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\$3,000 government chairs anger Kenyans

8th August, 2012

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

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THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

Kenyans are furious at what they see is their government's wastefulness. The anger is because of the amount of money spent on upgrading the country's parliament. Despite much of the nation living in poverty, the government has budgeted more than \$12.5 million for the upgrade. In particular, many were irate at the million dollars spent on 350 new, red chairs for the politicians to sit on. Each chair cost around \$3,000, even though they were made by the country's prison service. The original plan to buy \$5,000 chairs overseas was cancelled when some politicians discovered the cost. MP John Mbadi told the BBC he was angry because for the same price, a Kenyan "could put up some small house for someone".

The new chairs each weigh 50kg, are fireproof and come with a 30-year guarantee. Parliamentary speaker Kenneth Marende defended the decision to spend so much money, saying it would allow politicians to do their jobs better because each would have his or her own separate place to sit. He explained: "The changes we are making are going to input positively in governance. Now the member will be completely on his own. He will be independent. He will make up his mind and just press a button." The average politician in Kenya earns approximately \$168,000 per year, more than their British, French and Canadian counterparts. Two years ago, they started to pay taxes on their income for the first time.

WARM-UPS

1. CHAIRS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about chairs. Change partners often. Share your findings with your first partner.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

furious / wastefulness / upgrading / parliament / budgeted / poverty / politicians / fireproof / defend a decision / place to sit / positively / independent / average / taxes

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. GOVT SPENDING: How should a government spend \$12.5 million? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners and share what you wrote. Change and share again.

	How much of the \$12.5m?	Why this much?
New chairs		
Poverty		
Education		
Missiles		
Politicians' pay		
Healthcare		

4. SEATING: Students A **strongly** believe politicians need the highest quality chairs to sit on; Students B **strongly** believe they should make do with cheap chairs. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. SPENDING: Rank these possible government spending items. Put the most important at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- new chairs for politicians
- pay raise for the country's leader
- advertising for nation's tourism
- prize money for best citizens
- upgraded Internet security
- investment in sport
- conservation
- cheaper transport

6. WASTEFULNESS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'wastefulness'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Kenyans are angry because of new chairmen in the government. | T / F |
| b. Kenya now has 350 new chairs at a cost of around \$1 million. | T / F |
| c. The chairs were made by expert craftsmen and women in France. | T / F |
| d. An original plan for \$5,000 chairs was scrapped. | T / F |
| e. The new chairs will survive a fire if the parliament burns down. | T / F |
| f. A spokesman said the chairs will give politicians greater independence. | T / F |
| g. The average Kenyan politician earns less than French politicians. | T / F |
| h. Kenyan politicians do not need to pay tax on their income. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. upgrading | a. angry |
| 2. poverty | b. makes |
| 3. irate | c. build |
| 4. discovered | d. independent |
| 5. put up | e. modernizing |
| 6. guarantee | f. supported |
| 7. defended | g. hardship |
| 8. separate | h. found out |
| 9. earns | i. peers |
| 10. counterparts | j. promise |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. their government's | a. small house for someone |
| 2. upgrading the | b. his mind |
| 3. living | c. 30-year guarantee |
| 4. many were irate | d. wastefulness |
| 5. put up some | e. to spend so much money |
| 6. come with a | f. \$168,000 |
| 7. defended the decision | g. country's parliament |
| 8. her own separate | h. at the million dollars spent |
| 9. He will make up | i. in poverty |
| 10. approximately | j. place to sit |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Kenyans are (1) _____ at what they see is their government's wastefulness. The anger is because of the amount of money spent on (2) _____ the country's parliament. Despite (3) _____ of the nation living in (4) _____, the government has budgeted more than \$12.5 million for the upgrade. In particular, many were irate at the million dollars spent on 350 new, red chairs for the politicians to sit on. Each chair cost (5) _____ \$3,000, even though they were made by the country's (6) _____ service. The original plan to buy \$5,000 chairs overseas was cancelled when some politicians discovered the (7) _____. MP John Mbadi told the BBC he was angry because for the same price, a Kenyan "could (8) _____ up some small house for someone".

