



EQUALITY BULLETIN

THE INVISIBLE ECONOMY

Why Kenya Must Finally Count Women's Unpaid Care Work

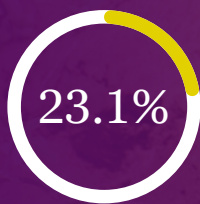
Every morning across Kenya, millions of women begin a shift that has no contract, no payslip and no formal recognition.

They cook, clean, fetch water, care for children, nurse the sick, tend to the elderly and hold families together. Their labour sustains households, supports the workforce and underpins the economy itself. Yet, in national accounting, it remains largely invisible.

New data is forcing a reckoning. Kenya's inaugural Household Satellite Account on unpaid domestic and care work reveals that this invisible labour is not marginal – it is monumental. In 2021 alone, unpaid domestic and care work was valued at approximately KSh 1.99 trillion, accounting for about 23.1 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Page 9,10

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Picture: freenik



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A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

This edition brings into focus a defining yet often overlooked dimension of inequality—unpaid care work. Across Kenya, the disproportionate burden carried by women and girls continues to limit their economic participation, educational advancement, and overall well-being. As highlighted in this edition, unpaid care work is not merely a household issue; it is a structural challenge with direct implications for equality, productivity, and national development. Addressing it requires deliberate policy action to recognise, reduce, and redistribute care responsibilities in line with constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination.

The articles featured in this edition collectively reflect the Commission’s ongoing work to translate rights into lived realities. From strengthening inclusive systems and advancing gender-responsive approaches to safeguarding vulnerable populations and promoting accountability across institutions, the stories underscore the interconnected nature of inequality. They highlight the need for coordinated efforts that bridge policy, practice, and community engagement.

As mandated, NGEC continues to monitor compliance with equality and inclusion standards, advise on policy and legislative reforms, and advocate for responsive interventions that address systemic barriers. The insights in this edition reaffirm that achieving substantive equality requires sustained commitment, evidence-based action, and collaboration across all sectors.



Purity Ngina, PhD, MBS
Chief Executive Officer
National Gender and Equality Commission

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Breaking Barriers to Work: Why Disability Inclusion Must Move from Promise to Practice

NGEC and partners push for systemic reforms to unlock employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.



NGEC officials pose with a delegation from Riziki Source during a strategic engagement

Across Kenya, thousands of qualified, skilled and capable individuals remain locked out of meaningful employment — not because they lack ability, but because the systems meant to include them were never designed with them in mind.

For persons with disabilities, the barriers are not abstract. They are physical, institutional and deeply embedded in society. From inaccessible buildings and transport systems to limited access to inclusive education and persistent workplace stigma, the path to employment is often obstructed long before a job application is submitted.

Recent data paints a stark picture. In Kenya, less than 1.4 per cent of public service employees are persons with disabilities, far below the legal requirement of five per cent.

Across the broader labour market, exclusion is even more pronounced. Only around 30 per cent of working-age persons with disabilities are employed, compared to 77 per cent of those without disabilities.

Against this backdrop, the National Gender and Equality Commission recently hosted Riziki Source to discuss strategic collaboration to address these entrenched challenges. The engagement focused squarely on the structural barriers that continue to limit access to meaningful employment for persons with disabilities.

Participants examined well-documented constraints: inaccessible workplaces and transport systems, gaps in inclusive education and skills development, limited access to assistive technologies, and weak enforcement of inclusive labour policies.

At the centre of the discussion was a shared understanding — exclusion is not incidental. It is systemic. And unless those systems are deliberately restructured, inclusion will remain aspirational.

Experts increasingly describe disability and employment in Kenya as an “economic trap”. Persons with disabilities often face additional costs — from assistive devices to healthcare — while simultaneously encountering barriers to income generation.

A wheelchair, for instance, can cost tens of thousands of shillings, placing it out of reach for many households. At the same time, limited access to employment opportunities restricts earning capacity, reinforcing cycles of poverty and dependence.

This dynamic is compounded by education gaps. Nearly 17 per cent of children with disabilities have never attended school, significantly limiting future employment prospects.

Even among those who access education, transitions into the labour market remain fraught with discrimination, inaccessible infrastructure and limited employer awareness.

The result is a labour market that systematically excludes a significant portion of the population — not due to lack of talent, but due to lack of opportunity. One of the most persistent barriers identified during the NGEK–Riziki Source engagement was the design of workplaces themselves.

Many offices, factories and public spaces remain physically inaccessible. Less than 10 per cent of public buildings in Kenya are fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

Transport systems, too, remain largely exclusionary, making daily commuting difficult and, in many cases, unsafe. But the barriers are not only physical.

Workplace cultures often reflect outdated assumptions about disability — equating it with incapacity, or viewing accommodation as a cost rather than an investment. These perceptions influence hiring decisions, career progression and workplace inclusion, often relegating persons with disabilities to informal or low-income roles.

