



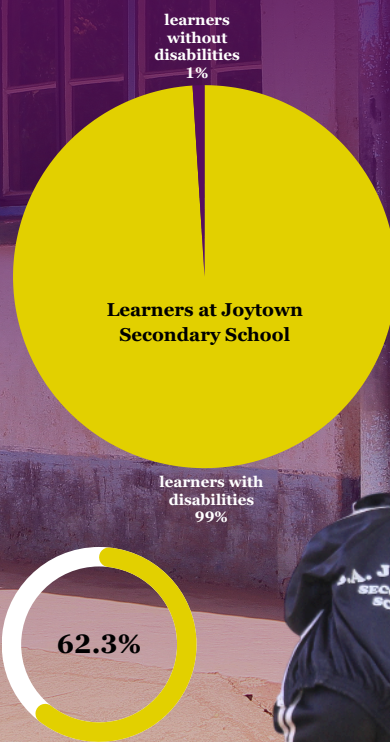
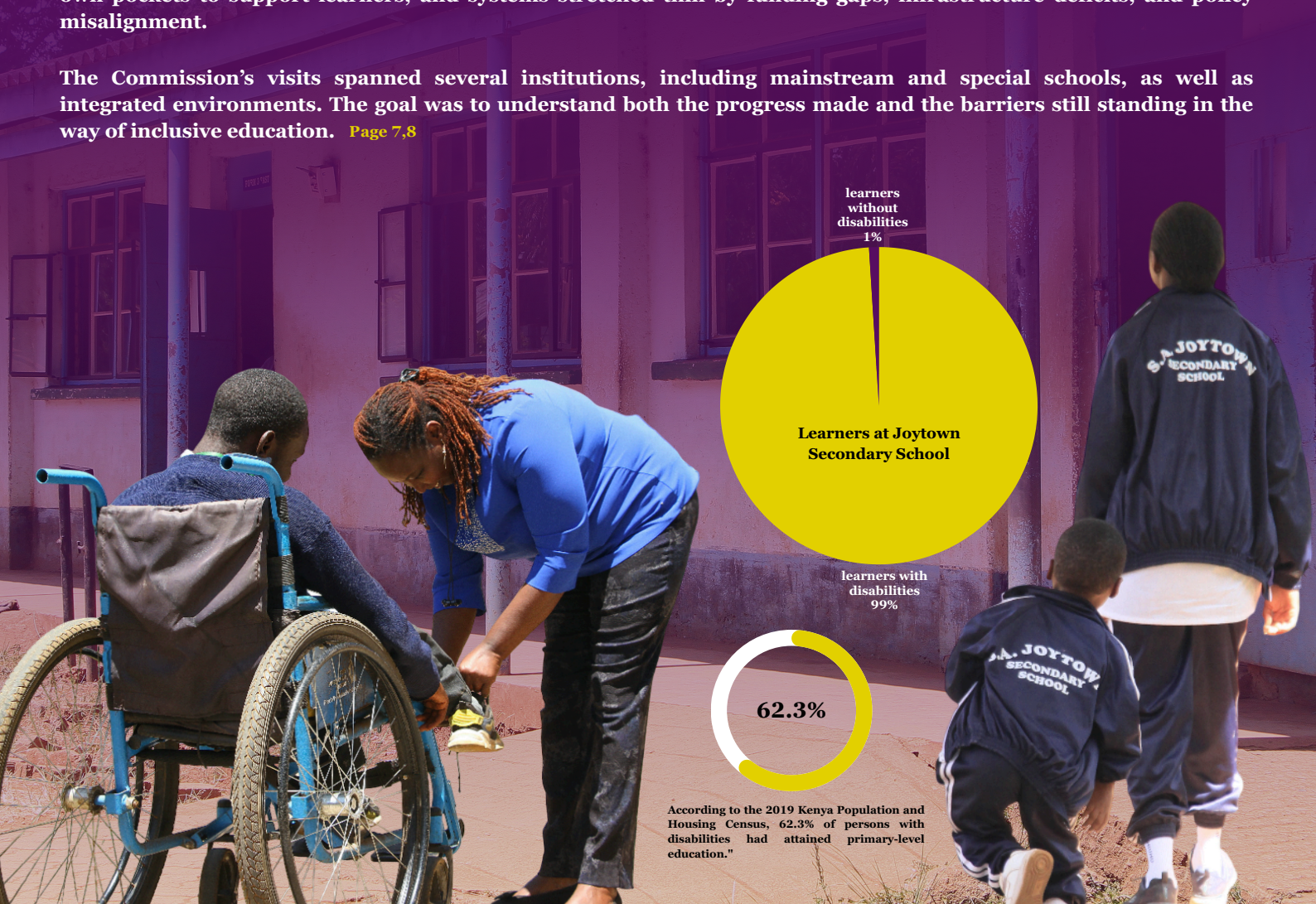
# EQUALITY BULLETIN

