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COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF EMBU

SECOND ASSEMBLY : FIRST SESSION

**REPORT OF SECTORAL COMMITTEE ON GENDER,
CULTURE, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL SERVICES ON
THE ISSUE OF WITCHCRAFT ALLEGATIONS AT
KARURA PRIMARY SCHOOL IN KIAMBEERE,
EMBU COUNTY**

**SUBMITTED FOR ADOPTION BY THE COUNTY
ASSEMBLY**

**Clerk's Office
County Assembly of Embu
P. O. Box 140-60100
EMBU**

Director LEPACS
Please advise
2/5/18

C.C.A
*For your further
direction*
2/5/2018

APRIL, 2018

Tabled
29/05/18

Page 8 of 17 Report on the Witchcraft Allegations at Karura
Primary School in Kiambeere, Embu County.

TO THE COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF EMBU
Tabled on.....
29 MAY 2018
Sign.....
P.O. Box 140 - 60100 EMBU

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

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ABBREVIATIONS

C.E.C.	-	County Executive Committee
C.G	-	County Government
C.O.K	-	Constitution of Kenya, 2010
CSO	-	Curriculum Support Officer
DHT	-	Deputy Head Teacher
ECDE	-	Early Childhood Education &Development
H T	-	Head Teacher
K.C.P.E	-	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
M.C.A	-	Member of County Assembly
PTA	-	Parents Teachers Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report on the Witchcraft Allegations at Karura Primary School in Kiambeere, Embu County came as a result of increased media outcry in all major Kenyan outlets both electronic and print on the demonstrations and eventual closedown of the school by parents owing to claims of witchcraft practices involving the school Head teacher and to which a class eight girl is reported to have fallen down in a seizure and to which the parents and community at large accused the Head teacher as having bewitched the girl.

This saw the local pastors from the local evangelical churches acting in solidarity with the parents and community storming the school to conduct exorcism prayers on the girl and the entire school compound despite the fact that the school was Catholic sponsored and not party to such activities.

The accusers alleged that the head teacher had planted jujus and charms all over the school compound to harm the girl and this led to massive demonstrations that saw parents pull their children out of classes leading to the school closure.

The committee on Gender, Culture, Children and Social Services responded by visiting the affected school on 18th October 2017 and later on 6th November 2017 to conduct some intensive investigations on the issue and to determine whether the alleged witchcraft practices was affecting the school and the rights of the children to enjoy their right to education.

The committee had various interviews with the school head teacher, area administration, area education officers, the local priest as well as parents, area residents and neighbors to the school with an aim to fully determining the issue and making the necessary recommendations.

In its observations, the committee noted there were serious contravention of the Witchcraft Act of 1925 which came with dire consequences if one was convicted of the offences spelt out in the Act.

The major recommendation of the committee was for the CEC Gender to liaise with other judicial organs to ensure rightful punishment as clearly spelt out in the Act, was meted on those found culpable.

1.0 BACKGROUND

In a nutshell, this report arose from the need and desire by the committee on Gender, Culture, Children and Social Services to get to the bottom of the case in which witchcraft allegations at Karura Primary School in Kiambeere, Embu County led to demonstrations and eventual closedown of the school by parents and local community.

This led to the rights of children to gather basic education in the area being undermined.

This report endeavors to come up with specific recommendations to ensure the same won't happen again in the future.

1.1 MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

The mandate of the Committee is as outlined in Standing Order 204(5) of the County Assembly of Embu which states that, the functions of a sectoral committee shall be to –

- a) Investigate, inquire into and report on all matters relating to the mandate, management, activities, administration, operations and estimates of the assigned departments;*
- b) Study the programme and policy objectives of the of departments and the effectiveness of the implementation;*
- c) Study and review all County Legislation referred to it;*
- d) Study, access and analyze the relative success of the departments as measured by the results obtained as compared with their stated objectives;*
- e) Investigate and inquire into all matters relating to the assigned departments as they may deem necessary, and as may be referred to them by the County Assembly;*
- f) To vet and report on all appointments where the constitution or any law requires the County Assembly to approve, except those under Standing Order 198(1) (committee on Appointments) and*
- g) Make reports and recommendations to the County Assembly as often as possible, including recommendations of proposed legislation.*

1.2 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee on Gender, Culture, Children and Social Services was formed pursuant to provisions of Standing Order No. 204(1) of the County Assembly of Embu as read with section 14 (7) of the County Governments Act, 2012 .The committee comprises of the following members;

1. Hon.Sicily Warue Mbugi	Chairperson
2. Hon.Newton Kariuki Ndwiga	Vice chairperson
3. Hon.Rose Ruguru Kinyua	Member
4. Hon. Bernard Nyaga Kandia	Member
5. Hon. Edith Wanjira Nyaga	Member
6. Hon.Patrick Njeru Mukavi	Member
7. Hon. Sicily Ruguru Njiru	Member

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The committee sought to establish whether it was true that witchcraft allegations led to demonstrations and eventual withdrawal of children leading to the close down of Karura Primary School in Kiambeere.