The engagement between NGEK and Riziki Source was not limited to diagnosis. It focused on solutions. Stakeholders identified practical, scalable interventions that could shift the landscape of employment inclusion in Kenya. These include strengthening inclusive recruitment practices, ensuring job advertisements and hiring processes are accessible, and actively encouraging employers to consider candidates with disabilities.

There was also strong emphasis on workplace accessibility — from physical infrastructure to digital systems — and on supporting employers to implement reasonable accommodation measures, such as assistive technologies, flexible work arrangements and adaptive workspaces.

Skills development emerged as another critical priority. Aligning training programmes with market demands, while ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities, is essential to bridging the gap between education and employment. Equally important is shifting societal attitudes. Inclusion cannot be achieved through policy alone. It requires a cultural shift — one that recognises persons with disabilities not as beneficiaries of charity, but as contributors to economic growth and innovation.

Where Change Begins: Why Grassroots Voices Must Drive Kenya's Equality Agenda

NGEC's engagement at a community-led forum underscores a hard truth – real progress on gender equality is forged not in boardrooms, but on the ground.

For years, Kenya's equality agenda has been shaped by policy frameworks, legislative debates and high-level commitments. Yet, despite this progress, inequality continues to persist in the places where it matters most – within communities.

It is at this intersection between policy and lived reality that the National Gender and Equality Commission's participation in the 4th International Women's Day Grassroots Edition, hosted by the Kibunja Foundation, takes on deeper significance.

Because while laws may define rights, it is communities that determine whether those rights are realised. The grassroots forum provided a rare but necessary platform for citizens to articulate the everyday realities that often escape formal policy discourse.

Women navigating economic hardship, young people confronting limited opportunities, and persons with disabilities facing structural exclusion shared experiences that underscored a persistent gap between constitutional guarantees and daily life.

The discussions were not abstract. They were grounded in practical challenges – access to services, protection from violence, economic inclusion and social recognition.



National Gender and Equality Commission officials at the booth during the 4th International Women's Day Grassroots Edition

In this sense, the forum did more than convene dialogue. It exposed the limits of top-down approaches that fail to sufficiently integrate community perspectives into decision-making.

A central thread running through the engagement was the recognition that awareness alone is no longer enough. Over the past decade, Kenya has made notable strides in raising public consciousness on issues of gender equality and social justice. Yet, participants were clear: awareness without action risks entrenching frustration rather than driving change.

The call, therefore, was for accountability – from institutions, from communities and from individuals.

This means ensuring that policies are not only enacted but implemented, that services are not ~

only available but accessible, and that rights are not only recognised but protected in practice. The National Gender and Equality Commission's presence at the forum reflects a broader shift in approach – one that recognises the centrality of grassroots engagement in advancing equality.

For too long, policy processes have operated at a distance from the communities they are meant to serve. The result has been a disconnect between intention and impact.

By engaging directly with grassroots initiatives, the Commission is not only strengthening its oversight role but also grounding its work in the realities of those most affected by inequality. This approach acknowledges a fundamental principle: sustainable change cannot be imposed from above. It must be built from within communities themselves.

Grassroots platforms such as the one convened by the Kibunja Foundation play a critical role in this process.

They create space for dialogue, foster collective ownership of solutions and enable communities to move from passive recipients of policy to active agents of change.

Why Schools Are the Frontline in Kenya's Equality Agenda

At a Kitui education forum, NGECE underscores the urgent need to confront stereotypes and build inclusive learning spaces for every child..

In the national pursuit of equality and inclusion, the classroom remains one of the most decisive battlegrounds.

It is here – in schools across the country – that attitudes are shaped, aspirations formed and futures defined. It is also here that inequality can either be reinforced or dismantled.

This reality framed the National Gender and Equality Commission's engagement in Kitui County, where its Regional Office served as Guest Speaker during the Kavililo Secondary School Education Day, held under the theme "Empowering Minds, Transforming Lives."

The forum brought together students, parents, educators and community stakeholders in a shared reflection on the role of education not only as a tool for academic advancement, but as a driver of social transformation.

Participants examined how gender stereotypes, social expectations and unequal opportunities continue to shape educational experiences – often limiting the potential of both girls and boys. For girls, barriers may include early marriage, gender-based violence and cultural norms that ~



Irene Musau of the National Gender and Equality Commission poses for a group photo with teachers during Kavililo Secondary School Education Day in Kitui.

deprioritise education. For boys, pressures around masculinity and economic responsibility can equally disrupt learning pathways. The engagement also highlighted the importance of inclusive education systems that accommodate the diverse needs of learners.

NGEC Engages KOICA on Equality and Inclusion

High-level talks signal renewed focus on gender equality, capacity building and inclusive development through strategic cooperation.



Thomas Koyier, Caroline N. Lentupuru, Margaret Karungaru, and Michael Mbithuka of the National Gender and Equality Commission during a courtesy visit to the KOICA Kenya Office.

