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ON THE GROUND

- Increased economic inequality
- Low housing standards
- Teacher shortages
- High cost of education
- Unemployment pressure

But progress appears when you look at the people's lives.

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Wamuchomba leaves UDA: What her exit means for Ruto and Mt Kenya

Githunguri MP Gathoni Wamuchomba's decision to leave the United Democratic Alliance is more than the departure of one politician from a ruling party.

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Daily ePAPER

Countdown 2027 **Kioni has stepped with questions that cut to the heart of what the opposition actually is**

Kenya's opposition fractures

Jubilee Party Deputy Party Leader Jeremiah Kioni yesterday broke publicly with the opposition's current political architecture, questioning his party's place in the Ukombozi Alliance and calling for an entirely new coalition to be assembled before Kenya goes to the polls in August 2027 — a declaration that has exposed, with uncomfortable clarity, just how fragile the opposition's foundations remain with less than a year to the ballot.

The intervention lands at the most turbulent moment the opposition has experienced since the 2022 general election. The Azimio La Umoja-One Kenya Coalition has been rebranded as The Ukombozi Alliance. Former President Uhuru Kenyatta resigned as coalition council chairman on 5 October, days after handing Jubilee's leadership to former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i. The man who built Jubilee into a political machine that twice delivered the presidency is now, by his own account, merely an adviser with no formal position in the coalition he once chaired. Uhuru's departure does not simply create an organisational vacancy — it removes the single figure whose name and regional weight gave Azimio its greatest credibility in 2022. With eleven months to polling day, that is not a gap that can be filled by a press conference or a rebranding exercise.

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Jubilee Party Deputy Party Leader Jeremiah Kioni



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Ruto claims farming revolution as election season dawns

BY Anita Njeri

@themtkenyentimes

Some of the moments as captured in pictures

President William Ruto yesterday told 10,000 agricultural stakeholders gathered at the Jamhuri ASK Showground in Nairobi that his government has doubled Kenya's maize production and slashed fertiliser prices by nearly 75 per cent since 2022 — figures he is now positioning as the foundation of his re-election case.

Addressing the Agriculture and Food Security Transformation Summit, Ruto said fertiliser subsidies had reduced the price per bag from KSh7,500 to KSh2,000, with more than 38 million bags distributed since he took office. The results, he said, were measurable: maize production rose from 34.3 million bags in 2022 to 71 million in 2025, while cotton yields climbed from 177 kilogrammes to 378 kilogrammes per acre.

"These are some examples of the phenomenal transformation taking place across the agriculture sector as a result of four years of sustained reforms and investment," Ruto said.

He announced plans to expand irrigation coverage to 2.5 million acres and construct mega, medium, and micro dams nationwide under the National Infrastructure Fund.

The timing is as political as it is agricultural. With eleven months to the August 2027 ballot and an opposition consolidating around economic grievances, Ruto is building a record-based campaign anchored on food security — a message with direct resonance in rural Kenya where farming households form the largest single voting bloc.

Whether the numbers survive independent scrutiny will determine how far that message travels.



Editor's Desk

The Mt. Kenya Times



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Group Executive Chairman

M. Danson

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dan-mwangi-1b47446b/>

Our Contacts

P. O. Box 101 675 - 00101 Nairobi, Cell: 0700 161 866, 0705 215 262

Editorial Desk: editorial@mtkenyentimes.co.ke, **Adverts:** ads@mtkenyentimes.co.ke,

News Desk: news@mtkenyentimes.co.ke, **Web:** www.mtkenyentimes.co.ke

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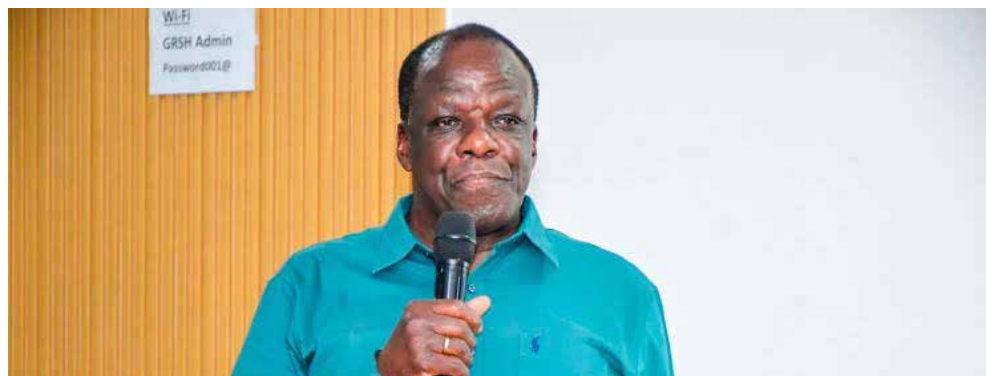


Deputy President Kithure Kindiki yesterday ordered the immediate replacement of the contractor handling the KSh114 million Kaguku Modern Market in Murang'a County, citing chronic delays that have left local traders without the facility long after it was due for completion. Kindiki issued the directive during an inspection of the stalled project, expressing visible frustration at the pace of work by a firm appointed by the Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development. The contractor had repeatedly missed completion deadlines, he said, with no credible justification for the extended delays. The Kaguku market is intended to provide traders in the area with a modern, organised trading environment. Kindiki said the government would not tolerate contractors who pocket public funds while delivering nothing on the ground.



Climate change and an approaching El Niño are set to worsen malaria across East Africa, Israel's Ambassador to Kenya Gideon Behar warned yesterday at the 2nd East African Community Malaria Stakeholders Meeting in Nairobi, urging governments to move decisively from planning to action.

Behar said rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns were enabling malaria-carrying mosquitoes to reach higher altitudes and previously unaffected areas. "El Niño will have an effect on malaria in Eastern Africa — that's for sure," he said. The warning came as the World Health Organization confirmed Africa accounts for 94 per cent of global malaria cases and remains off track on 2025 elimination targets. Globally, malaria cases rose to 282 million in 2024, up nine million from the previous year.



The High Court yesterday quashed Director of Public Prosecutions Renson Ingonga's decision to drop KSh2.2 billion corruption charges against Cabinet Secretary Wycliffe Oparanya, declaring the move unconstitutional, irregular, and void. Justice Benjamin Musyoki struck down Ingonga's 8 July 2024 decision, in which the DPP had reversed an earlier resolution to charge Oparanya with corruption-related offences — a reversal the court found could not stand legal scrutiny. The ruling is a significant blow to Ingonga and raises fresh questions about the integrity of prosecutorial decision-making at the highest levels of Kenya's justice system. Oparanya, who serves in President William Ruto's Cabinet, now faces the prospect of the original charges being reinstated following the court's intervention. The DPP's office had not responded by the time of going to press.



President William Ruto yesterday publicly rebuked Nairobi Governor Johnson Sakaja for talking during a presentation by an agricultural officer, telling him pointedly to pay attention in a moment that drew widespread reaction. "I hope weve governor you are listening," Ruto said, directing his remarks squarely at Sakaja, who had been murmuring amid the official's address. The rebuke, delivered in a matter-of-fact tone that left little room for ambiguity, underscored Ruto's well-documented insistence on discipline and attentiveness during official government functions. Sakaja, visibly caught off guard, fell silent. The incident occurred during an agricultural engagement and quickly circulated widely on social media, with Kenyans divided between those who found the president's intervention warranted and those who considered it a public humiliation of an elected leader.



A delegation from Botswana yesterday visited the Kenya National Police DT SACCO in Nairobi, seeking to draw lessons from Kenya's cooperative sector as the southern African nation works to strengthen its own savings and credit cooperative societies. The visit, which took place on Thursday, centred on governance structures, digital financial services, financial sustainability, and strategies for adapting cooperative models to evolving member needs — areas where Kenya's SACCO movement has built a continental reputation for depth and innovation. Kenya's cooperative sector is among the most developed in Africa, with SACCOs managing hundreds of billions of shillings in assets and serving millions of members across public and private sectors. Botswana's interest signals growing regional recognition of the Kenyan model as a practical blueprint for cooperative development.



With eleven months to the August 2027 general election, the race for the Nairobi governorship is filling rapidly, with at least six candidates already publicly declaring interest in succeeding incumbent Johnson Sakaja at City Hall. The field spans politicians, technocrats, and public servants, each arriving with promises calibrated to the frustrations of a capital city electorate that has grown impatient with undelivered pledges on housing, transport, drainage, and service delivery. The most intriguing entry, however, is that of Geoffrey Mosiria, Nairobi County's Chief Officer for Customer Care — a senior official in Sakaja's own administration who is now positioning himself to unseat the man he currently serves. Whether Mosiria can convert insider knowledge of City Hall's workings into a credible electoral campaign remains the question his rivals are watching most closely.

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Court Justice William Musyoka dismissed Gikaria's judicial review application

High Court upholds KSh2.5M IEBC fine against Gikaria

The ruling reaffirms the electoral commission's power to sanction sitting MPs — and sends a sharp warning ahead of the 2027 campaign season

BY David Kimani

@themtkenyatiimes

The High Court yesterday dismissed Nakuru Town East MP David Gikaria's challenge against sanctions imposed by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, clearing the way for enforcement of a KSh2.5 million fine and a public apology over Electoral Code of Conduct violations during the Ol Kalou parliamentary by-election campaign in July.

Justice William Musyoka dismissed Gikaria's judicial review application, finding that the MP had not met the threshold for the orders he sought. The court made no order as to costs. The ruling simultaneously discharged temporary orders issued on 15 July that had suspended implementation of the IEBC Electoral Code of Conduct Enforcement Committee's 14 July determination, meaning the full weight of the committee's sanctions is now immediately enforceable.

The case originated in complaints over remarks Gikaria made while campaigning ahead of the 16 July Ol Kalou by-election. The IEBC committee found that his statements concerning cash handouts and the collection of national identity card details from voters amounted to conduct prohibited under the Electoral Code — specifically, statements implying financial inducement and the potential misleading of voters about voting requirements.



Nakuru Town East MP David Gikaria

Gikaria had argued that the collection of ID details was administrative, used only to account for beneficiaries. "During voting, is it your ID that is used? No. People vote using their fingerprints," he said in his defence. The committee was not persuaded. It imposed the KSh2.5 million fine, ordered a public apology and retraction, issued a formal warning, and referred evidence to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for investigation of possible election offences.

Gikaria took the matter to the High Court, arguing that the IEBC proceedings violated his constitutional rights to fair administrative action and a fair hearing. He contended that the committee had proceeded with the 14 July hearing while he was hospitalised, and that he had been given insufficient time to respond to a cyber investigation report relied upon by the commit-

tee. Justice Musyoka had on 15 July certified the application as urgent and temporarily stayed implementation pending the full hearing. The IEBC committee, for its part, had rejected an earlier adjournment request, citing inadequate medical documentation and the statutory timelines that govern electoral proceedings — noting that Gikaria was represented by advocates throughout.

In dismissing the challenge, the court affirmed the legal framework under which the IEBC Enforcement Committee operates, including its powers to summon persons, hear complaints, and impose sanctions ranging from financial penalties and formal warnings to campaigning restrictions and disqualification. The judgment underscored the distinction between the enforcement process and criminal proceedings, and stressed the se-

riousness of voter bribery and voter suppression in a constitutional democracy.

Following the ruling, the IEBC called on Gikaria to comply with the 14 July determination within stipulated timelines. The commission said the judgment reaffirmed its mandate to enforce the Electoral Code and protect the integrity of Kenya's elections.

The timing carries significance beyond one MP's legal battle. With the August 2027 general election now eleven months away and campaigns quietly intensifying across the country, the ruling serves as a pointed reminder to politicians of every stripe that the electoral commission has both the authority and, now, fresh judicial backing to act against code violations — before, during, and after the campaign season that is already, in everything but name, well underway.

China grants Kenya \$2M for drought and Ebola response



BY Grace Wanja

@themtkenyatiimes

China yesterday handed Kenya a US\$2 million grant to bolster the country's drought response and Ebola preparedness, with the funds split equally between the two emergencies in a ceremony at the National Treasury in Nairobi.

Chinese Ambassador to Kenya Guo Haiyan and National Treasury Principal Secretary Chris Kiptoo signed the grant handover certificate, witnessed by Public Health and Professional Standards Principal Secretary Mary Muthoni. The timing was deliberate. Kenya confirmed its first imported case of Bundibugyo Ebola just days earlier, instantly elevating the US\$1 million Ebola allocation from precautionary planning to urgent operational necessity. The remaining US\$1 million targets drought relief in a country where successive

seasons of erratic rainfall have deepened food insecurity across arid and semi-arid regions.

The Ebola funds will specifically strengthen preparedness infrastructure in counties classified as very high-risk and high-risk — a designation that reflects both geographic proximity to active outbreak zones and existing gaps in surveillance and response capacity.

"China's aid embodies the friendly sentiments held by the Chinese government and people toward the government and people of Kenya," Guo said at the ceremony. Kiptoo welcomed the grant warmly, noting its timeliness. "We appreciate the Government of China for its continued support and commitment to strengthening our partnership," he said.

