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ONE) – CONNECTING AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN RESEARCHERS BY INTERNET

AfricaConnect, a four-year-long internet project between education and research institutions within Europe and sub-Saharan Africa, is scheduled to begin next year. The objective of the project is "to overcome the current limitations of international research collaboration within sub-Saharan Africa and towards Europe, and to foster research and education and advancement within and between these regions," according to an AfricaConnect press statement. The "project will establish a high-capacity internet network for research and education in Southern and Eastern Africa to provide the region with a gateway to global research collaboration."

The 11-country West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN), led by Tiémoman Koné, the director of information services at the University of Cocody in Abidjan, Ivory Coast (Côte d'Ivoire), is another partner in the AfricaConnect project.

WACREN was established last year and is based at the Accra, Ghana, offices of the Association of African Universities, which is another project participant. WACREN builds organisational and technical capacity within national bodies such as the Sénégalaise National Research and Education Network (Le Réseau National d'Éducation et de Recherche du Sénégal or SenRER) and the Ghana Research and Academic Network (GARNET).

National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in Eastern and Southern Africa are also participating in the project. NRENs are specialised internet service providers within a country which offer high-speed bandwidth support for research and education projects.

The UbuntuNet Alliance for Research and Education Networking, a non-profit association of NRENs covering thirteen countries in eastern and southern Africa, is a regional partner in the AfricaConnect project. The UbuntuNet Alliance, chaired by former University of Malawi vice-chancellor Zimani Kadzamira, has been involved since 2005 in efforts to secure high-speed, affordable connectivity for the African research and education community.

European NRENS involved with the AfricaConnect project include Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the United Kingdom (UK).

The Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe (DANTE), an international research network operator, is coordinating the AfricaConnect project. DANTE said in the statement that the AfricaConnect project will soon launch an international tender to invite companies to provide the infrastructure, including connectivity and equipment. "The initiative will dramatically accelerate the development of the Information Society in Africa," said a statement released on the DANTE website.

AfricaConnect is already interconnected with the Gigabit European Advanced Network Technology (GÉANT), a high-bandwidth computer network connecting 30 million researchers across 34 European countries, the statement said. The ultimate goal of AfricaConnect, the statement said, is to promote collaboration among African researchers, and between African researchers and their counterparts in Europe.

The contract, which is worth 14.7 million Euros, "represents a significant injection of capital to develop research networking infrastructure across sub-Saharan Africa and with Europe," according to an AfricaConnect statement.

African project partners will be expected to provide 20 percent of the funding, while the bulk of the funding will be contributed by the European Commission's EuropeAid Co-operation Office.

Links

[AfricaConnect: Africa-Europe research collaboration to be transformed by EC-funded research infrastructure](#)

[Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe](#)
[UbuntuNet Alliance](#)
[West and Central African Research and Education Network](#)
[Association of African Universities](#)
[GÉANT](#)

TWO) - ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF FINANCING THE AFRICAN UNION

[AU](#) In what could be described as a major boost to the Commission's quest to secure adequate, reliable and predictable financing for the activities of the African Union, the Commissioner for Economic Affairs, Mkwazalamba, met with Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, at his residence in Abiokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. The Commissioner travelled to Nigeria as a special envoy of Dr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the AU Commission, to present a letter appointing former President Obasanjo as Chairperson of the High Level Panel on Alternative Sources of Financing the African Union.

It will be recalled that the Executive Council, at its Ordinary Session held in January 2011, endorsed the proposal by the Commission to support the consultations on alternative sources of funding through a high level panel of eminent personalities with a view to engaging with Member States and coming up with definitive proposals for this long standing issue. During the recently concluded Malabo African Union Summit, the Assembly reiterated the decision and requested that the Panel completes its work and submit a report to the next Ordinary Session of the Assembly scheduled for January 2012 in Addis Ababa.

The appointment of former President Obasanjo was one step towards the fulfillment of the requirements of the aforementioned decisions. H.E. Obasanjo welcomed the appointment and pledged his full support to the Union's efforts.

Following the completion of the appointments, the Panel is expected to hold its inaugural briefing session in Addis Ababa during the first week of August 2011. Thereafter, members of the Panel are expected to embark on extensive consultations with Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on this very important subject during the months of August, September and October 2011. The Panel will hold a final meeting sometime in November 2011 to adopt its report prior to its presentation to the African Union Assembly in January 2012.