The National Gender and Equality Commission, led by Vice Chairperson Thomas Koyier, paid a courtesy visit to the KOICA Kenya Office to explore areas of collaboration aimed at advancing gender equality, inclusive development and capacity building.

The engagement reflects a broader alignment between national priorities and international development cooperation — particularly in addressing structural inequalities that continue to affect women, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is the Republic of Korea's official development assistance agency, established to support sustainable socio-economic development in partner countries through grants, technical cooperation and capacity-building initiatives.

Operating in dozens of countries worldwide, including Kenya, KOICA has built a reputation for investing in critical sectors such as education, governance, health, agriculture and technology — often with a strong emphasis on knowledge transfer and institutional strengthening.

In Kenya, KOICA's programmes have supported community development, water access, and women's economic empowerment initiatives, particularly in underserved regions.

Discussions between NGEK and KOICA centred on identifying practical areas of collaboration that can accelerate progress on gender equality and inclusive growth. At the heart of the engagement was a shared recognition that sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing inequalities that limit participation in economic, social and governance systems.

Capacity building emerged as a key priority — particularly in strengthening institutions, enhancing technical skills and equipping stakeholders with the tools needed to implement inclusive policies effectively. The Commission emphasised the importance of ensuring that gender equality is not treated as a standalone issue, but as a cross-cutting principle embedded across development programmes.

The engagement reaffirmed the longstanding partnership between Kenya and the Republic of Korea, which has evolved over the years into a model of development cooperation grounded in mutual learning and shared priorities. Through training programmes, technical exchanges and development projects, KOICA has contributed to building the capacity of Kenyan institutions and professionals across multiple sectors.

For NGEK, collaboration with such partners offers an opportunity to strengthen implementation of its mandate — particularly in promoting equality, inclusion and freedom from discrimination.

Kisumu Dialogue Calls for Men's Action to End Gender-Based Violence

KISUMU, Kenya — A community dialogue convened by STAWISHA DADA in Kisumu County has underscored the urgent need for men to take a more active role in preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and advancing gender equality.

The engagement, attended by the Kisumu Regional Office of the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), brought together men from diverse backgrounds, including professionals, youth, religious leaders, and informal sector workers. The forum provided a safe and structured space for reflection on responsibility, influence, and accountability in addressing GBV within families and communities.

Unlike conventional sensitisation forums, the dialogue moved beyond awareness creation to confront a central question: what practical and sustained action should men take to end GBV?



Davis Okeyo of the National Gender and Equality Commission during a community dialogue.

Participants acknowledged that while awareness of GBV has improved in recent years, harmful behaviours and attitudes remain deeply entrenched in social and cultural systems. The discussions emphasised that knowledge alone is not sufficient to drive change.

Men were therefore called upon to step forward as active agents of change — taking up roles as advocates, mentors, and allies in preventing violence, supporting survivors, and promoting safer community environments.

Participants reflected on how entrenched gender norms in some contexts have normalised dominance, discouraged emotional expression, and contributed to the silence surrounding abuse. The dialogue encouraged a shift towards healthier, more constructive expressions of masculinity.

The Two-Thirds Promise: Inside Kenya’s Long Struggle to Fix Gender Representation

As Parliament revisits constitutional reform, NGENC pushes for a broader, more inclusive vision that goes beyond numbers to real equality.



Desire Njamwea of the National Gender and Equality Commission presenting a memorandum on the two-thirds gender principle

Few provisions of Kenya’s 2010 Constitution have generated as much debate — or as much delay — as the two-thirds gender principle.

Clear in its intent, the Constitution mandates that no more than two-thirds of members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. It was a bold corrective to decades of exclusion, designed to anchor equality at the heart of governance.

Yet, more than a decade later, the principle remains largely aspirational.

Repeated legislative attempts have faltered. Court pronouncements have gone unimplemented. Political consensus has proved elusive. What endures is a constitutional obligation that the State has yet to fully discharge.

It is against this backdrop that the Constitution of Kenya (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2025 has returned the issue to the centre of national debate — and to the Senate floor.

When the National Gender and Equality Commission appeared before the Senate Standing Committee on Justice, Legal Affairs and Human Rights, it did so with a position that was both principled and pragmatic.

Led by its legal team, including Assistant Director Desire Njamwea and Zaphida Chege, the Commission presented a memorandum that framed the two-thirds gender principle not as a procedural hurdle, but as a foundational requirement for inclusive governance.

A compliance-driven approach that merely “fills gaps” risks missing the broader constitutional vision — one that demands meaningful inclusion across gender, disability, age and social background.

In this respect, NGENC’s submission marked a shift from narrow interpretation to structural reform.

The proposed amendment Bill seeks to introduce a mechanism to operationalise the two-thirds gender principle through a structured formula.

