

EDITORIAL - AJFAND Volume 13 No. 2 (2013)

**You can never be alone when you are fighting for the poor;
But so many times it feels that way**

By Ruth Oniangó, Editor-in-Chief, AJFAND

After releasing the last issue (56) of AJFAND, where I used the editorial and commentary to express my hope for a better Kenya as we headed towards the March 4, 2013 general elections, I received many positive and encouraging comments for which I am extremely grateful. I share below quotes sent by a friend (her contacts are given), who does a lot of charity work internationally. Diana told me that when she feels like giving up, or overwhelmed by what she sees and wonders whether her own work can make impact in what appears to be a desperate situation, the quotes help her. I too found them very inspiring.

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do." --Edward Everett Hale

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." --Anthropologist, Margaret Meade.

Sent to me by:

Rev. Diana Sickles, Founder and Director

Coalition in Support of Hungry Children

blogspot: <http://coalitioninsupportofhungrychildren.blogspot.com>

Elections were held, a petition filed by the losing side, that was resolved and now we have Kenya's 4th President, inaugurated on April 9, 2013. I stayed positive about the outcome and I am still hopeful that all will be well. Today as I release issue 57 of AJFAND, it is fair to say people are trying to get on with their lives.

As we go through the painful democratization process in Kenya, there are a number of lessons one can draw from this. One is that people want to see justice, they want to feel justice, and they want to be assured of justice and fair play. For a whole week, Kenyans were in their houses, glued on TV or by the radio, from March 4 when we voted to March 9 when the electoral body announced the winner, a result which was contested. In Nairobi the capital city, business was virtually at a standstill, and even though March 4 (a Monday) had been given as a public holiday, workers added themselves an extra 4 days as they awaited the results of the presidential elections. Other seats were being announced and even celebrated, and in some cases contested, but nothing engaged us more than the presidential elections. This is a bit surprising since the new constitution was meant to reduce powers and responsibilities of the presidency to ensure the position is not abused, and that it is not as emotive, and that many people would not care too much for it. But how could that be? In countries like India and Ethiopia, where the President is more or less a figure head, the Prime Minister is powerful. That is the Chief Executive of the country. In Kenya, the new constitution does not provide for a Prime Minister position, so the President is the Chief Executive; so how can he not be powerful?

So far it is a **"he"** and is likely to remain that way for sometime to come.

So, within a week, the economy was stalling, food was scarce even in the supermarkets, but more so in the kiosks and informal markets, the public transport sector was complaining already about lack of business, and the vendors of foods were already too scared to come out to sell their wares, and so food prices and transport prices were already hiked! How can we talk of food security when politics is bad? If political leadership could just appreciate how their actions impact people's lives, they would probably be better leaders. They would get in there, and ensure equity for all, they would see to a more just distribution of resources for all, they would address hunger and malnutrition and make pronouncements that express disdain for poverty and hunger, they would be ashamed to be put in the category of land grabbers when their citizens are squatters in their own home country, and they would feel ashamed to be plundering public resources, as their voters are kept poor and hungry, lacking a voice and dignity, only to be used as voting puppets.

I use Kenya as an example because it is my country. I know all too well that there are many countries out there like Kenya, probably worse, especially on my own continent of Africa. Even the Bible(for those of us who know it well) says you cannot be happy and have everything when your brother has nothing.

So, does what I do or say matter? Who listens? My own consoling words are: *Even if I lived for a million years, I could not solve all the world's problems. All I can do is the best I can when I can.* I believe if we all connected in the same spirit, we can lift millions out of poverty, out of hunger, and we can prevent the many unnecessary under-five deaths that we continue to witness.

Kenya's lawmakers are some of the best paid in the world. Yet they want more.

Because of the hue and cry by the public about the income discrepancies, a salaries' harmonization authority was put in place to try and even out and harmonize the distribution of Kenya's resources; but even before the lawmakers have a first sitting, some of them are already threatening to disband that authority and enhance their own salary packages. That is impunity of the highest order. There is no other way to describe it. This is notwithstanding the fact that many Kenyans are really struggling: youth unemployment is high, families can hardly put a decent meal on the family table, basic pay is meagre, decent healthcare is unaffordable, many women still die in childbirth and many promises have been made to make things better. Many Kenyans are surviving on hope, and the worst our elected leaders can do is to dash those hopes. All governments and their leaders need to commit to eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty from their midst. They need to be conscious of restoring the dignity of all their citizens otherwise the whole spirit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will have been lost. I hope our newly elected leaders will continuously remember why they were put there in the first place. They should see this as a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the many Kenyans who long for a better life, a better Kenya.

Yes, I still have hope for a better world, and a better Kenya for everyone.

I wish the new government of Kenya well. Let them do their bit, as the citizens do theirs.