With Ebola confirmed at Kenya's borders and drought deepening in the north, the US\$2 million arrives not a moment too soon.

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Economy For most Kenyan households, the cost of living remains the most immediate and visible sign of economic pressure

Growth on paper, struggle on the ground

Kenya's macroeconomic indicators point upward, but for millions of ordinary citizens, recovery remains something they read about rather than feel

BY Collins Kibet

@themkenyatimes

Kenya's economy appears to be moving in the right direction — on paper. Government statistics point to growth, rising investment, and improving macroeconomic indicators. Yet behind those figures sits a markedly different reality: families struggling to afford food, young people searching endlessly for work, small businesses battling shrinking purchasing power, and households cutting back on basic necessities simply to get through the month. The growing distance between economic statistics and lived experience raises a question that policymakers cannot indefinitely avoid: if the economy is growing, why are so many Kenyans still struggling?

Economic growth is conventionally measured through gross domestic product, investment flows, government revenues, exports, and overall production. These indicators matter — they help policymakers understand the direction of travel. But growth alone does not guarantee that ordinary citizens are becoming more financially secure. An economy can expand while wealth remains concentrated in a narrow segment of society. The real test of economic progress should therefore not be how quickly the economy grows, but whether that growth creates decent jobs, strengthens household incomes, reduces the cost of essential goods, and gives ordinary people a credible opportunity to build better lives.

For most Kenyan households, the cost of living remains the most immediate and visible sign of economic pressure. Food, transport, housing, electricity, education, and healthcare consume a significant and growing share of household income. Even when headline inflation appears manageable from a macroeconomic vantage point, individual families experience price increases very differently. A parent whose salary stays flat while food and transport costs rise does not experience stability — they experience a quiet, grinding decline in purchasing power. The consequences are difficult choices made daily: fewer meals, postponed medical treatment, cheaper housing, opportunities withdrawn from chil-



dren, and money borrowed to cover expenses that wages no longer reach.

The situation is particularly acute for Kenya's young population. Every year, thousands complete secondary school, college, and university and enter a labour market that cannot absorb them all into stable employment. A university degree, once a dependable pathway to economic security, no longer carries that guarantee. Many graduates spend years in a cycle of applications, interviews, and additional qualifications without finding meaningful work. Others turn to casual labour, informal trading, or online gigs simply to survive. The problem is not a

lack of willingness to work. In most cases, it is a structural insufficiency of opportunity relative to the number of people seeking it.

Small and medium-sized enterprises — which form the backbone of Kenya's everyday economic activity — are equally under pressure. Traders, shopkeepers, transport operators, farmers, and service providers depend heavily on consumers having disposable income. When households are stretched, businesses feel it immediately. Customers buy less, delay purchases, or shift to cheaper alternatives. Simultaneously, entrepreneurs must contend with operating costs, taxation, expensive credit, rent, and competition. A business can remain technically open while its owner earns barely enough to cover expenses and nothing more.

Agriculture presents its own contradiction. Kenya remains deeply dependent on farming for employment, food security, and rural livelihoods, yet farmers continue to face high input costs, unpredictable weather, unreliable markets, and inadequate farm-gate returns. A farmer may produce food that becomes expensive for consumers while receiving a price that barely justifies the effort of growing it. Between farm and table

lie multiple layers of transport, storage, processing, and distribution that absorb value without always adding it. Until these structural inefficiencies are addressed, Kenya risks the absurdity of struggling farmers and unaffordable food existing simultaneously.

The government deserves recognition for pursuing infrastructure development, attracting investment, and implementing measures intended to strengthen the economic base. Roads, energy projects, and digital infrastructure create real long-term opportunity. But development must ultimately translate into improved living standards that citizens can actually perceive. Kenyans should be able to draw a clear line between national economic policy and their own daily circumstances. Programmes that produce impressive headline figures while failing to generate jobs, strengthen household incomes, or reduce economic insecurity will eventually face a credibility problem that no amount of statistics can resolve.

There is also a deeper need to reconsider how Kenya defines and measures economic success. GDP growth matters, but it should not be treated as the sole measure of pros-

perity. Greater attention is needed to the quality of jobs created, household purchasing power, youth employment rates, access to affordable credit, small business productivity, food security, and the capacity of ordinary families to save rather than merely survive. Growth should be broad-based — felt across sectors and income levels — rather than concentrated in areas that generate impressive aggregates without meaningfully changing most people's lives.

Kenya also needs to build stronger support for local production. The country imports many goods that could be produced domestically, and exports significant volumes of raw materials that could generate considerably more value if processed locally. Expanding manufacturing, agro-processing, and value addition would create employment while reducing dependence on imported goods and the vulnerability that comes with it. Kenyan entrepreneurs need easier access to affordable financing, a predictable tax environment, and markets where they can compete on fair terms.

Kenya stands at an economic crossroads. One path fixates on impressive growth figures and macroeconomic achievements. The other asks a harder question: what does economic growth actually mean to the ordinary Kenyan? That answer should be taken from the kitchen table, the classroom, the market stall, the farm, and the workplace — not from a spreadsheet. If families cannot comfortably afford basic necessities, if graduates cannot find decent employment, and if small businesses cannot survive, then the country must be honest with itself: growth has not yet reached everyone.

Kenya does not simply need an economy that grows. It needs an economy that works for its people — one where growth translates into jobs, affordable living, productive agriculture, resilient businesses, and genuine opportunity for the young. The challenge for policymakers is not merely to increase the size of the economy, but to ensure that prosperity is shared widely enough to be felt. Until that happens, Kenya's economic growth will continue to look impressive on paper while millions of its citizens experience a very different reality on the ground.



Economic growth is conventionally measured through gross domestic product, investment flows, government revenues, exports, and overall production. These indicators matter — they help policymakers understand the direction of travel.

Politics The intervention lands at the most turbulent moment the opposition has experienced since the 2022 general election

Kenya's opposition fractures with 11 months to the ballot

As Jubilee rebels, Ukombozi reshapes, and Gachagua circles, the race to build a coalition capable of beating Ruto is producing more noise than strategy

BY James Mwangi

@themkenyatimes

Jubilee Party Deputy Party Leader Jeremiah Kioni yesterday broke publicly with the opposition's current political architecture, questioning his party's place in the Ukombozi Alliance and calling for an entirely new coalition to be assembled before Kenya goes to the polls in August 2027 — a declaration that has exposed, with uncomfortable clarity, just how fragile the opposition's foundations remain with less than a year to the ballot.

The intervention lands at the most turbulent moment the opposition has experienced since the 2022 general election. The Azimio La Umoja-One Kenya Coalition has been rebranded as The Ukombozi Alliance. Former President Uhuru Kenyatta resigned as coalition council chairman on 5 October, days after handing Jubilee's leadership to former Interior Cabinet Secretary Fred Matiang'i. The man who built Jubilee into a political machine that twice delivered the presidency is now, by his own account, merely an adviser with no formal position in the coalition he once chaired. Uhuru's departure does not simply create an organisational vacancy — it removes the single figure whose name and regional weight gave Azimio its greatest credibility in 2022. With eleven months to polling day, that is not a gap that can be filled by a press conference or a re-branding exercise.

Into that vacuum, Kioni has stepped with questions that cut to the heart of what the opposition actually is. "I really don't understand what we are doing as Jubilee in this whole Azimio/Ukombozi arrangement," he said. "At this point, I believe we should be thinking beyond the old formations and working towards a new, genuinely inclusive coalition that brings everyone on board and gives every voice a place at the table." The words carry the sting of a man who feels politically sidelined within his own party. Kioni had positioned himself as a natural successor to Jubilee's internal leadership. When Uhuru chose Matiang'i instead, Kioni acknowledged his



Jubilee Party Deputy Party Leader Jeremiah Kioni

disappointment but stopped short of open revolt — until now. His call for a political reset is simultaneously a principled argument about coalition architecture and a personal signal that he does not intend to be managed quietly into irrelevance before nominations open.

Ukombozi leader Kalonzo Musyoka has moved to contain the damage, insisting Uhuru remains part of the coalition in an advisory capacity and that no leadership vacuum exists. "The positions of Party Leader and Chair of Council are separate," Kalonzo said — a distinction that satisfies procedural requirements without resolving who now anchors the opposition's credibility in Mount Kenya. Kalonzo has led Wiper Democratic Movement for nearly two decades, sought the presidency multiple times without success, and is presiding over a coalition whose internal tensions grow harder to conceal as the electoral calendar tightens.

That question of credibility will define the next eleven months more than any other single factor. Kenya's opposition has a structural problem that rebranding cannot fix: it is a coalition of disappointed ambitions rather than shared conviction. Ka-

lonzo wants the presidency. Matiang'i, newly installed at Jubilee's helm, remains an untested quantity in electoral politics despite his formidable administrative record. Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, dramatically ousted in October 2024, is assembling his Democracy for the Citizens Party with visible energy and undisguised presidential intent. Siaya Governor James Orengo's name circulates in coalition discussions, adding yet another centre of gravity to a constellation that has not yet found its sun. Each brings something to the table. None has demonstrated a willingness to subordinate personal ambition to collective strategy — and in Kenyan politics, that willingness, or the absence of it, decides whether grand coalitions hold or collapse the moment nominations begin.

Against this fractured landscape, President William Ruto and Kenya Kwanza have a rational strategic interest: keep the opposition divided for as long as possible. Every public disagreement between Kioni and the Ukombozi leadership, every ambiguous statement about Uhuru's future role, every unresolved question about coalition leadership is time the government does not spend defend-

ing its record. And on that record — the rising cost of living, controversial taxation, persistent youth unemployment, and the 2024 finance bill protests that brought Kenyans onto the streets in numbers not seen in a generation — there is considerable ground to defend. Infrastructure investments and economic stabilisation measures have been made, but the daily experience of millions of Kenyans remains one of financial pressure rather than relief. That gap between government narrative and citizen experience is precisely the space a credible, united opposition should be occupying. It is currently not.

Mount Kenya, which delivered Ruto a critical margin in 2022, is restless. Gachagua's political mobilisation across the region — framed as a defence of its interests — has introduced genuine uncertainty into a bloc Kenya Kwanza cannot afford to lose. Kioni's deep Jubilee roots there give his intervention a dimension beyond personal grievance. If the opposition consolidates around a credible candidate with a coherent economic message, the path to State House is real. If it cannot, Ruto wins by default — not on the strength of his record, but on the structural

weakness of the alternative.

History is instructive and unforgiving. Kenya's opposition has repeatedly assembled coalitions that looked formidable at launch only to unravel when presidential candidacy, nominations, and post-election positions could no longer be deferred. The National Super Alliance of 2017 came closest to breaking that pattern and still fell short. The 2022 Azimio coalition, with all its resources and Uhuru's active involvement, lost to a Kenya Kwanza operation that was simply better organised in the final weeks. With eleven months remaining, the opposition has less time than ever to resolve contradictions it has carried unresolved into every previous cycle.

Three questions must be settled urgently. Who is the presidential candidate, and will every partner hold through the turbulence of nominations? What is the concrete economic offer to ordinary Kenyans — not manifesto language, but a specific account of what changes in a household's daily life? And can the coalition survive its own nomination process without fracturing precisely when unity matters most?

Kioni's call may be self-serving. It may also be correct. The two are not mutually exclusive. What the opposition cannot afford is more time debating internal structure while the electorate forms its judgements. Those judgements are being made now — quietly, continuously — by Kenyans paying more for flour, fuel, school fees, and healthcare than when they last voted, and by young people who marched in 2024 and are watching to see whether anyone in opposition politics has actually earned their trust.

Eleven months remain. Kenya's opposition is still debating who leads it. That is not a political problem. It is an emergency.

Business For a student, the lesson is simple: build a blog around something you understand, develop a portfolio, and use it to approach businesses near campus

Six businesses campus students can start with almost no cash

Across Kenya's universities, a quiet generation of student entrepreneurs is proving that HELB is not the only lifeline

BY **Njeri Mickeydan Kioko**

@themkenyatomes

Let me be straightforward with you. I am not a business guru or a motivational speaker. I am simply someone who has lived through campus life in Kenya, watched friends struggle with empty pockets, and seen others turn small, unglamorous hustles into reliable streams of income. This is not theory. It is observation. University life in Kenya comes with relentless financial pressure. Fees are steep, accommodation swallows a significant portion of Higher Education Loans Board disbursements, and by the third week of semester, many students are already calculating how to survive until the next payment arrives. But some students have quietly discovered that they do not need large capital to make money. They simply started small, started where they were, and stayed consistent.

None of what follows is a get-rich-quick scheme. These are practical businesses — proven in Kenyan campus environments — that can be started with relatively little money and run alongside a full course load.

Blogging is often dismissed as a hobby, but the real opportunity has never been advertising revenue alone. It lies in using a blog as a shopfront for your skills. Google AdSense pays according to traffic volume, and Kenyan traffic generally earns less than traffic from markets such as the United States or United Kingdom. At roughly \$1.50 per thousand views, 10,000 monthly pageviews yields only about \$15. That model, on its own, is frustrating.

