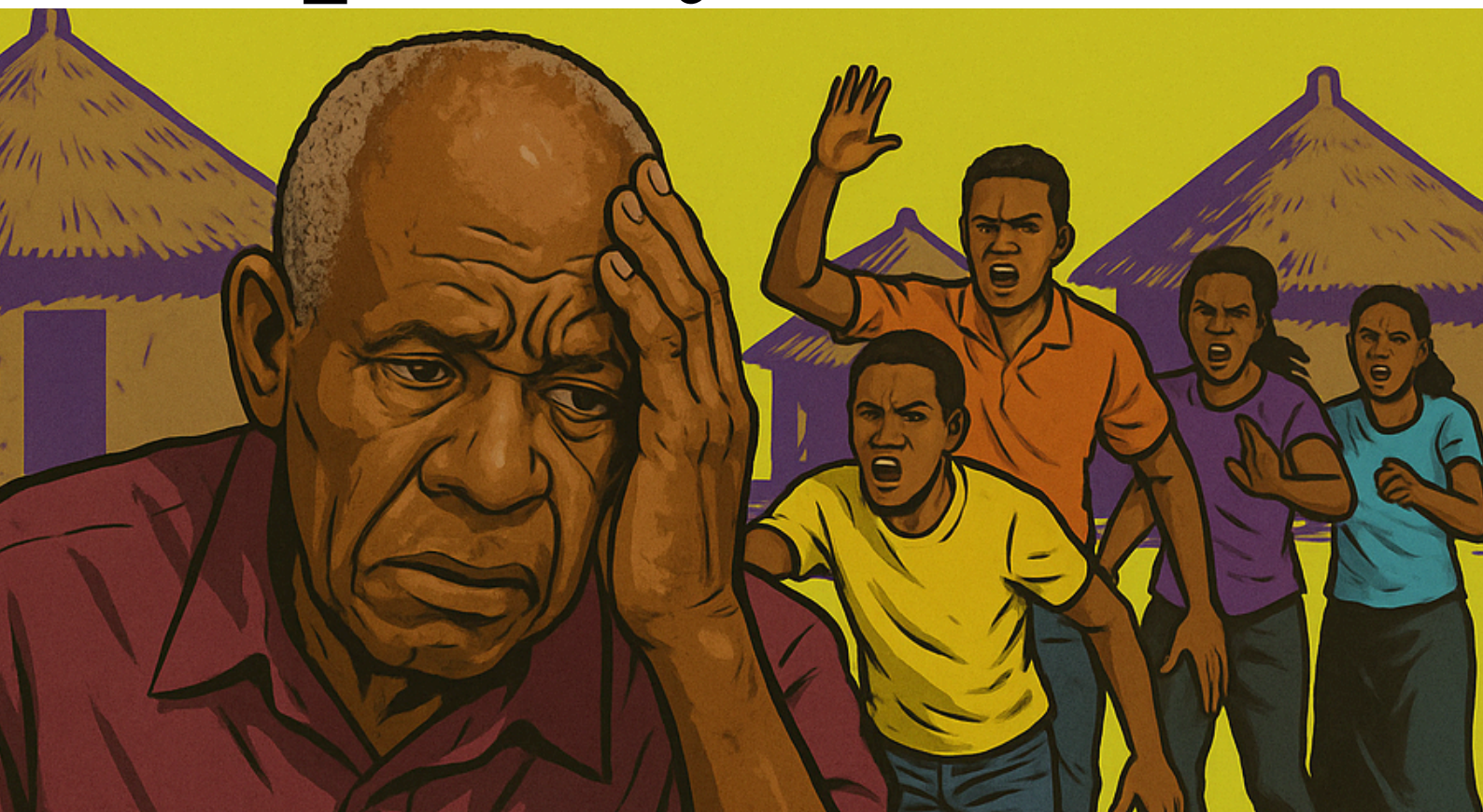




Equality Bulletin



Ageing in Shadows: Confronting the Silent Scourge of Elder Abuse in Kenya

As Kenya's ageing population grows, the National Gender and Equality Commission calls for bold action to protect older persons from abuse and neglect—and to build resilient, inclusive communities.

