The Chronicle

WEEKLY

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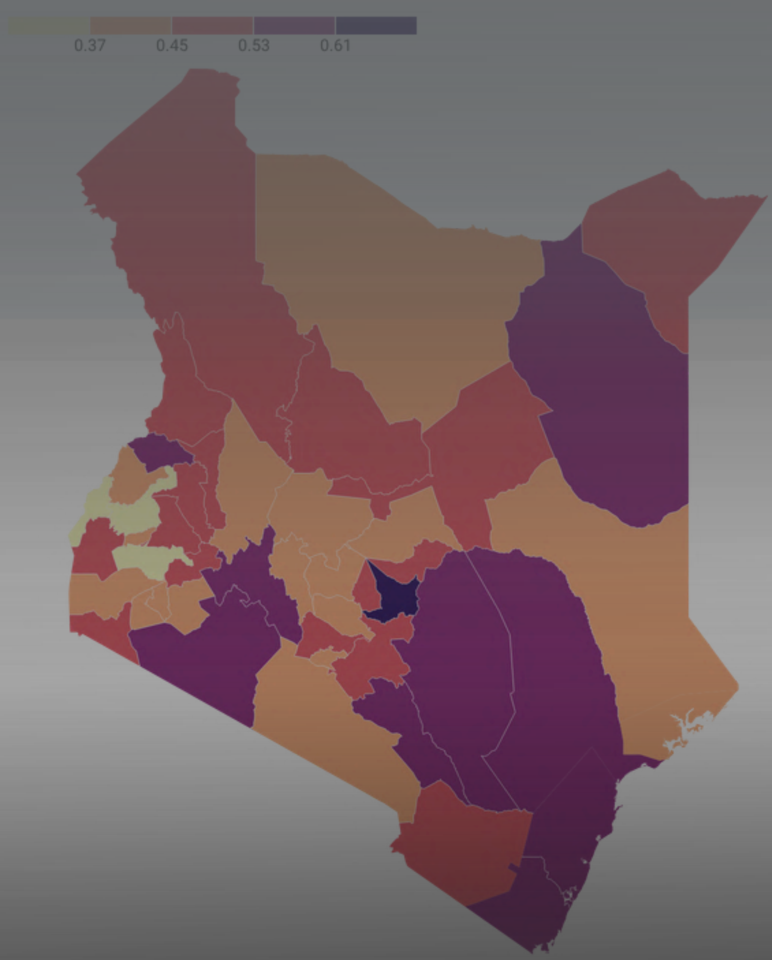
Two Years, Zero A's: What Kenya's first county fiscal scorecard reveals

PARLIAMENT'S BUDGET OFFICE HAS BUILT THE MOST RIGOROUS COUNTY PERFORMANCE TOOL YET; SHOWS NO COUNTY IS MANAGING PUBLIC MONEY WELL

CFPMI SCORE



BIGGEST MOVERS, YEAR ON YEAR

BIGGEST RISER
Embu
No. 23 → No. 1
Score +0.208

BIGGEST FALLER
Turkana
No. 1 → No. 16
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PENDING OBLIGATIONS

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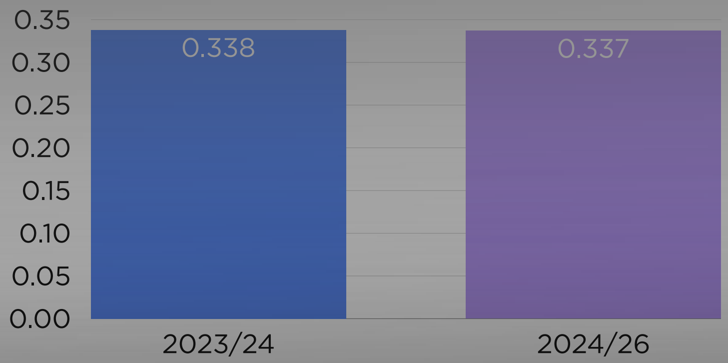

NAIROBI: THE EXTREME CASE

3x its annual revenue in unpaid bills, and approximately 40 per cent of all 47 counties' pending bills combined

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Opposition's real problem isn't unity, it's a reason to believe

TASK ISN'T FINDING WHO CAN BEAT RUTO; BUT BUILDING A COALITION THAT GIVES VOTERS A REASON TO VOTE FOR SOMETHING RATHER THAN SIMPLY AGAINST HIM

Karen to State House: Ruto's delegation playbook, recut for incumbency

THE VENUE HAS CHANGED, AND THE TITLE HAS BEEN UPGRADED, BUT THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF 2021 IS BACK IN A MORE INSTITUTIONAL FORM AS 2027 APPROACHES

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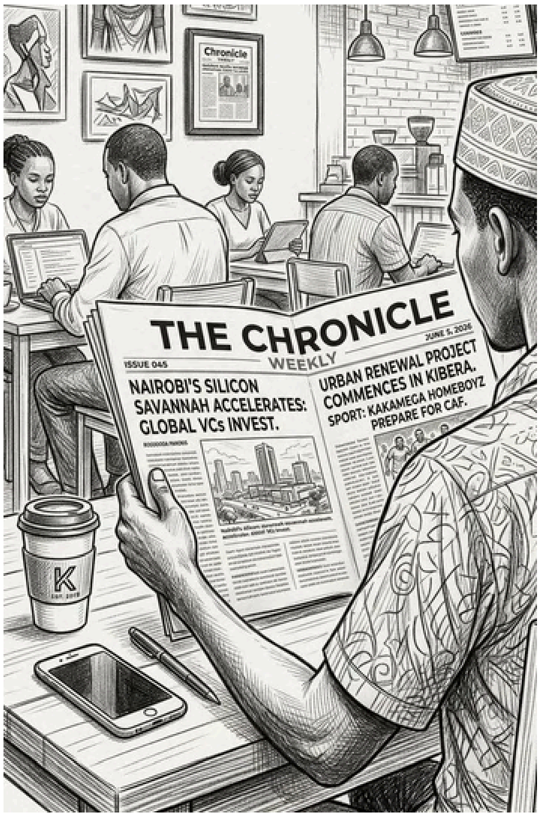

