

INTERNATIONAL

Debt crippling Tanzania, hitting women hardest

By Lawrence Kilimwiko

Special to Sentinel-Voice

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania (AIA/GIN) — With a population of 30 million and crippling external debt, Tanzania, according to the World Bank, is the world's second poorest nation.

Tanzania's debt servicing is equivalent to a quarter of the total export earnings and accounts for a quarter of the government's expenditure. By 1994, government expenditure on public debt exceeded the combined expenditure on health and education by 20 percent. Annual public health spending is estimated at only US \$3.50 per person.

About 59 percent of the

country's rural population, 10.9 million people, live in severe poverty. And according to the World Bank, the poor in Tanzania spend at least 75 percent of their income on food of low nutritional value.

Only two percent of the income of the poor goes toward health care and 0.6 percent on education. Worse still, 32 percent of all poor and 57 percent of the severely poor have received no education at all.

Women, who constitute 51 percent of the population, suffer the consequences of poor health care facilities. A report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) says pregnant women face

great risks because of the combined effects of poor nutrition, heavy work loads, incorrect or inadequate information, poor health services and their powerlessness to actively make decisions about reproductive health and their lives.

A study carried out in Dar es Salaam in 1993 indicated that 10 percent of first-time pregnancies occurred in children aged 15 and under.

In Tanzania, only 52 percent of all births take place in properly-equipped and staffed health facilities. Many mothers face multiple neonatal risks: early pregnancy, unsafe abortions, malnourishment, overwork, inadequate family

planning services, poor maternal health services, long and arduous journeys to the nearest health services, lack of transportation, poverty and low socio-economic status.

There are six million women of child-bearing age in the country; 1.2 million deliveries take place every year. The fertility rate is 6.2. Every year, some 200,000 girls under the age of 16 are at high risk when they give birth, while one million suffer from chronic under-nutrition and four million live in absolute poverty.

Lawrence Kilimwiko is a correspondent for *Africa Information Afrique*, a news and feature service based in Harare, Zimbabwe.

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recipients off the welfare rolls will lead to their finding jobs.

"Up to now, there have been claims and counterclaims about the success of welfare reform, but there has been no data with which to evaluate those claims," said Marcia Meyers, a Columbia University professor and welfare expert. "This really gives us the first glimpse of life after welfare and it is alarming."

Meyers and others said that the report helps confirm that, instead of helping, the new law will drive thousands of former welfare recipients deeper into poverty by forcing them off the rolls even though they have no prospect of legitimate employment.

Moreover, the situation is likely to get worse because new federal welfare rules compel states to be even tougher on welfare recipients still on the rolls.

Anne Erickson, the legislative coordinator for a New York advocacy group for the poor, called the study especially worrisome because it showed former recipients weren't finding jobs even during the country's current sustained economic surge.

"The true test will be when the economy takes an inevitable downturn and the people who remain on the caseload are less-

skilled and harder to serve," she said. "It's troubling."

The New York State welfare study calls into question a basic premise — and promise — of the new welfare laws the Congress enacted and President Clinton signed two years ago: that tougher restrictions move people from government dependency into jobs. It underscores what I and numerous other critics of the new law have been saying all along. Given the generally low education and skills of those who receive welfare, claiming that the law would work simply because our currently strong economy was generating a multitude of new jobs was nonsense.

America must, for all our sakes, give able-bodied welfare recipients a fair chance to earn a decent wage and leave welfare — and poverty — behind. This can't be achieved by wishing.

It requires a public- and private-sector commitment to programs that train them for the kind of work which enables individuals to earn their way in American society.

That's part of the value of this study of welfare reform in New York. It underscores the fundamental issue which has always been at the center of the debate over the welfare reform law: Where are the jobs?

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Policy Institute, a Washington-based organization, the bill will be a boon for multinational companies. The proponents of the bill say that it will open trade and apparel markets.

However, there is one catch — the countries must meet certain conditions. Among them, are reducing corporate taxes and controlling government spending which translates to even less money than is now allocated for education, health care and infrastructure improvement.

Other conditions include guaranteed royalty payments to foreign holders of copyrights and prohibiting countries from requiring that foreign corporations provide specific economic benefits to the host country.

I'm sure that bill supporters will point to the great opportunity that African countries will derive from passage of the bill. When I look at the legislation, it seems like an excellent opportunity for American companies to set up in Africa while the indigenous people watch them fill their coffers with money. If we are angry about sweat shops in Asia, wait until we witness the African version.

We have all heard it said

that Africa is a continent of enormous wealth. That may be true. However, the real question is, who benefits from the wealth.

The authors of the bill may mean well. This particularly applies to the members of the Congressional Black Caucus who support the bill.

However, there must be safeguards to keep others from again visiting Africa to drain its natural resources while leaving nothing behind, but poverty. There is support from several African ambassadors who see the bill as a wonderful thing. At the risk of being too critical, I have to recall that during slavery some African kings and others felt that they could trust those who came to their shores.

I have been fortunate enough to visit Africa several times in the last year. And, I didn't see enough African-owned businesses to really take on serious joint ventures with American or European companies.

The solution to Africa's problems lies in the hands of Africans, not those who contributed to the continent's myriad of problems.

The honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey said it best when he stated, "Africa for

Africans (at home and abroad)."

George Wilson is a veteran

Capitol Hill correspondent for the American Urban Radio Network.

WORLD BRIEFS**LATE NIGERIAN MONK MICHAEL TANSI ON THRESHOLD OF SAINTHOOD**

OBA, Nigeria (PANA) — Nigeria's late priest and monk, the Rev. Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, was beatified on Sunday, March 22, at an epic mass celebrated by visiting Roman Catholic Supreme Pontiff, Pope John Paul II. Beatification is the first stage in the process of gaining sainthood, according to the Catholic doctrine. Hundreds of thousands of faithfuls, including local and visiting bishops, priests and the laity participated in the mass at the Oba airstrip in eastern Nigeria, Tansi's hometown near the market city of Onitsha. "Acceding to the request of our brother Albert Obiefuna, Archbishop of Onitsha and president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, the many other brothers in the Episcopate, of many faithful, and of the Cistercian monastic family, and after consultation with the congregation for the causes of saints, by our apostolic authority, we declare that the venerable servant of God, Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, shall hereafter be invoked as blessed," the Pontiff said. Tansi was born in Aguleri in 1903 and ordained a priest in Nigeria in 1937 before he traveled to England where he took the monastic vows as a monk at Mount Saint Bernard in Leicester. Tansi died in 1964 and was buried in England, but his remains were exhumed and buried in Onitsha in 1986.

NEWTON KANHEMA WINS AFRICA'S BIGGEST JOURNALISM AWARD

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (PANA) — Newton Kanhema of *The Sunday Independent* in South Africa has won the prestigious African Journalist of the Year Award, sponsored by Ted Turner's Cable News Network. Kanhema beat 138 entrants from across Africa to win the award which was presented at a ceremony in Johannesburg on March 20. Organizers said the judges voted unanimously to give the award to Kanhema based on a portfolio of articles he wrote concerning the South African defense industry. Kanhema, who grew up in Zimbabwe, has established himself as one of South Africa's foremost investigative journalists. As part of the award, CNN International will host Kanhema for three days in Atlanta at its annual World Report conference, where he will have the opportunity to tour the CNN news group operation and meet with top executives, including founder Turner. Kanhema also received a substantial cash prize from the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Said CNN International president Chris Cramer: "Journalistic excellence and enterprise is at the heart of CNN's philosophy ... We believe these awards play a valuable role in the promotion and encouragement of the quality of journalism in Africa."

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