden of undernutrition with over 31 per cent of children stunted (too short for their age); 15 per cent wasted (too thin for their height) and 32 per cent underweight (too light for their age). This is significantly higher than the national average of 18 per cent, 4 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. In fact, the stunting level in Samburu worsened in 2022 compared to 2014 and is third highest in the country.

Honorable Members, poor nutritional outcomes have a lasting negative and irreversible impact on children now and in the future. This has a monumental economic cost for Samburu and for Kenya as a whole. The Cost of Hunger Study of 2019 showed that Kenya loses 7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product due to undernutrition. Nevertheless, we can turn this situation around. The first 1,000 days of a child's life up to the second birthday, is a critical time in which we can prevent undernutrition, ill health, and their consequences. Clearly, we all have a role to play here, With the recognition of the Community Health Promoters, we do have an opportunity to bridge the gap between communities and health care services.

In water and sanitation, the county is lagging behind the desired progress with over half of households still practicing open defecation (over 53 per cent or 184597 people). This is alarming. Samburu County is among the 11 largest contributors to open defecation (OD) in Kenya, while an average of 29 per cent of the population have access to basic water supply, which is below the national average of 68 per cent. This leads to transmission of preventable diseases and illnesses among children and communities. In education, between 2018 and 2020 the net enrolment rate fell from 56 per cent to 44 percent for primary school but increased from 16 per cent to 30 percent in 2020 for secondary schools.

I note with deep concern the reported high rate of teenage pregnancies, violence against girls and women, and child marriages in this County. According to the recently released the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey of 2022, half of adolescent girls were pregnant in Samburu compared to the national average of 15 per cent, Also, the median age of first marriage was as low as 17 years against the national average of 21 years. Yesterday, I was at Sasaab close to the West Gate dispensary and I interacted with few young mothers who were barely 13 or 14 years when they got pregnant for the first time. It was heartening to note, barely few kilometers from West Gate we were at Lorubae Primary School. It was amazing to see the very confident and smart young girls taking charge of the school event and part of the protocol team. It was sad to have witnessed these girls who belong to the same community and ethnic background, were leading two very different lives and different destiny.

These sobering statistics serve as a stark reminder that our journey is far from complete. As representatives of people, you have a solemn duty to address these pressing issues with the urgency they deserve. The challenges before us may be formidable, but we must approach them with unwavering determination and an unyielding commitment to making Samburu County a place of prosperity and well-being for all its residents.

Mr. Speaker, Honorable members, UNICEF will continue to be one of your key partners in addressing some of these concerns that impacts children with a solid footprint. We will focus on strengthening systems, and resilience building, UNICEF supported the recent development of the Samburu County Integrated Development Plan (20232027), to lay groundwork for investment in sectors with the greatest returns for women and children. Shortly, we will also be signing a joint

work plan with you, in which we commit to working together for realization of child rights to strengthen service delivery, realization of child rights and promote equitable socio-economic development in Samburu County.

Mr. Speaker and Honorable members, allow me now to highlight our previous and current investment and areas of partnership with your Government. In 2022, UNICEF collectively invested 1.92 million USC), an equivalent of 250 million Kenya shilling and an additional 160 million Kenya shilling in 2023 in the different social sectors of Health, Nutrition, WASH, Child Protection. Education and Social Protection.

On Health, in recognition of the importance of primary healthcare to our overall progress as a country, UNICEF and Samburu County have already embarked on an elaborate plan to operationalize the primary care networks, the community health system and building the capacity of all health care workers across the county, UNICEF has also supported the expansion of the cold chain system of storage and handling of essential vaccines, thereby increasing the number of immunization facilities from 72 in 2013 to 82 currently. Strengthening of routine immunization as part of primary health care and universal health coverage is indeed part of the national Government's agenda, which we must all rally behind. To address the burden of maternal and neonatal mortality, UNICEF has supported improvement in quality of care for mothers and new- born babies through training of healthcare workers and the provision of life-saving equipment and medical supplies for neonatal units in the county.

On nutrition, Samburu County was not spared from the impact of the recent devastating drought that affected an estimated 24,000 children including 4800 severely malnourished children in 2023¹⁷. In 2023 alone UNICEF has so far invested a total, 10 million Kenya Shillings in Samburu to support the procurement supply of life-saving nutrition commodities and equipment. At least 4370 severely malnourished children were treated at first that of 2023. UNICEF has also supported the County to undertake nutrition financial tracking and the development of a nutrition budget brief in collaboration with the County Assembly, this culminated in the signing of key commitments by the County Assembly to improve nutrition sector financing, this is a step in the right direction, and we are committed to working with you to make this a reality.

On Sanitation, UNICEF is working with your Government to move the County towards open defecation free status by 2025, through implementation of the County Community-Led Total Sanitation roadmap. Currently, UNICEF is working with the Ministry of Health to ensure that 150 villages are certified as open defecation free in Samburu North and East SubCounties,

On access to water, UNICEF is working to strengthen community resilience to climate change through improved wash services. Ground water resources mapping and water audit including development of a cloud-based database are underway. Through our support to drought response, 19 water supply systems have been constructed supporting 30 schools and nearby communities, benefitting over 39,000 children and their families. Additional 8 boreholes will be rehabilitated as we speak and upgraded with climate-smart solar systems to benefit approximately 19,000 more people.

We count on your usual support and leadership to ensure sustainability of those services, On Education, in 2023, we have supported the County to mobilize and enroll 7,721 learners of which 3,345 are girls who were out of school back to education, Between 2017 and 2021 UNICEF partnered with Samburu County to renovate and furnish pre-primary centers in Samburu which contributed to improve the quality of learning for 4,500 children (48% girls), In 2022, UNICEF supported the County to build the capacity of education sector in disaster risk reduction producing a County specific Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) for education and as we speak we are working with the County Administration and the National Government on *Elnino* preparedness and response and plan as well.