A frail figure limps along a dusty path in Nyamira County, her shoulders hunched not just from age, but from the invisible weight of trauma. Her name is Mama Kwamboka, 82, a widow and a survivor—not of war, but of her own family's betrayal. In 2023, she was accused of witchcraft, assaulted by neighbours, and forced off her ancestral land. Her only "crime"? Ageing while female.

Across Kenya, stories like hers are becoming tragically common. As the country marks World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) 2025 under the theme "Empowering Older Persons: Building Resilient Communities Free from Abuse," the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) is sounding the alarm.

This is not just a day of remembrance; it's a national call to action.

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A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

As we unveil the **17th Edition** of the Equality Bulletin, we are called to reflect on both our progress and the pressing inequalities that continue to affect Special Interest Groups across the country. From the rising tide of elder abuse to the persistent exclusion of persons with albinism and the gaps in child-focused budgeting, this edition brings into sharp focus the lived realities that still challenge Kenya's promise of equality and dignity for all.

The Commission remains steadfast in its mandate—to promote and protect the rights of women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, older members of society, and minority groups. Through strategic engagements, such as the CABI Africa Regional Consultation, partnerships in Malindi and beyond, and dialogue with regional allies like Somaliland, we continue to advocate for inclusive policies grounded in data, justice, and the Constitution of Kenya, 2010.

We urge all stakeholders—government institutions, development partners, and communities—to centre inclusion in their planning, budgeting, and implementation. Equality is not optional. It is a constitutional right, and its full realisation demands collective responsibility. Let us commit to building a Kenya where no one is invisible, where ageing is honoured, where children thrive, and where every citizen, regardless of circumstance, is treated with dignity and respect.

Purity Ngina, PhD, MBS
Chief Executive Officer
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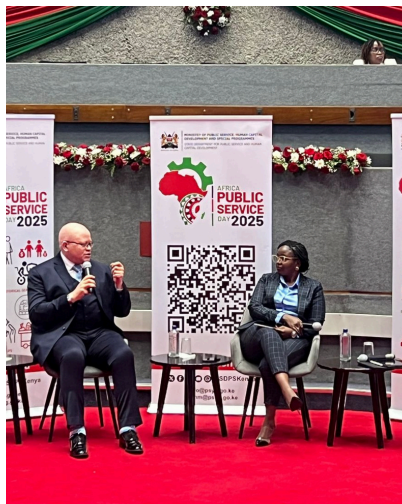
Michael Nzomo
Commissioner



Dr. Margaret Karungaru, **MBS**
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Bridging the Gap: How NGEK Is Reimagining Public Service for Kenya's Most Vulnerable

At Africa Public Service Day 2025, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) championed digital innovation and inclusive governance to close historic gaps in service delivery across Kenya.



Commissioner Nzomo Mbithuka during the 2025 Africa Public Service Day at the KICC

At the heart of the 2025 Africa Public Service Day commemorations was a question that cut through every keynote, panel, and pledge: How do we build a state that sees, hears, and serves every citizen equally?

For the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), the answer lies at the intersection of equity, innovation, and integrity. The Commission stood tall among participants drawn from across the continent, offering a powerful blueprint for governance that does not merely promise inclusion but actively engineers it.

Commissioner Nzomo Mbithuka delivered a presentation that left the audience in quiet reflection and applause. Titled "Leveraging Digitization to Enhance Access to Information and Accountability," his remarks drew parallels between Kenya's journey and Estonia's world-renowned e-Governance model.

"Digitisation is not a luxury—it is a right," Commissioner Mbithuka began, citing Article 35 of the Constitution on the right of access to information. "When we digitise public service systems, we remove

the physical and bureaucratic walls that exclude the youth, persons with disabilities, women in rural settings, and the elderly."

Equally compelling was Director of Programs and Research, Paul Kuria, who took the podium with a challenge: "We must stop treating marginalisation as an afterthought. The last must come first."