The new chairs each weigh 50kg, are (9) _____ and come with a 30-year (10) _____. Parliamentary speaker Kenneth Marende defended the decision to spend so much money, saying it would (11) _____ politicians to do their jobs better because each would have his or her own separate place to sit. He explained: "The changes we are making are going to input (12) _____ in governance. Now the member will be completely on his (13) _____. He will be independent. He will make up his mind and just press a button." The average politician in Kenya (14) _____ approximately \$168,000 per year, more than their British, French and Canadian (15) _____. Two years ago, they started to pay taxes on their (16) _____ for the first time.

prison
around
much
put
upgrading
furious
cost
poverty

earns
positively
guarantee
income
fireproof
own
allow
counterparts

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

Kenyans (1) _____ they see is their government's wastefulness. The anger is because of the amount of money spent on upgrading the country's parliament. (2) _____ nation living in poverty, the government has budgeted more than \$12.5 million for the upgrade. In particular, (3) _____ million dollars spent on 350 new, red chairs for (4) _____ on. Each chair cost around \$3,000, even though they were made by the country's prison service. (5) _____ buy \$5,000 chairs overseas was cancelled when some politicians discovered the cost. MP John Mbadi told the BBC he was angry because for the same price, a Kenyan "(6) _____ house for someone".

The new chairs each weigh 50kg, (7) _____ with a 30-year guarantee. Parliamentary speaker Kenneth Marende defended the (8) _____ much money, saying it would allow politicians to do their jobs better because each would have his or her own (9) _____. He explained: "The changes we are making are going (10) _____ governance. Now the member will be completely on his own. He will be independent. He will make up his mind and just press a button." The (11) _____ Kenya earns approximately \$168,000 per year, more than their British, French and (12) _____. Two years ago, they started to pay taxes on their income for the first time.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'up' and 'grade'.

up	grade

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• anger• nation• sit• service• plan• small	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• come• allow• changes• press• average• started
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CHAIRS SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

Write five GOOD questions about chairs in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

WASTEFULNESS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'wastefulness'?
- c) How wasteful are you? About what?
- d) How wasteful is your government?
- e) Should children learn about wastefulness at school?
- f) What do you think of Kenya's decision to buy \$3,000 chairs for its politicians?
- g) How can a government do this when so many of its people live in poverty?
- h) Is the decision easier to understand because prisoners made the chairs?
- i) Should politicians have said no to the chairs?
- j) How might a poor Kenyan feel about his/her government buying \$3,000 chairs for politicians?

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WASTEFULNESS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do politicians (or anyone else) need heavy, fireproof chairs that come with a 30-year guarantee?
- c) Do you think the chairs could lead to better decision-making?
- d) How much does the quality of a chair affect a politician's job?
- e) What might the differences be between a \$3,000 chair and a \$300 one?
- f) How might a \$3,000 chair help a politician make up his mind?
- g) Why do you think Kenyan politicians earn more than their Canadian, French and British counterparts?
- h) Why do you think Kenyan politicians only started paying taxes in 2010?
- i) What do you think of the salary for a Kenyan politician?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Kenya's leader about the chairs?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1208/120808-chairs.html>

Kenyans are furious at what they (1) _____ is their government's wastefulness. The anger is because of the amount of money spent on (2) _____ the country's parliament. Despite much of the nation living (3) _____ poverty, the government has budgeted more than \$12.5 million for the upgrade. In particular, many were (4) _____ at the million dollars spent on 350 new, red chairs for the politicians to sit on. Each chair cost around \$3,000, even though they were made by the country's prison service. The original plan to buy \$5,000 chairs (5) _____ was cancelled when some politicians discovered the cost. MP John Mbadi told the BBC he was angry because for the same price, a Kenyan "could (6) _____ up some small house for someone".