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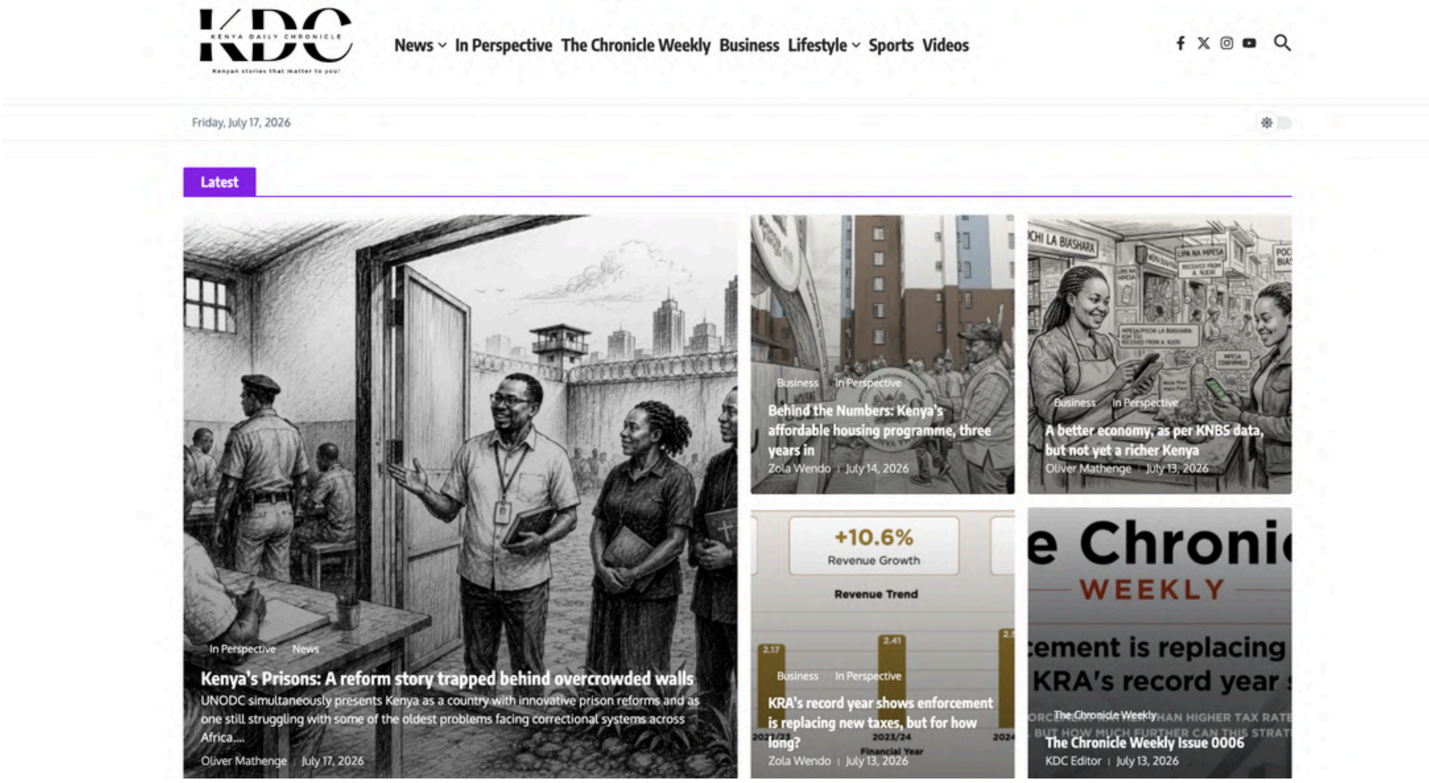

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While the Kenya Daily Chronicle delivers a mix of breaking news and real-time updates across politics, business, health, sports, and lifestyle, the Weekly is its considered, curated counterpart; a deeper read for audiences who want more than headlines.

Published every Monday, The Chronicle Weekly distils the most important stories of the preceding week into a single, authoritative edition. It brings together the Kenya Daily Chronicle's signature editorial strengths: rigorous political reporting, sharp business analysis, contextual perspectives, and vibrant community coverage, in a format designed to be read, saved, and shared.

The Chronicle Weekly occupies a distinct space in Kenya's media landscape: it is neither a wire-driven news feed nor a long-form magazine, but a weekly newspaper of record; structured, comprehensive, and grounded in the journalistic values that define the Kenya Daily Chronicle. Every edition is built around the belief that informed Kenyans make better decisions, stronger communities, and a more accountable nation.

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Editorial Note

Two years of data, and still not one "A." That's the number this issue turns on.

The Parliamentary Budget Office has finally given the Senate, and the rest of us, a standardised way to score how counties spend public money, built under the constitutional oversight mandate Article 96 hands the Senate, but which, until now, it had no real tool to exercise.

What it found should unsettle anyone still treating devolution as a settled success. The national average composite score barely moved between the two financial years measured, and the "bottom nine" counties PBO now wants the Senate to scrutinise more closely include some names that will surprise readers and some that won't.

What's more instructive than the ranking itself is what it demolishes. Nairobi, sitting on the country's largest county budget, cannot manage its pending bills any better than counties a fraction its size.

Embu, rarely part of the devolution conversation, produced the report's only genuine turnaround story, leaping from mid-table obscurity to the top of the national ranking in a single year.

Neither fact fits comfortably into the narrative that either side of the devolution debate usually reaches for, which is exactly why we've led with it this week.

We have paired that scorecard with two pieces reading the same instinct for institutional accountability into national politics.

One asks why "not Ruto" still isn't a governing programme for the opposition, 12 months out from an election, it insists it can win.

The other traces how State House has quietly become what Karen once was for the President: a delegation machine for building political capital ahead of a vote, only now with the convening power of the presidency and a Treasury line attached to it.

Elsewhere in this issue: what DP World's Jomvu bet says about whether Mombasa can finally convert a port into an economy, and why Kenya's track record on Special Economic Zones gives every reason for caution about how quickly that happens.

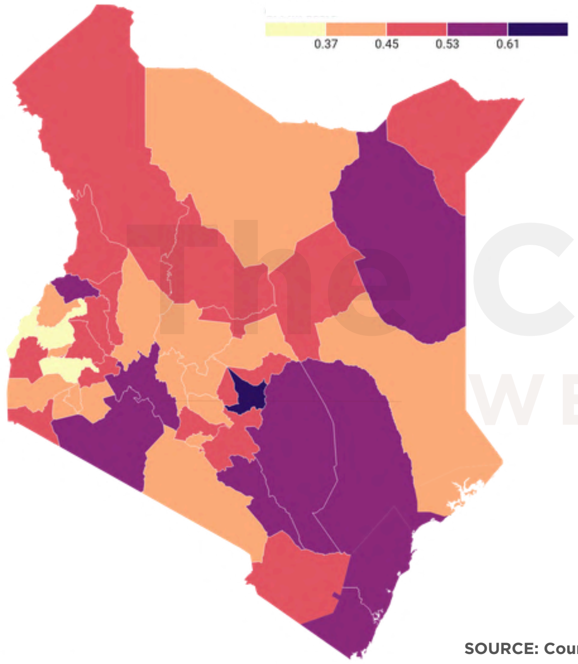
We also look at how the "side hustle" quietly stopped being a hustle and became infrastructure for how Kenyan households actually get by, and what three gold medals in Glasgow reveal about how narrow, and how fragile, Kenya's competitive sporting base has become beyond distance running.

As always, we'd rather ask an uncomfortable question early than a convenient one late. We hope this issue does that for you.