It is clear that the current financing arrangement for the African Union dependent on assessed contributions of African Union Member States and Partner funds is no longer adequate, sustainable and reliable to meet the growing financing needs of the Union. Delays in payment of contributions by Member States, coupled with the difficulty in accessing partner funds, for example, are increasingly impacting negatively on the pace of implementation of the Union's activities, projects and programmes. These are major challenges that deserve urgent attention and all the technical analyses conducted so far have confirmed that options identified as alternatives to the current system of financing will not only have a significant revenue impact for the Union but will also be equitable and efficient.

The options include import levy, tax on air tickets and tax on insurance premiums. Some of these options are already being applied and have proven extremely successful in some Member States and RECs, such as tax on air tickets in Senegal and import (community) levy in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is the Commission's wish that this long standing issue would be acted upon decisively once and for all for inaction is no longer an option if the Union is to succeed in addressing its numerous challenges.

THREE) - HORN OF AFRICA: POOR ATTENTION TO FORECASTS TO BLAME FOR FAMINE IN SOMALIA

The world had an opportunity to save thousands of lives that are being lost in parts of Somalia due to the famine, if only the donor community had paid attention to the early warning systems that predicted it eight months ago. "The situation would not have been this bad if there was emergency response for prevention, despite the conflicts in the country," said Anna Ridout, Oxfam's spokesperson.

The United Nations declared a famine in south Somalia on Jul. 20, following the two-year drought in the country, and the high child mortality rate due to the lack of food in the region.

According to the U.N., the southern part of the country hosts 310,000 acutely malnourished children at the moment. At the same time, nearly half of the population in Somalia is threatened with the famine. In some regions, at least six out of 10,000 children under the age of five die daily.

The death rate is three times higher than what the U.N. Children's Fund defines in a famine, which is two people per 10,000 per day.

According to Oxfam, the U.N. announcement, which is the first one in the region this century, should be a wake-up call to the rest of the world. "There has been a catastrophic breakdown of the world's collective responsibility to act. 3,500 people a day are fleeing Somalia and arriving in parts of Ethiopia and Kenya that are suffering one of the driest years in six decades. Food, water and emergency aid are desperately needed. By the time the U.N. calls it a famine it is already a signal of large scale loss of life," Oxfam said. The organisation said that emergency aid was vital now to avoid people dying in massive numbers.

"Whenever there is an indicator of such a disaster, we must not only sit and wait for the emergency response. We can conveniently invest the funds by putting irrigation systems in place, vaccinating people, especially children, against anticipated diseases, and creating proper infrastructure to be used in case there is need for food supply," said Ridout.

Speaking from the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, Ridout said that refugees arrive daily and in huge numbers from Somalia. Nearly all the children are malnourished and women are weak and wasted after trekking for days in search of water, food and a chance to live. "They tell of horrible experiences of children who died along the way, and even adults who drop along the way because they cannot make it to refugee camps, mostly in Kenya or Ethiopia," she said.

The most affected areas in south Somalia include the Lower Shabelle, Middle and Lower Juba, Bay, Bakool, Benadir, Gedo and Hiraaan.

The effects of the drought were made worse by the Al Shabaab militia group, which had blocked donor agencies from operating within its territories in 2009 – now the famine zones. "We are praying that the October rains expected in the East African region do not fail. Or else, we are likely to have a crisis in the area due to the looming drought," said Ridout.

However, despite the drought in northern parts of Kenya, Somali refugees keep arriving at various refugee camps on a daily basis. In June alone, 68,000 Somalis arrived in Kenya and 54,000 in Ethiopia searching for food and livelihood. At the moment, U.N. records indicate that 1,700 and 1,300 Somalis are arriving daily in Ethiopia and Kenya respectively.

According to Mark Bowden, the U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, 300 million dollars is required to scale up the emergency response for the 3.7 million people in need in the next two months.

One of the biggest setbacks for food aid distribution has been Al Shabaab. However, the extremist group recently lifted its ban on international aid agencies. "We have security advisors on the ground. But most important, humanitarian organisations in the country are already working closely with local community-based organisations to access people in need," said Bowden.

"We are also involved in dialogue (not negotiation) with all community-based organisations, including groups like Al Shabaab, to ensure that there is cooperation for the aid to reach those who need it," he added.

However, despite the challenges, humanitarian agencies have already put in place response mechanisms. In an effort to reach more children with life-saving interventions, the U.N. and its partners have scaled up emergency nutrition, water and sanitation, and immunisation efforts to combat malnutrition and reduce disease.

