

The presidency is too powerful, says UNDP

PICTURE: ELVIS OGINA

By James Anyanzwa and Tom Mogusu

CONCENTRATION of political power in the Executive has undermined the principle of separation of powers between the Judiciary and Parliament, according to Kenya's Third Human Development Report.

According to the report, the consolidation of power in the Executive has led to erosion of the supremacy of Parliament. "Checks and balances between public and institutions have been rendered irrelevant. This has set in motion a process that has weakened and abused public institutions."

It says constitutional amendments, effected between 1986 and 1989, rescinding the security of tenure of the offices of Attorney-General, Solicitor-General and various judges undermined the Judiciary and subjugated it to the Executive.

It also says that corruption that has infiltrated the Judiciary and other public institutions has denied the poor and ordinary citizens access to justice.

It says that political

patronage undermines the mechanism of checking abuse of power to the detriment of ordinary citizens.

The report also criticises the Government's decision to pull out of the provision of social services, in the name of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

The report says uncontrolled implementation of the SAPs have had a negative impact on the country's economic growth.

It further criticises the manner in which the Government implemented the SAPs, which essentially led to privatisation in the provision of social resources such as education, food and health.

It also says that the Government's unco-ordinated withdrawal led to disparities in service access and affordability.

The disparities are reflected in urban and rural areas, with health expenditures in rural areas accounting for just 30 per cent while those in urban areas eat up the remaining 70 per cent of the country's health expenditure.

The same disparity occurs in the distribution of medical personnel, where there is one doctor per 33,000 rural residents compared to one doctor for 1,700 urban residents.

These disparities also exist in



Dr Isaac Chivore (left) and Ms Deborah Ongewe, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Human Development, follow the proceedings during the launch of the Third Kenya National Human Development Report at the University of Nairobi.

education, water, energy and communication.

They are manifested in differentials in human development across regions and between rural and urban areas.

It says that the worst hit are areas within the arid and semi-arid areas, also known as Asals.

The key victims have been essential services such as health and education.

The report says that at the implementation of the SAPs, the Government recognised that some people would not be able to

afford the services.

However, the report says that over the years, the implementation of the SAP policy has been affected because of poor economic performance and increasing poverty among Kenyans.

It argues that one of the factors behind this decline has been the lack of indicators to identify those who are unable to access services.

"Indeed, it is largely those who have access to service providers who manipulate the system and

benefit," the report reads in part.

It also questions the rationale behind the Government's decision to pursue the system of user fees in providing education, health and other social services, with no meaningful regulation. "This exploited the poor through high service tariffs."

The result, the report says, has been limited access to services and worrying unmet needs for most of the population.

Report indicates welfare of Kenyans improved

KENYA has recorded slight improvements in human welfare over the past two years, according to the Third Human Development Report. The report estimates Kenya's Human Development Index (HDI) at 0.550, a 0.011 increase from the 0.539 recorded in 2001. The report attributes the marginal increase to a slight improvement in life expectancy.

The report, launched yesterday by Ms Deborah Ongewe, the Permanent

Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Human Development, places Kenya in the medium human development category following the improved index. HDI is a composite of three indices: life expectancy, education level and standard of living as measured by income. Nairobi Province recorded the highest HDI of 0.758 of Kenya's eight administrative regions. But the figure was lower than the 0.783 recorded in 2001. The change is attributed to a declining life expectancy in Nairobi that fell from 66 in 2001

to 57 in the current report. Nairobi is followed by Rift Valley (0.534), Eastern (0.522) and the Coast (0.487). The report shows that the fairly high HDI for Nairobi has concealed many hardships in the city ranging from poor living conditions in slum areas to abject poverty. The better performance of Central and Rift Valley is attributed to among others, policies and allocation of resources that tended to favour the so-called high potential areas in Kenya.

North Eastern had the least human development with a HDI of 0.487. According to the report, this province has the least opportunities for income generation. As a result, majority of the population have no access to basic social services such as education, health and infrastructure. It shows that arid and semi-arid lands (Asals) have received little Government attention. Similarly, the report estimates Kenya's Human Poverty Index (HPI) to be 34.1 per cent compared to the Income

Poverty Index of 56 per cent. The HPI uses basic indicators of deprivation, namely, illiteracy, malnutrition, early death, inadequate health care and limited access to safe water. The region with the least poverty is Central with an HPI of 31.6 per cent. Rift Valley follows with 36.7 per cent and Coast with 37.3. North Eastern has the highest HPI at 42 per cent. Compared to the report for 2001, human poverty has fallen, though marginally, in all regions except Eastern Province.