Kenya Daily Chronicle Team

Two Years, Zero A's: What Kenya's first county fiscal scorecard reveals

CFPMI SCORE



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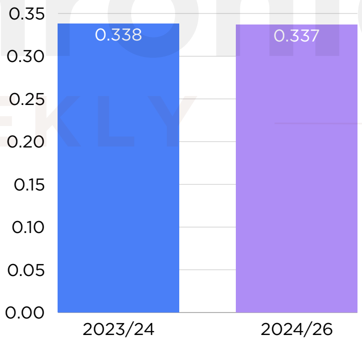


Pending Obligations national mean score remained flat two years running.

NAIROBI: THE EXTREME CASE

3x its annual revenue in unpaid bills, and approximately 40 per cent of all 47 counties' pending bills combined

SOURCE: County Fiscal Performance Measurement Index (CFPMI), FY 2024/25, Parliamentary Budget Office

For two financial years running, not a single one of Kenya's 47 counties has earned an "A" grade for fiscal management. Not the wealthiest. Not the most industrious. Not even Nairobi, whose budget dwarfs that of any other county government in the country.

That is the headline finding buried inside the Parliamentary Budget Office's new County Fiscal Performance Measurement Index (CFPMI), the first standardised, data-driven scorecard the Senate has ever had on how counties spend public money.

Built under Article 96 of the Constitution, which gives the Senate oversight of counties' revenue, the index scores all 47 counties across seven indicators: budget implementation, development spending, own-source revenue collection, wage and benefits expenditure, pending bills, county assembly spending ceilings, and audit outcomes.

Composite scores run from 0 to 1, mapped onto a five-tier grading system from A to E. The numbers tell an uncomfortable story about the state of devolution thirteen years in.

The national average composite score increased from 0.469 in FY 2023/24 to 0.471 in FY 2024/25, a marginal improvement that the PBO itself describes as "modest." The share of counties in the middle "C" band was roughly 74.5 per cent, according to our count of the report's own ranking table. PBO's executive summary cites 76.6 per cent.

Either way, the picture is the same: the vast majority of counties sit in the middle of the pack, competent in places and failing in others, with only three - Embu, Narok and Wajir - clearing the bar into "B" territory in FY 2024/25. Embu's leap from mid-table "C" to the top of the national ranking in a single year is the report's one genuine good-news story.

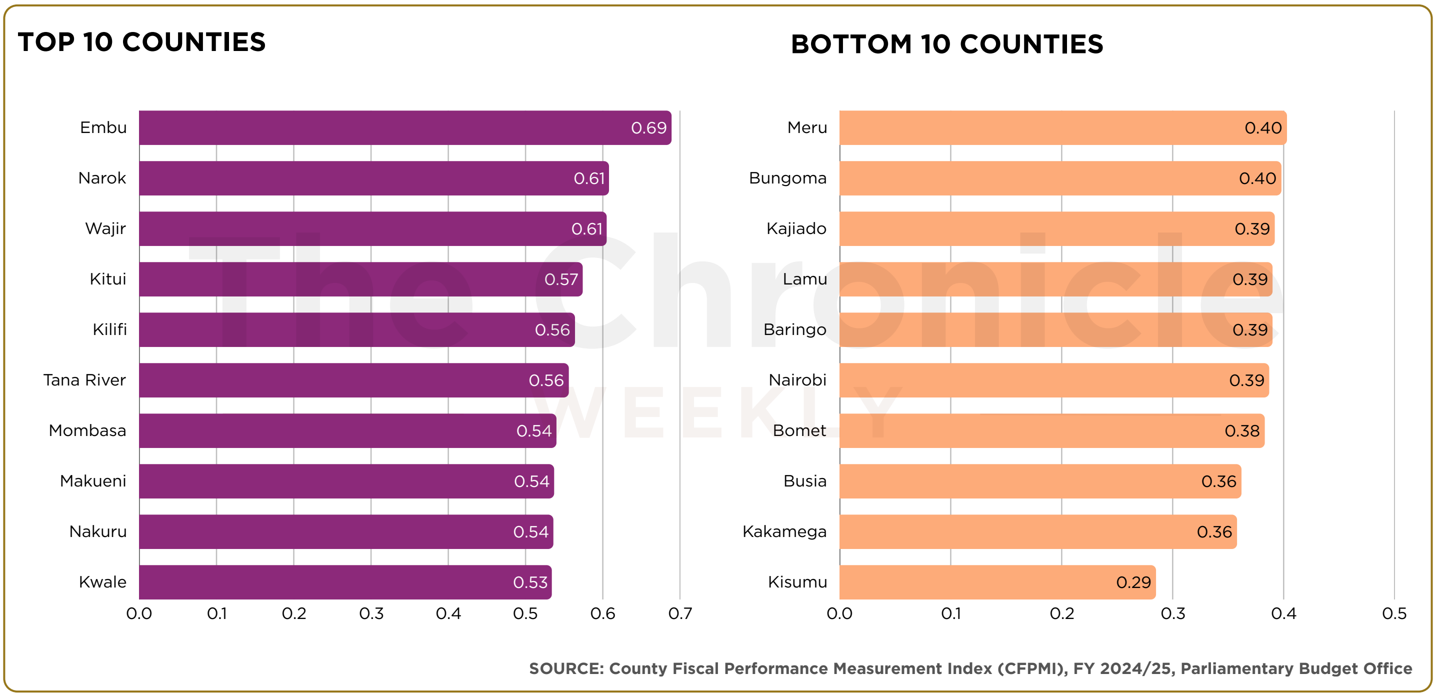
Rich County, Failing Scorecard

Nairobi sits on the largest county budget in the country, yet it ranked dead last in FY 2023/24 (position 47, CFPMI 0.324) and only crept up to 43rd the following year, still firmly in the "D" band.

Wealth and administrative capacity, in other words, are no guarantee of fiscal discipline, a finding that cuts against the assumption that urban, high-revenue counties automatically outperform their poorer, rural counterparts.

The report describes Nairobi's position as "the most extreme case of fiscal insolvency among all counties" with unpaid bills running to more than three times its total annual revenue. Nairobi alone accounts for roughly 40 per cent of the pending obligations owed across all 47 counties combined. Its score on this single indicator was effectively zero.

Nairobi is not alone in this failure; it is simply the most dramatic case of what is, nationally, the worst-performing indicator. The mean pending-obligations score between the two years stuck at 0.337–0.338.



Every other indicator showed at least some movement, up or down. Pending bills didn't move, which PBO reads as evidence of a structural problem in procurement, commitment control and debt management rather than a one-off shock.

Bills Strangling Growth

Buried near the back of the report is a regression analysis that gives the pending-bills story real teeth.

Running county fiscal indicators against Gross County Product, PBO's economists found that a 1 per cent increase in a county's pending bills is associated with a statistically significant 0.043 per cent reduction in its economic output, the strongest and most consistent effect of any variable tested.

Effective own-source revenue collection and full budget implementation both showed smaller, positive, statistically significant effects on growth.