In his address on "The Role of Civil Society Advocacy and Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Inclusive Governance," Kuria called upon public institutions, civil society actors, and the private sector to centre Special Interest Groups (SIGs) — women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), older persons, children, and minority groups — in policy formulation and budgetary allocations.



Director of Programs and Research, Paul Kuria during the 2025 Africa Public Service Day at the KICC

"The Constitution of Kenya 2010 already provides the framework," he stated, referencing Article 21(3) and Article 27, "but it is our political and moral responsibility to breathe life into these rights."

Kuria's presentation underscored NGEK's strategic approach to partnerships: build inclusive data systems, fund grassroots innovations, and create participatory policy spaces where SIGs are not mere subjects but active architects of their future.

As NGEK continues its audits, advisory reports, public forums, and compliance reviews, one message reverberates: Inclusion is not an option — it is a right. Public service must be agile, yes, but more importantly, it must be just.

Bridges Not Barriers: Malindi Alliance Lights Path for GBV Survivors

The Commission, through its Malindi office, held strategic talks with Malindi Nest Organisation, a grassroots NGO with a long-standing track record in child protection and women's rights. The dialogue, while unassuming at first glance, marked a pivotal moment in strengthening Kenya's national response to GBV. At the heart of these discussions lay a simple but urgent ambition: to build a robust referral pathway that ensures survivors of GBV are not only heard—but healed.



The initiative aligns closely with NGEK's constitutional mandate under Article 27 and Article 43 of the Kenyan Constitution—to ensure freedom from discrimination and the right to the highest attainable standard of health, respectively.

It also reinforces NGEK's strategic vision to mainstream issues affecting Special Interest Groups—including women, children, persons with disabilities, the youth, and older members of society—into national development frameworks.

The Commission's emphasis on psychosocial support is timely and essential, especially in the wake of rising reports of intimate partner violence post-COVID-19 and during socio-economic downturns.

The Malindi Nest Organisation, long known for its grassroots work with vulnerable women and children, brings lived experience and local knowledge to the table. Together with NGEK, they will create safe spaces where survivors can seek help without fear of stigma or retaliation.

"This is not just a partnership. It's a promise to ensure no survivor walks alone," said Aisha Juma, a programme coordinator at Malindi Nest.

Harvesting Equality: NGEC Champions Inclusive Agri- Futures at CABI Regional Meet

Empowering marginalised voices in agriculture for a safe, inclusive, and sustainable Kenya



Mr. Lewis Mwaniki-NGEC, speaking at the CABI Africa Regional Consultation meeting

In a bold stride towards inclusive national development, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) has reiterated its call for equitable participation of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) in Kenya's agriculture sector, spotlighting systemic inequality and calling for transformative policy action.

Speaking during the CABI Africa Regional Consultation held in Nakuru under the theme "Working in Partnership for a Safe and Sustainable Future", NGEC officials underscored the urgency of embedding inclusivity into agricultural innovation, warning that continued exclusion of vulnerable populations undermines both equity and national food security.

"More than 65% of Kenya's rural population depends on agriculture, yet women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, and marginalised communities remain largely side-lined in critical agri-policy conversations," said Lewis Mwaniki, representing NGEC's Nakuru Regional Office. "We cannot talk about sustainability without inclusivity."

Despite progressive laws and policy frameworks, disparities persist. Women, who comprise over 70% of the agricultural labour force, own less than 5% of land. Youth, representing 75% of Kenya's population, face chronic unemployment, limited capital access, and outdated farming training. Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) often face physical and informational barriers, while older persons, minority groups, and indigenous communities are routinely excluded from extension services and innovation dialogues.

At the CABI consultation, the Commission presented evidence-based findings from its latest audits on gender and social inclusion in agricultural policy frameworks across Kenya's counties.

The Commission used the forum to amplify its message to policymakers, development partners, and researchers: Inclusivity must not be an afterthought. It must be designed into every level of agricultural innovation—from research and funding models to extension services and trade policies.



Participants pose for a group photograph during the CABI Africa Regional Consultation meeting

NGEC further proposed that all agricultural research frameworks incorporate sex-disaggregated and disability-sensitive data.