The smarter approach is to use a blog as proof that you can write, create content, and attract an audience — then offer those skills to businesses. Content writing earns between KSh2,000 and KSh10,000 per piece. Social media management can bring in KSh10,000 to KSh30,000 per client each month. A Nairobi personal-finance blogger with roughly 60,000 monthly pageviews earned just \$34 from AdSense — but she held a KSh25,000 content-writing retainer with a SACCO, an KSh18,000 social media management contract with a small lender, and a KSh15,000 sponsored post arrangement. Her blog generated close to KSh58,000 a month through services, not advertising.

For a student, the lesson is simple: build a blog around something you understand, develop a portfolio, and use it to approach businesses near campus. A smartphone and hostel Wi-Fi are enough to begin.

Cleaning is not glamorous. It is also genuinely profitable. Residential cleaning in Kenya commands between KSh1,500 and KSh5,000 per job, depending on the property and scope of work. A student who builds a base of regular clients — targeting hostels, bedsitters, and apartments near campus — can turn the work into a steady monthly income without employing anyone or paying rent on premises. Basic equipment: mops, buckets, brushes, rags, and detergent. The real asset is trust. Do the job well and clients refer you. Target deep-cleaning requests during exam periods and semester breaks, when students vacating rooms need help. Reliability, not academic credentials, determines whether you are

hired again.

The growth of eCitizen, Kenya Revenue Authority online platforms, HELB applications, and other government digital services has created a new and underserved market. Smartphones have not killed the cyber business — they have changed what that business looks like. Assisted digital services are where the opportunity now sits. A student with a laptop and a portable printer can help fellow students and community members navigate HELB applications, eCitizen processes, document uploads, and online registrations. A lean setup of one or two computers costs roughly KSh50,000 to KSh80,000, though starting smaller is entirely possible. The highest-demand periods — HELB disbursement cycles, Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service application windows — are predictable, which makes planning straightforward.

A mobile beauty service eliminates the single biggest cost in the industry: rent. Basic manicure and pedicure equipment costs between KSh20,000 and KSh50,000, though starting with core essentials and reinvesting as income grows is a well-worn path. Clients pay between KSh2,000 and KSh5,000 per

session, and the repeat-business cycle — customers returning every few weeks — makes revenue reasonably predictable. There is a well-known story from Nakuru of a man named Mbugua who reportedly started his nail business with KSh100, bought supplies, served people he knew, and built steadily from there. A hostel room can function as the salon. WhatsApp Status and Instagram, used consistently, are the marketing. Valentine's Day, graduation ceremonies, and end-of-semester parties are the peak seasons.

Few businesses are more straightforward, or more honest, than selling food to hungry people. Winfridah Mukhwaya — known widely as Mama Mandazi in Ongata Rongai — has run her mandazi and chapati business for more than nine years. From 2kg of wheat flour she produces roughly 80 mandazis, selling each at KSh5, generating KSh400 in sales with a reported profit of around KSh150 per packet. At five packets a day, that translates to more than KSh22,500 a month. Elizabeth Kanyara, who sells smokies, boiled eggs, and chapatis in Kiambu town, reports between KSh1,000 and KSh1,500 in daily profit on a good day.

A student need not operate

as a full-time vendor. Morning mandazis sold to students heading to lectures, chapati orders taken in advance, snacks supplied to study groups — all are viable entry points. If hostel rules prohibit cooking, a partner who lives off-campus solves the problem simply.

Secondhand clothing remains one of the most accessible campus businesses precisely because the market is right there in front of you. Viola Dola started her thrift operation in her second year. She and friends would buy clothes from Gikomba Market, post them in a WhatsApp group, and deliver to hostels. She eventually built a proper thrift shop. With KSh2,000 a student can buy carefully selected pieces and resell them — dresses sourced for KSh50 to KSh100 can move at KSh500 or KSh600. Secondhand shoes cleaned and presented well can command significantly higher prices, particularly branded pairs in good condition.

The student advantage here is genuine: you already know your market. You know what your classmates wear, what is trending, and what people can realistically afford. One practical caution — avoid sealed bales early on. They can contain damaged or slow-moving stock that ties up your capital.

Buy individual pieces first, learn what sells, then scale.

Across all six of these businesses runs a single truth: you do not need to wait until you have thousands of shillings in reserve. Your hostel room can be a shop. Your WhatsApp Status can be your billboard. Your classmates can be your first customers. The obstacle is rarely money — it is the fear that the business is too small, too ordinary, or somehow beneath you.

The mandazi does not care whether you hold a degree. The cleaning job does not care whether you are a first-year or a finalist. The mitumba rack does not care what you are studying. What matters is whether you show up, provide something people genuinely need, and do it consistently.

Start small. Learn as you go. Reinvest your profits. And do not wait for HELB. Your hustle can start today.

Six Businesses Campus Students Can Start with Almost No Cash

Small capital. Big opportunities.

Your skills + consistency = income

- 1 Blogging & Content Services**
 - Start a blog around what you understand (passion or expertise).
 - Offer content writing, social media management, and digital services to businesses.
 - All you need is a smartphone and hostel Wi-Fi.

Potential Earnings: KSh2,000 – KSh30,000+ per client/project
- 2 Cleaning Services**
 - Target hostels, bedsitters and apartments near campus.
 - Use basic equipment (mops, buckets, brushes, rags, detergent).
 - Build trust and deliver quality — clients will refer you.

Potential Earnings: KSh1,500 – KSh5,000 per job (or more with regular clients)
- 3 Assisted Digital Services**
 - Help students and community members with HELB, eCitizen, KRA and other online services.
 - Use a laptop and portable printer.
 - Peak periods = HELB disbursements, KUCCPS applications.

Potential Earnings: KSh1,000 – KSh5,000+ per service (varies by service)
- 4 Mobile Beauty Services**
 - Offer manicures, pedicures and other beauty services from your hostel room.
 - Market via WhatsApp Status & Instagram.
 - Peak seasons: Valentine's Day, graduations, end-of-semester parties.

Potential Earnings: KSh2,000 – KSh5,000 per session (prepare clients + steady repeat)
- 5 Food Business**
 - Sell mandazi, chapati, smokies, boiled eggs, snacks and more.
 - Serve fellow students, accept pre-orders, use hostel networks.
 - Use a partner off-campus if hostel rules restrict cooking.

Potential Earnings: KSh1,000 – KSh1,500 daily profit (can go higher with volume)
- 6 Secondhand Clothing (Mitumba)**
 - Buy quality pieces from Gikomba or trusted suppliers.
 - Post in WhatsApp groups, deliver to hostels.
 - Start small (avoid sealed bales), learn what sells, then scale.

Potential Earnings: KSh500 – KSh600 per item (higher for branded/good condition)

Your hostel room can be a shop. | Your WhatsApp Status can be your billboard. | Your classmates can be your first customers.

Start small. Be consistent. Your hustle can start today!

Irrigation This county has the agricultural potential, the farmers, the land and, in various locations, water resources capable of supporting a more reliable and productive agricultural economy

Uasin Gishu has the water: Why leaders must now turn the president's irrigation call into food, wealth and opportunity

"Food security will not be achieved by waiting for the rains; it will be achieved when leadership turns every available drop of water into food, income and opportunity."



BY Fredrick Kipchumba Chelimo

fkipchelimo@yahoo.com

"Food security will not be achieved by waiting for the rains; it will be achieved when leadership turns every available drop of water into food, income and opportunity."

Today, watching the national food security engagement, one thing attracted my attention. Not because it was strange or significantly large, but it is a question that has lingered in my mind for some time. Big dams have been constructed in Uasin Gishu, fertile farms are present, the farmers are skilled and determined and one thing looks prominently amiss. This is the linkage between the water in the dams and the farm. The President hit this point with clear precision: we should connect our dams with the farm.

President William Ruto's call for Kenya to move decisively from rain-fed agriculture towards irrigation-led production should not be treated as another national policy declaration to be applauded in speeches and forgotten when the political moment passes. For Uasin Gishu, it should be received as a direct invitation to action.

This county has the agricul-

tural potential, the farmers, the land and, in various locations, water resources capable of supporting a more reliable and productive agricultural economy. What is urgently required is leadership willing to connect these assets into a functioning system. If Uasin Gishu gets this right, the reward will extend far beyond increased harvests. It could become a powerful pathway to household incomes, youth employment, agro-processing, stronger cooperatives and genuine economic empowerment. Done properly, it would also be a sure bet for food security and shared prosperity for the people of Uasin Gishu.

The central question, therefore, is no longer whether irrigation is desirable. It is whether local leadership is prepared to actualise the national call.

For too long, Kenya has sometimes celebrated infrastructure at the point of construction rather than at the point of impact. A dam is commissioned, photographs are taken, speeches are delivered and the project is recorded as an achievement. But for the farmer, the real test begins afterwards. Is water reaching the farm? Can farmers afford to use it? Is there an irrigation network? Is electricity or an alternative energy source available where pumping is required? Are farmers receiving technical advice? Is there a market for the additional produce? If the answer to these questions is no, then the infrastructure is not yet

delivering its full economic promise.

This is precisely where Uasin Gishu's leadership can make a difference. Instead of waiting for another national programme, county leaders, Members of Parliament, ward representatives, agricultural agencies, water institutions, farmer organisations and development partners should come together and map the county's irrigation potential. Existing dams, water pans, rivers, reservoirs and other water-harvesting investments should be identified alongside the farms, cooperatives and agricultural value chains that could benefit from them.

The objective should be simple: identify where water exists, establish where productive agricultural land is located, determine what is preventing the connection between the two and mobilise resources to close that gap. Such an exercise would transform the irrigation debate from political rhetoric into a practical development programme.

Local leaders should be asking government agencies a straightforward question: What will it take to move water from existing reservoirs to farmers' fields? If pipelines are missing, let them be prioritised. If distribution infrastructure is incomplete, let the gaps be costed. If pumping systems are required, let sustainable energy options be examined. If farmers need training, let extension services be aligned. If markets are



the constraint, let production planning be connected to buyers and agro-processing. This is where political leadership becomes meaningful.

A Member of Parliament does not need to build a dam personally to make a difference. A county leader does not have to control every national agency. Leadership can mean convening the institutions that do, demanding timelines, mobilising resources, monitoring implementation and keeping the public informed.

Uasin Gishu's leaders have an opportunity to turn the President's irrigation message into a countywide agricultural mobilisation agenda. They can identify priority irrigation zones, bring farmers into the planning process, champion unfinished water projects and pursue partnerships with national government, development agencies, financial institutions and the private sector. The economic opportunity is enormous.

Reliable irrigation can allow farmers to produce beyond the traditional dependence on one rainy season. It can support vegetables, fodder, cereals and other higher-value crops while creating predictable supplies for processors and traders. More production means greater demand for transport, storage, agricultural inputs, machinery, packaging and financial services. Cooperatives can become stronger aggregation and marketing centres. Young people can find opportunities not merely as farm labourers but as irrigation technicians, agronomists, processors, entrepreneurs and service providers. And this transformation must deliberately include persons with disabilities.

Too often, inclusion is mentioned after development projects have already been designed. That must change. Persons with disabilities are part of Uasin Gishu's agricultural economy. They own land, cultivate farms, participate in cooperatives and run enterprises. Irrigation projects should therefore incorporate accessibility from the beginning—from farm access and water points to training, information, financing and agricultural technologies. The objective should not be charity. It should be participation.

The same applies to women, young farmers and other groups whose productive potential is frequently constrained by limited access to resources. Irrigation provides an opportunity to broaden ownership of economic opportunity rather than simply increasing agricultural output. But none of this will happen through speeches alone.

Leaders should now move from congratulating the national government on its irrigation ambition to asking what they can practically do to support it. They should jointly establish measurable local targets: hectares to be brought under irrigation, farmers to be reached, water infrastructure to be completed, production to be increased and markets to be secured. Every project should have a clear beginning, a responsible institution, a budget, a completion date and a measurable outcome. That is how public investment acquires credibility.

Uasin Gishu should not wait until every national irrigation programme is designed elsewhere before determining its own priorities. The county should prepare itself, pres-

ent its evidence and demand alignment. It should identify existing assets and unfinished projects, package viable proposals and place them before the national government and development partners.

This is the moment for local leadership to demonstrate that devolution is not simply about administering programmes handed down from Nairobi. It is also about identifying local opportunities and mobilising the partnerships necessary to unlock them. The President has provided the national direction. Uasin Gishu's leaders now have an opportunity to provide the local drive.

If they succeed in connecting water to farms, farms to markets, markets to processors and farmers to economic opportunity, the impact will be measured not only in tonnes of food produced but in families whose incomes improve, young people who find livelihoods and communities that become more resilient. That is the real meaning of agricultural transformation.

Uasin Gishu should therefore not merely applaud the President's irrigation call. It should act on it, align with it and make it work on the ground. Because the county already has much of what it needs: productive land, experienced farmers, agricultural institutions and water resources. What is missing is the determined leadership to connect these pieces.