Development expenditure, by contrast, showed no statistically meaningful relationship with growth at all, even though 27 of 47 counties still fail to meet the constitutional threshold of allocating at least 30 per cent of their budget to development projects, and seven counties (including Nairobi) allocate less than 20 per cent.

PBO's own reading is blunt: either the counties are underinvesting in development to begin with, or the money that is being spent on development isn't translating into productive assets, a distinction the report says needs further scrutiny rather than being read as vindication of low development spending.

What The Scorecard is For

None of this is presented by PBO as a verdict on individual county leadership so much as a diagnosis of system-wide weakness.

Audit outcomes remain weak nationally (mean score 0.508, a small improvement); county assembly spending against Commission on Revenue Allocation ceilings actually worsened, from 0.655 to 0.611. Only one county, Tana River, hit a perfect own-source revenue score.

PBO's headline recommendation is that the Senate use the CFPMI to direct its oversight, training scrutiny specifically on what it calls the “bottom nine”: Kisumu, Kakamega, Busia, Bomet, Nairobi City, Baringo, Lamu, Kajiado and Bungoma, the nine lowest-scoring counties overall in FY 2024/25.

It also wants the index published annually and formally folded into the national performance-monitoring framework, positioning it alongside international tools like the Open Budget Survey rather than as a one-off report.

Whether the Senate uses the tool that way is a separate question from whether the tool itself is sound, and an open one. As it stands, the CFPMI is the most granular, comparable evidence yet that Kenya's county governments, collectively, are not meeting the basic fiscal responsibility standards set out in the PFM Act.

With the 2027 election cycle already reshaping political attention at the national level, a scorecard built specifically to hold county governments accountable is arriving at precisely the moment national politics is best positioned to drown it out.

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Opposition's real problem isn't unity, it's a reason to believe

Kenya's opposition has reached a familiar stage in the electoral cycle, where the political class is once again attempting to address what it has long treated as the central problem of Kenyan elections: merging all anti-government sentiment into a single electoral force that can compete effectively at the ballot.

The conversations that accompany this effort follow a familiar pattern. Political principals meet in various configurations, party leaders negotiate positions and influence, and potential presidential contenders quietly test their strength in different regions.

At the same time, their allies circulate their names for both the presidency and the running mate position. Beneath the public statements, political operatives are engaged in detailed calculations of regional voting blocs, historical turnout patterns, and the arithmetic required to secure a first-round victory or at least force a decisive run-off.

The logic behind this approach rests on the assumption that President Ruto cannot be defeated if the opposition vote is divided among multiple candidates, and that the only viable path to victory, therefore, lies in unity around a single flagbearer.

There is considerable merit in that argument, and it is precisely why opposition leaders have been working towards a formal pact that would commit them to supporting one presidential candidate, with technical teams already drafting frameworks intended to guide such an agreement.

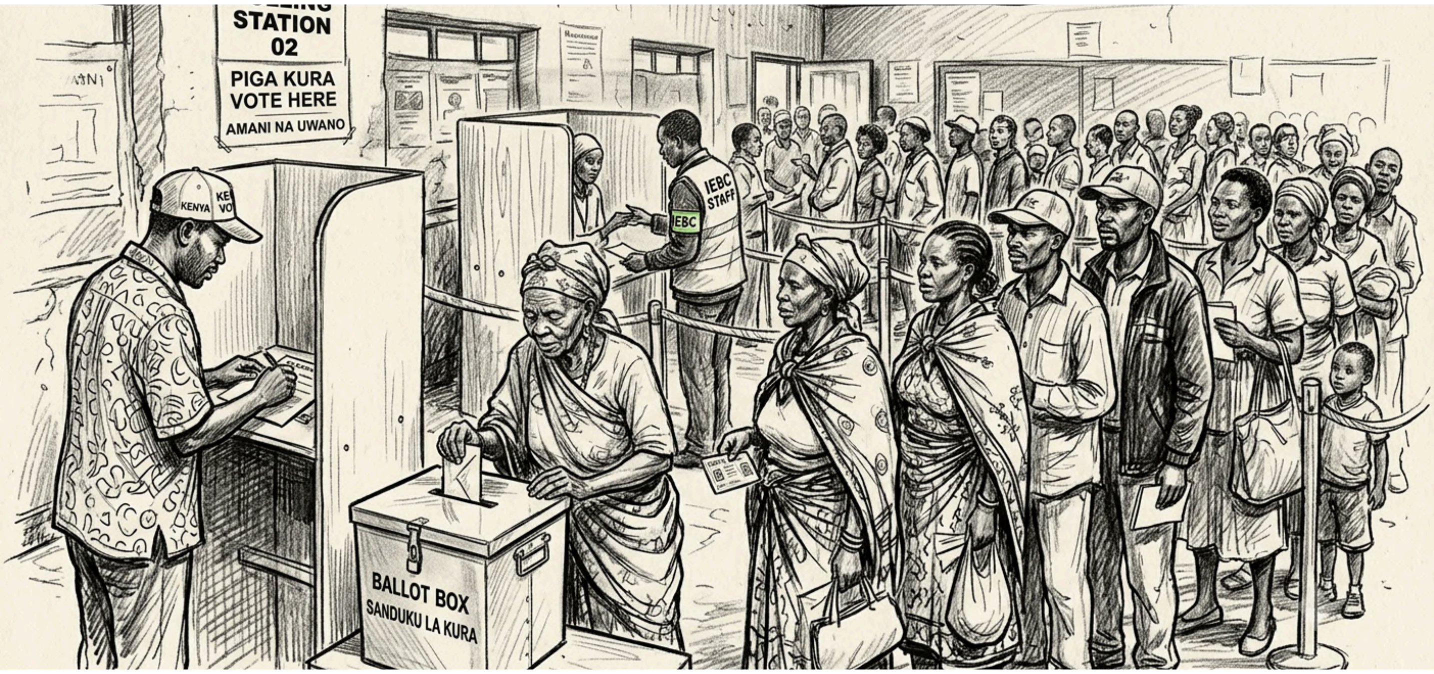
However, unity, while necessary, only resolves part of the 2027 equation, because it does not answer the more fundamental question of what this coalition is asking Kenyans to unite around in the first place.

The latest Infotrak polling data provides an important entry point into this question. President Ruto currently leads with 32 per cent support, followed by Kalonzo Musyoka at 13 per cent, while Edwin Sifuna and Fred Matiang'i each register 12 per cent, and Rigathi Gachagua stands at 4 per cent.

More revealing than the individual figures, however, is the fact that 18 per cent of respondents remain undecided. These numbers should not be read as a definitive forecast of the 2027 election, given that the political environment is fluid, alliances are yet to crystallise, and the campaign period has not begun.

Nevertheless, they do expose a structural weakness in the opposition's current approach, which is that there is no single opposition figure who has managed to consolidate support across the field, while a significant portion of the electorate has not yet anchored itself to any political camp.