"We have already started airlifting urgently-needed medical, nutrition and water supplies into the worst-affected areas," said Bowden.

Compared to previous famines, the current situation in Somalia compares or exceeds those reported during recent years in Niger (2005), Ethiopia (2001), Sudan (1998) and Somalia (1992). However, this is the most severe food security crisis in Africa since the 1991/92 Somalia famine, according to the U.N. Between January and June this year, 300,000 people in Mogadishu were given food assistance by humanitarian

agencies on a monthly basis. Approximately 100,000 malnourished children were treated through some 418 nutrition centres in south Somalia from January to May 2011.

The U.N. further reports that 93,000 people received shelter, especially in Mogadishu, where the majority of those displaced by the drought fled to from other parts of the country.

The current crisis in Somalia is expected to have an increasingly devastating effect on other countries in the region. However, generally, the Horn of Africa has 11.5 million people in crisis, including the 3.7 million in Somalia.

FOUR) - SOMALIA: "I CARRIED HIM A WHOLE DAY WHILE HE WAS DEAD, THINKING HE WAS ALIVE"

As the first of food aid from the United Nations World Food Programme was airlifted into Mogadishu on Wednesday, it came too late for Qadija Ali's two-year-old son Farah. He died in his mother's arms as Ali and her eight other children made the 16-day epic journey from their drought-stricken village in Wanlaweyn district, Lower Shabelle, in southern Somalia to Mogadishu. "I carried him a whole day while he was dead thinking he was alive and just asleep. We did not have anything to give him. No water or food for three days," an emotional Ali tells at Badbado Camp on the outskirts of the Somali capital.

Ali's family had 50 head of cattle, 20 goats and five camels before the onset of the current drought in southern Somalia that has raged for two years. Her family was one of the well-off ones in the region, where ownership of numerous livestock, the mainstay of a rural economy, is a sign of wealth.

"It started with (a) shortage of rains for the first three seasons and then no rains followed. Grass dried up, wells and rivers dried up. Our animals began dying one after another as there was no pasture or water for them," Ali recalls as she carries one of her remaining three young sons who is weak and malnourished. Camp Badbado, which in Somali means 'rescue', is the city's largest settlement for the drought displaced people from southern Somalia. The U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) says that it is currently home to an estimated 28,000 people, approximately 5,000 families.

Ali's entire family is not with her, however. Her husband remained behind in their village to look after the family's remaining belongings. Ali is not aware of her husband's fate. But she made the arduous journey along with hundreds of other families to escape the severe drought and famine in search of aid. But aid has come too late for some.

Many children arrive at the camp too weak and malnourished to be saved by doctors. Some children have gone for days without food and water.

Most of the children are too small for their age with a three-year-old having the frame and stature of a one-year-old.

"They come here very weak from hunger and exhaustion. Two or three children and adults die every week in Mogadishu, but we have no exact statistics as camps are located in diverse places in the town," Muna Igeh, a nurse at Badbado, tells as she weighs one of the dozens of malnourished children at the camp. Daahir Gabow, a father of seven, had to watch as two of his children succumbed to severe malnourishment just after they arrived in Mogadishu.

He says doctors and nurses at Banadir Hospital, one of Mogadishu's main health centres, did everything they could to save the life of his second child, a girl, but "fate had its way". He says his family had tried to "weather" the drought but could not this time and had to leave their home in search of aid.

"We tried to weather the drought as we did many other times but our livestock could not survive until the rains arrived. Many of our neighbours began leaving after losing all their livestock, so we decided it was time to go," says Gabow as he prepared for the burial of his daughter who died of malnutrition complications. "We walked for 21 days. (We) ate (and) drank what we could find and slept where the sun set on us. This is not what I have seen or (what) my father told me happened in his lifetime. (These are) testing times so we have to be patient and strong," Gabow says.

Ehadji As Sy, the regional director of UNICEF (the U.N. children's fund) for eastern and southern Africa, called the famine "a child survival crisis".

Somalia is the country worst affected by a severe drought that has ravaged the Horn of Africa, leaving an estimated 11 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti are all also facing a crisis that is being called the worst in 60 years. Last week the U.N. declared a famine in parts of southern Somalia.

The agency estimates that in total 2.23 million children in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia are acutely malnourished. The U.N. says it has delivered 1,300 metric tonnes of supplies to southern Somalia,

including therapeutic supplies to treat over 66,000 malnourished children.