1.4 OBJECTIVES/TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To assess whether the issue of the alleged witchcraft was true.
2. To establish the status/fate of the school going children affected by the closure of the school owing to the allegations.
3. To prepare a report for consideration by the County Assembly.

1.5 METHODOLOGY

In preparation of this report, the Committee used the following methods to gather information.

- Committee meetings.
- Visiting the affected area.
- Oral Interviews with relevant stakeholders in the affected area.

1.6 TOOLS OF REFERENCE

Reference to the following documents was made:

- (i) The Constitution of Kenya, (C.O.K) 2010
- (ii) County Assembly of Embu, Standing Orders
- (iii) Correspondences
- (iv) The Witchcraft Act of 1925 (revised 2012)

1.7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The committee wishes to record its appreciation to the Speaker of the County Assembly for the invaluable assistance given in order to complete this task. The committee is further indebted to the Clerk of the County Assembly for facilitation and advice, committee members and the staff of the County Assembly for the services they rendered to the committee. It is their commitment and dedication to duty that made the work of the committee and production of this report possible.

Signed _____ Date _____

HON.SICILY WARUE MBUGI

CHAIRPERSON

**COMMITTEE ON GENDER, CULTURE, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL
SERVICES.**

2.0 COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS AND DELIBERATIONS

2:1 FINDINGS FROM VISITS TO KARURA PRIMARY SCHOOL, KIAMBEERE.

The committee toured Karura Primary School on Wednesday, 18th October 2017. The school is located in Mutuovare area of Kiambeere ward in Embu County. On reaching the school the committee was met by the Head teacher, Mr. Edward Njeru who ushered the members to his office. The chairperson introduced the members of the committee and the accompanying staff and later explained to the Head teacher that they had come owing to the issues regarding the alleged witchcraft in the school. She pointed out that her committee was also responsible for children and hence the need to look at the issues affecting the children.

2.2 PRESENTATION BY THE HEAD TEACHER OF KARURA PRIMARY SCHOOL.

The HT thanked the committee for visiting the school and for seeking information regarding the incident which had happened.

He informed the committee that the School was started in 1979 and is under the sponsorship of the Catholic Church. It has a total enrolment of 430 pupils, where 229 are boys and 201 are girls. The ECDE class has 31 boys and 29 girls.

He went ahead to confirm the happenings in the school regarding the girl who was involved in seizures to which the family members and community at large attributed to witchcraft.

The girl in question joined the school in 2014 from another school. She was currently in class 8 and was 17 years old. A similar incident involving the same girl had happened again in the year 2015 which had seriously affected her performance. The matter came to rest and for some time it remained forgotten.

On the current issue, the HT informed the committee that the whole saga had started way back on Monday 4th September 2017, when the mother of the affected girl came to school to report that her daughter had not reported to school as she had been involved in a seizure on the previous day (Sunday 3rd September 2017).

On Tuesday 5th of September 2017, the girl got seizures again in school whereupon the HT sent for the mother to pick up the daughter. The mother came to the school accompanied by her son. They took the daughter away and after some time, she was brought back to the school feeling well. As soon as the mother left, the girl fell down again in a seizure but was later revived only to fall again. The incident and seizures had continued and after word leaked out, it had prompted some pastors around the school who had teamed up and sought an appointment with the school in an endeavor to carry out exorcism on the girl through prayers.

The HT had at that time contacted the priest in charge over the issue and the Priest had initially agreed to the appointment but gave the following conditions;

- That the catholic priest was to lead the prayers since the school was under the sponsorship of the Catholic church
- That the Ministry of Education be involved as primary education had not been devolved.
- That the County Government be involved because of the ECDE classes.

The pastors at that time were unable to meet with the conditions as set out by the Priest and chose not to appear though it was apparent that they never let the matter go.

As fate would have it, the almost forgotten issue of the girl and the seizures re-emerged again more strongly the next month. On Monday 2nd October 2017, while at her home the girl got the seizures. On consultation the local pastors who conducted some prayers at home alleged that the exorcism prayers were not effective since they claimed someone was blocking them.

Amidst the disagreements amongst the pastors, the girl recovered and turned up in school only for the seizures to recur again. The HT tried to reach the local parish priest in charge of the school but learnt that the priest had proceeded on prayer retreat to Nairobi and could not be reached on phone. The pastors on learning about the incident and the fact that the Priest was not around ambushed the school and proceeded to conduct the exorcism prayers which were held on the afternoon of 2nd October 2017.