This reality ought to shift the nature of the opposition's internal debate. Instead of focusing narrowly on how Kalonzo, Gachagua, Matiang'i, Sifuna and other figures can avoid splitting the vote, the more pressing question should be why a voter who is dissatisfied with the current government should ultimately choose any of them.



That is a far more demanding question, and it cannot be answered through coalition arithmetic alone.

The Politics Of Subtraction

Kenyan opposition politics has historically been more effective at defining what it stands against than what it stands for. In 2002, the National Rainbow Coalition derived much of its momentum from the desire to end KANU's long dominance.

In 2007, the political contest was framed largely around dissatisfaction with the Kibaki administration and the promise of change.

In 2013 and 2017, opposition campaigns were heavily structured around resistance to the Jubilee government. In 2022, Ruto successfully recast himself as an outsider challenging an entrenched political establishment, as his opponents were closely associated with the state.

The lesson from this history is not that negative campaigning is ineffective, because it has, in fact, been central to many successful political transitions in Kenya.

Rather, the more important lesson is that opposition coalitions become vulnerable when their primary organising principle is reduced to the removal of an incumbent, without a sufficiently developed vision of governance beyond that point.

A slogan such as "Not Ruto" may carry emotional and political weight, but it does not in itself constitute a governing programme, nor does it answer the question of what kind of state would emerge in its place.

This challenge has become more pronounced in the current political environment, which has evolved significantly since the last election. While the cost of living continues to shape public sentiment, the broader political conversation has expanded.

Younger voters have demonstrated an increasing capacity to organise outside traditional party structures, and the 2024 protests illustrated that political mobilisation can now occur around specific issues without requiring endorsement from established political leaders.

This emerging political generation is unlikely to stay satisfied with being told which leaders to reject, especially in the absence of an alternative vision.

It is in this context that the opposition must confront an uncomfortable possibility that the electorate it seeks to persuade may already be more politically discerning than the coalition-building processes currently taking place within elite political circles.

The 18 Per Cent Question

The 18 per cent of undecided voters may prove to be the most consequential segment of the electorate, because they represent the space in which the 2027 election is still genuinely open.

It is tempting to assume that if Ruto commands 32 per cent support and opposition-aligned figures collectively account for a larger share when combined, then the opposition's task is simply to unify those numbers under a single candidate.

However, this assumption overlooks a critical reality of electoral behaviour where political support does not automatically transfer between candidates.

A voter who supports Kalonzo does not necessarily become a supporter of Gachagua, Matiang'i or Sifuna. Similarly, a voter who is dissatisfied with the current administration may still harbour reservations about the political figures seeking to replace it.

As a result, coalition mathematics cannot be reduced to simple addition, because electoral behaviour is ultimately shaped by persuasion, trust, and perceived credibility.

This is precisely why the process through which the opposition selects its eventual candidate is so important. If the nominee is widely perceived as the outcome of elite bargaining among the principals, rather than a process that reflects broader public legitimacy, then the coalition risks entering the election with a credibility deficit.

Concerns of this nature have already surfaced within opposition circles, where there is unease about the possibility that a presidential candidate could be imposed through negotiation rather than a process that commands public confidence.

This is not a procedural disagreement, but rather a substantive question about whether the opposition understands the country's political mood.

What Would They Actually Change?

The opposition's most important test, therefore, is not the scale of its rallies or the size of its coalition, but the clarity and specificity of its governing programme.

It is not enough to argue that the current administration has failed; it must also be clear about what it would do differently.

This requires detailed positions on taxation and public debt, healthcare structure and financing, and the creation of employment opportunities beyond broad vague references to youth empowerment.

It also requires a coherent housing policy, a clear approach to agricultural productivity and food security, a credible plan for reducing energy costs, and a defined strategy for strengthening devolution.

In addition, it must articulate how policing and public accountability would be reformed, and perhaps most importantly, it must explain how it would govern differently from the political establishment from which many of its leading figures have previously emerged.

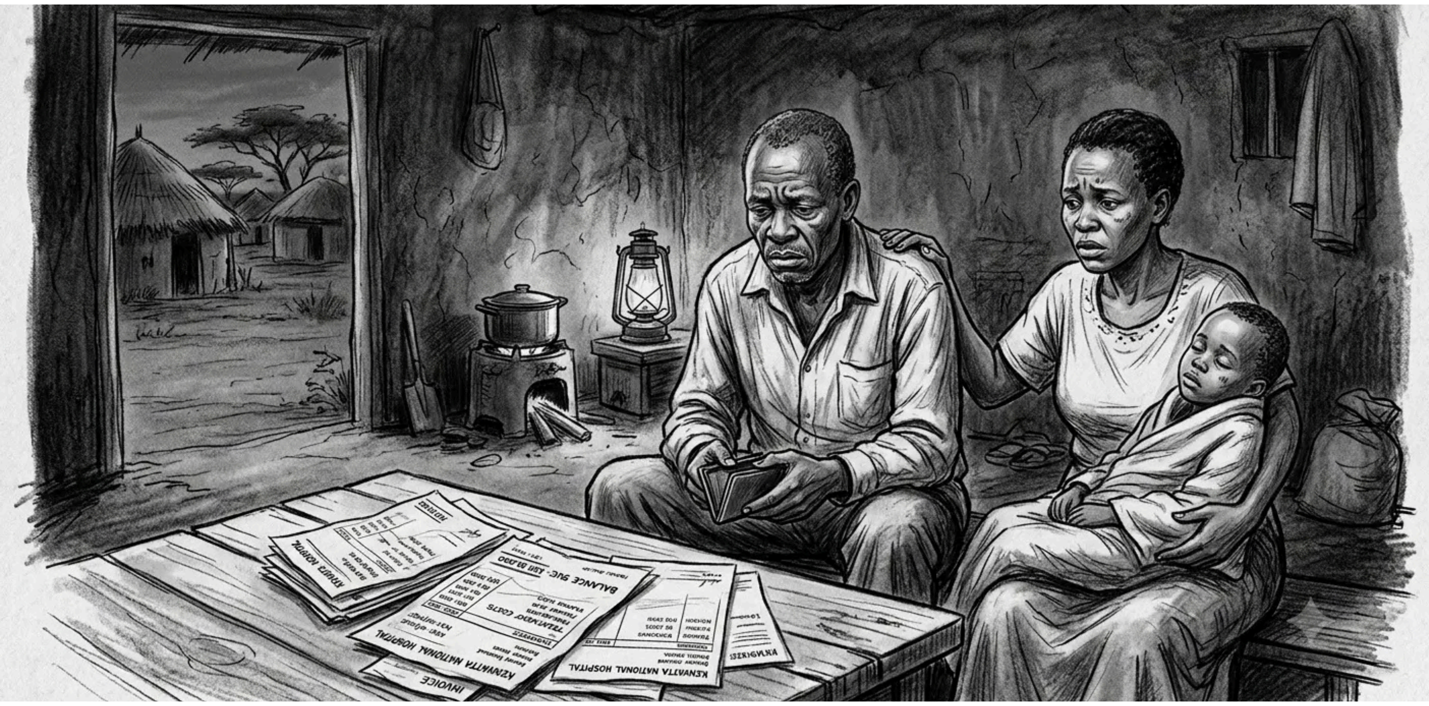
These questions are particularly important because the opposition is not composed entirely of political outsiders. Many of its leading figures have previously held senior government positions, including cabinet secretaries, deputy presidents, and senior legislators.