Meanwhile, people are still fleeing their homes in southern Somalia. The U.N. says almost 100,000 displaced people have arrived in Mogadishu, with nearly 40,000 of those in the past month.

"Over the past month, UNHCR figures show that nearly 40,000 Somalis displaced by drought and famine have converged on Mogadishu in search of food, water, shelter and other assistance," says Vivian Tan, UNHCR spokesperson in a statement on Tuesday.

The U.N. estimates that the number is growing by the day, with daily arrivals averaging 1,000 in July. Local non-governmental organisations are providing much-needed humanitarian aid but camp residents say the aid is limited and Somali government officials are echoing calls for more assistance.

The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) on 27 Jul. began its first airlift of food aid to Mogadishu, the first such shipment since the Islamist extremist group, Al Shabaab, banned international aid agencies from operating in regions it controls.

The WFP flew in 14 tonnes of ready-to-use food supplements for malnourished children at the camps in Mogadishu.

Spokesman for the agency, David Orr, told reporters at Mogadishu airport that more aid will be flown in over the coming days.

FIVE) – INCREASING TAXES IN THE SOUTH IS THE “BETTER LONG-TERM OPTION”

Taxation as a development finance mechanism is currently on everyone's lips. Increased domestic resource mobilization in the South has been neglected for a long time, but is now regarded as the better long-term option to foreign aid funding. If developing countries were able to collect sufficient tax revenues, they could increase their independence, the provision of social protection, infrastructure and basic services, finds [two recent studies by published Afrodad](#). Taxation also plays a significant role in income and wealth redistribution, as well as governance. The papers analyse the role of tax in African development by examining various complexities surrounding it in [Mozambique](#) and [Zimbabwe](#), and provide policy recommendations for the two countries.

SIX) – MOROCCO: STUDENTS SEEK TRAINING, NOT TEACHING

Despite 12 years of reform, Morocco's universities continue to fall short of expectations, with students complaining that the training they get does not meet the demands of the job market.

Professors in this North African country of 32 million people echoed their students' grievances, adding that Moroccan universities are poorly managed and riddled with corruption. "The kind of training provided by universities remains poor and does not meet any of the educational, pedagogic, academic and intellectual conventional standards," said Zakaria Rmidi, a student preparing for his master's degree in English studies. "We have not moved yet from the logic of teaching to that of training," said Abdellatif Fetheddine, head of the Department of Philosophy at Hassan II-Mohammedia University in Casablanca, in an interview.

Morocco's university system has been subject to reforms since 1999 when King Hassan II decided to institute wide-ranging measures in the field of education. The reform aimed especially at adapting university training to the needs of the job market. Hassan II, however, died that same year. He had ruled Morocco for nearly four decades since 1961.

But the death of the king did not stop the reforms, which were continued by his successor, Mohamed VI. In a speech on Oct. 8, 1999, the king said the purpose of the reform was "educating good citizens capable of acquiring knowledge and skills" as well as "the rationalisation of expenses reserved for education, and the protection of these public funds from any abuse or manipulation."

Less than a year later on May 19, 2000, the Moroccan parliament enacted a new law granting total administrative and financial autonomy to Morocco's 15 universities.

According to official figures by the Ministry of National Education, the total number of students in these universities during the academic year 2009-2010 reached 306,595.

The law established a modular system of training, with the academic year divided into semesters. Also for the first time, master's degrees were created, replacing the former system where universities granted only Diplomas of In-depth studies (DEA) and Diplomas of Higher Education (DES).

But these educational reforms do not satisfy students. "University education in Morocco is much more quantitative than qualitative," Rmidi explained. "Students sometimes find themselves having nine to 10

subjects within the same semester, dealing with plenty of material, studying up to 24 hours a week. They are required to be present in all the sessions and to prepare presentations on what they study."

Despite this, the new system still has a long way to go before it reaches the goal of reform laid out 12 years ago. Rmidi said that because of the incompatibility with the employment market, students have "lost trust in universities as a place of knowledge and thought."

"A lot of students who get their baccalaureate would prefer to go to a vocational training institute instead of going to university. Sometimes, even those who go to university can opt for another two years training in a vocational institute after they get their license degrees," Rmidi added.

The problem is not only educational. Professors also complain of poor working conditions, including the lack infrastructure and facilities, Rmidi said.