The opportunity is staring us in the face. If Uasin Gishu's leaders seize it now, irrigation could become one of the county's strongest instruments for food security, employment and economic empowerment. As the President visits the County in readiness for the National Mashujaa Day, leaderships in Uasin Gishu should show support in words, action and measurable pledges when receiving the President.

"The President has called for irrigation-led agriculture; Uasin Gishu's answer should not be another speech—it should be water flowing into farms, food filling granaries, businesses growing and ordinary people earning more from the land beneath their feet."

Politics President William Ruto came to power with significant backing from Mount Kenya, where voters played a decisive role in the 2022 election

Wamuchomba leaves UDA: What her exit means for Ruto and Mt Kenya

The Githunguri MP's departure is more than one politician's grievance — it is an early warning sign for a government heading into a difficult election cycle

BY Levis Wangamati

@themtkenyaintimes

Githunguri MP Gathoni Wamuchomba's decision to leave the United Democratic Alliance is more than the departure of one politician from a ruling party. It is another signal that Kenya's political landscape is already being reshaped ahead of the 2027 general election. Wamuchomba has openly expressed dissatisfaction with the direction of the government and what she described as the poor treatment of leaders who raise concerns on behalf of their constituents. Her exit deserves attention beyond the corridors of Parliament. It raises a larger question about whether the political relationship between the Kenya Kwanza administration and parts of the Mount Kenya region is beginning to develop cracks.

When politicians abandon a ruling party, the departure is often dismissed as routine political survival. Kenya has witnessed enough defections to know that politicians rarely leave powerful machines without calculating what comes next. But Wamuchomba's exit comes at a particularly sensitive moment. Mount Kenya remains one of the country's most consequential voting blocs, and every disagreement involving a prominent leader from the region attracts national attention. The question is no longer simply whether one MP is unhappy. The more pressing question is whether her frustrations reflect a wider feeling among voters and leaders who once strongly supported the government.

President William Ruto came to power with significant backing from Mount Kenya,

where voters played a decisive role in the 2022 election. That political understanding was built around expectations of representation, influence, and economic transformation. But as 2027 approaches, political loyalty is being tested against what communities believe they have received in return. Roads, jobs, the cost of living, taxation, agricultural prices, and access to opportunity are becoming the currency of political conversation. Leaders who cannot account for these concerns to their constituents risk becoming the first casualties when public expectation collides with political reality.

Wamuchomba's departure presents UDA with a difficult challenge. A ruling party can survive the loss of one politician, but repeated departures from influential regions carry a compounding political cost. The danger is not necessarily that every dissatisfied leader will defect. The danger is that voters may begin to read political defections as evidence of a deeper malaise within the ruling establishment. Once that perception takes root, party loyalty becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. In Kenyan politics, where perception often travels faster than policy achievement, a small crack can quickly become a much larger electoral conversation.

It would, however, be premature to interpret Wamuchomba's resignation as proof that Mount Kenya has turned against Ruto. Kenyan voters are not the permanent property of political parties or their brokers. They have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to change loyalties when circumstances demand it. The same voters who delivered a landslide for one candidate

can make an entirely different judgment at the next ballot. That is why both the government and the opposition should resist the temptation to read too much into individual defections. What matters is whether political movements of this kind are accompanied by a genuine, measurable shift in public opinion.

The opposition will be watching closely. Political formations are already in conversation about possible alliances, leadership arrangements, and electoral strategies ahead of 2027. Every politician departing the government side will be viewed as a potential recruit, while every new alliance will be assessed for its capacity to mount a credible challenge to the incumbent. But Kenya has seen many grand coalitions that looked formidable on paper only to unravel when questions of presidential ambition, nominations, and resource-sharing emerged. Turning political dissatisfaction into a coherent national alternative is a considerably harder task than assembling a press conference.

For Wamuchomba herself, leaving UDA guarantees nothing. She must now convince voters that her decision rests on principle rather than electoral positioning. That argument will require more than sharp speeches and government criticism. Her political future will depend on whether she can articulate a clear alternative and explain, concretely, what she would do differently. Voters are growing impatient with politicians who remember their constituencies during campaign season and disappear thereafter. A defection without a credible political programme risks becoming another unremarkable



Githunguri MP Gathoni Wamuchomba

chapter in Kenya's long history of political realignment.

There is also a broader lesson here for Ruto and his administration. Political support cannot be sustained indefinitely through party structures, appointments, and managed alliances. Governments survive politically when citizens believe that campaign promises are translating into tangible improvements in their lives. When people are contending with high living costs, unemployment, and economic uncertainty, political messaging loses ground to lived experience. The administration has time — but not unlimited time — to listen to the concerns surfacing from its traditional support bases before the 2027 campaign turns every grievance into an electoral weapon. Mount Kenya itself faces its own political reckoning. For years the region has been courted by presidential candidates on the strength of its voting numbers. But political leaders ought to be asking whether another election built on personality and ethnic arithmetic will address the

problems facing ordinary residents. Farmers want reliable markets. Young people want employment. Businesses want a predictable tax environment. Families want affordable services. These needs will outlast every political rally. The real test for any politician seeking the region's support should be what they can deliver — not simply which coalition they have joined.

Wamuchomba's exit is consequently best understood as one chapter in a much larger story. Kenya is entering a period in which alliances will shift, parties will negotiate, and politicians will reposition for the next contest. Some movements will be driven by genuine ideological conviction; others will simply reflect the calculation of securing favourable ground before nominations begin. The public must look beyond the noise and ask what each political realignment means for governance, accountability, and the lives of ordinary citizens.

The 2027 election may still be months away, but the campaign has already begun in

everything but name. The alliances forged in 2022 cannot be assumed to survive intact. Ruto and his allies have time to rebuild confidence. Opposition leaders have time to demonstrate that they offer more than criticism. But for voters across Mount Kenya and the country, the question should remain simple: who has a credible plan to make their lives better?

Behind every political calculation are millions of Kenyans managing the realities of rent, food prices, school fees, healthcare, and unemployment. They are not merely watching who joins which coalition. They are measuring whether the people asking for their votes have earned the right to ask again. Wamuchomba has made her move. The more consequential question is what the voters will do with theirs. That is where the 2027 contest will ultimately be decided — not in party headquarters or coalition meetings, but in the quiet, unforgiving judgement of citizens who have seen and heard it all before.

PSC Speaking after the swearing-in, Ali said she was humbled by the appointment and committed to working collaboratively with fellow commissioners

Fatuma Ali joins PSC with pledge to build consensus

The former Wajir Woman Representative yesterday took the oath as Parliamentary Service Commission’s new female non-member commissioner

BY John Kariuki
@themkenyaintimes

Fatuma Ibrahim Ali was yesterday sworn in as a commissioner of the Parliamentary Service Commission, pledging to champion consensus, integrity, and teamwork in an institution she described as central to the functioning of Kenya’s democracy.

Ali, who served as Wajir County Woman Representative in the 11th Parliament, took her oath after both cham-

bers of the national legislature approved her appointment to replace Rachel Ameso, whose term had ended. The Senate endorsed her nomination on 1 October, and the National Assembly followed on Wednesday.

Her path to the commission was competitive. She emerged the highest-ranked candidate among 12 shortlisted applicants interviewed on 10 September, assessed on academic qualifications, public affairs experience, understanding of Parliament’s mandate, lead-

ership skills, and compliance with Chapter Six of the Constitution on integrity.

Speaking after the swearing-in, Ali said she was humbled by the appointment and committed to working collaboratively with fellow commissioners. “I am a person who believes in consensus in commissions,” she said. “Consensus is very crucial in decision-making, and I am committed to working on consensus at all times.”

National Assembly Speaker and PSC chairman Moses

Wetang’ula welcomed Ali warmly, noting that several commissioners had worked alongside her during her parliamentary career. “You have a rich history behind you and I have no doubt whatsoever that you will add value to this Commission,” Wetang’ula said. He reminded her that the PSC had never resolved a matter by vote — preferring instead to deliberate until agreement is reached. “By building consensus, you carry everybody. When you vote, you split yourselves,” he said.

Colleagues at the ceremony were equally effusive. Nyandarua Woman Representative Faith Gitau, who has known Ali for more than a decade, said she possessed both the heart and the intellect for the role. PSC Commissioner Johnson Muthama acknowledged the commission’s heavy workload but assured Ali of her colleagues’ full support. Likoni MP Mishi Mboko, who has worked with Ali for



Fatuma Ibrahim Ali was yesterday sworn in as a commissioner of the Parliamentary Service Commission

more than 20 years through ODM party structures and Parliament, described her as a natural team player. Nyamira Senator Okong’o Omogeni said her top ranking in the recruitment process spoke for itself.

The PSC, established under Article 127 of the Constitution, is responsible for providing the services and facilities necessary for Parliament to function efficiently, appointing and supervising parliamentary office holders, and managing the institution’s budget. It also runs programmes to promote parliamentary democracy and oversees the welfare of members and staff.

Ali steps into the role at a moment when the commission is focused on strengthening Parliament’s public profile ahead of the next general election — a task her colleagues believe her public affairs background makes her well suited to lead.



Wamuchomba demands suspension of tea levy as farmer bonuses collapse

BY John Kariuki
@themkenyaintimes

Githunguri MP Gathoni Wamuchomba yesterday called for the immediate suspension of the 0.8 per cent Tea Export Levy, warning that the tax — introduced on 1 May 2026 — is accelerating a crisis that threatens the livelihoods of more than 650,000 smallholder farmers and the six million Kenyans who depend on the sector.

Wamuchomba said farmers were misled when the levy was introduced, having been assured that exporters would absorb the cost. That assurance, she said, has proved hollow, with the burden being pushed back to growers through reduced buying prices and shrinking bonuses.

The pain is already measurable. Rukuriri Tea Factory in Embu declared a bonus of KSh50 per kilogramme yesterday, down from KSh57.50 last year. Ngere Tea Factory



Githunguri MP Gathoni Wamuchomba

declared KSh48 — among the lowest in recent memory. At the Mombasa Tea Auction, Kenyan tea that should fetch a minimum of USD 2.60 per kilogramme is reportedly being sold for as little as USD 1.35, a near-50 per cent discount passed directly to the farmer.

Compounding the crisis is a debt burden exceeding KSh30B across Kenya Tea Development Agency-managed factories, flagged in a 2026 Tea Board of Kenya audit. Wamuchomba also warned that Kapseret Tea Factory faces possible closure.

She issued five demands to Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe: suspend the levy pending impact assessment, restore key export markets including Pakistan — which accounts for over 40 per cent of Kenya’s tea exports — publish the factory debt audit, eliminate port delays driving up demurrage costs, and commission an independent review of the 2025/2026 bonus decline.

The Ministry of Agriculture had not responded by the time of going to press.

Rejection is not the end, it is like going global



May be considered the greatest one.

Many leaders were rejected,
Their rejection made them rise higher.
Don't cry for anything,
Your tears will count will be turned to joyous

If anyone rejects you anytime,
Be happy.
A time will come for them
To come to you again

You will soon go global,
The time is not far away.

Brinda. D
Creative writers
Ghs Melpattampakkam
Tamil Nadu India

Be not discouraged, disappointed or depressed,
Rejection is not the very end.
Stay firm, be confident,
It will take you global.

Others teasing, making fun and trolling you
Will take you to a great destination.
No more worries about rejection,
The stone that is once rejected

If you obey all the rules, you miss all the fun



Rules shape everything perfectly. However, if you try to follow every rule strictly, you may miss some beautiful moments in life.

If you teach primary and pre-primary students, you cannot always follow strict rules. You should come down to the children's level and understand their mindset. This approach helps students enjoy learning.

When you gather with your friends and relatives, you should enjoy those moments without thinking too much about rules.

Children learn through their environment.

A flower blooms naturally in its own time.
The wind blows freely.
The sun shines, and the rain falls naturally.
Even our feelings, such as hunger, are part of our natural lives. Beautiful things have their own beauty because they happen naturally.

If you follow strict rules all the time, people may respect you, but they may not always feel your affection and love.

Love is God.
So, you should follow certain rules, but sometimes you should also know when to let them go.

Life is more precious than rules.

__G.YasminSirajudheen
Secondary grade teacher
Memalayanur block
Villupuram dt.

Leave some room for fun



You need not be perfect to sing, play or fall,
Just step into the moment and give it your all.

In the race for perfection, don't forget to live,
For the greatest of lessons are those life can give.
Let mistakes be your teachers, let laughter be free,
Let the child in your heart have a little liberty.

So bend a few rules when the moment feels right,
Trade seriousness briefly for laughter and light.
For life is not measured by how flawless you've been,
But by how deeply you lived, how freely you've grinned!

Nandini Anandkumar
Educator, Writer, Motivator

If you obey every rule, every line, every sign,
You may walk perfectly, but miss the sunshine.
For life is not a test where each answer must be right,
It is a colourful journey, a dance in the light.

Don't polish each moment till its laughter is gone,
Sometimes messy beginnings are where joy is born.

Don't search for yourself, Create yourself



Yes! I don't search for myself
As I found adoring myself
By sculpting myself
Handling the chisel to myself.