This experience is politically valuable, but it also means that they cannot credibly present themselves as entirely separate from the system they now criticise.

The electorate is therefore entitled to ask what lessons they have drawn from their time in government, and how this would shape their approach to power if they were to return to office.

Ruto's Advantage Is Not Only Incumbency

It would also be a strategic error for the opposition to assume that the vulnerabilities of the current administration automatically translate into its own political advantage.



Ruto remains the leading individual candidate in recent polling, and his support has increased from 21 per cent in August 2025 to 32 per cent in the June 2026 survey. This suggests not only resilience but also the capacity to consolidate support over time.

More importantly, the administration retains the advantage of incumbency, which allows it to present a record of governance that it can defend and interpret in its own terms.

It can point to macroeconomic stabilisation efforts, infrastructure development, and reforms in sectors such as healthcare, while acknowledging that these achievements will be contested by critics who question their cost, effectiveness, or impact.

As a result, the 2027 election is likely to evolve into a contest between competing interpretations of the same national experience. The government will ask voters to evaluate its record based on what it has built and stabilised.

The opposition will ask voters to focus on what has not been delivered, what has become more difficult, and what choices could have been made.

However, the opposition will still be required to move beyond critique and offer a credible account of what would follow a change in leadership.

The Coalition After The Coalition

This is where the 2027 election may differ significantly from previous cycles, because the opposition may succeed in constructing an effective electoral coalition while still struggling to construct a viable governing coalition.

Winning an election requires agreement on a candidate, but governing requires agreement on far more complex issues, including fiscal policy, public appointments, constitutional interpretation, foreign relations, devolution, and the distribution of political authority across institutions and regions.

A coalition that spends all its time negotiating positions, offices, and regional balances may find that it has exhausted much of its political capital before it articulates a coherent governance vision.

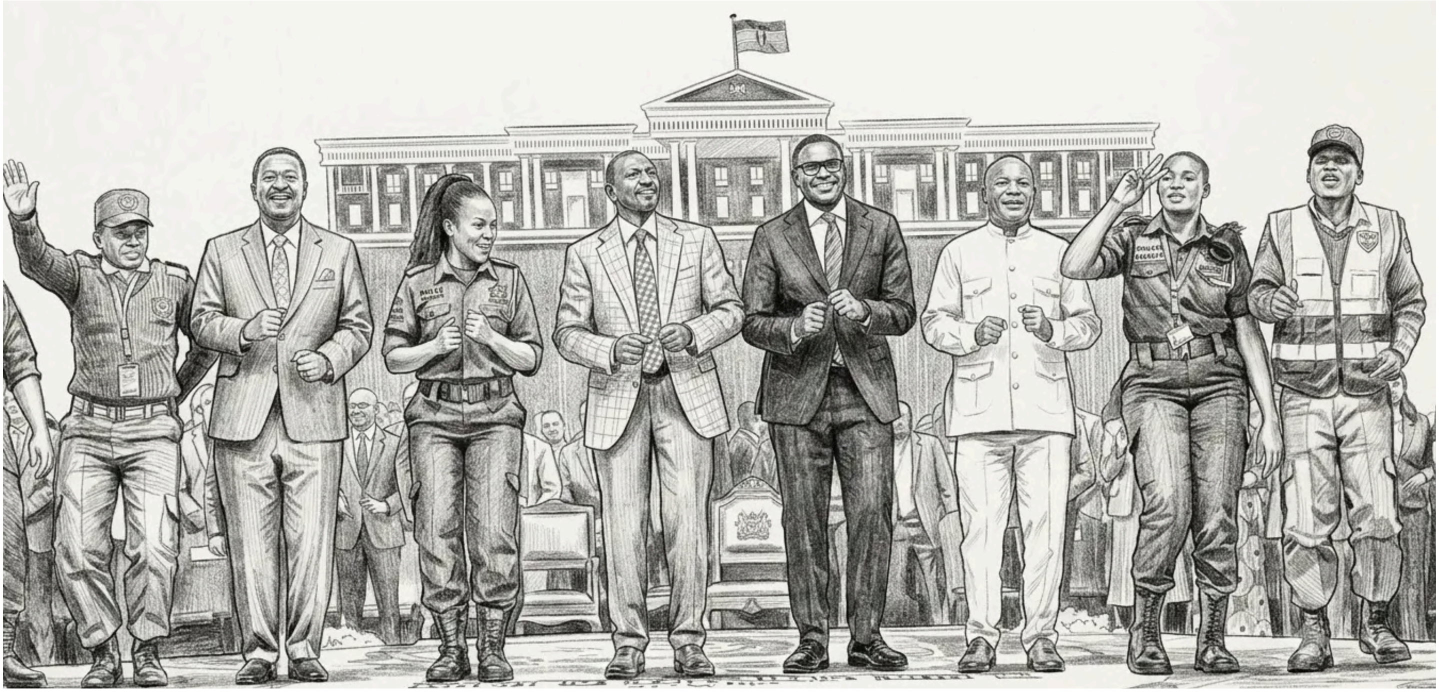
The risk is that Kenya finds itself choosing between personalities rather than programmes, which would represent a missed opportunity at a moment when the electorate has already demonstrated a willingness to question inherited political loyalties and traditional party alignments.

The 2027 electorate is still in the process of forming its final judgement, and this creates an opening for the opposition that goes beyond simply assembling a larger anti-incumbent bloc. It creates the possibility of making a substantive argument for a different kind of government.

However, that possibility cannot be realised through unity alone. It requires ideas that are clearly articulated, credibility that is publicly defensible, and a coherent account of past performance by those who seek to lead. Above all, it requires an understanding that voters are not merely looking for a candidate who can defeat Ruto, but for a leader they can trust with what comes after.

That is the real challenge facing the opposition, and it is not simply the task of finding a candidate. It is a more difficult task of finding one reason to believe.

Karen to State House: Ruto's delegation playbook, recut for incumbency



On Thursday, President William Ruto hosted thousands of private security guards at State House, where he said Kenya was implementing key reforms on the welfare, professionalism and recognition of private security officers, as indispensable partners in maintaining national security.

Two days earlier, he hosted more than 9,000 Muslim religious leaders. Here, he declared that his administration was correcting historical injustices through equitable development across our Republic.

"Historically underserved regions, including Northern Kenya and the Coast, are receiving unprecedented investment in infrastructure and economic opportunity as we ensure that no community is left behind," Ruto said.