In addition, the Commission urged county governments to align their agricultural budgeting processes with the values of Article 10 of the Constitution: human dignity, equity, inclusiveness, equality, non-discrimination, and protection of the marginalised.

Beyond the Myths: Kenya's Commitment to the Rights and Protection of Persons with Albinism

As the world marks International Albinism Awareness Day 2025, Kenya takes stock of its progress—and persistent gaps—in safeguarding the dignity, health, and inclusion of persons with albinism.

International Albinism Awareness Day (IAAD), marked annually, is more than a date on the calendar — it is a clarion call for justice, health equity, and human dignity. This year's theme, "Demanding Our Rights: Protect Our Skin, Preserve Our Lives", resonates deeply with the lived realities of thousands of persons with albinism (PWAs) in Kenya and beyond.

In Kenya, the 2019 census recorded 9,729 persons with albinism, roughly 0.02% of the population. While the Constitution recognises albinism as a disability, daily life remains a test of endurance for many PWAs. From enduring sun exposure that leads to life-threatening skin cancer, to exclusion in schools and the job market, the burden is far heavier than the statistics suggest.

Yet amidst these trials, the Government of Kenya has made significant strides. Through the National Albinism Sunscreen Support Program, free skincare products are distributed countrywide. Policy reforms have improved access to education and employment, and most recently, the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 reinforced the legal protection framework.

Kenya is at a crossroads. The question is not whether progress has been made—it has. The question is whether Kenya will boldly complete the journey toward full inclusion, protection, and celebration of persons with albinism.

"Albinism is not a disease," says Chairperson Hon. Jaldesa. "It is a different way of being—a way equally worthy of safety, visibility, and respect."



» CONTINUATION

Forgotten No More: A Nation's Call to Honour and Protect Its Ageing Pillars

In the twilight of their lives, many older Kenyans are not basking in the warmth of familial respect or societal honour. Instead, they are enduring abuse—quietly, invisibly. As Kenya joins the world to mark World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) 2025, the haunting reality emerges: behind closed doors in homes, in slums, rural villages, and even hospitals, elder abuse is taking root. It is a pandemic of silence.

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), at the heart of this year's commemoration themed "Empowering Older Persons: Building Resilient Communities Free from Abuse", paints a sobering picture: a rising population of older people faces a rising tide of neglect, exploitation, and violence. The question is no longer if we act, but how fast.

Kenya is ageing. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, 2.7 million Kenyans—about 6% of the population—are aged 60 and above. By 2050, this is projected to hit 10%. Significantly, women make up 55% of this population, most of whom reside in rural areas where poverty and invisibility intersect.

Elder abuse manifests in painful, often invisible ways. In Kisii and Kilifi counties, elderly women are attacked—sometimes lynched—on trumped-up witchcraft accusations, often motivated by greed and land disputes. In Nairobi's informal settlements, elderly men are left unattended in squalid conditions, with no access to medical care or family support. Cases of neglected elders dumped at public hospitals have become alarmingly routine.

Yet, these are only the cases that come to light.

"Elder abuse in Kenya is significantly underreported," says Hon. Rehema Jaldesa, Chairperson at NGEC. "Stigma, fear, and lack of awareness about rights and redress systems mean many suffer in silence."



Hon. Rehema Jaldesa, Chairperson NGEC

Kenya's current efforts to support older persons are notable but insufficient. The Inua Jamii cash transfer programme provides KES 2,000 bi-monthly to individuals over 70. However, widespread delays, poor coverage, and lack of accountability dilute its impact. Other schemes such as the NSSF, Mbao Pension Plan, and SHIF aim to cushion older persons, yet barriers remain—especially for those in informal employment or remote regions.

Community and faith-based organisations offer home-based care, but these efforts are often under-resourced and inconsistent. Meanwhile, Article 57 of the Constitution guarantees older Kenyans the right to dignity, respect, and care, but implementation remains sluggish.

