

Survival on campus

By IRENE WANYANGA

University students have become part-time businesspeople to counter the cost-sharing problem. There is a kiosk in hall 10, a bar in hall 5, mandazis being sold in the prefabs, illicit brew being sold in hall 11, video shows, photography, just to mention a few. Students are also cooking in their rooms. Books are bought in groups because student cannot afford them individually.

These money making and money-saving ventures may not be as profitable as the students think. Cooking in the rooms is only economical when done in groups and students are therefore pooling together. They however forget that the time spent in the purchasing, preparation and cleaning up makes it more expensive than eating in the dining hall.

Those who operate businesses do it at the expense of their studies. They are so busy making money that they miss some lectures. The financial constraints have had both positive and negative effects on the students. They have learnt to pool their resources whenever possible and give each other loans when necessary. Fredrick Okite of hall 8 says, "My room-mate and I do not go for breakfast in the dining hall. We find it cheaper to make the tea in our room. We therefore have an agreement that he buys the bread and I buy the milk." This kind of arrangement does not always work because there are students who will want to ride on the backs of others.

There are however, those who cannot cope with the pressure and are very depressed. Henry Ongeri, a first-year student from Kisii says, "I'm depressed most of the times because I don't have money. Back at home, when I run out of money, I can sell bananas or sugarcane to generate income. I can't do that here. When I write home to my parents to send me some money, they respond saying they do not have it and there are the other children to think about. Though I understand their situation I can't help being depressed." Other students have turned to alcohol and other drugs to escape their problems.

Others from humble backgrounds spend their allowances on clothes in a bid to fit in socially, but this means that they have to do without certain meals. Susan Waihenya, a first year student, says "when we reported there were noticeable class differences portrayed by our manner of dress. Some of us were quite "shao". But after two weeks, you could not tell who was who."

Though a meal of ugali and sukuma-wiki costs only nine shillings, few students are brave enough to order it because it is regarded as an indication of one's poverty. "If you order for this meal, you have to "improve" it with something like a sausage, which costs sh 13. So, if we have to eat ugali and sukuma-wiki, we cook it and eat it in the privacy of our rooms," revealed Caro Muigai.

There is also a mass exodus of students from the University to the estates on Fridays in a bid to save money that would otherwise have been spent on food over the weekend. Weekends are therefore not being fully utilised for academics.

Though the going is tough, the students feel that they have become more responsible in organising their finances. "When we are on vacation, we have learnt to use whatever money we get sparingly because we are always thinking of the next semester. We even go out of our way to try get part-time jobs, and we are not too choosy about the kind of jobs we want to do," says Kevin Ochieng.

The students say that the situation can improve if they were honest in applying for their loans. "Some of us even fill the forms that both our parents are dead, or that our parents are peasant farmers when this is not the case." Honesty would ensure that resources from the government are given deserving cases. They also appealed to the university administration to provide more recreation facilities within the campus as most of them cannot afford them elsewhere.



Chopped sukuma. Easing domestic chores

Picture Courtesy of Nation Newspapers

HUMOUR

Hard times in the city

By KIPLON KANGOGO

If you are the type of man or woman in Nairobi who still considers living by your own sweat as the only noble means, then take it from me, even though I am not a prophet, that there is no difference between you and the white rhino.

Seriously speaking, you are an endangered species just as much as the rhino. It's life is in danger because of its horn and you are in danger because of your money.

In fact the reason why you have long since parted ways with peace is because the city has been invaded by myriads of idlers who have insatiable lust for reaping where they have not sown.

These malingersers come to you in several ways very well disguised. When they come, you are deluded that they are humble people and yet they are wolves in sheep skin. They come in the form of conmen and conwomen, street comedians, hawkers and sadly, there is a new group who come to you completely disguised as the men or women of "the collar," that is as preachers.

Disguised because they have learnt that the lion that roams

around as it combs the forest roaring like thunder, risks scaring away its prey. So, like the with lion, these people who never sweat for anything except perhaps when they are eating, have only one clear and definite objective. A desire to ensure that your pockets are emptied of its contents.

Since you are the type of person who lives by your own sweat and must be having some money, these idlers confront you anywhere in the city, from the streets, parks and even in the estates.

The sad thing about these idlers is that they are putting in jeopardy the faith of many hard working Kenyans. They are sowing in their hearts the feelings of spiritual despair. This is because if those exerting the siege on their pockets include people disguised as those who should be showing them the only way that will lead from this world to a better world, then things automatically have turned purple.

These 'preachers' do not care much sweating as they locate you. They wait until you have earned the fruits of your sweat, stuffed it in your pockets and perhaps gone to Uhuru park or some place of your choice to relax after a hard work and then approach you like the clever lion.

If by any chance you decided to go

to Uhuru Park because you consider the Architect of the Ruaraka waters part of these people, they come to you with a bundle that you would think are from the famous Marigiti Market.

But when they unbundle their luggage, you realize that they are setting up a public address system and beginning to 'preach'. With a Bible in their hands, they shout over what they have been saying over and over again ever since they invaded the city.

"Brothers and sisters" they shout over the loud speaker and begin "preaching" on how all the Nairobians should cease pretending that they are Christians. Then they appeal to those curious enough to have gathered around them to be true christians.

And as they continue with their talk, your heart is captivated by their articulation of the religious facts. But sadly, as they wind up their 'sermon' they again repeat what they have said in many other places in the city.

"Brothers and sisters", we are mere preachers who are only human and we need earthly food just as much as we need the spiritual food. So, give us food by donating your

'Sadaka' generously. We accept 'Kobole', 10 shillings coin, a Pound, 'Soo Mmoja' and even cheques".

But when you turn back and inwardly figure out the motives behind every move of everybody today including those of hawkers, acrobats, comen and even some of our preachers in Nairobi, the once famous City, which always stood face to face with the sun, you come to a sad conclusion.

The breeding of idlers in the City is higher than that of the mosquitoes. There is breeding of these malingersers day and night, and that is why I am advising you that, you are an endangered species.

They will rest only when they are completely assured that your pockets which you stuffed with the fruits of your sweat, are inside out. Then you will have no choice but to be born into their family.

The only advise I can give you as a friend, though we have never met or are not likely to meet at all even in the future, is you should not break your neck worrying. If you do, then you are likely to develop ulcers. The best thing is salvage what you can and leave the rest for them to scramble for.