



# Equality Bulletin



## Widows Expose Injustice, Demand National Policy

*National Gender and Equality Commission rallies support for urgent legal and policy action to protect widows' rights in Kenya.*

A nationwide appeal to end the systemic marginalisation of widows gained momentum last week at the Kenya School of Government, where over 200 stakeholders gathered to spotlight the injustices faced by bereaved women across the country.

At the centre of the three-day high-level consultative forum was a call for urgent national policy and legal reforms to uphold the rights of widowed persons, particularly women. The event, convened by the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organisation (CTWOO), featured emotional testimonies from widows and firm commitments from public officials and civil society actors.

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## A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

In this 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Equality Bulletin, we highlight the powerful stories of widows reclaiming dignity and rights, a testament to resilience in the face of adversity. Their journey emphasizes the urgent need for inclusive policies and community support. We also reflect on NGEK's active participation in the Gender-Based Violence County Forums, where dialogue with county leaders and stakeholders is strengthening local responses to violence and inequality.

Central to our progress is the deepening collaboration with partners across regions—such as Plan International, ActionAid, and Swiss agencies—working hand in hand with NGEK to accelerate the realization of gender equality and social justice throughout Kenya. Together, we reaffirm our commitment to building a more equal and just society for all.

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



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## NGEC Joins GBV Hearings, Amplifies Survivor Voices



NGEC CEO, Dr. Purity Ngina MBS, at the ongoing county hearings by the Technical Working Group on GBV

The Commission (NGEC), led by CEO Dr. Purity Ngina, has reaffirmed its commitment to listening, learning, and acting in the national fight against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

This comes as the Commission actively participates in the ongoing county hearings by the Technical Working Group on GBV, appointed by President William Ruto on January 10, 2025.



Participants speaking during the public participation forum on community engagements

The 42-member Taskforce, constituted to curb the escalating cases of GBV and femicide in Kenya, was mandated to examine, assess, and review the country's legal, policy, and institutional frameworks on GBV, and recommend actionable strategies for reform.

The national public participation exercise kicked off on Monday, May 12, and will run until Wednesday, May 28, covering all 47 counties.

Dr. Ngina, representing NGEC in this critical process, has already visited Embu, Murang'a, Nyeri, Kiambu, and Mandera counties. At each stop, the sessions placed communities at the center, providing a safe platform for survivors, local leaders, and residents to voice their experiences, concerns, and proposed solutions.

"Real change begins with the people," emphasized Dr. Ngina. "We are here to listen to the lived realities of Kenyans and co-create sustainable, homegrown solutions to end GBV once and for all."

The hearings have revealed a strong public demand for coordinated action, increased awareness, and robust support systems. Survivors and community members are calling for strengthened legal mechanisms, survivor-centered services, and localized interventions to address the root causes of GBV.

As the hearings continue across the country, NGEC remains steadfast in amplifying community voices and influencing policy outcomes that promote equality, justice, and dignity for all.

## NGEC, Plan-Swiss Alliance Launch GBV Fight in Isiolo

*NGEC and Plan International Kenya unveil GBV response project with Swiss support to protect Isiolo's most vulnerable*

**Isiolo** — The Commission (NGEC), through its Isiolo Regional Office, has partnered with Plan International Kenya to launch a new Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response Project in the Horn of Africa. The initiative is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation.

Commissioner Nzomo Mbithuka led the Commission's delegation to the official launch, which targets Burat and Ngaremarara Wards in Isiolo County. The project aims to strengthen GBV prevention and response systems through a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach.



NGEC Commissioner Nzomo Mbithuka at the launch of the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response Project in the Horn of Africa, in Isiolo

The launch was preceded by courtesy visits to the Office of the Governor, where the NGEC and partners, hosted by the County Secretary, discussed strategies to deepen cooperation, coordination, and partnerships for effective project delivery.

The event brought together high-level stakeholders, including the Plan International Kenya Country Director and the Regional Director for Africa's Development from the Swiss Development Cooperation, underscoring the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration.

Speaking as Chief Guest, Commissioner Mbithuka reaffirmed NGEC's commitment to offering technical support and advancing strategic partnerships to galvanize collective action against GBV in the region.

The project, designed to empower vulnerable communities in northern Kenya, is expected to bolster local GBV response mechanisms and promote inclusive engagement across government, civil society, and community actors.