Where elective outcomes fail to meet the constitutional threshold, additional members would be nominated to restore balance. The mechanism, anchored in Articles 97, 98 and 90 of the Constitution, aims to provide a predictable and enforceable pathway to compliance.

At first glance, the proposal appears technical. In reality, it is deeply political.

It raises enduring questions about representation, legitimacy and the design of

Kenya’s democratic institutions. It also exposes a longstanding tension: how to reconcile electoral outcomes with constitutional imperatives.

NGEC’s intervention pushes this conversation further.

The Commission has called for safeguards to ensure that the five per cent affirmative action requirement for persons with disabilities is preserved within any new framework. It has also urged that party nomination lists reflect not only gender balance, but broader diversity — including youth, workers, minorities and marginalised communities.

In doing so, it situates the two-thirds rule within a wider inclusion agenda, consistent with Article 100 of the Constitution.

The failure to implement the two-thirds gender principle has often been attributed to legal complexity. That explanation no longer holds.

Kenya’s courts have pronounced themselves on the matter. Policy frameworks have been developed. Draft legislation has been tabled — and stalled.

What remains is not a legal gap, but a political one.

Concerns over the expansion of parliamentary seats, public expenditure and political competition have repeatedly overshadowed constitutional compliance. The result is a cycle of deferral — where obligation is acknowledged, but action postponed.

The current Bill attempts to navigate this impasse through a conditional “top-up” model, activating additional seats only where necessary. Whether this approach will overcome entrenched resistance remains to be seen.

At its core, the debate is not about numbers. It is about the nature of representation.

A Parliament that does not reflect the diversity of its people risks reproducing the inequalities it is meant to address. Policy outcomes, budget priorities and legislative agendas are shaped by those who occupy decision-making spaces.

Strengthening Equity in Public Finance: NGECE and Partners Advance Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Budgeting in Kenya

NAIROBI, Kenya — The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), in collaboration with GIEM, Girl Child Network, government agencies, and development partners, launched a two-day capacity-building workshop aimed at strengthening gender-responsive and inclusive budgeting in Kenya.

The training, which commenced yesterday, brings together key stakeholders drawn from national and county governments, civil society organisations, and gender equality advocates, in a coordinated effort to enhance equity, accountability, and inclusivity in public financial management.

The initiative aligns with Kenya’s constitutional commitment to equality and non-discrimination, as well as global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on gender equality and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities.

The workshop focused on strengthening understanding of gender mainstreaming across the entire budget cycle — from planning and formulation to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is widely recognised as a strategic public finance approach that integrates gender considerations into fiscal policy decisions, ensuring that government budgets respond equitably to the diverse needs of women, men, girls, boys, and other marginalised groups.

According to established public finance and gender equality frameworks, GRB does not imply the creation of separate budgets for women, but rather the systematic analysis of how budgetary allocations and revenue policies impact different population groups. This approach enables governments to identify and correct structural inequalities embedded within resource distribution systems.

Participants were taken through practical approaches to embedding gender analysis



Participants pose for a group photo during the two-day workshop on strengthening gender-responsive and inclusive budgeting in Kenya

within programme-based budgeting systems, with emphasis on ensuring that public expenditure aligns with national equality commitments and development priorities. A key highlight of the discussions was the importance of strengthening accountability mechanisms in public budgeting processes.

Stakeholders noted that while Kenya has made significant progress in adopting programme-based budgeting reforms, gaps persist between policy commitments and actual resource allocations, often limiting the effective implementation of gender equality objectives.

Experts emphasised that gender-responsive budgeting enhances transparency and accountability by requiring sex-disaggregated data, participatory planning, and monitoring systems that track the differential impact of public expenditure on various groups.

Global and regional evidence shows that such approaches improve governance outcomes by making budget decisions more responsive to lived realities, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised populations.

The workshop further underscored the need to bridge the gap between policy frameworks and budget implementation.

Despite strong constitutional provisions and institutional mandates for equality in Kenya, challenges remain in translating these commitments into adequately funded programmes that directly address ~

inequalities affecting women, youth, persons with disabilities, children, and older persons. Participants highlighted the importance of strengthening institutional coordination between planning units, treasury functions, and sector ministries to ensure that gender equality priorities are fully integrated into national and county budgeting processes.



Winfred Wambua making a presentation during a two-day capacity-building workshop on gender-responsive and inclusive budgeting.

The collaboration between NGECE, GIEM, Girl Child Network, and government agencies reflects a growing recognition that advancing gender-responsive budgeting requires multi-sectoral partnerships.

Civil society organisations play a critical role in advocacy, capacity building, and monitoring budget implementation, while government institutions provide the policy and regulatory frameworks necessary for institutionalising inclusive budgeting practices.

Kenya Takes Its Voice to the World Stage on Gender Equality

NGEC joins global leaders in New York to push survivor-centred responses and strengthen international action on women's rights.