NGEC's Call to Action: A Seven-Point Agenda for Dignity

In observance of WEAAD 2025, NGEC has unveiled a robust policy framework to turn words into action:

1. Enactment of the Older Persons Bill (2024): A dedicated legal framework to define rights, care standards, and punish abuse.
2. Invest in Age-Friendly Infrastructure: From geriatric clinics to inclusive public transport and digital literacy.
3. Expand Social Protection: Include caregivers and vulnerable older persons under 70 years.
4. Mainstream Elder Rights: Integrate aging issues into all sectors—justice, education, public participation.

5. Strengthen Data Collection: Use gender- and age-disaggregated data to drive policy.

Establish Local Redress Mechanisms: Link communities with police, medics, and civil society.

6. Promote Intergenerational Solidarity: Foster community models that support psychosocial wellbeing and reduce isolation.

Kenya's development policies often speak to youth and children, but rarely centre ageing populations as active contributors. This omission is short-sighted. Older persons are not just recipients of care; they are veterans of labour, volunteers in faith communities, mentors in agriculture, and anchors of rural economies.

NGEC is urging the integration of older persons' needs across Vision 2030, the Fourth Medium-Term Plan, county Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), and the National Ageing Strategy. It has also recommended age disaggregation in national surveys, to make ageing visible in data and budgeting.

As Kenyans don purple ribbons this WEAAD to honour their elderly, the symbolism must be matched with substance. It is not enough to commemorate. We must legislate, fund, enforce, and educate.

The elderly are not relics of a fading past. They are living testaments of resilience. They sang freedom songs. They built bridges, both literal and metaphorical. They deserve more than perfunctory praise. They deserve protection, presence, and policy.



Commissioner Mbithuka during WEAAD 2025 events in Nairobi

"You cannot inherit the future if you forsake your ancestors," says Commissioner Mbithuka during WEAAD 2025 events in Nairobi. "Let us build a Kenya where ageing is honoured, not punished."

Gender Bridges Beyond Borders: NGEK Spurs Regional Progress in Equality

A pivotal partnership between Kenya's NGEK and Somaliland marks a new chapter in regional cooperation for inclusive development and gender equality.

In a milestone moment for East African regional cooperation, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEK) of Kenya played host to a high-level delegation from Somaliland, marking a significant stride toward cross-border dialogue on gender mainstreaming and inclusive policy reform.

Held at the Commission's Nairobi offices, the delegation's mission was anything but symbolic. It signalled the growing influence of Kenya in shaping inclusive governance and equality frameworks within the Horn of Africa region. The Somaliland team, after extensive consultations and engagement with NGEK's technical experts, adopted key proposals rooted in Kenya's best practices on gender equality and non-discrimination.

These were formally presented to the World Bank during a regional consultative meeting in Nairobi, reflecting a shared commitment to the transformation of policy into tangible social justice.



Delegates from Somaliland



Paul Kuria, Director of Programmes and Research at NGEK

"This visit is a testament to the power of partnership and peer learning in promoting the principles of equality and inclusion," remarked Paul Kuria, Director of Programmes and Research at NGEK, while addressing the visiting delegation.

During the visit, the Somaliland team engaged with NGEK's leadership, research, and legal advisors to dissect the intricate web of national laws that anchor gender parity in Kenya—ranging from the Sexual Offences Act and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act to the Persons with Disabilities Act and the Children's Act. The discussions highlighted the power of cross-sectoral policy alignment, backed by rigorous compliance monitoring and citizen participation.

The delegation expressed keen interest in NGEK's role in coordinating public education programmes, facilitating legal redress for rights violations, and compiling gender-disaggregated data that informs national planning and reporting. The replicability of NGEK's inclusive approach appears promising, particularly as Somaliland seeks to strengthen its governance frameworks while striving for international recognition.

Forging Alliances, Fighting Femicide: NGEK and Swiss Embassy Unite Against Gender Violence

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEK), under the stewardship of its Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa, paid a courtesy call to H.E. Mirko Giulietti, Switzerland's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Offices in Nairobi. At the heart of the dialogue? A shared vision—to dismantle gender-based violence and chart a future free from femicide in Kenya.