## NGEC Deepens Strategic Partnership with ActionAid to Advance Gender Equality in Northern Kenya

**Garissa**— The Commission (NGEC) has intensified efforts to strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships in Northern Kenya, following a high-level engagement with delegations from ActionAid Ireland and ActionAid Kenya.

The strategic visit, hosted at NGEN's Garissa Regional Office, focused on building synergies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the region's underserved communities.

The meeting, part of NGEN's broader mandate to facilitate and coordinate gender mainstreaming in public and private institutions, provided

a platform for dialogue on shared priorities, including the protection of women's and girls' rights, enhancement of local governance structures, and promotion of inclusive, gender-responsive development.

Delegates from ActionAid emphasized the importance of sustained collaboration with government institutions such as NGEN to accelerate the implementation of gender-sensitive policies and programmes, particularly in counties affected by social exclusion, insecurity, and underdevelopment.

In turn, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to

providing technical support, monitoring compliance with equality and inclusion standards, and ensuring that development partners align their interventions with Kenya's constitutional and legislative framework on gender and equality.

"This partnership with ActionAid Ireland and ActionAid Kenya is an important step toward mobilizing collective action for systemic change," said Ibrahim Abdiwahab, the NGEN Garissa Regional Office Coordinator, underscoring the urgency of closing gender gaps and fostering resilience among -



Garissa Regional Head Abdiwahab Ibrahim with a delegation from ActionAid Ireland and ActionAid Kenya

vulnerable populations.

The engagement concluded with a shared commitment to scale up joint initiatives, conduct community sensitizations, and invest in data-driven strategies that empower women and girls to participate fully in socio-economic and political life.

This partnership forms part of NGEN's ongoing efforts to create inclusive governance frameworks and promote equitable development outcomes in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions.

## Empowering Hope: 100 Young Mothers and GBV Survivors Supported in Kibarani

**Kilifi** – The Commission (NGEC) Malindi Regional Office, in a collaborative effort with Kilifi County Government, the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Directorate of Children Services, Kenya Network of Humanitarian Actors (KENHNA), and grassroots organizations, has marked a significant milestone in supporting vulnerable groups in Kibarani Ward, Kuwapa

This joint initiative directly assisted 100 young mothers and survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), offering more than material aid. The event, graced by Dr. Dama Masha, County Executive Committee Member for Gender, Culture, Youth Affairs, Sports and Social Services, provided beneficiaries with food supplies, sanitary pads, dignity kits tailored for both girls and boys, clothing, psychosocial counselling, and vital life skills training.



Kilifi Regional Office, in partnership with stakeholders joint initiative to assist GBV survivors

The integrated approach aims not only to meet immediate needs but also to foster healing, resilience, and long-term empowerment.

By addressing physical, emotional, and socio-economic dimensions, the programme seeks to rebuild dignity and enhance the capacity of survivors and young mothers to participate fully in community life.

Dr. Masha lauded the partnership as a powerful demonstration of collective action towards gender equality and social justice.

"This initiative reflects the commitment of both county and national government agencies, alongside civil society, to create an enabling environment where survivors and vulnerable groups can regain hope and opportunities," she said.

The milestone achieved in Kibarani Ward underscores the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration in advancing the NGEN's mandate to promote dignity, equality, and protection for all, especially marginalized women and youth. This landmark intervention sets a precedent for similar efforts across Kilifi County and beyond, reinforcing the call for sustained investment in programmes that address the multifaceted challenges faced by GBV survivors and young mothers.



» CONTINUATION

## Widows Expose Injustice, Demand National Policy



NGEK Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa giving remarks at the high-level forum on the protection of the widowed persons rights in Kenya

A nationwide call to end the systemic neglect and marginalization of widowed persons—particularly women—rang out at the Kenya School of Government last week, as the Commission (NGEK) led calls for urgent policy and legal reforms to protect the rights of widows.

Speaking at a high-level consultative forum hosted by the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organisation (CTWOO), NGEK Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa described widowhood in Kenya as a “structural gender inequality crisis that has long been normalized and ignored.” The three-day event brought together widows, lawmakers, human rights actors, and civil society stakeholders, marking a turning point in Kenya’s approach to widowhood as a human rights and public policy concern.

“There are over five million widowed persons in Kenya today, yet they remain legally invisible,” Jaldesa said in her keynote address. “The death of a spouse should not lead to the death of one’s rights. Yet, for countless women, this is precisely what it becomes.”