## POLICY VS REALITY

*How a disability admission row exposed the fragile promise of inclusive education in Kenya*

What began as a single complaint soon grew into a wider inquiry. Within days, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) dispatched a fact-finding team, not just to one institution, but to several schools across the country. What we found was a complex portrait: schools striving to do the right thing, teachers digging into their own pockets to support learners, and systems stretched thin by funding gaps, infrastructure deficits, and policy misalignment.

The Commission's visits spanned several institutions, including mainstream and special schools, as well as integrated environments. The goal was to understand both the progress made and the barriers still standing in the way of inclusive education. [Page 7,8](#)



According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, 62.3% of persons with disabilities had attained primary-level education."



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## A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

As we present the 30th edition of our newsletter, I am proud to highlight NGEK's ongoing commitment to advancing equality, inclusion, and human dignity across Kenya. Our mandate is to ensure that rights are not only protected but lived in practice, in schools, workplaces, media, and every public institution.

This month, the Commission visited mainstream, special, and integrated schools to assess progress and identify barriers to inclusive education. At Thika School for the Visually Impaired, we were inspired by a community of learning fully committed to inclusion: 99 Grade 10 learners, mostly visually impaired, supported by 40 specially trained teachers. These visits reveal both the promise of inclusion and the work still needed to ensure every learner thrives.

The Commission is also working to shape public discourse through its partnership with the Media Council of Kenya, under the Shaping Voices, Driving Change initiative, promoting gender-inclusive journalism that amplifies diverse voices and strengthens equality in reporting.

As we move forward, NGEK will continue to collaborate with institutions, communities, and partners to turn policies into tangible outcomes. Together, we can build a Kenya where inclusion is real, opportunities are equal, and every citizen can thrive with dignity.



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

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## Rewriting the Law on Sexual Violence: Kenya Moves to Close Justice Gaps

*Justice sector actors chart the next phase of reforms to strengthen prevention, accountability, and survivor protection*



Members of the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) Committee

NAIROBI — Kenya has taken a significant step toward strengthening its response to sexual violence following deliberations by the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) Committee on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) on the Draft Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

The interactive meeting, held at the NCAJ offices and attended by key justice sector stakeholders, focused on charting the way forward after the completion of a technical review of the draft Bill. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), a member of the NCAJ SGBV Committee, participated in the discussions as part of its constitutional mandate to promote equality, protect vulnerable groups, and advance access to justice.

During the session, the Committee Vice Chairperson, Mr Desire Njamwea, formally received the Draft Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2025 from the Kenya Law Reform Commission (KLRC). The handover marked a key milestone in the legislative review process, signalling the transition from drafting to broader engagement and validation.

Justice sector actors present underscored the need for reforms that respond to persistent challenges in the handling of sexual offence cases, including low conviction rates, case attrition, evidentiary gaps, and barriers faced by survivors in accessing timely and effective justice.

The meeting brought together institutions across the justice chain to align on a coordinated approach to strengthening the legal framework governing sexual offences. Participants emphasised the importance of laws that are not only legally sound but also practical, enforceable, and responsive to the realities faced by survivors, investigators, prosecutors, and judicial officers.

For the National Gender and Equality Commission, the process is particularly critical for ensuring that the revised law adequately addresses the needs of women, children, persons with disabilities, older members of society, and other groups disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence.