The causes are not necessarily financial, a case in point being the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Ben Msik, affiliated to Hassan II-Mohammedia University in Casablanca. An official statement of accounts of the faculty, a copy of which IPS obtained, says it spent over 6.3 million dirhams (more than 800,000 dollars) in 2010 alone.

The statement also showed that of this amount, more than 480,000 dirhams (60,000 dollars) were spent on catering and accommodation. The faculty has no restaurant and no residence halls for students. In contrast, the faculty spent only 633 dollars for new books for the library.

Those who raise their voices against these practices have gotten into trouble. Mohamed Said Karrouk, professor of climatology in the same faculty, wrote several letters to the administration to denounce mismanagement, corruption, and falsification of documents, only to find himself dragged before a disciplinary council. "They did not even open an investigation to show whether I am right or wrong," he told. When resistance to reform comes from those supposed to apply it, "this reform remains only on paper," said Abdelmajid Jahfa, a member of the National Syndicate of Higher Education.

"I do not see absolutely any advantages of the system. What advantages exist are completely demolished by an archaic administrative system," he said.

"We still need to democratise more the management of the university. We need to reform the reform," Abdellatif Fetheddine said.

SEVEN) – **DISPLACED IVORIANS 'TOO AFRAID TO RETURN'**

More than half a million people remain displaced by Ivory Coast's post-election conflict and many are too afraid to return home for fear of ethnic reprisals, Amnesty International says in a report.

The London-based human-rights organisation says that forces loyal to Alassane Ouattara, the president, were reportedly involved in killings and other abuses during their battle to oust Laurent Gbagbo. "Serious human rights violations including torture, enforced disappearances and extra-judicial executions have been committed in Ivory Coast since the arrest of former president Laurent Gbagbo on April 11," the 44-page report released on Thursday said. It said both sides had committed crimes.

Gbagbo's removal in April ended months of violent power struggle over a disputed election in November 2010.

Most of the abuses, and all of the killings, that Amnesty International documented happened in April and May, as the West African country - the world's biggest cocoa producer - was still emerging from a conflict that killed at least 3,000 people and displaced more than a million.

The report further said the crimes, which were worst in the volatile west of the country, a tinderbox of ethnic and land tensions, had created a climate of fear preventing tens of thousands of refugees from returning home for fear of reprisals.

"It is therefore not surprising that the number of displaced people and refugees, the overwhelming number of whom belong to ethnic groups perceived as supporters of Laurent Gbagbo, remains very high," the report said.

Some 670,000 Ivorians remained displaced at the end of June, it said, quoting UN refugee agency figures, and 55,000 people were still displaced in the main commercial city of Abidjan.

Commission of inquiry

Much of the persistent lawlessness, including beatings and intimidation of civilians, was being perpetrated by ethnic fighters from Ouattara's Dioula tribe called Dozos. These are allied to his former armed group which is currently being integrated into the national army.

Ouattara signed a decree on Wednesday establishing a commission of inquiry into crimes committed during the post-election crisis, giving it six months to reach conclusions.

He also wants to try Gbagbo and his senior aides currently detained in the north of the country for war crimes, aims which may fit ill with his goal of reconciling in a deeply divided country.

The Hague-based International Criminal Court has been carrying out preliminary research and may soon order an investigation into the gravest crimes committed during the post-election civilian conflict.

Amnesty International recommended it be expanded to cover all crimes committed since a rebellion cut the country in two in 2002.

Gbagbo's supporters complain that not a single member of Ouattara's camp has been arrested for alleged crimes, despite evidence of abuses by the former rebel troops. "In order to end this cycle of violations and reprisals, it is essential to ensure justice for all victims, whatever their political affiliation or ethnic group," Amnesty International said.

EIGHT) – TUNISIA: MIGRANTS FLEE TO NEW TRAPS

As African Union and NATO leaders push for a political solution to the Libyan crisis, many of the thousands of refugees and migrants stranded on the Libyan- Tunisian border say their plight continues to fall on deaf ears. Sitting outside her makeshift tent with her daughter and grandson, 63-year-old Somali refugee Hawiyeh Awal tries to find a bit of shelter from the scorching sun on the Tunisian desert. "I'm so scared that I'm going to die in this hot desert," she says. "I have diabetes and I've lost more than eight kilos since coming here because of the hot weather." Before arriving in Tunisia by bus several months ago, Hawiyeh worked for 18 years as a domestic worker for Libyan families. Instability in her war-torn country forced Hawiyeh to embark upon a treacherous journey through the desert with her daughter. Violence, which claimed the lives of many members of her family, caused severe injuries to both her hands. "Both of my hands were hit during a gun battle, and they were unable to save my small finger on my left hand. My right hand suffered many fractures. A surgical operation that I had in Libya turned out to be a mess because they forgot to remove cotton from inside, and after 20 days it became infected." "My daughter and I can't bear the situation in this camp any more because all we do is sit and wait. We're just hoping to be resettled in a safe place where I can find medical treatment because here we must first get approval from the Tunisian military in order to access any kind of healthcare."