The Chairperson emphasized that widowhood must be recognized not only as a personal tragedy but as a national governance issue that exacerbates poverty, inequality, and gender-based violence.

She cited evidence from NGEK’s field investigations, which reveal widespread disinheritance, forced evictions, and physical and sexual abuse, all of which go largely unpunished due to gaps in the current legal and policy framework.

Among the most pressing concerns highlighted at the forum were the non-domestication of the UN Resolution on Widowhood, the absence of widows in the official classification of marginalized groups, and legal loopholes that fail to protect women in uncoded or customary marriages. Participants also exposed troubling cases of chiefs demanding bribes or sexual favors before issuing succession letters, and discriminatory laws that strip widows of property rights upon remarriage—restrictions not applied to widowers.

These are not isolated cases,” said Jaldesa. “They point to systemic failure. Cultural silence must not be used as a shield for legal injustice.”

The Commission has now formally recommended the development of a National Policy on Widowhood, the -

amendment of the Law of Succession Act to explicitly protect widows’ rights, and the creation of a national database of widowed persons to inform service delivery and policy planning.

The forum’s communique also called for the inclusion of widows in land control boards and local governance structures, the establishment of a national helpline, and the creation of a widow protection fund. It further demanded access to legal aid and psychosocial support for widows, who often suffer in silence without redress.

The push for reform received backing from lawmakers and legal experts, including Hon. Dr. Otiende Amollo, who underscored the discriminatory application of succession laws and the urgent need for legal clarity on the rights of surviving spouses in non-formal unions.

In her closing remarks, the Chairperson issued a powerful reminder: “A country cannot claim to be equal and just while ignoring the plight of its widowed women. The time to act is now.”

The Commission has committed to follow through with multi-agency engagements to push for institutional responses to the policy recommendations. If adopted, these reforms would mark a watershed moment for widowhood rights in Kenya, anchoring dignity, justice, and recognition within the broader national equality agenda.

## NGEK Champions Care: Spotlight on Women and Childcare Workers

*Multi-stakeholder forum spotlights urgent reforms for women in childcare amid policy gaps*

Kisumu, Kenya — The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEK) convened a pivotal multi-stakeholder forum this week in Kisumu County to address the urgent need for reforms safeguarding the rights and welfare of paid childcare workers, who the Commission terms “the unsung heroes of care work.”

Bringing together county government officials, civil society, legal experts, and grassroots women leaders, the dialogue highlighted that over 70 percent of paid childcare workers in Kenya are

women operating without formal legal protections, fair pay, or access to mental health support. NGEK identified policy fragmentation and unclear mandates stemming from the devolution of Early Childhood Development (ECD) services as key factors exacerbating these vulnerabilities.

The Commission called for a National Support Plan for Paid Carers, encompassing legal safeguards, decent work standards, mental health services, and accessible justice mechanisms. Special emphasis was placed on mainstreaming disability inclusion in childcare, advocating support for women and children with disabilities.

The Kisumu dialogue represents a pivotal move in NGEK’s wider efforts to harmonise policy, improve stakeholder coordination, and raise public awareness in recognising and uplifting Kenya’s vital care economy.



## NGEC Nakuru and MIDRIFT HURINET Unite to Champion Equality for SIGs Groups



Nakuru Regional office staff with the Executive Director, MIDRIFT HURINET

The Nakuru Regional Office has forged a strategic partnership with MIDRIFT HURINET to advance equality and inclusion for Special Interest Groups (SIGs) across Nakuru County.

In a recent meeting, Mr. Joseph Omondi, Executive Director of MIDRIFT HURINET, and NGEN Nakuru leadership agreed on a collaborative framework to co-host community dialogue forums and youth engagement initiatives. These joint efforts aim to amplify marginalized voices and promote active participation in governance and development processes.

Further, the partnership will undertake joint baseline surveys and comprehensive community assessments focusing on critical themes such as gender equality, governance, and human rights.

These data-driven initiatives are designed to provide robust evidence for policy formulation and program implementation at both county and national levels.

“This collaboration ensures that issues of gender and equality are deeply integrated into development agendas, fostering inclusive communities where every individual has the opportunity to thrive,” said the NGEN Nakuru Regional Coordinator Lewis Mwaniki.

The Commission and MIDRIFT HURINET are collaborating to promote inclusion and ensure that no one is overlooked, advancing Kenya’s goal of fairness and equality.