Following the review, the Committee will subject the draft Bill to structured stakeholder engagement, allowing for inputs from relevant government institutions, civil society organisations, professional bodies, and affected communities. This consultative phase is intended to ensure that diverse perspectives are meaningfully incorporated into the proposed amendments.

The stakeholder engagement process will be followed by a validation phase, aimed at strengthening the Bill's coherence, responsiveness, and effectiveness before it proceeds further along the legislative pathway. This stage will focus on addressing identified gaps, aligning the Bill with constitutional principles, and ensuring consistency with existing laws and international obligations.

The proposed amendments come at a time when Kenya continues to grapple with high incidences of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly affecting women, children, and persons with disabilities. Justice sector reports and civil society analyses have consistently pointed to systemic weaknesses that undermine survivor protection and accountability for perpetrators.

Stakeholders at the meeting noted that legislative reform, while not sufficient on its own, remains a critical pillar in strengthening prevention, improving case management, and restoring public confidence in the justice system.



Committee Vice Chairperson Mr. Desire Njamwea speaks during the NCAJ SGBV Committee deliberations

Once refined and validated, the Draft Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2025 will advance through the remaining stages of the legislative process, including policy approval and parliamentary consideration.

For institutions involved in the reform process, the objective remains clear: to ensure that Kenya's legal framework on sexual offences is robust, survivor-centred, and capable of delivering justice consistently and effectively.

As the Bill progresses, its impact will ultimately be measured not by legislative milestones alone, but by whether survivors experience a justice system that is accessible, responsive, and firmly anchored in accountability.

## A Strategic Handshake on Inequality: NGEC and GIZ Align for a Fairer Kenya

*A courtesy visit signals deeper technical cooperation to advance gender equality, inclusion, and equitable development*

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) masked a deeper strategic dialogue—one that could shape Kenya’s approach to tackling entrenched inequalities. Mr. Frank Holtmeier of GIZ Kenya (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH) met with Commission officials in what turned out to be a decisive exchange on aligning international expertise with national priorities for inclusive development.



Representatives from NGEC and GIZ Kenya engage in talks



Mr. Frank Holtmeier of GIZ Kenya during a courtesy call

At the centre of discussions was the National Inequality Reduction Action Plan, a blueprint designed to confront inequality not as an abstract concept but as a tangible barrier to opportunity across education, employment, political participation, and access to essential services.

Kenya’s inequality is complex, unevenly distributed, and deeply rooted. Children with disabilities still struggle to access inclusive education. Women and youth remain concentrated in informal, low-

paying work. Political leadership often fails to reflect the country’s diversity. The meeting underscored that addressing these gaps requires more than policy statements—it demands coordinated, actionable strategies grounded in data and evidence.

Both NGEC and GIZ Kenya agreed that strategic alignment is key. Rather than fragmented projects, technical cooperation must reinforce national systems, empower institutions, and strengthen mechanisms for monitoring impact. This ensures that interventions do more than tick boxes—they deliver measurable improvements in the lives of Kenya’s most marginalized communities, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, children, older persons, minorities, and other vulnerable groups.

GIZ Kenya brings decades of experience supporting inclusive governance, social protection, and sustainable development across Africa.

For NGEC, this engagement represents an opportunity to amplify the Commission’s mandate: promoting equality, inclusion, and human rights through evidence-based interventions.

The discussion also positioned equality as an economic and democratic imperative. Persistent disparities weaken trust in institutions, limit social cohesion, and constrain economic growth. Conversely, inclusive development strengthens governance, unlocks productivity, and builds resilience against social and economic shocks.

This partnership signals a strategic shift—an acknowledgement that tackling inequality requires deliberate, long-term collaboration.