In addition, 1,900 girls have been provided with menstrual hygiene kits to enable them to continue and complete their education and as we speak we are working with Safaricom Foundation to ensure that it is not just about providing with the kits but the County should start manufacturing sanitary pads and make the availability of the sanitary pads, this is very much in advance stage but we will update you as we progress on the plan. On Child protection, UNICEF supported 10 child protection volunteers, working within the

Department of Children Services in Samburu to reach more than 14000 girls and boys at risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. In addition, humanitarian cash transfers were provided to 150 a small number but undoubtedly made a big impact to households in Samburu East during the recent drought.

UNICEF has further partnered with stakeholders in Samburu County to develop the FGM action plan and is undertaking advocacy against FGM and child marriage in collaboration with Civil Society Organizations in Samburu and as we speak the State House is preparing a teenage pregnancy campaign where we requested to engage with the County Government and the stakeholders in the County so that they are able to take a holistic approach to deliver context in the specific County's campaigns as opposed to one sides fix all campaign across the high board which are really in teenage pregnancies, FGM and child marriages.

On Disaster Risk Management, UNICEF supported a joint Samburu County Assembly and Executive workshop to review and update the Disaster Management Act of 2015, this aims to increase the County budgetary allocation by 2 per cent for disaster preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery, in promoting resilience of communities and systems from the impact of climate change.

On Child Poverty, UNICEF supported the National Treasury to produce the Samburu County Poverty Profile and Samburu County Budget Brief, the evidence from these two documents was used in the development of the third generation County Integrated Development Plan and can further be used by the County Executive and Assembly to target their efforts and resources towards the most significant underlying factors that drive child poverty.

Mr. Speaker and Hon Members, as I conclude, I wish to bring to the attention of the House, the unfinished business as highlighted in our last address to this Hon. Assembly on 25th of March 2021 as was alluded by the Hon. Speaker. Some requests are outstanding while in others, there has been some progress made. These are the proposals made by UNICEF to Members of the County Assembly on behalf of the children of Samburu; Let me read the proposals;

- The development, enactment, and implementation of the Samburu County Water Bill.
- The commitment to eradicate FGM in Samburu by 2027.
- Implementation of the National Action Plan to prevent Violence Against Children¹⁸.
- The development of a Social Protection Bill and Child Protection Policy.
- Strengthening the management and coordination of integrated early childhood development services.
- The creation of a specific budget line for nutrition and subsequent increase in allocation for full implementation of the County Nutrition Action Plan 2018-2022. 2023 so probably a revisit
- Increased budgetary allocation and utilization for water and sanitation¹⁹.

- Lastly, support for the enactment of the Community Health Services Bill, the Facility Improvement Fund Bill and their respective regulations.

Mr. Speaker and Hon Members, in addition to the above I wish to request this Hon. House to further consider the following:

- Facilitate the repeal of the Disaster Management Act 2015 and enact the Disaster Risk Management Bill.
- Implement the commitments made on 11th August 2023 after the Nutrition Financial Tracking Tool workshop in Naivasha, this will go a long way in improving the nutrition situation of children and women of Samburu County.
- Complement school retention efforts and strategies such as school meals, safety nets (cash transfers) especially for children with disabilities and children from vulnerable homes and enforcement of child protective policies,

To achieve all this, there is a need for sufficient and sustained public financing and efficient and timely utilization of County budgets. We request careful consideration, prioritization, and ring-

fencing of budgets for those social sectors that directly impact children's lives and benefit communities.

Hon. Members, in a world marked by rapid technological advancements, global pandemics, and environmental crises, we cannot afford to be complacent. The policies we enact must be visionary, forward-thinking, and adaptable to the ever-changing landscape of our times.

Our citizens are looking to us for leadership, for solutions, and for a vision of a better future. We have a moral obligation to provide them with a sense of security and optimism. Let us not forget that we hold the power to shape the destiny of our County and Nation, to build a society that is fair, just, and inclusive for all.

In this hall, where decisions are made that impact the lives of millions, let us remember the weight of our responsibility. Let us rise to the occasion, transcend partisan divides, and work together for the common good. Let us be the leaders our nation deserves, the leaders who inspire hope and drive progress, the time for action is now,

Mr. Speaker and Hon Members, I stand before you today not just as a Representative of UNICEF but as a concerned advocate for the welfare of the children and families of Samburu County. The narrative we are painting here today is one that should move each and every one of us to take immediate action, to shake the very foundations of our commitment to improving the lives of our constituents.

In closing, let us remember that the children of Samburu County are not just our future; they are our present. It is our duty, our responsibility, and our honor to ensure their well-being and prosperity, Let us be relentless in our pursuit of a future where no child is left behind let their voices echo in these Chambers, let their hopes guide your actions, and let their dreams inspire your policies, In your capable hands, Hon. Members, lies the power to effect profound change, to craft policies that empower our children, and to allocate resources that enhance their well-

being. Together, we can create a brighter future for all child no matter where they are either in Nairobi or Samburu and to divide and to breach the digital divide and all other divides where no child is left behind, and no family is left without hope,

I thank you for according to me this opportunity, on behalf of the children of Samburu County, to address this very Hon. House. *Ashe Oleng*, thank you.

Hon. Members the time being ten minutes to ten o'clock and there being no any other business this Assembly now adjourns until Wednesday 27th September 2023 at 2:30 pm.