The committee learnt with a lot of concern that in the exorcism prayer meeting, the HT claimed that the area chief and his assistant, some school board members, Curriculum Support Officer (CSO), parents, pupils as well as members of the public were present. The HT on further interrogation by the committee exonerated the chief and his assistant as they were just there to maintain law and order

The pastors involved in the exorcism prayers were;

- ✓ Pastor Morris Ngungi of the Rise and Christ Love Ministry
- ✓ Pastor Wilson Ndaru of King's Outreach Church
- ✓ Pastor Njiru of the Jesus Glory Centre Ministry
- ✓ Pastor Kariuki of East Africa Pentecostal Church

The pastors addressed the crowd that had gathered stating the reasons for the prayers. They all teamed up with the parents of the affected girl and concluded that the girl had been bewitched by the Head teacher. They claimed that the head teacher had planted jujus all over the school compound starting from the gate in an attempt to harm the girl. The school was closed indefinitely on 3rd October 2017 after the parents demanded that their children leave

school. The ECDE and the upper primary pupils were in shock with the turn of events at the school.

On 4TH October 2017, the Deputy County Commissioner (DCC) came to the school and after a fruitful meeting with the parents, teachers and rest of the stakeholders, it was ordered that the students report back to school. The DCC also sent messages to all the churches in the area on 8th October 2017 asking that parents return their children to the school. The response was as follows;

- ❖ Thursday, 5th October 2017 - 25 out 490 pupils reported
- ❖ Friday, 6th October 2017 - 57
- ❖ Monday, 9th October 2017 - 250
- ❖ Tuesday, 10th October 2017 - 372
- ❖ Wednesday, 11th October 2017 - 425

The DCC advised that the parents seek medical assistance and also prepare her for exams at home. Her stay in school would affect the whole school.

The head teacher said he was still doing investigations on the matter which was being blown out of proportion. He noted that the former chairman of the parents' teachers association (PTA) had incited the public on the instant matter since he fell out with him over the requirement by the ministry of education that chairpersons must have some level of academic qualification which he did not have. He was quick to clarify that his life was not in danger and that relationship between the school and the community was normal.

In a nutshell, the head teacher summarized his presentation to the committee by claiming that some people out of malice and fight for control of the school were just taking advantage of the girl's predicament to wage war against him. He also believed that it was wrong for pastors to storm into the school without going through the sponsor- the Catholic Church and cause turmoil in the school.

2.3. PRESENTATION BY THE LOCAL PARISH PRIEST (MUTUOVARE PARISH) IN CHARGE OF KARURA PRIMARY SCHOOL.

The local parish priest confirmed and ascertained that it was true that there were issues in the school and the witchcraft allegations were indeed true.

According to him, the child is reported to have fallen down in a seizure to which the parents attributed to her having been bewitched by the Head teacher.

They claimed that the head teacher had planted jujus all over the school compound starting from the gate in an attempt to harm the girl.

Previously, the girl had developed seizures during consecration mass but the priest was convinced that she was sick.

He advised that the child need to be taken to hospital but the family totally refused to agree.

The parents teamed with others and they demonstrated against the head teacher. They also pulled their kids out of classes leading to the school closure.

From the confrontations that ensued, it was apparent that local dirty politics was in play as there were two groups fighting; one group pitting the head teacher on one side and another group pitting the parents to the girl on another side.

The priest also highlighted the point that there seemed to be fight for control of the school.

Five local pastors united together and worsened the situation further by believing the witchcraft theory against the head teacher and thus storming the school to conduct exorcism.

The priest organized a meeting with the school community whereby in conjunction with the office of the DCC and the entire education department, they were able to convince the parents to bring the children back to school.

2.4. PRESENTATION BY THE AREA ADMINISTRATION, MUTUOVARE.

The committee visited the area chief's office where they were met by the assistant chief who welcomed them on behalf of the chief who was away on an official duty.

The assistant chief acknowledged that the issues in the school as reported were indeed true but was quick to blame local dirty politics which he felt was in play as there were two groups fighting; one group pitting the head teacher on one side and another group pitting the parents to the girl on another side.

He also blamed interference from visitors from neighboring county whom he felt that they joined the fighting and brought about the issues of witchcraft which according to him were unfounded and barbaric and should not find their way into the local society.

In his submission, the assistant chief informed the members that after the issue was highlighted, the DCC immediately ordered a meeting with the local community and the parents of the school. They went ahead to hear presentations from the affected parties but thoroughly dismissed the issue of witchcraft as baseless.

The DCC cautioned the parents to avoid jeopardizing the future of their children because of believes in barbaric traditions which were against the laws of Kenya and the rights of the children to free, fair and quality education which was clearly spelt out in the COK.