## When Drought Deepens Inequality

*As Kenya confronts a worsening climate emergency, institutions warn that women and children face the greatest risks when protection lags behind relief.*

As drought tightens its grip across counties, the crisis unfolding in Kenya’s arid and semi-arid regions is no longer defined solely by empty dams and failing crops. It is increasingly marked by a quieter, more pervasive threat: the erosion of safety and dignity for women and children when humanitarian systems come under strain. This reality framed discussions this week when the Executive Director of AFOSC Kenya, Mr Mohamed Sheik, paid a courtesy visit to the Chief Executive Officer of the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), Ms Purity Ngina. The engagement focused on the intersection between prolonged drought and the heightened risk of gender-based violence during emergencies — a pattern repeatedly observed during past humanitarian crises.

While drought affects entire communities, evidence from previous emergencies shows that its social consequences are uneven. Women and children often absorb the heaviest impact as households grapple with displacement, loss of income, and resource scarcity.

The meeting drew on lessons from previous drought and flood responses, where humanitarian interventions focused primarily on food, water, and shelter — often treating protection as secondary. Experience has shown that such approaches leave critical gaps, especially for women and children.



AFOSC Kenya Executive Director Mohamed Sheik and NGEC CEO Purity Ngina during a courtesy visit

The engagement between AFOSC Kenya and NGEC signals growing recognition that drought is not only a humanitarian challenge but a governance test.

## When party doors open, democracy breathes

*Machakos office launch signals renewed push for inclusive politics ahead of next General Election*

In the unfolding story of Kenya's democracy, the most significant shifts are often quiet ones—marked not by rallies or campaign slogans, but by institutional steps that bring governance closer to the people. In Machakos, such a moment took shape with the official launch of the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties (ORPP) Regional Office, a move expected to strengthen party governance and widen democratic participation across the Lower Eastern region.

The event drew key stakeholders from the political, governance, and civil society sectors, among them the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), represented by its Kitui Regional Office. Their presence underscored the deeper meaning behind the launch: that democracy is not merely about elections, but about building systems that guarantee equality, inclusion, and fair participation for all citizens.



Dr. Moses Saranta of NGEK attends the launch of the ORPP regional office in Kitui.

As Kenya inches toward the next General Election cycle, the decentralisation of critical democratic institutions is being viewed as both timely and necessary.

For years, access to political party regulatory services has largely been concentrated in major urban centres. Smaller parties, grassroots movements, and political actors in counties far from Nairobi have often faced logistical and administrative barriers in meeting compliance requirements.

The establishment of the Machakos regional office is intended to bridge that gap. By moving services closer to political stakeholders in the Lower Eastern counties, the ORPP aims to ease access to registration processes, compliance support, dispute resolution, and civic education.

Officials at the launch noted that decentralisation is a critical step in nurturing a healthier multiparty system. Political parties, they said, are the backbone of representative democracy—and their internal governance must reflect the constitutional principles of transparency, fairness, and inclusivity. The launch also provided a platform to reaffirm the centrality of the Political Parties Act, the legal framework that guides the formation, regulation, and funding of political parties in Kenya.

Stakeholders emphasised that compliance is not a mere technical requirement. It is a safeguard for democracy itself. Political parties are expected to operate with internal democracy, respect for diversity, and transparent management of their affairs. As conversations at the event revealed, the spirit of the law is just as important as its letter. Parties are being called upon to create leadership pathways that reflect the country's social fabric, rather than reproducing old hierarchies and exclusions. At the heart of the discussions was a recurring concern: the persistent underrepresentation of special interest groups within political party structures.

Women, youth, persons with disabilities, minorities, older persons, and other marginalised communities continue to face barriers in accessing party leadership positions and elective seats. High nomination fees, limited access to campaign financing, cultural biases, and lack of political mentorship remain significant obstacles. The NGEK reiterated the constitutional obligation to uphold equality and non-discrimination, reminding parties that inclusive participation is not an act of charity—it is a legal and moral duty.

## Bringing Justice Closer: NGEK and Huduma Kenya Forge Partnership to Serve Nakuru's Most Vulnerable

*Collaboration aims to integrate gender protection and inclusion into service delivery for women, youth, and marginalized communities*

Nakuru, Kenya — In a move that promises to bring government services closer to the people, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEK) Nakuru Regional Office paid a courtesy visit to the Huduma Kenya Centre, engaging with Manager Mr. Michael Otieno to explore deeper collaboration in service delivery. The dialogue, framed by a commitment to inclusion and equity, seeks to ensure that the voices of women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, children, minorities, and other marginalized groups are heard, protected, and



The Nakuru Regional Office team engages Huduma Centre Manager Michael Otieno during a courtesy call.