In the same week, he held a separate consultative forum with village elders from across the country, an event described by Interior PS Raymond Omollo as historic because it was the first time village elders had been collectively brought to State House.

The President announced Sh3,000 monthly stipends, SHA health cover and smartphones for more than 106,000 elders and their families, effectively embedding a new layer of actors into a structured state-supported programme. Ruto used the occasion to announce a significant increase in Chief's operational funding, raising quarterly allocations from Sh30,000 to Sh50,000 while doubling assistant chiefs' support from Sh15,000 to Sh30,000.

A day earlier, he had hosted roughly 5,000 members of the Friends Church, also known as Quakers, at State House and presented a Sh50 million cheque for a peace centre. This adds a religious constituency to a growing list of organised groups being received at the seat of executive power.

None of these meetings, taken individually, can be reduced to campaigning, because presidents meet citizens, governments engage communities, and public officials routinely announce programmes that fall within their mandate.

However, politics is rarely located in isolated events and is instead revealed in patterns that accumulate over time and begin to suggest a method. And the pattern emerging around State House now looks strikingly familiar; it has a precedent.

The address has changed, the office has changed, and the resources available to the man at the centre have changed. However, Ruto appears to be returning to a political method that served him exceptionally well in the run-up to the 2022 election.

The Karen Precedent

Between 2020 and 2022, Ruto's official residence in Karen, widely nicknamed the Hustler's Mansion, functioned less as a conventional government residence and more as a political coordination hub where hundreds of delegations passed through in a steady rhythm that mirrored, and in many ways substituted for, traditional campaign infrastructure.

After Uhuru's administration restricted political gatherings during the Covid-19 period, Ruto's events increasingly concentrated in Karen, where he received regional power brokers, youth and women's groups, religious leaders, professional associations, party operatives and ordinary supporters, all arriving not as isolated individuals but as organised delegations representing identifiable constituencies.

The significance of this format lay in what it enabled, because a rally demonstrates popularity in aggregate while a delegation demonstrates access to organised networks. In Kenyan politics, that distinction is decisive since networks, not crowds, ultimately determine electoral mobilisation.

The Karen meetings, therefore, became a form of political mapping in which grievances were recorded, alliances tested, regional balances assessed and local organisers identified, gradually producing a distributed structure that could later be activated during the formal campaign period.

The conversion of these interactions into political capital became visible in multiple ways, and many emerged from Karen publicly aligning themselves with the "hustler movement" and pledging support for Ruto's presidential bid.

Later, at the same address, the country was introduced to the later Hustler Nation parliamentary strategy sessions that brought together more than 140 legislators to assess grassroots penetration ahead of the election.

Even as the political significance of these gatherings became increasingly apparent, allies defended them on procedural grounds arguing that the Deputy President was simply exercising his right to receive guests at his residence.

It is a defence that was technically accurate but politically incomplete because it treated form as substance while ignoring the organisational function the residence had come to serve.

The importance of Karen was never architectural; it was operational and functioned as a node through which political relationships were built, consolidated and converted into an electoral structure long before the formal campaign began.

Same Script, Now With A Treasury Line

What distinguishes the current moment is that Ruto no longer needs to simulate proximity to state power, as he now occupies it fully. This means that the same delegation-based strategy that once relied on access and hospitality can now be combined with policy authority, administrative direction, and direct fiscal allocation.

Where Karen offered political access, State House now offers institutional capacity, and that shift fundamentally alters the scale and implications of the same underlying method.

The chiefs and elders forums illustrate this most clearly, because beyond the announced increases in funding and stipends, the President directed the Ministry of Interior to prepare a Sessional Paper to formalise the reforms that would effectively tighten the institutional link between grassroots administration and the executive.

It was in this context that he told assembled elders, in reference to the new Sh3,000 stipend, that "we start from here, and when we cross the next election, we will push it even higher," a statement that was met with chants of "Tutam", which explicitly located a State benefit within a post-election trajectory.

In the Karen years, the key political resource was access; in the State House years, access is combined with authority and expenditure, creating a qualitatively different political environment, even when the format of engagement appears similar.

The irony of Ruto's current position is that the same political instincts that required improvisation in 2021 are now being exercised from within the institutional core of the state, which means that a strategy once built on proximity to power is now being executed through power itself.

In 2021, he was a Deputy President increasingly estranged from the President, with visibility but limited control over state machinery, and therefore compelled to construct an independent political infrastructure that could operate alongside, and at times outside, formal government channels.

In 2026, he is the President, which means that the convening power of State House and the scale of the national budget are available within the same architecture that once had to be built externally.

This creates both advantage and constraint, because while it allows for a far more extensive form of engagement with communities, it also removes the ambiguity that once allowed him to position himself as an outsider challenging an establishment he was formally part of.

In 2022, he could ask voters to imagine what he might do with power; in 2027, voters will evaluate what he has already done with it, which means that every engagement now carries dual meaning, functioning simultaneously as governance and as political signalling.

The Dry Run Was Already Underway

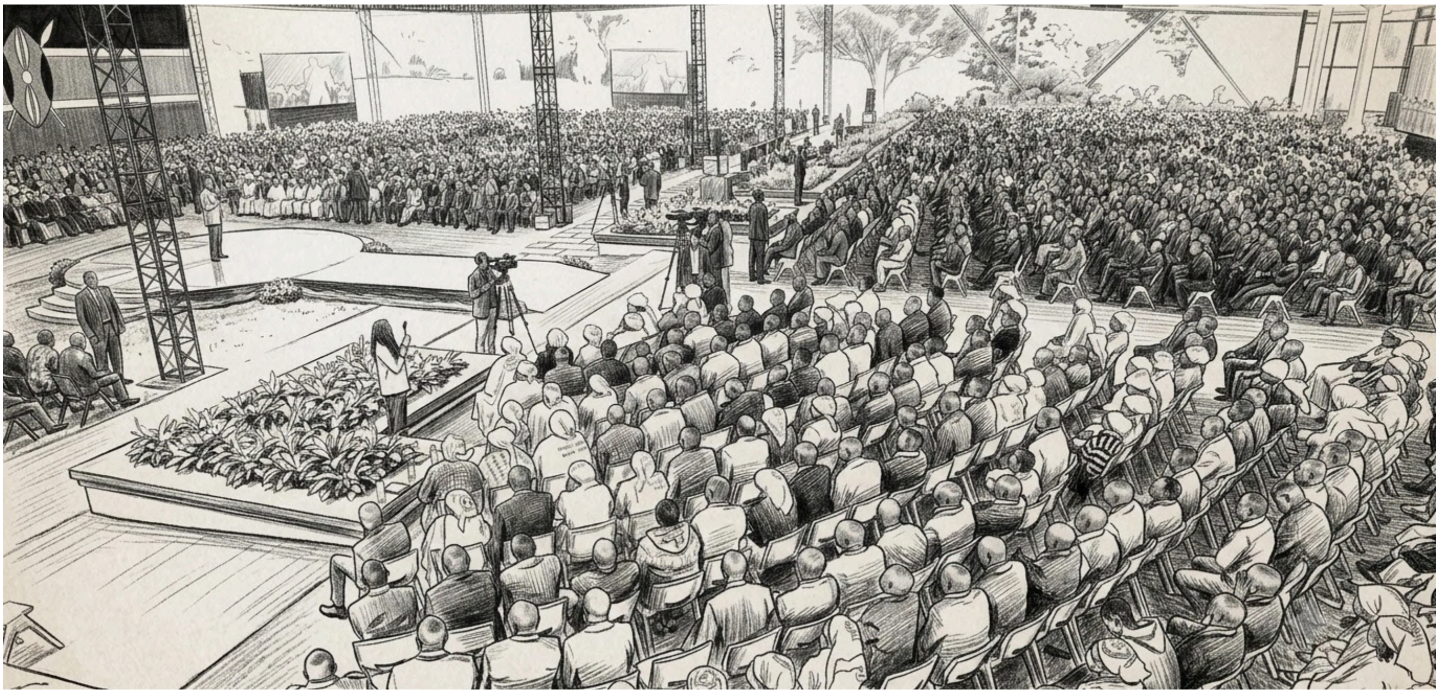
The current pattern did not begin with chiefs or elders, because in September 2025, the President hosted approximately 10,000 teachers at a "Walimu na Rais" forum at State House, where participants who had queued from early morning received Sh10,000 transport reimbursements while broader commitments were made regarding sector reforms that later drew institutional scrutiny.