Is it wrong to live imagining unicorn oneself
To the desired shape to engulf

Not with materialistic as a cunning wolf
Or to be underestimated as an elf
And I never mind though isolated in gulf
But will change to oasis proudly standing self.

I mould positive vibes within myself
Promoting socialisation to myself
And with confidence equip myself
Not searching for me,
I stay loving myself.

G.Sarala.
Creative writers

In the Books of Life



Where I can simply be myself.
But the rain begins to fall,
Washing the old words from my skin.
In its steady rhythm,
I hear a quieter truth:
I am not wrong for being here,
Not broken for wanting to be seen.
Then joy breaks through the clouds,
Bright as a rainbow
Opening across the sky.
And for the first time,
I step into the light,
Ready to become
Who I have always been.

Viji. T
CW writer
Namakkal
Tamilnadu
India

In the books of life,
I have never been allowed
To be what I am,
So I hide myself from the unseen,
Fighting battles within,
Carrying the ruthless words
The world has taught me.
Even beneath
The scorching sunshine,
I stay hidden,
Searching for a place

The witty little boy asked his grandfather



"What makes food tastier - salt or sweet, spicy or sour?"

His grandfather stood quietly.
A cracking voice arose from his tummy,
And he wondered that it is hunger.

When plate and stomach are empty,
taste doesn't matter.
Adding different sauces to the noodles,
different masalas to the biryani,
different colours to variety rice,
different types of plating -
tastes and plating disappear
when hunger is more important than it.

Hunger is a need to be fulfilled.
Every simple bowl of rice feels like a royal feast
when hunger is yet unfilled.

J.H. Aasiya
11th std,
Government Girls Higher Secondary School,
Nellikuppam, Cuddalore district
Tamil nadu

School It is a place where young people acquire knowledge, values, skills, and character that prepare them for life beyond the school gate

Bikeke school leads the way on competency-based learning

In Trans Nzoia, a head teacher is proving that education works best when it reaches beyond the classroom

BY Daniel Kipchumba
@themkenyatiimes

Nestled in the agricultural heartland of Trans Nzoia County, Bikeke Comprehensive School is quietly building a reputation as one of the region’s most forward-thinking institutions — not through examination results alone, but through a deliberate commitment to developing the whole learner.

At the centre of that transformation is Ronald Francis Toili Wamalwa, the school’s head teacher, whose leadership has steadily reshaped what education looks like at Bikeke. Under Wamalwa, the school has placed growing emphasis on academic achievement, agricultural education, infrastructure improvement, and a rich programme of co-curricular activities — all anchored in the principles of Kenya’s Competency-Based Educa-

tion framework.

Wamalwa’s philosophy is straightforward but quietly radical in a system that has long rewarded rote learning over practical ability. He believes that every learner carries unique potential that must be identified, nurtured, and given room to grow. Discipline, hard work, and commitment to both academic and practical achievement are the values he models and expects — not as abstract ideals, but as daily habits built into the life of the school.

“A school is not simply a place where examinations are taken,” Wamalwa has told staff and parents. “It is a place where young people acquire knowledge, values, skills, and character that prepare them for life beyond the school gate.” For him, practical competence is not an addition to education — it is its very purpose.

That conviction is visible across the school’s grounds.

Bikeke sits in one of Kenya’s most productive farming counties, and Wamalwa has embraced that geography as a teaching resource. Learners tend a variety of food crops and maintain tree-planting programmes that have improved both the school’s environment and its sense of pride. Agricultural activities give students hands-on exposure to farming techniques, environmental responsibility, and an appreciation of the sector’s economic significance — skills directly relevant to the communities most of them will return to.

Beyond agriculture, the school has worked to improve its physical infrastructure and learning environment, with each incremental improvement aimed at giving students the space and resources they need to develop creatively and with confidence.

Co-curricular life is equally central to the Bikeke model. Students participate in sports,

music, drama, cooking, and construction-related activities — programmes that build teamwork, leadership, self-expression, and practical skills that carry real value after school. In a world increasingly driven by innovation and adaptability, Wamalwa argues, a student who leaves Bikeke with a trade skill, an agricultural competency, or a creative discipline is far better equipped than one who leaves with theory alone.

The results are becoming visible. Bikeke is earning recognition across Trans Nzoia for the quality and confidence of its students — young people shaped not merely to pass examinations, but to think, build, grow, and contribute. That, by any measure, is education doing what it was always meant to do.



Students practicing a practical skill on chapati making



Students planting trees as a way to curb erosion

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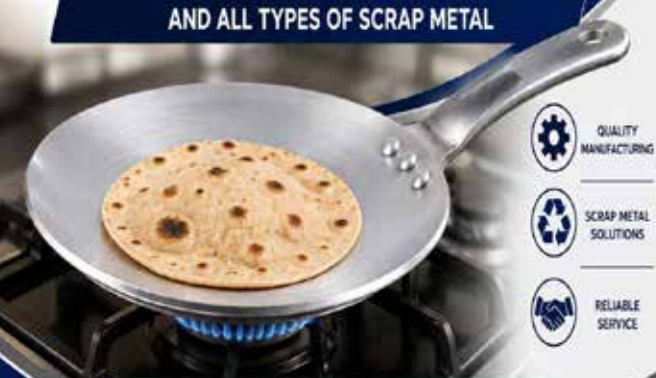
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AI One of the most celebrated promises of AI is productivity. Studies show that tasks such as writing, research, and ideation can be completed two to three times faster with AI assistance

From information to insight: Why AI in 2026 demands a rethink of education

As artificial intelligence reshapes how the world works, Africa's classrooms risk being left behind — not for lack of access, but for lack of wisdom

BY Ashford Kimani

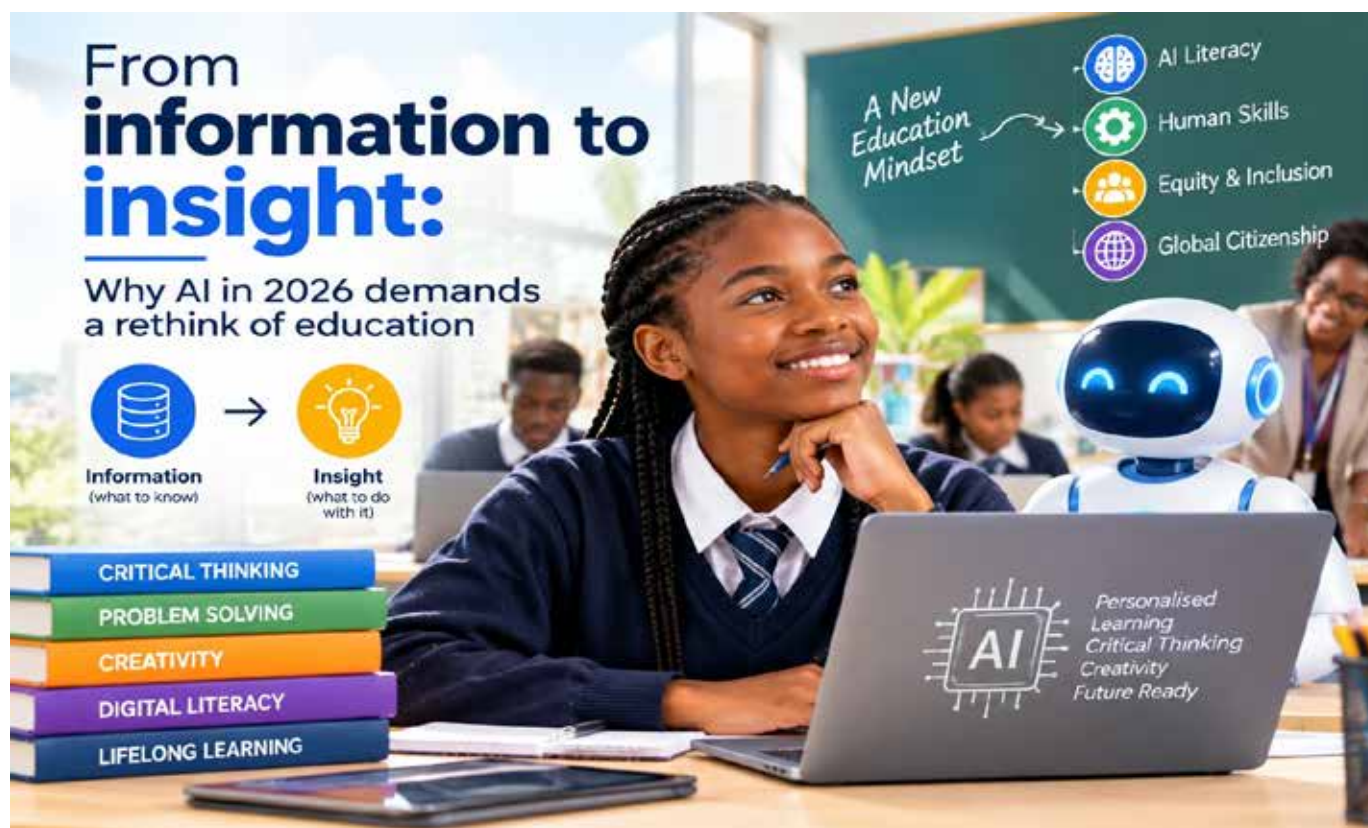
@themkenyatimes

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” This oft-quoted biblical lament has, for generations, been used to justify the expansion of schooling, the proliferation of textbooks, and the relentless push for access to information. But in 2026, that statement demands reinterpretation. The crisis of our time is no longer a scarcity of knowledge. It is the inability to interpret, prioritise, and apply an overwhelming abundance of it.

A recent guide by Harvard Business School on AI in 2026 captures this shift with striking clarity. Artificial intelligence is no longer a peripheral tool deployed to enhance productivity. It has become the very infrastructure through which decisions are made, systems are designed, and organisations function. In such an environment, the question is no longer whether institutions will adopt AI, but whether they understand how to operate within its logic.

For education systems, particularly in contexts like Kenya, this transition is both urgent and unsettling. Schools were designed for an era in which information was scarce, teachers were gatekeepers of knowledge, and assessments measured recall. Today, information is abundant, instantly accessible, and increasingly generated by machines. The traditional architecture of schooling is, therefore, misaligned with the realities of the present.

One of the most celebrated promises of AI is productivity. Studies show that tasks such as writing, research, and ideation can be completed two to three times faster with AI assistance. Learners and professionals alike can now attempt work that previously required specialised training. But there



is a crucial caveat: AI does not turn novices into experts. It can generate answers, but it cannot supply judgement. It can suggest solutions, but it cannot replace experience.

This distinction is where education must now concentrate its energies. If machines can provide information, schools must focus on cultivating understanding. If AI can generate content, teachers must emphasise interpretation. The value of education is shifting — decisively and irreversibly — from knowledge acquisition to knowledge application.

The Harvard Business School guide introduces a concept that deserves to become central to educational discourse: “change fitness.” This refers to the capacity of individuals and organisations to continuously adapt to shifting technological and social environments. It is not a single skill but a composite of curiosity, flexibility, data literacy, and the ability to redesign one’s approach to work as circumstances evolve.

In practical terms, learners must be prepared not for a fixed body of knowledge, but for a lifetime of learning, unlearning, and relearning. Kenya’s Competency-Based Curriculum gestures toward this ideal, but its implementation often remains tethered to old habits of content coverage and examination performance. Change fitness demands something deeper: an education system that is itself adaptive, responsive, and informed by real-time evidence.

And here lies a paradox. Even as AI promises to make decision-making more efficient, it introduces new and layered complexities. The guide distinguishes between predictive AI, which enhances accuracy and consistency, and generative AI, which fosters creativity and diversity of thought. These two forms of intelligence pull in different directions. An overreliance on predictive systems risks producing rigid, standardised outcomes. An overreliance on generative systems risks sacrificing rigour for novelty.

Education must navigate between them.

Assessment frameworks, for instance, must move beyond narrow standardisation without descending into subjectivity. The ongoing conversations at forums such as the Kenya National Examinations Council Annual Educational Assessment Symposium are timely in this regard. The challenge is no longer simply to collect data on learner performance, but to use that data intelligently — to inform teaching, guide interventions, and shape policy with precision rather than guesswork.

Yet the integration of AI also brings risks that cannot be wished away. There are security concerns, as AI systems become both targets and instruments of sophisticated cyber threats. There are cognitive risks, including bias and the now well-documented phenomenon of AI hallucinations — where systems generate plausible but factually incorrect information with disarming confidence. And there are strategic risks,

particularly when institutions automate decisions without fully understanding the processes they are delegating to machines.

These risks point to a critical need. AI literacy must go beyond technical proficiency. It must encompass critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and a clear-eyed awareness of the limitations of machine intelligence. Learners must not only know how to use AI — they must know when to question it.

Perhaps the most counter-intuitive insight from the Harvard guide is this: as AI becomes more powerful, distinctly human qualities become more valuable, not less. Judgement, empathy, contextual understanding, and ethical reasoning are not diminished by technology; they are amplified in importance. In a world where machines can process data at unprecedented speed, the ability to make sense of that data — to weigh it, contextualise it, and act wisely on it — becomes the defining human advantage.