This meeting, more than ceremonial, signals a powerful pivot towards multi-stakeholder partnerships. It heralds a new chapter of cross-border solidarity and institutional



Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa, H.E. Mirko Giulietti – Switzerland's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Commissioner Caroline Lentupuru, Commissioner Nzomo Mbithuka, and Mr Paul Kuria – Director of Programmes and Research, pose for a group photo

commitment, with the NGEK at the forefront, reinforcing Kenya's constitutional promises to uphold equality, inclusion, and human dignity.

"This is not just a conversation—it is a coordinated call to action. Femicide is not

only a human rights violation, it is a crisis that requires joint strategic responses across borders," noted Hon. Jaldesa during the deliberations.

Switzerland, long known for its neutral diplomacy and human rights advocacy, has become an increasingly vital partner for Kenya in development matters. Under H.E. Giulietti's leadership, the Swiss Mission in Nairobi has bolstered efforts around governance, peacebuilding, and sustainable development, making gender justice a central tenet of its cooperation.

"We see gender equality as not just a women's issue but a societal obligation," said Ambassador Giulietti. "Switzerland is honoured to stand with Kenya, not as a distant donor but as a committed partner walking side by side with NGEK in this transformative journey."

Budgeting for the Future: Why Kenya Must Prioritise the Rights of Its Children

As Kenya marks the Day of the African Child 2025, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEK) calls for bold reforms in child-responsive budgeting to ensure no child is left behind.



The urgent need to place children at the centre of national and county planning and budgeting. It is a call resonating across the continent as Kenya joins other African nations in commemorating the Day of the African Child 2025 under the theme: “Planning and Budgeting for Children’s Rights: Progress Since 2010.”

In a bold and reflective statement, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEK) is challenging the nation to take stock—not only of policies on paper but also of investments that truly transform the lives of children. The Commission’s Chairperson, Hon. Rehema Jaldesa, minced no words: “A country that neglects its children neglects its future.”

Since the turn of the last decade, Kenya has emerged as one of Africa’s leaders in integrating child rights into public planning. Anchored by Article 53 of the 2010 Constitution, which guarantees every child’s right to survival, protection, and development, the nation has woven a progressive legal

framework aimed at child-sensitive governance.

A notable milestone is the Children Act, 2022, which established a devolved structure for child care, a national welfare fund, and clear mechanisms for child participation. Equally important, Kenya rolled out the National Plan of Action for Children (2015–2022) and followed it with the National Care Reform Strategy (2022–2032)—pivotal tools guiding the transition from institutional to family-based child care.

Kenya’s journey over the past decade has been marked by important legislative and policy strides. Article 53 of the Constitution of Kenya recognises every child’s right to survival, protection, development, and participation. The enactment of the Children Act, 2022 introduced bold provisions, such as the establishment of the Child Welfare Fund and the decentralisation of child protection services to counties. Further, public investments in education and healthcare have yielded

quantifiable progress. According to government statistics, primary school enrolment rates have consistently stayed above 90%. Child health indicators have also improved, with under-five mortality declining from 73 per 1,000 live births in 2010 to 43 in 2022.

Programmes like the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) have offered a financial lifeline for families in extreme poverty, mitigating the harsh impacts of inequality.

Despite legal frameworks and encouraging numbers, inequality remains a stark reality. Children living in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), informal urban settlements, and hard-to-reach rural communities continue to face systemic neglect. For children with disabilities, access to inclusive education and healthcare is still more rhetoric than reality.

Moreover, while the Children Act 2022 is a landmark reform, it is yet to be fully operationalised. Many county child protection systems remain underfunded, overstretched, and lacking proper data systems, making targeted interventions difficult.

“Budget lines may exist, but the actual allocation and expenditure on child-focused programmes remain insufficient,” said Rehema Jaldesa, Chairperson of the National Gender and Equality Commission. “It’s not enough to plan—we must finance, implement, and monitor.”

A budget is more than numbers. It is a reflection of what a society values. As Kenya edges closer to realising its Vision 2030 goals and fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that children are not only seen but factored into planning, financing, and evaluation will be key.

From the dusty plains of Garissa to the bustling streets of Kisumu, every child carries a dream. It is up to us—policymakers, citizens, and institutions—to provide the framework, the funding, and the faith to make those dreams possible.

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