The meeting focused on leveraging the Huduma Kenya infrastructure to expand NGEK's reach through joint participation in Huduma Mashinani outreach activities. These mobile service initiatives are designed to take government services to remote communities, offering a platform for direct engagement with Special Interest Groups (SIGs) who often face barriers to accessing essential services.

Another key aspect of the discussions was capacity-building for Huduma Centre staff, particularly in gender mainstreaming and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in the workplace. Both NGEK and Huduma Kenya agreed that equipping frontline staff with knowledge and tools to recognize, report, and respond to GBV is essential to creating safe, inclusive, and accountable public service environments.

## Uniting for Change: NGEC and Plan International Strengthen Frontlines Against Gender-Based Violence in

*High-level collaboration aims to protect vulnerable communities and advance inclusive development across Kenya and the Horn of Africa*

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) welcomed a delegation from Plan International, led by Ambassador Susan Blankhart, Supervisory Board Member of Plan International Netherlands, on an official visit to Kenya. The engagement, held at NGEC's Isiolo Regional Office alongside Plan International Kenya's local team, highlighted a growing commitment to regional collaboration, protection of vulnerable groups, and inclusive governance.



NGEC and Plan International representatives during a high-level engagement led by Ambassador Susan Blankhart

—including women, youth, persons with disabilities, children, older members of society, minorities, and marginalized communities. These initiatives aim to deliver more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable outcomes.

“Collaborations like this demonstrate that protecting human dignity and promoting inclusive development are achievable when institutions and international partners work together,” Ambassador Blankhart said during the visit.

The Horn of Africa project highlights the transnational nature of GBV, which disproportionately affects women and children in marginalized and conflict-affected regions. Through coordinated prevention efforts, local capacity-building, and community engagement, NGEC and Plan International are working to strengthen early detection, reporting, and response mechanisms across the region.

Locally, the project has focused on awareness campaigns, training for local governance officials, and community-based interventions aimed at empowering survivors and preventing future abuse.

Both NGEC and Plan International emphasised the importance of sustainability and measurable outcomes. By scaling up successful programs and integrating Special Interest Groups into decision-making processes, the partnership aims to ensure that Kenya's most

vulnerable populations are not left behind in social and economic development initiatives.

“Partnerships like these reinforce our ability to reach those often excluded, ensuring no one is left behind in Kenya's development journey,” said a senior NGEC regional official.

The meeting left a clear message: the fight against gender-based violence and inequality is ongoing, and meaningful change requires collaboration, strategic action, and sustained commitment. For NGEC and Plan International, this engagement is more than symbolic—it is a concrete step toward safer communities, stronger governance, and inclusive development across Kenya and the broader Horn of Africa.

The partnership serves as a reminder that gender equality, human rights, and social inclusion are responsibilities shared by all sectors of society—government, international partners, civil society, and citizens alike. As Kenya charts its path toward a more equitable future, initiatives like the NGEC-Plan International collaboration illustrate the potential of focused, sustained, and community-centered action to turn policy into real, lasting impact.

Both NGEC and Plan International are committed to accountability and results-driven action. Monitoring and evaluation are central to ensuring programs are not only implemented but also effective, measurable, and sustainable. This includes assessing whether the most vulnerable communities experience tangible improvements in safety, access to services, and participation in local decision-making.



Ambassador Susan Blankhart of Plan International with NGEC's Lotaruk Nahashon

The meeting underscored the strong and sustained collaboration between NGEC and Plan International, which spans both headquarters and regional offices across Kenya. At the center of the discussions was the Horn of Africa Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Project, a multi-country initiative currently active in Isiolo and extending into Ethiopia and Somalia. Commission officials and Plan International representatives reflected on strategies for scaling up the project, identified priority areas for joint action, and explored avenues for resource mobilisation to strengthen NGEC's impact in all 47 counties.