In the discussion, the issue of the issue of the four pastors involved in the exorcism prayers was brought up. The DCC was very angry over the four for interfering with the running of the school and ordered them to record statements with the police. She cautioned the community against what she termed fight for control of the school using unorthodox means and promised that stern action against all those involved would be taken to act as deterrent to the rest. The four pastors involved included:

- Pastor Morris Ngungi of the Rise and Christ Love Ministry.
- Pastor Wilson Ndaru of King's Outreach Church
- Pastor Njiru of the Jesus Glory Centre Ministry
- Pastor Kariuki of East Africa Pentecostal Church

The assistant chief further informed the committee members that after the meeting, the parents agreed to bring back the children to school and hence the school was re-opened.

It was generally agreed that the girl be allowed to do her KCPE exams which she did. Investigations were yet to yield results as no arrests had been made.

2.5. PRESENTATION BY THE AREA EDUCATION OFFICERS

The committee was met by the sub-county human resource Education officer who spoke on behalf of the rest of the officers since they were all involved in the delivery and management of the ongoing KCSE exams within the sub-county.

He informed the members that immediately after the issue was aired, they rushed to the school in the company of the DCC and other government officials including the local stakeholders and had an urgent meeting with the parents, children and local people in the area.

The principal concern was immediate solution to the problem at hand to pave way for immediate re-opening of the school since KCPE exams were around the corner.

They listened to the issues from the affected parties and agreed that immediate action needed to be taken on those involved so as to avoid the issue from ever happening again.

They also promised to commence with immediate investigation on the Headteacher and promised that immediate administrative issues would be taken against him in case he was found culpable to having been guilty of the allegations against him.

They managed to convince the community to embrace dialogue and allow their children back to school and to move on while shunning all the negative /harmful traditions which could only take them backward in their lives.

The school was finally re-opened and the girl was able to sit for her exams.

3.0 COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

From the whole saga of the events that followed the case of the girl under seizures, the committee made the following further observations.

- That, there seemed to be neglect on the side of the parents in taking good care of their child because everything pointed to the fact that the girl was sick and what she needed was good quality medical care to alleviate the issue of seizures.
- That, there seemed to be a bitter fight for control of the school pitting the head teacher and the priest on one side and the parents to the affected girl together with the local pastors on the other side. This was very wrong as it would eventually lead to the collapse of the school and infringements to the children right to education.
- That, there lacked psychological assistance to the children in the school including guiding and counselling services and it was seriously affecting the children as seen in the affected girl.
- That, the area education officers seemed not to be in full control of education in the area as it should be. They were not taking any serious deterrent actions against people interfering with education in the area as it should be.
- That, the issue of sponsorship of schools in the area was an issue which required proper management otherwise it would result to bigger problems causing untold misery to the children.
- That, believe and trust in witchcraft/supernatural power play was very real and rich and highly recognized thing in the area.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THAT**, the CEC Member for Gender, Children, Culture and Social Services should liaise with the national government and other relevant county departments in enforcing the policy which requires children to acquire the compulsory basic education.
2. **THAT**, the CEC Member for Gender, Culture, Children, and Social Services should develop management guidelines to guard against effects of harmful cultural practices especially those affecting the rights of children including right to education.
3. **THAT**, the CEC Member for Gender, Children, Culture and Social Services should organize and conduct sensitization forums to educate residents on dangers of continuing to follow harmful/backward cultural practices.
4. **THAT**, the CEC Member for Gender, Children, Culture and Social Services should liaise with other judicial organs to ensure rightful punishment as clearly spelt out in the Act was meted on the convicted offenders.
5. **THAT**, the CEC Member for Gender, Children, Culture and Social Services should ensure that the area Education Officer should be in full control of education I the area of his/her jurisdiction to avoid such impeccable occurrences.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The recommendations herein were agreed upon by all members without any dissenting opinion. The Committee therefore urges this honorable house to adopt this report and the recommendations herein.

NAME	POSITION	SIGN
1. Hon. Newton Kariuki Ndwiga	Vice chairperson	-----
2. Hon. Rose Ruguru Kinyua	Member	<u>Ruguru</u> -----
3. Hon. Bernard Nyaga Kandia	Member	<u>B.N</u> -----
4. Hon. Edith Wanjira Nyaga	Member	<u>Edith</u> -----
5. Hon. Patrick Njeru Mukavi	Member	-----
6. Hon. Sicily Ruguru Njiru	Member	-----

SIGNED NSIWARUE DATE 6-04-2018

HON. SICILY WARUE MBUGI,

CHAIRPERSON, GENDER, CULTURE, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL SERVICES