This has profound implications for teaching and learning. The teacher is no longer merely a transmitter of knowledge but a curator of meaning. The classroom is no longer a site of information delivery but a space for dialogue, inquiry, and critical engagement. Assessment is no longer a measure of what learners know, but of what they can do with what they know.

At a systemic level, education must also respond to the changing nature of work. AI is not eliminating jobs wholesale, but it is reshaping them. Routine and repetitive tasks are increasingly automated, while demand grows for roles that require analytical thinking, creativity, and complex problem-solving. This calls for an education system that prepares learners not just for employment, but for adaptability, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

The Kenyan context adds another layer of urgency. Schools already grapple with large class sizes, limited resources, and significant disparities in access and quality. AI’s arrival into this landscape could either deepen those inequalities or help address them — the outcome depends entirely on how the transition is managed. Leveraged wisely, AI can support personalised learning, enhance teacher effectiveness, and improve data-driven decision-making. Adopted uncritically, it risks widening the very gaps it promised to close.

The central lesson of AI in 2026 is deceptively simple: access to information is no longer the problem. Making sense of it is. Education systems must pivot from accumulation to application, from content to competence, from data to decision-making.

The lament of Hosea may still hold, but its meaning has evolved. We are no longer destroyed for lack of knowledge. We are at risk of being overwhelmed by it. The task before educators, policymakers, and institutions is not to provide more information, but to cultivate the wisdom to use it well.

Ashford Kimani teaches English and Literature in Gatundu North Sub-county and serves as Dean of Studies.

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Post-colonial elite This is the politics of inequality, exclusion, and poverty not as residual failure but as sustained political project

The banquet of the untouchables: How Sub-Saharan Africa's post-colonial elite feast on the bones of the excluded

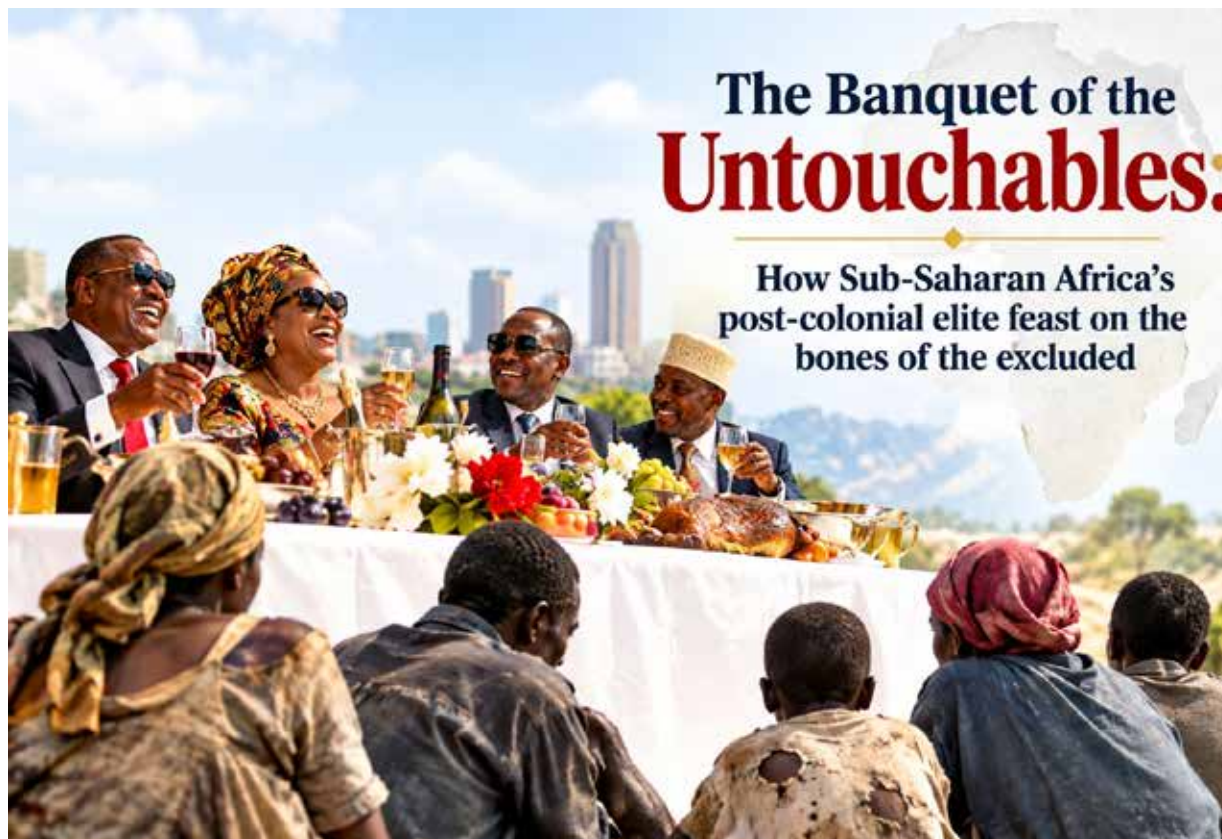


By: Jerameel Kevins Owuor
Odhiambo
@themkenyatomes

In Kenya today, 125 individuals control more wealth than 42.6 million of their fellow citizens fully 77 percent of the population. Nearly half the country scrapes by in extreme poverty while the richest one percent holds 78 percent of the nation's financial wealth. This is not misfortune. It is architecture.

Walk the dusty tracks of Turkana or the overcrowded alleys of Kibera and the numbers cease to be abstractions. They become hollow cheeks, children who leave school early because fees outrun wages, mothers who ration maize meal while elite compounds in Karen and Runda glitter with imported luxury. The same pattern repeats across Sub-Saharan Africa: growth that fattens the few and starves the many. Economic expansion has averaged around five percent in recent years in places like Kenya, yet poverty reduction has stalled or reversed. The link between rising GDP and falling destitution has been deliberately severed.

This is the politics of inequality, exclusion, and poverty not as residual failure but as sustained political project. The colonial state was an extractive machine. In Kenya the White Highlands were carved out for settlers, Africans reduced to tenants at the will of the Crown, forced into labour through hut taxes and the kipande. Independence did not dismantle the machine; it merely changed the operators. The same land concentration, the same ethnic arithmetic of reward and punishment were inherited and refined by African elites. What the settler once claimed by race, the post-independence oligarch claims by proximity to power. The Mau Mau demand for land justice was quietly buried under "willing buyer, willing seller" schemes that legitimized dispossession while elevating a new class of African landlords and political bro-



The banquet of the untouchables

kers.

The result is structural exclusion written into geography, ethnicity, and class. Rural poverty rates remain roughly three times higher than urban ones. Northern and northeastern counties have stayed trapped at the bottom of the poverty distribution for a quarter-century while Mount Kenya regions advanced. Coethnicity with the president has long correlated with better public investment and lower household poverty. Devolution was supposed to break this pattern; the evidence suggests the old logic merely decentralised. The child born in a pastoralist county still faces years less schooling than the child born in a central highlands constituency. Education, health, and opportunity are rationed according to political geography rather than citizenship.

Across the region the same script plays out with local variations. South Africa's Gini remains among the world's highest. Resource-rich states see oil and mineral rents captured by ruling circles while the majority remain outside formal employment. Informal labour absorbs the surplus population without the rights, wages, or security that turn work into dignity. Debt service in Kenya

has at times consumed more than two-thirds of tax revenue twice the education budget, many times the health budget while social protection reaches only a small fraction of the poorest. The fiscal system often taxes the poor more heavily, through regressive consumption taxes, than it transfers to them. Growth becomes a private banquet; the public is left with the crumbs and the bill.

Literary devices are unnecessary when reality itself is grotesque. Consider the image of a CEO in one of Kenya's largest firms earning 214 times the salary of a teacher. Or the fact that the salary increase enjoyed by top executives in a single recent year could have paid public school teachers for six years. These are not market outcomes; they are the visible surface of political choices tax codes that favour capital over labour, procurement systems that reward connected firms, land registries that remain opaque, and a social contract that has been rewritten to protect accumulation at the top.

The emotional weight of this system is not abstract. It is the quiet rage of a young graduate who discovers that connections, not competence, open doors. It is the exhaustion of a small-holder farmer whose produce never

reaches a fair market because middlemen and political cartels control the chains. It is the humiliation of watching public hospitals collapse while private clinics for the connected flourish. Inequality of this magnitude does not merely impoverish; it corrodes the possibility of common citizenship. When the distance between the gated estate and the informal settlement becomes a chasm, solidarity dies and grievance flourishes.

Original insight demands we abandon comforting myths. The problem is not insufficient growth. Kenya and several peers have grown. The problem is the political determination of who captures that growth. Structural inequality rooted in colonial extraction, preserved by elite continuity, and reproduced through ethnic and spatial patronage explains why poverty reduction has slowed even as economies expanded. More than half of income inequality in the region is attributable to circumstances over which individuals have no control: place of birth, parental education, ethnicity, and access to networks of power. Effort is real; the starting line is not the same.

This is not inevitable. It is maintained by actors who benefit from

it and by institutions too weak or too captured to challenge it. Governments that speak of "bottom-up" transformation while protecting the upward flow of rents must be held to account. Parliaments that pass regressive finance bills and then face youth protests must confront the social contract they are breaking. Elites who treat the state as a private estate must face progressive taxation of wealth, land, and capital gains that actually bite. International financial institutions that celebrate GDP while remaining silent on distribution must recalibrate their metrics. Citizens especially the young who filled the streets against the 2024 Finance Bill must refuse to accept exclusion as destiny.

The path forward is not mystery. Universal, high-quality public services in education and health break the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Progressive taxation and aggressive action against illicit financial flows reclaim resources currently locked in private vaults. Land reform that prioritizes productive use and justice over speculative holding addresses the original colonial wound. Labour market policies that expand formal, decent work reduce the informal trap. Transparent, formula-based resource allocation that ignores ethnicity and rewards need can begin to unwind spatial exclusion. None of this is technocratic fine-tuning. It is political confrontation with those who currently profit from the status quo.

Sub-Saharan Africa does not lack resources, talent, or demographic energy. It suffers from a politics that systematically converts public potential into private privilege. The banquet continues because the excluded have been told, for generations, that their hunger is natural. It is not. It is engineered. The words of independence promised a shared table. That promise has been betrayed with clinical precision. The only remaining question is whether the majority will continue to accept the scraps or finally demand the keys to the kitchen.

The writer is a social commentator

Classrooms When these pressures accumulate without a safe outlet, they manifest as chronic stress. Psychologically, unresolved stress changes how a young person thinks about themselves

The silent crisis in our classrooms

Mental health has become the world’s leading health concern — and Kenya’s schools are feeling it from both sides of the desk



By: Wanjohi P. Mugambi
@themkenyatimes

Mental wellbeing for young people is no longer a quiet crisis hidden in dormitories and staffrooms. It has become the leading health concern on the planet, and the numbers make that impossible to ignore.

The Ipsos Global Health Service Monitor 2024, which surveyed 23,667 respondents across 31 countries, found that 45 per cent of people now regard mental health as the biggest health issue in their country — ahead of cancer at 38 per cent and stress at 31 per cent. As a young teacher, I do not read that data as a statistic. I read it as my own story, and the story of my learners. We are present in class in body, but frequently absent in mind — anxious, withdrawn, irritable, or unusually aggressive. Many have lost interest in learning, not because they are lazy, but because something deeper is broken.

We know what it means to grow up under pressures that our parents simply did not face. Young people today navigate overcrowded classrooms, the demands of the Competency-Based Curriculum, relentless pressure to perform academically, and a simultaneous expectation to appear perfect online. A single smartphone exposes a 14-year-old to filtered lives, cyberbullying, social comparison, and information overload — all before the first lesson of the day. Beyond school, many carry adult burdens: caring for sick parents, walking long distances to class without breakfast, living in homes fractured by separation, or displaced by floods and drought. I have sat in staffrooms where teachers are exhausted, and in class-



rooms where learners are equally exhausted, and the realisation has settled on me with some weight — we are all young people carrying the same load.

When these pressures accumulate without a safe outlet, they manifest as chronic stress. Psychologically, unresolved stress changes how a young person thinks about themselves. They begin to internalise limitation. The shift is gradual but devastating — from “I am facing a difficult situation” to “I am the difficult one. I am not enough.” I described this pattern in earlier research as youth stress mania: intense, fluctuating stress responses among young people transitioning to adulthood under compressed timelines for success. I did not write about it from a distance. I wrote about it because I have lived it, and because I have listened to my learners live it too.

A young person struggling with poor mental wellbeing shows signs that an attentive teacher — or a fellow young person — can learn to recognise. Constant fatigue despite adequate sleep. Loss of interest in subjects once loved. Frequent headaches and stomachaches with no medical cause. Withdrawal from friends. Irritability over minor frustrations. Declin-

ing performance and unexplained absenteeism. In girls, it often appears as quietness, self-isolation, and tearfulness. In boys, it more commonly surfaces as anger, defiance, and truancy. Both are cries for help, expressed in different languages.