Hon. Sen. Veronica Waheti and Hon. Rehema Jaldesa during the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City

In the halls of the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, where global priorities are debated and international standards shaped, Kenya's voice on gender equality is once again being tested — not in principle, but in action.

The National Gender and Equality Commission, led by Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa and Vice Chairperson Thomas Koyier, participated in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70), contributing to high-level global dialogue on advancing gender equality and protecting the rights and dignity of women and girls.

Held from 9 to 19 March 2026, the 70th session brought together governments, civil society organisations and development partners from across the world to confront one of the most persistent global challenges: inequality. This year's theme — ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls — reflects a growing recognition that legal rights alone are insufficient without systems that deliver them in practice.

The global conversation at CSW70 was anchored in a stark truth: despite decades of progress, inequality remains deeply entrenched. World leaders and institutions reiterated that barriers to justice — from discriminatory laws to weak enforcement mechanisms —

continue to limit the ability of women and girls to claim their rights.

For Kenya, these discussions are not abstract. They mirror domestic challenges — from gender-based violence and limited access to justice, to structural inequalities that continue to affect women's participation in economic and political life.

NGEC's participation at CSW70 therefore represents more than diplomatic engagement. It is part of a broader effort to align national priorities with global standards, while ensuring that Kenya's experiences inform international discourse.

Through the CSW platform, NGE engaged with governments, multilateral institutions and civil society actors to strengthen collective action towards inclusive and equitable development.

The Commission's presence reflects its growing role not only as a national oversight body, but also as a contributor to global policy conversations on equality and non-discrimination. Such engagements allow Kenya to share lessons from its own reforms — including efforts to strengthen legal frameworks, expand access to justice and address gender-based violence — while also drawing from international best practices.

In an increasingly interconnected world, these exchanges are critical.

A defining feature of NGE's participation at CSW70 is its co-hosting of three side events focused on survivor-centred approaches to ~

addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

These discussions place emphasis on shifting from reactive systems to holistic, coordinated responses that prioritise the needs, dignity and recovery of survivors.

Kenya's experience in this area — including strengthening justice systems, improving referral pathways and enhancing coordination among service providers — offers practical insights into what works, and what still needs to change.

The survivor-centred model, increasingly recognised globally, moves beyond punitive responses to include psychosocial support, legal aid, healthcare and community-based protection mechanisms.

Participation in CSW70 also provides an opportunity for mutual learning. Countries bring diverse experiences — from legal reforms and policy innovations to grassroots interventions — creating a platform for exchanging evidence-based solutions.



NGEC Vice Chairperson Thomas Koyier and CEO Purity Ngina during the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70)

NGEC's engagement reflects a commitment to ensuring that Kenya is both a contributor to and beneficiary of this global knowledge ecosystem.

The Commission's involvement in these discussions reinforces the importance of grounding policy in lived realities — ensuring that interventions are not only well-designed, but also responsive to the needs of communities.

The engagements at CSW70 signal a clear direction: that advancing gender equality requires sustained, coordinated and multi-level action. It demands political will, institutional accountability and community participation.

The pursuit of equality is not confined to borders. For NGE, participation at CSW70 is part of that broader journey. A journey toward societies where women and girls are not only protected by law, but empowered in reality.

Mimi ni Mkenya: A Call to Responsibility and Inclusive Electoral Participation



Commissioner Michael Mbithuka during a media briefing on the launch of the Mimi ni Mkenya initiative

Kenya's electoral cycle is often defined by rallies, manifestos and the spectacle of polling day. Yet beneath this visible theatre lies a quieter, more consequential process — one that determines not just outcomes, but legitimacy itself.

It is the process of inclusion. Who is registered. Who is informed. Who is able to participate.

With less than two years to the next General Election, the launch of the Mimi ni Mkenya initiative by the Nation Media Group signals a recognition that the real contest has already begun — not between candidates, but between inclusion and exclusion.

Unveiled in Nairobi, the initiative seeks to create a structured platform for citizen engagement through nationwide dialogues, town halls and policy forums. Its stated aim is to strengthen public participation, counter misinformation and foster a shared sense of national identity.

But beyond its civic framing, the initiative speaks to a deeper national concern: the integrity of Kenya's democratic process is being shaped now.

At the centre of this moment is voter registration — a process often treated as administrative, yet fundamentally political.

Kenya's Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to vote. However, that right is conditional upon registration, making the process the primary gateway to political participation.

Data from past electoral cycles reveals a persistent gap between eligible voters and those registered. Ahead of the 2022 General Election, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission registered approximately 22.1 million voters out of an estimated 28 million eligible citizens — leaving millions unaccounted for in the electoral process.

The disparity is not evenly distributed. Young people — who constitute the majority of Kenya's population — remain disproportionately under-registered. Women in rural areas face barriers linked to documentation, mobility and socio-cultural constraints. Persons with disabilities encounter both physical and systemic obstacles. Marginalised communities, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions, continue to grapple with access and awareness challenges.