This partnership is a key milestone in empowering Special Interest Groups and embedding equality in the country’s development agenda

## Inclusive Investment Initiative Ignites Interest: NGEN Champions Access at Kisumu Roundtable

*National Gender and Equality Commission spotlights critical barriers for persons with disabilities in Kenya’s investment forums*

**Kisumu,** — The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) Kisumu office joined the Governor’s Lands & Investment Roundtable, highlighting a significant yet overlooked challenge within Kenya’s investment environment: the urgent need to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all investors, especially persons with disabilities (PWDs).

During the forum, NGEN presented compelling data revealing that while approximately 70% of investors expressed a clear preference for inclusive investment spaces, the practical realities of many event venues tell a different story. Persons with disabilities attending the roundtable encountered substantial barriers, including physical inaccessibility of the event premises and the absence of sign language interpreters. These obstacles effectively excluded a sizeable and vital demographic from fully engaging in discussions and decision-making processes critical to Kenya’s economic development.

The roundtable, hosted by the Kisumu County Governor’s office, brought together key stakeholders from government, private sector investors, and community representatives. The primary agenda was to foster a conducive environment for sustainable investment and land utilisation in the region. However, NGEN’s intervention introduced a fresh and crucial perspective by underscoring

inclusivity as an indispensable element for equitable growth.

“Accessibility is not merely a legal obligation but a cornerstone of economic empowerment,” remarked NGEN Kisumu regional head, Mr. Davis Okeyo. “Excluding persons with disabilities from investment forums undermines the broader goals of national development and equality. We call upon event organisers and policymakers to prioritise inclusive infrastructure and communication tools to foster true participation.”



Despite existing legislation mandating accessibility standards in public and private spaces, enforcement remains inconsistent, particularly in the business and investment sectors.

The Kisumu County Government committed to reviewing venue selection policies to ensure compliance with accessibility guidelines and to engage sign language interpretation services at all official forums.

The NGEN’s participation in the Governor’s Lands & Investment Roundtable marks a pioneering step towards bridging the gap between Kenya’s economic ambitions and the reality of equal opportunity. The Commission’s call to action serves as a timely reminder that sustainable development must embrace diversity and accessibility as foundational pillars.



## Climate Collaboration Champions Change: Gender, Governance, and Growth in Isiolo and Marsabit

*NGEC, Swedish Embassy and IDLO Partner to Empower Marginalised Voices in Gender-Responsive Climate and Peace Initiatives*



Isiolo Regional Office Staff pose for a photo with delegates from Human Rights & Democracy, Embassy of Sweden, Nairobi, and IDLO's Kenya

The Isiolo Regional Office played host to a pivotal meeting that underscores the growing intersection between climate action, human rights, and inclusive governance in Kenya's arid northern counties. Madam Hanna Carlsson, First Secretary for Human Rights & Democracy at the Embassy of Sweden in Nairobi, together with Madam Tareza Mugadza, Kenya Country Director of the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), convened stakeholders to forge a united front in championing gender-responsive climate action and peacebuilding efforts across Isiolo and Marsabit.

These counties, home to approximately 45% of Kenya's Special Interest Groups—including women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), minorities, and

other marginalised communities—face systemic barriers to access and inclusion. The joint initiative emphasises embedding inclusive climate governance frameworks that ensure all voices are heard, rights upheld, and equitable participation guaranteed.

The approach aligns with broader global commitments recognising climate justice not merely as an environmental challenge but fundamentally a human rights and equality imperative.

"The climate crisis disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, yet these groups often remain excluded from decision-making processes," noted Madam

Carlsson during the event. "Our mission is to support local authorities in designing policies that are transparent, accountable, and truly representative of everyone's needs."

Madam Mugadza echoed these sentiments, highlighting the crucial role of the rule of law and community engagement in sustainable peacebuilding and climate resilience. "Empowering Special Interest Groups ensures that climate adaptation strategies are effective and just, fostering stability in regions historically affected by conflict and marginalisation."

This collaboration seeks to dismantle existing socio-economic and cultural barriers

through accessible information dissemination, participatory policy development, and capacity building tailored to local realities. By doing so, it aims to secure climate governance that reflects fairness, accountability, and collective responsibility at all levels.

The significance of this partnership lies in its focus on actionable inclusivity—ensuring that climate policies are not just drafted but implemented with active involvement from those most impacted. This represents a critical step forward for Kenya's climate agenda, particularly in vulnerable northern regions where environmental degradation intersects with entrenched social inequities.

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