Located along the main Libyan coastal highway leading to Tripoli just east of the southern Tunisian town Ras Ajdir, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) run Shousha camp is home to an estimated 3,500 refugees and migrants.

Daily life here has become difficult due to exposure to extreme temperatures, frequent sandstorms, insufficient access to hygiene facilities, and overcrowding.

"This is the biggest hell. There are no schools, no electricity, no work, and with Ramadan approaching we don't even have access to proper wash facilities to clean ourselves," Jamal from Darfur told IPS.

"Everyday all we eat is rice and macaroni. No one is helping us. I would prefer to go back to Libya because whether I'm here or there I'm going to die."

According to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), more than 600,000 of the nearly one million civilians that have fled Libya's conflict are migrants.

From Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria and some 20 other countries, many of these individuals who are seeking refuge from the Libyan war were already escaping war and poverty in their home countries.

Twenty-seven-year-old Dombia, originally from Cote d'Ivoire, fled his country to nearby Burkina Faso after political upheaval claimed all but two of his family members. Unable to find sufficient work, he decided to pay a middleman 2,000 dollars to enter Libya illegally.

For several years Dombia juggled various odd jobs to make ends meet until he was able to obtain stable work as a manager for a construction company. Just as he was starting to rebuild his life the war started. "I can't go back home because of the political situation and I have no family there," said Dombia.

"When the war broke out I tried to escape but the pro-Gaddafi soldiers took my passport, money, phone and then detained me because I wasn't legal in the country. After one month they dumped us at the Tunisian border."

Penniless, hungry and with no NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) member states or African leaders prepared to intervene, hundreds of migrants and refugees risk the perilous journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Europe despite a one in ten chance of perishing due to hunger, drowning or inability to navigate themselves.

"How long must we continue suffering like this? I have been here for two months now and I have to wait until the end of November for an interview with the UNHCR for possible resettlement," Eritrean asylum

seeker Nasih told.

"I tried along with dozens of other people to reach Italy in April but our boat capsized and I never made it. We lost many people. Luckily I survived but ended up in this camp. I am ready to go back to Libya and try again."

So as to reach Libya before nightfall, dozens leave the Shousha camp every morning. Aid workers warn that those numbers will start to increase rapidly unless the international community adopts urgent measures to improve their standard of living or assist in their resettlement.

"What about the African Union? If you see how they are dealing with the situation of drought in East Africa now, then how can we expect them to take interest in our suffering here? They have done nothing and will continue to do nothing, which is why we have to take matters into our own hands," Ethiopian migrant Yonas tells. "We are trapped here. I refuse to have this be the life for me and my family."

NINE) – ZIMBABWE: BLEAK FUTURE FOR SECOND-HAND CLOTHES TRADERS

It is becoming increasingly difficult for second-hand clothes traders like Susanne Jabavu to do business because of rising costs to import bales of clothing from neighbouring countries.

As government attempts to revive the country's failing textile industry amid pressure from clothing unions to curb the importation of cheap and second-hand clothes, the numerous women who make their living from this trade are finding business difficult. A year after the prohibitive duty tariffs were introduced, Jabavu is finding it hard to make a profit from her business after paying the duties.

Import and customs tariffs have become a huge stumbling block for Jabavu, whose income solely comes from selling second-hand clothes and other cheap merchandise sourced in neighbouring countries.

It costs her around 20 dollars per kg to import second-hand clothing, and a bale can weigh anything up to 60 kgs.

Previously, Jabavu says she paid about a quarter of what she has to pay now and at any given time she imports up to five bales worth anything between 1,000 and 1,500 dollars.

Jabavu is one of many Zimbabwean women who have set up stalls in flea markets across the city where they sell cheap, second-hand clothing and Chinese imports preferred by the country's low-income earners. But this sector is facing an uncertain future as Zimbabwe's economic reconstruction efforts continue at a snail's pace. "The money demanded at the border for us to bring the bales (of clothing) is just too much and it does not make sense to make these long trips to Zambia and Mozambique when you won't be able to pay the duty," Jabavu says.