Plan International praised NGEC's efforts to fortify local governance structures, improve coordination mechanisms, and advance targeted initiatives for Special Interest Groups

## Counting the Uncounted: Why Kenya's Equality Agenda Is Being Rewritten Around Evidence

*Inside a high-level meeting at Harambee House that could reshape how the State measures, plans and delivers inclusion*

In a country whose Constitution places equality at the heart of governance, a quiet but consequential challenge continues to undermine public policy: the absence of coherent, credible and coordinated gender evidence.

This reality formed the backdrop of a high-level engagement at Harambee House Annex, where the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), together with its partners, held discussions with the Principal Secretary for Cabinet Affairs, Dr Idris Salim Dokota. The meeting reaffirmed a shared commitment to advancing equality and inclusion, while confronting a problem that has long constrained Kenya's development planning—fragmented and limited data on the lived realities of millions of citizens.



Principal Secretary Dr. Idris Salim Dokota

At the centre of the discussions was the recognition that policy ambition, however well articulated, cannot substitute for evidence. Without reliable data on women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, minorities and marginalised communities, government interventions risk missing their mark, reinforcing inequities rather than dismantling them.

Kenya has made notable strides in embedding equality and non-discrimination into law and policy. Yet implementation has often lagged behind intent. One reason, acknowledged during the engagement, is the persistent gap in the generation, coordination and use of gender evidence to inform decision-making.

Existing research and data are frequently scattered across institutions, collected using differing standards and rarely synthesised into a coherent national picture.



Principal Secretary Dr. Idris Salim Dokota chairs discussions during a strategic engagement at Harambee House Annex

In some sectors, information is outdated; in others, it is incomplete or insufficiently disaggregated. The result is a policy environment where decision-makers must operate with partial visibility, limiting the ability to design responsive and inclusive programmes.

This challenge is particularly acute for special interest groups whose experiences are often underrepresented in national statistics. Without consistent data on access to services, economic participation, exposure to risk or outcomes of public programmes, inequalities remain difficult to measure—and therefore easier to overlook.



Dr. Purity Ngina of NGEC and partners during discussions with PS Dr. Idris Salim Dokota

It was against this context that the engagement focused on strengthening the National Gender Research Agenda, a framework intended to guide the production and application of gender and equality evidence across government.

The discussions underscored the need for stronger coordination among data producers and users, including State institutions, researchers, policymakers and communicators. Improving the quality of data collection and analysis was identified as equally critical, alongside investments in

institutional and technical capacity across the entire evidence ecosystem. The aim, participants noted, is not merely to generate more research, but to ensure that evidence is timely, policy-relevant and actively used in planning, budgeting and programme implementation. Strengthening the link between research and policy would allow gender and equity considerations to be integrated earlier and more systematically into national development processes.

The State Department for Cabinet Affairs occupies a strategic position within government, with a mandate to coordinate policy processes at the highest level. Its engagement in discussions on gender research signals an acknowledgement that evidence gaps are not a sectoral concern, but a cross-cutting governance issue.

By aligning institutions around shared research priorities and standards, the department is expected to play a key role in ensuring that gender and equity evidence informs Cabinet deliberations and national policy direction. Such coordination would also help reduce duplication, improve efficiency and strengthen accountability for results.



Presenters share updates during the Harambee House Annex high-level meeting

For NGEC, the engagement aligns with its constitutional mandate to promote equality and freedom from discrimination. The Commission has consistently argued that evidence is foundational to this mandate, providing the basis for credible policy advice and effective oversight of government action.

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## Kenya's Inclusion Promise Meets Its Hardest Test

*A national inquiry exposes deep cracks in the dream of truly inclusive classrooms*



NGEC team interacts with a teacher to evaluate learning environments

For many Kenyan families, transition to secondary school is supposed to be a moment of triumph. But this year, one teenager's journey to the classroom became a national flashpoint — not because of what he achieved, but because of how the system failed him. After earning placement at one of the country's prestigious national schools, a Grade 10 learner with a disability was initially denied admission, pushing his family into uncertainty and igniting public debate about inclusive education in Kenya.