Educational psychology is clear on this point: learning cannot happen when the brain is in survival mode. A stressed brain cannot concentrate, cannot retain information, and cannot create. Abraham Maslow was right — belonging and safety must precede achievement. I have seen this truth in my own experience. On the days I am not well, I cannot teach well.

So how do we genuinely support the mental wellbeing of young people? The first step is deceptively simple: normalise asking, “Are you okay?” In my classroom, I have found that a quiet “Uko sawa?” — asked in the learner’s mother tongue — opens doors that a formal questionnaire cannot. Young people heal when they feel safe, not when they are lectured. Listening without judgement is the first intervention, and young people respond best to fellow young people.

Second, we must teach emotional literacy with the same seriousness we bring to mathematics or English. Young

people need to learn how to name their emotions, understand stress, and develop

practical coping mechanisms — controlled breathing, journaling, talking to a trusted adult, and taking deliberate breaks from social media.

Third, schools must become wellness spaces. This does not require a large budget. It requires a designated corner where a learner can decompress, a peer support club led by students themselves, at least one teacher trained in psychological first aid, and school leadership that does not use intimidation as a management tool.

Finally, young people must be involved as researchers of their own wellbeing. When given tools to document their own experiences and design solutions to their own stress, their sense of agency improves significantly. They

move from being victims of stress to active participants in their own healing. That is what evidence-based practice looks like in a Kenyan classroom. We do not need expensive programmes imported from abroad. The most effective intervention is often a young teacher who genuinely cares, a classroom that truly listens, and a community willing to speak the language of the child.

The Ipsos data is a clear wake-up call. If 45 per cent of the world identifies mental health as the top concern, then young people are not exaggerating when they say they are struggling. They are telling the truth. The education of Kenya’s children depends not only on books, blackboards, and mean scores, but on the wellbeing of the child holding the pen — and the young teacher holding the chalk. Care for the mental health of the young person, and the young person will care for their future. And the nation, in turn, will be well.

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Fuel Where scarcity exists, price differentials follow. And where price differentials exist across poorly regulated or porous borders, fuel moves. Not always through formal channels.

Africa's fuel crisis crosses its own borders

As Gulf crude recovers, refined fuel is leaking across African frontiers — and the continent's best-supplied markets may be the most exposed

BY Jacob Kimemia

@themkenytimes

Africa's oil crisis has quietly changed character. What began as a shortage of Gulf crude following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz in late February has evolved into something more complex and, in many ways, more difficult to contain: a continent-wide competition for refined fuel that is pulling supply across borders, draining markets that appeared well-protected, and exposing the structural fragility at the heart of African energy security.

Middle East crude exports, excluding Iran, returned to pre-war levels in September, offering a degree of relief to global markets rattled by what the International Energy Agency described as "the largest disruption in history." Yet the recovery in refined-product exports tells a different story. Those exports remain at roughly 58 per cent of their pre-war volumes, and Brent crude continues to trade near US\$100 a barrel. The crude may be moving again, but the finished fuel — the petrol and diesel that powers African economies — remains stubbornly scarce.

Where scarcity exists, price differentials follow. And where price differentials exist across poorly regulated or porous borders, fuel moves. Not always through formal channels.

That dynamic is now reshaping supply across sub-Saharan Africa, most visibly in Nigeria, home to the Dangote refinery, the continent's largest and most strategically significant refining asset. The refinery ran at 105.21 per cent of capacity in August, a figure that ought to signal strength. Crude deliveries to Nigerian refineries rose 16.75 per cent to 683,000 barrels a day, according to data from the Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority. On paper, Nigeria looks like the region's most secure fuel market. In practice, that security is being tested from the outside.

Aliko Dangote, president of the Dangote Group, said on 15 September that petrol sells for between 30 and 50 per cent more in some neighbouring countries than it does in Nigeria. The price gap, he argued, is not merely an economic inconvenience



Africa's fuel crisis crosses its own borders

nience — it is a standing incentive for diversion. Fuel intended for Nigerian consumers is crossing borders into Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, Togo, and beyond, either through formal export arrangements or, as Dangote acknowledged directly, through smuggling. His assessment of the crisis was stark: it is "not even about price; it's about availability."

The warning carries weight. If refined fuel continues to leave Nigeria faster than the country's refineries and import terminals can replace it, domestic buyers face the prospect of shortages or sharply higher pump prices — even with refinery utilisation running above full capacity. The Nigerian National Petroleum Company raised the Dangote refinery's crude allocation to seven cargoes a month in May, up from approximately five. The refinery itself says it needs between 13 and 15 cargoes

a month to operate optimally. The shortfall is filled by purchasing crude at international market prices, a cost that ultimately feeds back into the price of fuel at the pump.

Nigeria's fuel security, in other words, depends on far more than the existence of a large refinery. It rests on the delicate interplay of crude allocation decisions, export volumes, and the price differentials between Nigerian pump prices and those of its neighbours. When those differentials widen during a regional supply crunch, the refinery's output becomes, paradoxically, an asset for the entire neighbourhood — at the expense of the home market.

David Precious, Senior Market Analyst at EBC Financial Group, which has been tracking the regional dynamics closely, put the paradox plainly. "The common view is that more refining capacity in Africa

means more protection from shocks such as Hormuz," he said. "However, when fuel, the raw material itself, is scarce, a market that sells below its neighbours' prices becomes their supplier too, as supply suddenly crosses boundaries. This is when shortages can appear at home."

The reach of Nigeria's refinery output illustrates precisely how far that pull now extends. Dangote fuel has reached buyers in Tanzania — a logistical and geographic stretch that would have seemed improbable just a few years ago. But Tanzania is not the only market feeling the strain at a distance. Africa's landlocked economies, which sit at the end of long and vulnerable supply corridors, have been among the hardest hit.

Ethiopia, which depends heavily on the Djibouti corridor for its fuel imports, ordered conservation measures in March as supplies tight-

ened. Zambia declared a fuel supply emergency in April after diesel scarcity began disrupting markets and transport networks. Both countries have since seen conditions ease, but the episodes serve as a reminder of how quickly an inland market can tip from adequacy to crisis when a shock hits the coast.

Currency movements, which are often blamed for fuel price pressures across Africa, appear to be a secondary factor this time. South Africa's October fuel price breakdown, released by the Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, showed the rand contributing less than one cent per litre to the increase in pump prices. The dominant driver was international product prices, which the department attributed to "supply shortages caused by lower global inventories of products" — adding R3.29 a litre to petrol costs. The message is clear: this is a supply problem, not a currency problem.

Several markers in the coming days will indicate whether the pressure is easing. Kenya's next pump-price review is scheduled for 14 October, the same day the reduced VAT rate on petrol and diesel is due to lapse — a double signal for East African consumers already absorbing higher costs. The IEA's next Oil Market Report also falls on that date. Nigeria's monthly NMDPRA supply figures, which track how much domestically refined fuel actually reaches the local market, will offer a further read on whether the border-leakage problem is worsening or stabilising.

Precious offered what amounts to the defining observation of the current crisis. "In a shortage, the cheapest fuel in a neighbourhood is the fuel most likely to leave it," he said. "When a litre sells about 25 per cent more in Togo than in Nigeria and more than 50 per cent more in Ghana, that gap is a standing incentive to move fuel across the border, whatever a refinery produces. The pull may only ease when Gulf refined-product exports recover, the gaps between neighbouring pump prices narrow, or local refiners receive more of their own country's crude — and until then, the markets that look best protected may be the ones most likely to run short."

For a continent that spends an estimated US\$30 billion a year importing refined fuel, according to the African Export-Import Bank, the lesson is a hard one. Refining capacity matters. But in a regional market where price signals travel faster than tankers, proximity to a refinery may offer less protection than it promises.



All eyes on Ash Dykes

By Jeremiah Kingamu

Welsh adventurer Ash Dykes is kayaking more than 700 kilometres down the Sangha River — from Nola in the Central African Republic to Mossaka in the Republic of Congo — in what could be a world-first descent through one of Earth’s most unforgiving terrains.

The mission is the opening leg of Project 6, a year-long programme of six extreme expeditions from the man who has already crossed Mongolia solo, traversed Madagascar, and navigated China’s Yangtze River. Each day on the Sangha, Dykes covers 30 to 40 kilometres in an inflatable kayak chosen for durability, threading through crocodile-infested waters, hippo territories, and the suffocating humidity of the Congo Basin rainforest.

But this is not simply an endurance test. Dykes has partnered with local NGOs to spotlight the ecological fragility of the world’s second-largest rainforest and draw attention to the indigenous communities whose



lives are inseparable from it. “This is about more than endurance,” he said before setting off. “It’s about listening to the forest and the people who know it best.”

That message carries weight at a moment when the Congo Basin faces mounting environmental pressure from deforestation, extractive industries, and climate change — threats that rarely make international headlines with the urgency they

deserve. The descent is expected to take three to four weeks, with global audiences tracking Dykes’ progress in real time. When he reaches Mossaka, he will have paddled a potential world first. The more important question is whether the world was listening along the way.

JSS becomes Kenya’s teen pregnancy epicentre

By John Kimani

Junior Secondary School girls now account for 60 per cent of all pregnant learners in Kenya, with cases rising fastest among girls aged 10 to 14 — a generation the government concedes it has no reliable system to track, protect, or count.

The Gender Report 2026 by Usawa Agenda, which assessed more than 49,000 children across all 47 counties, identified JSS as the new epicentre of school-going pregnancy. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics Economic Survey 2026 confirms the acceleration: teenage pregnancy cases rose from 224,333 in 2024 to 235,938 in 2025, with the 10-to-14 bracket recording a 14.6 per cent jump to 11,605 cases. Kenya now ranks third globally in teenage pregnancy rates, with more than 13,000 girls dropping out of school annually. Only 58.1 per cent ever return.



Most JSS students are day scholars walking long distances past boda boda stages and older men, often into homes where the real danger waits. Most of these pregnancies are not adolescent relationships — they are defilement under the Sexual Offences Act.

Appearing before the Senate on 7 October, Education Cabinet Secretary Ogamba admitted the ministry has no comprehensive data framework for tracking learner pregnancies or perpetrators, and that mon-

itoring depends entirely on head teachers — a system he described as “not watertight.” The government does not know how many JSS girls are pregnant, who impregnated them, or whether any perpetrator has been prosecuted.

If Junior Secondary was meant to bridge childhood and senior education, it is now where, for tens of thousands of girls, childhood ends.

If we cannot count them, we cannot save them.

At Laikipia, the cold is not just weather — it is a mental health crisis

By Simon Juma

Students at Laikipia University’s Main Campus in Nyahuru-ru are battling seasonal depression driven by the town’s extreme highland cold — a mental health crisis hiding in plain sight that the institution has yet to meaningfully address.

Everyone jokes about Laikipia being cold. Nobody talks about what that cold does to the mind.

From June to August, the sun disappears for weeks at a stretch. Students wake at 6 a.m. to darkness, dense mist, and freezing bedsitters in Manguo, Shamanei, and Kwa Senteu — hostels with no heaters and a single coil that takes 30 minutes to warm bathing water. So students skip bathing. They isolate. They miss meals, miss classes, and spend entire days staring at walls. HELB disbursements arrive late, meaning many cannot afford even a cup of coffee for warmth. They sit in silence, alone, burning through whatever reserves of motivation they arrived with.

Classes run half-empty during the cold season — not because students are lazy, but because many are genuinely losing the daily fight against low mood, anxiety, and loneliness. In Nairobi, you step outside and the city distracts you. In Nyahuru-ru, on a day of cold, unbroken rain, there is nowhere to go and nothing to break the isolation.



Lecturers record absences. Parents question commitment. Neither conversation addresses what is actually happening. Cold is a clinically recognised trigger for depression and anxiety. Seasonal affective disorder is not an urban myth — it is a documented condition, and the conditions at Laikipia’s highland campus are precisely those most likely to produce it.

The solutions are neither complicated nor prohibitively expensive. Counselling services should be intensified during the cold months, not reserved for examination periods alone. Heated common rooms where students can gather, talk, and simply be warm would cost a fraction of what student wel-

fare budgets already absorb. Lecturers need guidance on distinguishing mental fatigue from indiscipline. Small interventions, deployed consistently, can hold students together through the worst months.

Three years in Nyahuru-ru have taught me that a degree here demands more than academic effort. It demands surviving cold, loneliness, and pressure with almost no institutional support.

The cold made many of us stronger. It also came close to breaking us. That should not be a rite of passage — it should be a policy failure that demands urgent correction.



SPORTS NEWS

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Sports >> *With the iconic event secured for March, attention shifts to building a national motorsport pyramid that outlasts any single race

Safari Rally confirmed for 2027 WRC calendar as Kenya eyes motorsport revival

By Martin Weche

Kenya's Safari Rally will return to the 2027 World Rally Championship calendar, scheduled for 18 to 21 March, after months of intensive behind-the-scenes negotiations led by WRC Safari Rally Project Chief Executive Officer Carl Tundo in partnership with the government and Motorsport Kenya Federation.