The new chairs each weigh 50kg, are (7) _____ and (8) _____ with a 30-year guarantee. Parliamentary speaker Kenneth Marende defended the decision to spend so much money, saying it would allow politicians to do their jobs better because (9) _____ would have his or her own separate place to sit. He explained: "The changes we are making are going to input positively in governance. Now the member will be completely on his own. He will be independent. He will (10) _____ up his mind and just press a button." The average politician in Kenya (11) _____ approximately \$168,000 per year, more than their British, French and Canadian (12) _____. Two years ago, they started to pay taxes on their income for the first time.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1. | (a) saw | (b) seen | (c) seeing | (d) see |
| 2. | (a) upgrading | (b) upgrades | (c) upgraded | (d) upgrade |
| 3. | (a) on | (b) of | (c) in | (d) up |
| 4. | (a) berate | (b) irate | (c) irritate | (d) pirate |
| 5. | (a) over oceans | (b) overseas | (c) over there | (d) over here |
| 6. | (a) shell | (b) erect | (c) put | (d) screw |
| 7. | (a) fireproof | (b) firearm | (c) firebrand | (d) firework |
| 8. | (a) enter | (b) go | (c) leave | (d) come |
| 9. | (a) all | (b) every | (c) whole | (d) each |
| 10. | (a) take | (b) make | (c) fake | (d) wake |
| 11. | (a) earns | (b) earnings | (c) earnestly | (d) earnest |
| 12. | (a) spare parts | (b) ramparts | (c) counterparts | (d) parts |

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HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about Kenya's new chairs. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. WASTEFULNESS: Make a poster about government wastefulness. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. CHAIRS: Write a magazine article about the chairs. Include imaginary interviews with people who are for and against them.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to Kenya's leader. Ask him three questions about the new chairs. Give him three of your opinions. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. F b. T c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. upgrading | a. modernizing |
| 2. poverty | b. hardship |
| 3. irate | c. angry |
| 4. discovered | d. found out |
| 5. put up | e. build |
| 6. guarantee | f. promise |
| 7. defended | g. supported |
| 8. separate | h. independent |
| 9. earns | i. makes |
| 10. counterparts | j. peers |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. their government's | a. wastefulness |
| 2. upgrading the | b. country's parliament |
| 3. living | c. in poverty |
| 4. many were irate | d. at the million dollars spent |
| 5. put up some | e. small house for someone |
| 6. come with a | f. 30-year guarantee |
| 7. defended the decision | g. to spend so much money |
| 8. her own separate | h. place to sit |
| 9. He will make up | i. his mind |
| 10. approximately | j. \$168,000 |

GAP FILL:

\$3,000 government chairs anger Kenyans

Kenyans are (1) **furious** at what they see is their government's wastefulness. The anger is because of the amount of money spent on (2) **upgrading** the country's parliament. Despite (3) **much** of the nation living in (4) **poverty**, the government has budgeted more than \$12.5 million for the upgrade. In particular, many were irate at the million dollars spent on 350 new, red chairs for the politicians to sit on. Each chair cost (5) **around** \$3,000, even though they were made by the country's (6) **prison** service. The original plan to buy \$5,000 chairs overseas was cancelled when some politicians discovered the (7) **cost**. MP John Mbadi told the BBC he was angry because for the same price, a Kenyan "could (8) **put** up some small house for someone".

The new chairs each weigh 50kg, are (9) **fireproof** and come with a 30-year (10) **guarantee**. Parliamentary speaker Kenneth Marende defended the decision to spend so much money, saying it would (11) **allow** politicians to do their jobs better because each would have his or her own separate place to sit. He explained: "The changes we are making are going to input (12) **positively** in governance. Now the member will be completely on his (13) **own**. He will be independent. He will make up his mind and just press a button." The average politician in Kenya (14) **earns** approximately \$168,000 per year, more than their British, French and Canadian (15) **counterparts**. Two years ago, they started to pay taxes on their (16) **income** for the first time.

LANGUAGE WORK

1 - d 2 - a 3 - c 4 - b 5 - b 6 - c 7 - a 8 - d 9 - d 10 - b 11 - a 12 - c