Jabavu has an option of travelling very cheaply by train but she says this means spending long periods travelling, which is bad for business, so she opts for going by road. "If I am lucky, I can get a lift with those truckers who demand 100 dollars if am travelling from Mozambique. But other private transporters demand more," Jabavu says. "We have tried (among the traders) to pool resources to assist each other with paying (the import and customs tariffs) but this has proved difficult because not all of us always have the money," she says.

The prohibitive duty tariffs introduced in 2010 are seen by many in Zimbabwe as part of government's effort to promote local manufacturing as the country's focus on economic recovery is increasingly being directed at the local textile industry, a one-time major employer.

Finance Minister Tendai Biti has made the resuscitation of the country's textile industry one of his top priorities.

Both government and textile industry officials say the sector faces total collapse as major firms in Bulawayo have shut down. The "unsustainable and unfair" competition presented by second-hand clothes and Chinese imports are among the major causes for this.

According to the ministry of industry and commerce, more than 100 companies have closed in Bulawayo in 2011 as the Zimbabwean economy continues to implode. This includes many textile industries and even previous major employers, Cotton Printers and Security Mills.

"Some traders I know have decided to smuggle in bales of clothing because they cannot afford the duty," says Janet Sibamba, another second-hand clothes trader. "But a lot of these bales have been confiscated by the customs people so it is making our efforts to work very difficult," she says, adding she still has to contend with high transport costs of up to 200 dollars to haul her bales from surrounding countries into Zimbabwe.

Traders like Sibamba buy second-hand clothing and cheap Chinese goods from Zambia, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

However, it has become common for the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) - the country's customs

duty collector - to auction confiscated bales of second-hand clothing at border towns.

ZIMRA raids flea markets demanding proof that the second-hand clothes and other goods on sale were brought into the country legally.

Customs officials who said their warehouses are stacked with second-hand clothes after importers failed to pay duty on the items.

"We know this is one of the means of earning a living for many women, but because these are for resale in the country, they must pay the required tariffs," said one official.

While the ministries of women and gender affairs and the Small to Medium Enterprises push for the economic empowerment of women, the high import tariffs has made this difficult.

"There are obviously serious implications for women who cannot continue to earn a decent living because of these tariffs. And for us as country that already has a very low employment rate, it is difficult to imagine how women are going to (be) integrated into the mainstream economy," says economist Johnson Samuriwo. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions says the country's unemployment figures are hovering around 90 percent. "Yet there is a fine line the government must bestride, which on one hand is to promote local industry and on the other is to create conditions that economically empower women who we know survive mainly on the informal fringes of the economy," he said says "Government must not make knee-jerk responses to issues but must create platforms where all sectors of the economy (can operate) without compromising (each) other. I believe it is about uplifting people's lives and if women feel they are not getting any support, that could have implications on how people vote, for example," Samuriwo says.

The National Union of the Clothing Industry (NUCI) - which ironically claims women as the bulk of the textile workforce - has been lobbying government to curb the importation of cheap Chinese and second-hand clothes, citing massive redundancies in the sector.

"Our people (in the clothing industry) are suffering immensely because of these second-hand clothes as everyone is now buying a shirt for one dollar, meaning that what we are manufacturing will never be bought," says Simbarashe Mutambanengwe of NUCI.

A shirt in formal retail outlets can cost anything from 30 to 50 dollars.

"It has simply meant employers cannot continue (employing) our members and government just has to act on this. We need to survive," he says.

For women like Jabavu who have never known formal employment, it could mean pursuing other avenues to earn a living.

TEN) – EGYPT: 'ONE MUBARAK GOES, 18 COME IN'

Almost six months after the popular uprising that led to the ouster of former president Hosni Mubarak, the honeymoon between protesters and Egypt's ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) - initially portrayed as a "defender of the revolution" - appears to be over. "The people's confidence in the SCAF, which appears unable or unwilling to address our grievances, has reached an all-time low," said Abdel Rahman Abu Zeid, a spokesman for protesters currently camped out in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

Since Jul. 8, demonstrators have returned en masse to the iconic square - in the hundreds of thousands on certain days - to protest the ruling council's failure to implement key revolutionary demands.