Speaking during the launch of the Mimi ni Mkenya initiative, Commissioner Mbithuka articulated a position that cuts through the technicalities of electoral management. "The credibility of that election will be determined now by how inclusive the process is from the outset. Who is registered is who is empowered." The statement reframes the conversation.

Voter registration is not a procedural step. It is the foundation of equality in a democratic system. Any failure at this stage translates directly into disenfranchisement. Despite legal frameworks designed to ensure universal suffrage, multiple barriers continue to limit access to registration.

Documentation remains a primary challenge. National identification cards — a prerequisite for voter registration — are not uniformly accessible, particularly in marginalised regions.

Geographical barriers also persist. In remote areas, registration centres may be few and far between, requiring significant travel time and cost.

For persons with disabilities, accessibility issues — from physical infrastructure to communication barriers — further complicate participation.

Additionally, socio-cultural factors continue to play a role. In some communities, gender norms and economic pressures limit the ability of women and young people to engage fully in civic processes.

These intersecting barriers create a layered exclusion — one that is often invisible in aggregate statistics, but deeply felt at the individual level.



Launch of the Mimi ni Mkenya Initiative

Compounding these structural challenges is the growing influence of misinformation. Kenya's digital landscape has expanded rapidly, with social media platforms becoming central to political communication. While this has enhanced access to information, it has also created vulnerabilities.

False narratives, manipulated content and targeted disinformation campaigns have the potential to distort public understanding of electoral processes, discourage participation and undermine trust in institutions. The Mimi ni Mkenya initiative positions itself as a countermeasure — promoting informed dialogue and civic awareness.

However, the scale of the challenge is significant. Combating misinformation requires not only accurate information, but also trust — in institutions, in media and in the processes themselves.

At its core, the Mimi ni Mkenya initiative seeks to anchor electoral participation within a broader framework of national identity.

» CONTINUATION

The Invisible Economy: Kenya's KSh 1.99 Trillion Blind Spot

Worth trillions yet absent from pay slips, unpaid labour remains the backbone of households – and the missing link in women's economic empowerment.



Credit: Freep

Before the first matatu hoots through Nairobi's streets and before offices flicker to life, millions of Kenyan women have already begun a full day's work. They cook, clean, fetch water, tend to farms, care for children, nurse the sick and support the elderly. It is work that sustains households, stabilises communities and quietly underpins the formal economy.

Yet it is work that is neither paid nor counted. Recent national estimates place the value of unpaid domestic and care work in Kenya at KSh 1.99 trillion – equivalent to 23.1 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This places it among the largest "sectors" of the economy, surpassing even some of the country's most visible industries. Despite its scale, it remains largely invisible in policy, budgeting and economic planning. Unpaid care work in Kenya is profoundly gendered.

Women and girls perform the overwhelming majority of domestic and caregiving tasks, spending significantly more hours than men on activities such as cooking, cleaning, childcare and caring for dependent family members.

In total, Kenyans spend an estimated **30.6** billion hours annually on unpaid domestic and care work – with women contributing the largest share.

This imbalance is not accidental. It is rooted in long-standing social norms that define caregiving as women's responsibility, often from an early age. The consequences are far-reaching. Time spent on unpaid care work limits women's access to education, formal employment and economic opportunities. It reduces their earning potential, constrains entrepreneurship and reinforces cycles of poverty – particularly in rural and marginalised communities.



For many women, economic exclusion does not begin in the labour market. It begins at home. As Kenya pushes forward with policies aimed at empowering women economically, a critical

gap remains: the failure to address unpaid care work.

This reality came into sharp focus in Kitui County, where the National Gender and Equality Commission's Kitui Regional Office joined a high-level delegation to advance implementation of the National Policy on



Irene Musau engages participants during a high-level delegation in Kitui to advance implementation of the National Policy on Women's Economic Empowerment

The delegation – comprising UN Women, the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, and the University of Nairobi Women Economic Empowerment Hub – held strategic discussions with county leadership to localise the policy framework.

At the heart of the engagement was a simple but powerful realisation: women cannot fully participate in the economy if they remain disproportionately responsible for unpaid care work.

Stakeholders identified priority actions tailored to Kitui's context, emphasising coordinated implementation, inclusive planning and practical interventions that translate policy into tangible outcomes.

The Kitui engagement marked the culmination of a two-day sensitisation workshop that brought together government actors, development partners and community stakeholders. The focus was not merely on policy awareness, but on operationalising solutions.

These included expanding access to essential services such as water, healthcare and childcare – investments that directly reduce the time women spend on unpaid tasks. Improved infrastructure, for instance, can significantly cut the hours spent fetching water or fuel, freeing time for education, income-generating activities and community participation.