The episode did more than shake one community; it prompted the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) to launch an urgent, multi-school fact-finding mission. In visits that spanned Nairobi to Thika, the Commission found pockets of promise — where specialised support and accessible environments turn policy into progress — but also persistent systemic gaps that leave some learners on the margins of a system built to include them.

Kenya's education laws and policies position inclusive education as a constitutional right. The Basic Education Act and the Sector

Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities affirm that learners with disabilities should be able to attend mainstream schools alongside their peers, with appropriate support and reasonable accommodation.

Yet advocacy groups say the reality often falls short. The Institute for Social Accountability, for example, has criticised instances of exclusion — including recent cases where learners were denied admission because schools lacked disability-friendly facilities — as violations of constitutional rights that deep-root inequality and undermine access to education for vulnerable children.



Smooth, well-maintained pavements designed for inclusive access.

At Thika School for the Visually Impaired, the Commission found a school deeply committed to inclusion. The institution had 99 Grade 10 learners, the majority with visual impairments, supported by 40 teachers—all trained in special needs education.

Over three days of assessments,

Commission teams engaged with institutions across Nairobi.

At Moi Forces Academy, officials discussed learner welfare and governance structures; at Aquinas High School, authorities acknowledged being open to inclusion but flagged the absence of specialised staff as a key limitation. At Ngara Girls High School and Upperhill High School, administrators described deliberate efforts towards inclusion, but noted that support systems remain inconsistent and under-resourced.



NGEC team during a school-level assessment with a teacher at Aquinas High School

The story shifted when teams reached specialised institutions like Thika School for the Blind and Salvation Army Joytown Special Primary School. In these environments, learners with disabilities demonstrated confidence and independence — outcomes observers attributed to purpose-built infrastructure, sustained support services and tailored learning approaches. These schools offered a glimpse of what inclusive education can look like when intentions match resources and training.



Learners with Disabilities

According to the Ministry of Education, about 11.4 per cent of children aged 3–21 in Kenya live with disabilities — roughly 2.5 million learners.

» CONTINUATION

But absence of accessible infrastructure, assistive learning materials and trained educators limits the ability of many schools to fulfil their constitutional obligation.



NGEC team during a school-level assessment with Moi Forces Academy Chief Principal, Mr. Maina.

Despite significant government investment in education — with the sector receiving Sh628.6 billion in the 2023/24 national budget — allocations for Special Needs Education lag behind the need. Funding shortfalls have meant that capitation grants intended to support learners with disabilities often reach only a fraction of those targeted.

One of the most consistent themes emerging from school visits was the critical role of teachers. Educators trained in inclusive methodologies — especially those who themselves live with disabilities — were shown to be powerful agents of change, changing school cultures and modelling acceptance. Yet many teachers still lack access to specialised professional development, limiting their ability to adapt lessons and learning environments for diverse needs. Such training is essential if inclusion is to move beyond principle to everyday practice.



NGEC staff during a school assessment visit at Upperhill High School

The Commission's assessment also revealed how disability intersects with poverty, gender and geography to deepen educational exclusion. Girls with disabilities, in particular, face compounded barriers, including higher risks of school dropout and social marginalisation.



NGEC staff during an assessment visit at Thika School for the Visually Impaired

Children in remote or marginalised counties where infrastructure and support services are often weakest, face even steeper challenges.

The Commission's assessment also revealed how disability intersects with poverty, gender and geography to deepen educational exclusion. Girls with disabilities, in particular, face compounded barriers, including higher risks of school dropout and social marginalisation. Children in remote or marginalised counties, where infrastructure and support services are often weakest, face even steeper challenges.



A structure equipped with taps and washrooms to support health and hygiene

The NGEK's consolidated findings will now inform recommendations for strengthening policy coherence, reinforcing accountability frameworks, expanding teacher training, and ensuring that schools are not only prepared but equipped to support learners with diverse needs.

Inclusive education, the Commission emphasised, is not a rhetorical ideal but a constitutional right and national imperative.