"If you can't meet the demands of the revolution... then you should step down," the Revolutionary Youth Coalition, which consists of several protest groups that played a major roles in the recent uprising, told the council last week. "The Egyptian people represent the sole source of authority; they impart authority, and they can take it away."

The SCAF has governed the country since Mubarak's departure in February following an 18-day popular uprising in which hundreds were killed.

For one, protesters demand an immediate halt to the use of force by security forces to disperse demonstrations. In a disturbing precedent late last month, hundreds were injured when police used rubber bullets and tear gas to break up a protest in Cairo held by relatives of those killed during the uprising.

"Such naked aggression against protesters, the likes of which have not been seen since the days of the revolution, have infuriated the public," said Abu Zeid.

Demonstrators also want to see the speedy prosecution of corrupt former regime officials, especially Mubarak and his close associates, and security personnel implicated in killing protesters. "No one has seen Mubarak in weeks. We don't even know if he's in prison," said Sherif Mekawi, a leading member of the liberal Ghad Party. "They also say they're prosecuting the former interior minister, but no one has seen him recently either."

In early July, an Egyptian court found three former government ministers, all of whom had been particularly

close to Mubarak, innocent of corruption charges. The following day, a criminal court in the city of Suez bailed out seven police officers, charged with involvement in killing protesters. "This apparent lack of accountability has further incensed public opinion and brought demonstrators back to Tahrir Square to register their mounting dissatisfaction," said Mekawi.

Protesters also demand a halt to the continued referral of civilians to military tribunals - a common practice under the former regime. Since the revolution, hundreds of young protesters have been slapped with jail terms, some of up to five years, by military courts.

"The only ones currently being tried in military courts are protesters, when former regime officials are the ones that should be on trial," said Mekawi.

At the height of the revolution, Egypt's armed forces were praised by the public after they ostensibly came out on the side of the protesters. In the months since 'the people and the army are one' has been an oft-repeated refrain at many public rallies.

But as chief demands remain unfulfilled, the feelings of camaraderie have noticeably cooled. "People don't feel there's been any real change. The foot-dragging by the military council reminds people of the Mubarak regime," Khaled Mohamed, 26-year-old university student and active Tahrir protester, told IPS. "We feel like we've traded one Mubarak for 18 Mubaraks," he added, referring to the 18-member SCAF.

Slogans calling for the "fall of the regime" repeated ad nauseam throughout the course of the uprising, have now been replaced in many cases with calls for the "fall of the field-marshal" in reference to SCAF head and longstanding defence minister Field Marshal Mohamed Tantawi.

"The people initially saw Tantawi as a protector of the revolution," said Mohamed. "But six months on, he now appears to be running the country in the same autocratic way that Mubarak did."

Protesters, therefore, have also begun calling for the dismissal of the SCAF-appointed transitional government, the replacement of the ruling military council with a civilian council, the removal of all Mubarak-era regional governors, and a "purge" of the judiciary and media of all remnants of the former regime.

"If the SCAF wants to regain the trust of the public, it must comply with all these demands," said Abu Zeid. In an unusually strongly-worded statement on Jul. 12, the ruling council stressed its refusal to countenance any attempt to "seize" power. Stating that it would not relinquish its governing role before parliamentary polls were held later this year, the SCAF went on to warn protesters against impeding the functioning of the state and its institutions.

"The tone of the statement was unusually harsh. The council tacitly threatened to break up protests by force," said Abu Zeid. "This was both unexpected and, for protesters, totally unacceptable."

In an effort to placate frustrated demonstrators, Prime Minister Essam Sharaf recently announced a handful of concessions.

On Jul. 13, he dismissed more than 500 police officers believed to have been involved in the killing of protesters. He also promised to carry out a wide-ranging cabinet reshuffle, dismiss all Mubarak-appointed regional governors, and televise trials of former regime officials.

On the same day, Sharaf accepted the resignation of assistant Prime Minister Yehia al-Gamal. And on Monday (Jul. 18), foreign minister Mohamed al-Orabi - appointed by the SCAF only three weeks ago - likewise tendered his resignation.

Protesters, however, rejected the moves as inadequate. "These measures were merely cosmetic," said Abu Zeid. "It took Sharaf more than four months to take these simple steps, which he only did under public pressure. He's lost all credibility. "We respect the Egyptian Armed Forces as an institution," Abu Zeid added. "And we will also respect the SCAF - but only if it complies with the people's demands."

Protest groups are calling for another million-man demonstration in Tahrir Square on Friday to reiterate their demands.

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