» CONTINUATION



Credit: Freep

Equally important is strengthening social protection systems that support vulnerable households, particularly those headed by women or caring for dependants. The message from stakeholders was clear: economic empowerment cannot be achieved in isolation from the realities of unpaid labour.

A national and global imperative

The issue of unpaid care work is central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 5 on gender equality.

Speaking during the 2025 SDGs National Multi-Stakeholders Conference, NGECC Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa underscored the urgency of addressing this long-standing imbalance.



Rehema Jaldesa with other key speakers during the 2025 SDGs National Multi-Stakeholders Conference in Mombasa

She emphasised that unpaid domestic and care work — predominantly performed by women and girls — remains a critical barrier to inclusive development.

The Commission reaffirmed that achieving the SDGs in Kenya depends on an equitable development agenda that upholds constitutional principles of equality, non-discrimination and meaningful participation.

Globally, the conversation is gaining traction. Countries are increasingly recognising the economic value of unpaid care work and exploring ways to integrate it into national accounting systems. Kenya’s development of a Household Satellite Account represents a significant step in this direction, offering a more comprehensive picture of economic activity beyond traditional GDP measures.

The policy gap

Despite growing recognition, policy responses to unpaid care work remain limited. While Kenya has made progress in advancing gender-responsive policies, implementation gaps persist — particularly at the county level, where service delivery directly impacts households.

Stakeholders in Kitui emphasised the need for stronger coordination among national and county governments, development partners and community organisations. Without alignment, even well-designed policies risk failing to deliver meaningful change. There is also a need for targeted investment in care infrastructure — including childcare services, eldercare systems and community health support — to reduce the burden on households. Such investments are not merely social interventions. They are economic enablers that unlock productivity and expand labour force participation.

Rethinking value and work

At its core, the debate on unpaid care work challenges how societies define and value work. By excluding domestic and care labour from economic metrics, traditional systems have undervalued contributions that are essential to human wellbeing and economic stability.

Recognising unpaid care work is not simply about assigning it a monetary value. It is about reshaping policy priorities and ensuring that those who perform this work — primarily women — are supported, protected and empowered.



Credit: Freep

This requires a cultural shift alongside policy reform. Redistributing care responsibilities within households, promoting male involvement in caregiving and challenging entrenched gender norms are critical components of long-term change.

The momentum seen in Kitui signals a broader shift in Kenya’s approach to women’s economic empowerment. There is a growing consensus that unpaid care work must move from the margins of policy discussions to the centre of development planning. For the National Gender and Equality Commission, this is not just an economic issue. It is a matter of equality, inclusion and justice. As Kenya moves toward 2030, the path to inclusive growth will depend on whether it can confront the realities that have long been overlooked.

Strengthening Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence Response Systems in Kisumu and Kakamega Counties: A Multi-Level Government Engagement on Care, Coordination and Reform

KAKAMEGA & KISUMU, Kenya – The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), working alongside the Ministry of Gender, Culture and Children Services, Members of Parliament, and representatives from various government institutions, undertook a series of coordinated high-level engagements in Kakamega and Kisumu Counties aimed at strengthening child protection systems, improving Gender-Based Violence (GBV) response frameworks, and enhancing inter-agency coordination in the delivery of services to vulnerable populations.

The multi-site engagements brought together national and county-level actors in the child protection and GBV response ecosystem, reflecting a growing recognition that sustainable protection of children and survivors of violence requires integrated planning, adequate resourcing, and strengthened institutional linkages across government and partner agencies.

A key component of the visit involved engagements at the Kakamega and Kisumu Children’s Remand Homes, where the delegation spent time interacting directly with children in custody settings.



Cabinet Secretary Hannah Wendot Cheptumo, Members of Parliament, and representatives from government agencies and NGEC, including Paul Kuria, during an official engagement

The team, comprising the Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture and Children Services, Members of Parliament, and representatives from government agencies, listened to the lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations of the children, many of whom are navigating complex social, economic, and familial circumstances.

Discussions focused on the importance of strengthening reintegration pathways, psychosocial support systems, and access to education and rehabilitation services within remand and correctional environments.

Officials underscored that children in such settings remain rights holders under both national legislation and international frameworks, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and must be treated with dignity, care, and a clear pathway to rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

In a parallel engagement in Kisumu County, the Commission accompanied the Cabinet Secretary and other stakeholders on visits to Kajulu GBV Recovery Centre (GBVRC), Kondele Child Protection Unit, and the Child Protection Unit in Seme Sub-County.

These frontline facilities form a critical part of Kenya’s response architecture for survivors of gender-based violence and children in need of care and protection. The visits provided an opportunity for direct engagement with officers working at the frontlines of service delivery, including social workers, law enforcement personnel, healthcare providers, and child protection officers.

Discussions highlighted systemic challenges affecting service delivery, including resource constraints, staffing gaps, psychosocial support limitations, and the need for strengthened referral mechanisms between health, legal, and social services.