Turning that right into reality requires deliberate investment, systemic coordination, and a shared national commitment.

Kenya's legal and policy frameworks remain among the most progressive in Africa. But the journey from policy to classroom reality is far from complete.



A modern laboratory classroom with high tables and chairs

For learners and families who arrive at school gates with hope, inclusion must not be a conditional privilege. It must be a guarantee — reflected in accessible classrooms, supportive teachers, adaptive learning tools, and a school community that embraces every child.

Only then can the promise of inclusion become more than a line in a policy document — and evolve into a lived reality for every learner.

## Shaping Voices, Driving Change: NGEC and Media Council Partner to Elevate Gender-Inclusive Journalism

*Strategic collaboration aims to amplify marginalized voices and reward excellence in reporting that advances equality and social justice*



Dr. Purity Ngina of NGEC meets Media Council of Kenya CEO David Omwoyo during a strategic courtesy call.

Nairobi, Kenya — In an era where information shapes perception, influence, and policy, the pen is proving as mighty as the gavel. Last week, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) paid a strategic courtesy call to the Media Council of Kenya (MCK), meeting with CEO David Omwoyo to chart a new course for journalism that drives social justice, amplifies marginalized voices, and advances gender equality across the nation.

The engagement comes at a time when Kenya's media landscape is rapidly evolving, with stories spreading faster than ever across digital platforms and collaborative media spaces. For NGEC, whose mandate spans equality, equity, and inclusion across all sectors, this partnership presents an opportunity to ensure that public discourse reflects the lived experiences, contributions, and aspirations of Special Interest Groups—including women, youth, persons with disabilities, children, older members of society, minorities, and marginalized communities.

Central to the discussions was the Gender and Inclusivity Reporting category under the Annual Media Excellence Awards (AMEA), MCK's flagship program that recognises outstanding journalism across the country.

Both NGEC and MCK committed to strengthening this category, not just as a recognition platform, but as a tool to mentor, train, and equip journalists to report ethically, inclusively, and with social impact.

"Beyond the awards, we want this partnership to focus on mentorship and professional development. Our aim is not only to recognise excellence but also to strengthen capacity and support journalists in producing ethical, inclusive content on issues of national interest," Mr Omwoyo said during the meeting.

NGEC Secretary Purity Ngina highlighted the Commission's mandate to promote equality and inclusion across all sectors, noting that the media is a critical lever for social transformation. "Media houses dedicating space for gender stories is commendable. We are ready to provide expert input in identifying parameters for judging these stories," Ms Ngina said, underscoring the importance of gender-responsive reporting and fair

representation of marginalized groups.

The meeting reinforced the understanding that journalism is not merely about information—it is a catalyst for accountability, inclusion, and societal change. By elevating stories that challenge inequality, the partnership aims to ensure that public discourse accurately reflects Kenya's diverse population and addresses the structural biases that perpetuate marginalization.

MCK's rigorous multi-stage evaluation process for the AMEA, now in its 14th year, was cited as a critical component in maintaining professionalism and ethics in media coverage. Both institutions emphasised the importance of clear guidance on framing gender and inclusion stories, noting that recognition of exemplary reporting incentivizes journalists to adopt practices that uphold human dignity and social equity.

A key pillar of the collaboration is professional development. Beyond recognising outstanding journalism, NGEC and MCK aim to mentor reporters, editors, and media houses to enhance the quality, accuracy, and impact of gender-inclusive stories. This involves offering expertise in crafting narratives that not only inform but also inspire public action and policy reforms.

Both NGEC and MCK reaffirmed their commitment to deepening collaboration, ensuring that journalism in Kenya continues to serve as a force for equity, accountability, and inclusion. By recognizing and nurturing stories that centre marginalized communities, this partnership promises to shape a media landscape that reflects Kenya's diverse realities, challenges inequality, and empowers citizens to participate fully in national conversations.

For journalists across the country, the partnership represents both a challenge and an opportunity: to produce content that not only informs but transforms, and to be recognized as architects of a society where equality and inclusion are not aspirational ideals but lived realities.

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