The confirmation ends a period of considerable uncertainty around one of rallying's most storied events. Tundo, a five-time Safari Rally winner and vice president of Motorsport Kenya Federation, stepped into the chief executive role shortly before the 2026 edition at a moment when the project faced serious financial and organisational strain. His immediate brief was unambiguous: stabilise the event, deliver the 2026 race, and secure Kenya's place on the WRC map beyond it. Yesterday's calendar announcement marks the completion of that first phase — and the beginning of a considerably more demanding second one.

"We are extremely excited to have the Safari Rally back on the 2027 WRC calendar," Tundo said. "The Safari is one of the most iconic rallies in the world, and having Kenya confirmed once again is a tremendous achievement for the country. There has been a huge amount of work behind the scenes. The team has worked extremely hard, and we are grateful for the support we have received from government and all the stakeholders involved."

Tundo acknowledged the role played by President William Ruto, under whose instructions he took charge of the project, as well as Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Salim Mvurya and Principal Secretary Elijah Mwangi, in providing the political and institutional backing



Action at 2026 WRC Safari Rally. Photo/WRC X

that made the calendar retention possible.

For Altaf Ganatra, president of Motorsport Kenya Federation, the WRC confirmation matters — but it represents only one component of a broader and more ambitious vision for Kenyan motorsport. Speaking yesterday, Ganatra was clear that the Safari Rally should function as the pinnacle of a national sporting pyramid, not as a stand-alone spectacle disconnected from the grassroots.

"The Safari Rally is much more than a sporting event," Ganatra said. "It is a global showcase for Kenya, our people, our talent and our tourism. But the government has demonstrated that its interest in motorsport goes beyond the Safari Rally. There is now an opportunity to revive and develop the entire sport, from grassroots competition to the international stage."

That development programme spans a wide range of disciplines, including Tarmac Racing, Rallycross, Rally, Autocross, Rally Raid, Karting, Cross Car, Drifting, E-Sports, Sim Racing, Classic and Historic Motorsport, and four-wheel-drive off-road competition. The ambition, Ganatra said, is to construct a genu-

ine development pathway — one through which a young Kenyan can enter motorsport at the lowest level and, with talent and opportunity, progress to international competition.

"We want a young Kenyan to be able to enter the sport at grassroots level, develop through Autocross, Rallycross, Tarmac, Rally or Rally Raid and ultimately have the opportunity to compete internationally," he said. "This is not just about drivers. It is about mechanics, engineers, officials, marshals, teams and businesses."

The vision is well-articulated. The challenge, as everyone involved privately acknowledges, is execution. Securing a calendar slot is a diplomatic and financial achievement; delivering a world-class event is an operational one, and the two require different skills. That operational responsibility now rests squarely with Tundo and his project team. The government and the federation have provided the framework. The 2027 Safari Rally itself must be built from the ground up, on a tighter timeline and with a global audience watching.

Tundo is under no illusions about the scale of what lies ahead. "The Safari is back, Ken-

ya is on the calendar, and we are proud," he said. "But this is only one part of the journey. Now we have to put on a great show in 2027 and continue building a motorsport system that can serve Kenya for generations."

Kenya's relationship with the WRC has always carried a weight beyond sport. The Safari Rally, first held in 1953 and a fixture on the world championship calendar for decades before its long absence, is woven into the country's identity in ways that few international sporting events achieve anywhere. Its return in 2021 after a 19-year hiatus was celebrated as a moment of national pride. Retaining it, and building something durable around it, would mean considerably more.

For Ganatra, the measure of success will not be the 2027 race alone. "The Safari Rally is the pinnacle," he said, "but underneath it we need a strong national sport — strong clubs, properly organised championships, trained officials, better safety standards and opportunities across every discipline."

The calendar is confirmed. The harder work begins now.

GET THE BEST OF WORLD

Sports >> *Kenya's women put one foot in the next round of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games qualification with a dominant first-leg victory at Ulinzi

Harambee Starlets thrash Seychelles 11-0 to take commanding grip on Olympic qualifier

By Martin Weche

Kenya's Harambee Starlets demolished Seychelles 11-0 yesterday at the Ulinzi Sports Complex in Nairobi in the first leg of the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games qualification, producing one of the most emphatic victories in the national women's team's recent history.

The result, played on Thursday afternoon before a partisan home crowd, effectively settles the tie before next Monday's second leg at the same venue. Kenya's passage to the second round, where the winner of the Malawi versus Zimbabwe tie awaits, is now a formality — though Harambee Starlets will be expected to see out the return fixture with the same clinical authority they displayed in the first.

The goals were shared across the team in a display that underlined both Kenya's depth in attack and the enormous gulf in quality between the two sides. Foreign-based forward Valary Nekesa led the scoring with a brace, joined by Airin Madalina, Elizabeth Mideva, Mercy Airo, Martha Amunyolete, and Elizabeth Muteshi — each contributing two goals in a performance that was as organised as it was ruthless.

Kenya made their intentions clear from the opening minutes. Nekesa drew first blood in the eighth minute, giving the hosts an early lead that immediately settled any nerves and set the tone for what was to follow. Mango added a second in the 25th minute, extending the advantage before Nekesa struck again in the 43rd minute to send Kenya into the interval with a commanding 3-0 lead.

If the first half was controlled, the second was a statement. Harambee Starlets returned from the break with the same intensity and added eight further goals, overwhelming a Seychelles side



Harambee Starlets celebrates

that had no answer to the pace, movement, and finishing of the Kenyan attackers. The final scoreline of 11-0 is among the heaviest defeats ever inflicted on a team in the African qualification pathway for the Olympic Games.

The performance will be particularly encouraging for the technical bench given the involvement of foreign-based players, whose quality and fitness added a sharper edge to Kenya's attacking play. Nekesa, in particular, was a constant threat — her pace and composure in front of goal a reminder of why she has established herself as one of the most dangerous forwards in the regional game. The contributions from Mideva, Airo, Amunyolete, and Muteshi, each finding the net twice, demonstrated a collective attacking ambition that bodes well for the challenges ahead.

Kenya's women's football programme has been on an upward trajectory in recent years, with

improved investment in player development, foreign-based recruitment, and competitive exposure helping to raise the standard of the national team. Yesterday's result, while achieved against significantly weaker opposition, reflects the growing confidence and organisation within the squad and the technical staff overseeing the qualification campaign.

The second leg on Monday at Ulinzi Sports Complex is unlikely to alter the aggregate picture in any meaningful way, but it presents an opportunity for the coaching staff to rotate the squad, give minutes to players who featured less prominently yesterday, and fine-tune combinations ahead of the more demanding second round. With a Malawi-Zimbabwe winner to face next, Kenya will need to be sharper, more tested, and ready for a considerably stiffer challenge than Seychelles could offer.

For Seychelles, the scale of the defeat is sobering, though the gap between the island nation's resources and those of a country the size and footballing ambition of Kenya is significant. Qualification campaigns at this level routinely produce results of this magnitude when the disparity between competing nations is large, and Seychelles will now focus on the second leg as an opportunity to restore some dignity before heading home.

For Kenya, however, the mood is one of quiet confidence and forward momentum. Eleven goals, six different scorers, a clean sheet, and a first-leg lead that makes the tie as good as done — there are far worse ways to begin an Olympic qualification campaign.

The second leg kicks off on Monday at Ulinzi Sports Complex. Kenya's eyes, though, are already on what comes next.

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Lucinda Hughes Afzal: Where compassion meets courage

From Bulawayo to boardrooms across the region, a Zimbabwean humanitarian is redefining what African leadership looks like



By: Anila Bukhari
@themkenyatimes

Some women are recognised by their titles. Others are remembered by the lives they touch. Ambassador Lucinda Hughes Afzal belongs to both worlds — but it is the human impact behind the titles that best captures the essence of her journey.

A businesswoman, humanitarian, fundraiser, community advocate and Executive Director of the Nozizwe Mother of Nations Trust, Afzal represents a distinctive kind of African leadership: rooted in compassion, strengthened by courage, and guided by an enduring conviction that success carries greater meaning when it creates opportunity for others.

Born and raised in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, she carries with her the values of a city and a culture that have shaped her understanding of community. At the centre of that worldview is Ubuntu — the belief that a person's humanity is inseparable from the humanity of those around them. For Afzal, leadership has never been simply about how far one can rise. It is equally about who is lifted along the way.

The values that define her were formed long before she entered public life. Raised by a resilient single mother, with her grandmother's influence also deeply felt, she witnessed what it means to keep building, keep caring, and keep moving forward even when circumstances are hard. Those lessons did not remain in childhood. They became the architecture of her character — shaping the way she approaches business, relationships, philanthropy, and community service.

Rather than viewing achievement as a personal destination, Afzal has consistently treated it as an opportunity to contribute to something larger than herself. That philosophy has remained visible at every stage of her professional and humanitarian



Lucinda Hughes Afzal.

journey.

She serves as Executive Director of the Nozizwe Mother of Nations Trust, an organisation founded in Bulawayo in 2018 with a clear mandate: to support vulnerable communities while protecting their dignity. The work has placed her close to some of the most pressing social needs on the continent — from education and hunger relief to disability support and children's welfare. It demands more than compassion. It requires coordination, persistence, fundraising discipline, and the ability to convert genuine concern into practical, measurable action.

Afzal has contributed to initiatives including work at Sigola Primary School, where classroom blocks and staff accommodation are being developed to benefit the surrounding community. She has also been involved with Mustard Seed Communities, where a new children's home has opened its doors to provide care and a safer environment for vulnera-

ble children. These projects reflect a consistent characteristic of her leadership: a willingness to work where the need is greatest, even when that work is far removed from glamour or public recognition.

Her humanitarian interests extend beyond any single organisation. She has publicly supported the Cally Rahman Blood Drive and fundraising efforts linked to KidzCan Zimbabwe — causes that address urgent and deeply human needs. Blood donation may appear to be a straightforward act, but behind every unit is a human story: a mother facing complications during childbirth, an accident victim clinging to survival, a patient mid-treatment who depends entirely on the generosity of someone they will never meet. Afzal understands that awareness without participation changes nothing, and she has consistently worked to close that gap.

Her support for KidzCan Zimbabwe reflects the same instinct. Childhood

cancer does not only affect young patients — it consumes entire families, generating emotional, financial, and practical pressures that can outlast the hospital stay by years. For Afzal, humanitarianism cannot remain an abstraction. It must become something people can see, feel, and experience through action.

Although her roots remain firmly in Zimbabwe, her vision extends well beyond national borders. As the Nozizwe Mother of Nations Trust develops partnerships across the Southern African Development Community and explores further regional engagement, Afzal has emerged as a genuinely interconnected form of African leadership. Among the areas of planned work is support for the Nazzar Foundation's home for 52 children with special needs in Tanzania — a project that reflects her understanding that compassion requires no passport. The needs of vulnerable children and families may look different from one country to the next, but the underlying human questions remain strikingly similar: who will help, who will care, and who will show up?

Afzal has consistently chosen to be among those who do.

One of the most distinctive aspects of her story is the combination of business acumen and humanitarian purpose. She is not defined solely by philanthropy. Her experience as a businesswoman gives her a perspective that understands strategy, sustainability, resource mobilisation, and the value of a well-managed relationship. Humanitarian initiatives require more than goodwill — they need people who can build partnerships, communicate a vision, and create pathways to impact that outlast the initial impulse to help. Afzal brings that disciplined, business-minded approach into her service without losing the warmth that drives it.

For her, enterprise and humanity are not adversaries. Business can create opportunity. Networks can mobilise resources. Professional relationships can become bridges to communities that would otherwise remain unreachable. When success is used responsibly, it becomes a platform from which others can rise.

Yet titles and positions tell only part of her story. Beyond the boardroom and the humanitarian brief is a woman shaped by family, culture, and the relationships she has chosen to nurture. She moves comfortably between professional environments and community spaces without losing sight of either — participating in strategic conversations while remaining conscious of the everyday realities facing ordinary families: food insecurity, education gaps, inadequate healthcare, disability support, and the wellbeing of children who have no one to advocate for them. That ability to move between worlds may be one of her most underappreciated strengths.

There is also a quieter form of leadership that receives far less attention than speeches and awards: the leadership of simply showing up. Making the call when someone needs help. Connecting a donor with a cause. Attending the fundraiser. Opening a door. Standing beside another person's vision without needing to become the centre of the story. Afzal embodies this form of leadership with consistency and without fanfare. Her contribution does not always carry her name — but it carries her influence. Sometimes impact is simply knowing that because someone was present, something moved forward.

Titles change. Positions evolve. Awards gather dust and photographs become memories. But people remember how someone made them feel. They remember who answered when they called, who believed in them, who stood beside them when there was nothing obvious to gain. That, ultimately, may be the most meaningful measure of Lucinda Hughes Afzal's journey — not simply what she achieved, but who is better because she was here.

Her legacy is not being built through titles or accolades alone. It is being built through people, relationships, communities, and lives quietly and steadily changed along the way. Success is beautiful. Purpose is powerful. But success that becomes a blessing to someone else — that is legacy.