The delegation also visited the NGEC Kisumu Regional Office, where Cabinet Secretary Hannah Wendot Cheptumo, accompanied by Members of Parliament and representatives from government and non-government institutions, engaged in structured discussions with the Commission.



Cabinet Secretary Hannah Wendot Cheptumo, Members of Parliament, and representatives from government agencies and the NGEC, including Paul Kuria, during an official visit to the NGEC Kisumu Regional Office.

The session provided an opportunity for NGEC to present its constitutional mandate, ongoing programmes, key achievements, and operational challenges in promoting gender equality, social inclusion, and ~

protection of special interest groups, including women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, older members of society, and marginalized communities.

The discussions were marked by a strong emphasis on coordination, with participants identifying the need to strengthen inter-agency collaboration, eliminate duplication of efforts, and enhance data sharing and joint planning across institutions. Key thematic areas included gender-based violence prevention and response, child protection systems strengthening, youth empowerment, and inclusive governance.

Across all engagements, a consistent message emerged: the need for a more integrated, adequately resourced, and accountable system for addressing GBV and child protection challenges in Kenya. Stakeholders acknowledged that while significant progress has been made in policy development and institutional frameworks, gaps remain in implementation, particularly at the sub-national level where service delivery occurs.

The importance of aligning national and county government priorities through planning and budgeting processes was strongly emphasised, with calls for increased investment in frontline protection services, capacity building for officers, and strengthened monitoring and evaluation frameworks. The series of engagements underscored the government’s renewed focus on strengthening coordination between national and county institutions in addressing GBV and child protection challenges.

With leadership from the Ministry of Gender, Culture and Children Services, NGEC, and county governments, the initiatives aim to enhance the effectiveness of Kenya’s protection systems through improved infrastructure, stronger institutional linkages, and survivor-centred approaches. Ultimately, stakeholders reaffirmed a shared vision of building a more inclusive and protective system where every child, survivor, and vulnerable person is safeguarded, empowered, and given a genuine opportunity to thrive.

Accelerating Women’s Inclusion in Kenya’s Digital Economy: NGECE Leads Push for Gender-Responsive Innovation

KONZA TECHNOPOLE, Kenya – The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), in partnership with Edsource Africa, Silicon Savannah Woman, the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, the Kenya Film Commission, and Microsoft, convened a high-level Tech Summit at Konza Technopolis aimed at advancing women’s participation and leadership in Kenya’s digital transformation agenda.

The summit, held at Kenya’s flagship smart city and innovation ecosystem, brought together policymakers, technology industry leaders, innovators, development partners, and civil society actors to explore pathways for addressing persistent gender disparities in the digital economy.

Under the theme “Accelerating Women’s Participation & Leadership in Kenya’s Digital Future,” the forum provided a strategic platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and co-creation of solutions to promote inclusive innovation and equitable access to digital opportunities.

Discussions at the summit highlighted the persistent structural barriers that continue to limit women’s full participation in the digital economy, including unequal access to digital skills training, limited representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, and constrained access to innovation financing and leadership opportunities.

While Kenya has established itself as a regional leader in digital innovation—anchored by advancements in mobile technology, fintech ecosystems, and e-government services—participants noted that these gains have not been equitably distributed across gender lines.

The gender digital divide, stakeholders observed, risks undermining inclusive growth and limiting the country’s ability to



NGECE officials engage participants at the Commission’s booth during the High-Level Tech Summit held at Konza Technopolis

fully harness its human capital potential in an increasingly technology-driven global economy. A central focus of the summit was the need to move beyond policy conversations towards actionable and scalable interventions that can accelerate women’s participation in the digital space.

Participants emphasised the importance of strengthening gender-responsive digital policies that deliberately integrate inclusion targets into national ICT strategies, education systems, and innovation frameworks.

Key proposals emerging from the discussions included expanding access to digital literacy programmes for girls and women, strengthening mentorship and incubation programmes for women-led tech enterprises, and enhancing public-private partnerships to support equitable participation in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, data science, and digital media production.

The role of data was also underscored, with stakeholders calling for improved sex-disaggregated digital statistics to inform evidence-based policymaking and track progress in closing the gender gap.

The summit highlighted the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration in driving inclusive digital transformation.

Government institutions, private sector players, development partners, and civil society organisations were recognised as critical actors in shaping a digital ecosystem that is both innovative and equitable.

Microsoft and other partners reaffirmed their commitment to supporting capacity-building initiatives aimed at equipping women and girls with future-ready digital skills, while national stakeholders emphasised the need for sustained investment in STEM education and innovation infrastructure.

Konza Technopolis was identified as a strategic hub for fostering inclusive innovation, with participants noting that its success will depend on how effectively it integrates gender equality principles into its long-term development model.

The Commission stressed that ensuring women’s equal participation in the digital economy is not only a matter of social justice but also a critical driver of national productivity, innovation, and competitiveness.

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