That event was not isolated, but part of a broader sequence of engagements involving boda boda riders, small business groups, religious leaders, professional associations and regional delegations, all of which followed a similar structure in which organised constituencies were received at State House and engaged through a combination of dialogue and material commitments.

The teachers' union leaders publicly endorsed Ruto's re-election bid and proposed institutionalising the forum, which illustrates how such engagements can evolve from one-off meetings into durable political relationships that extend beyond their immediate administrative purpose.

The import of this pattern lies not in any single event but in its accumulation, because one group can be dismissed, two can be coincidental, but a sustained sequence of demographically and regionally targeted delegations resembles a structured political play.

The visit by the Friends Church adds another layer of interpretation because the denomination has deep roots in Western Kenya, which forms a critical electoral bloc that both the government and opposition are actively attempting to influence.



This is the same region that has become central to emerging opposition calculations, including efforts to consolidate a coalition that would combine Western Kenya, Nairobi and Lower Eastern into a competitive electoral formation against Ruto.

In that context, the combination of a Sh50 million cheque and a Sh550 million hostel commitment delivered within a short period to a major religious institution in the region cannot be read as determinative of political alignment. However, it does reflect the broader reality that Western Kenya is already being treated as a decisive electoral theatre.

Every major political actor understands this and is investing in relationships there well before the formal campaign period begins, although only the incumbent can do so while simultaneously deploying state resources.

These outreach efforts are unfolding alongside visible internal coalition management, including the need to maintain cohesion within Kenya Kwanza at a time when succession politics and regional recalibrations are already generating tension.

In late July, Deputy President Kithure Kindiki released photographs of a private meeting with the President at State House without accompanying commentary. A deliberate act of visual cue intended to counter speculation about internal friction, and which underscored the sensitivity surrounding cohesion within the ruling coalition.

At the same time, the collapse of the Ruto-Gachagua alliance has reshaped Mt Kenya politics, creating a vacuum that both government and opposition actors are attempting to navigate.

All this, while questions about future running mates and regional balancing continue to circulate within political circles.

This means that the President is simultaneously managing coalition stability and electoral outreach, a dual responsibility that increasingly overlaps in practice because the same meetings that reinforce internal unity also serve as platforms for external mobilisation.

The Counter

The opposition is constructing its own version of coalition arithmetic, led by figures such as Gachagua, Kalonzo Musyoka, Edwin SIfuna, James Orengo, Eugene Wamalwa, Fred Matiang'i, Martha Karua and George Natembeya, who are attempting to assemble a counterweight to the incumbent by aggregating regional vote banks into a single electoral formation.

Their strategy relies on parallel mobilisation across regions, with each leader consolidating influence in specific areas while broader negotiations over a presidential flagbearer continue, reflecting a shared understanding that national victory will depend on the integration of local networks.

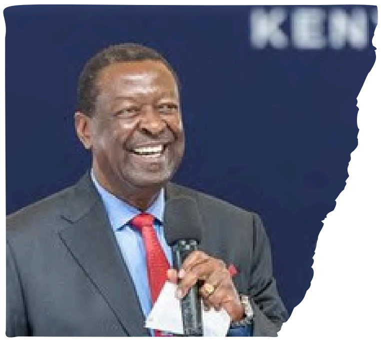
However, the structural asymmetry remains significant because while both sides are engaged in retail politics, only the incumbent can combine political outreach with state-backed programmes, budgetary allocations and institutional authority.

This means that identical formats of engagement carry different weight depending on who is executing them.

The Week in Numbers

0.60%	147	Sh896 bn	115
DECLINE	**SHORT CODE**	**DISBURSEMENT**	**YEARS**
Drop in Nairobi satellite areas house prices in Q2 of 2026; land prices went up by 1.40 per cent during the same period.	Toll Free number to contact the newly launched National Ambulance Dispatch Centre for 24 hours emergency service.	Amount of money that the victims of human rights violations have received since the panel was established.	Jail term handed down on Ibrahim Hussein who was convicted for seven terrorism-related charges.

Quote of the Week



"We are working on a petition-free win for President Ruto. Petitions make the country pull in different directions, causing tension. We have witnessed these scenarios in previous elections. We want to change this trend.

- Prime Cabinet Secretary. Musalia Mudavadi

KDC Explainer: What Is the CFPMI?

The County Fiscal Performance Measurement Index (CFPMI) is the Senate's first standardised, data-driven scorecard for how Kenya's 47 county governments manage public money. It was built by the Parliamentary Budget Office, Parliament's in-house fiscal think tank, and formally launched by Senate Speaker Amason Kingi on August 6, 2026.

How It Works

Each county is scored on seven indicators of public finance management:

- **Budget implementation:** How much of the approved budget is actually spent
- **Development expenditure:** Share of the budget spent on development projects, against the 30 per cent legal minimum
- **Own-source revenue:** Locally raised revenue against target
- **Wages and benefits expenditure:** Compliance with wage bill ceilings
- **Pending obligations:** Unpaid bills
- **County assembly expenditure ceilings:** compliance with CRA-set limits
- **Audit outcomes**: Quality of the county's audit opinion

Each indicator is scored between 0 and 1 using min-max normalisation, comparing each county against the best and worst performing county on that measure, then combined into a single composite score. That composite score is mapped onto a five-tier grading scale: A (0.80–1.00), B (0.60–0.79), C (0.40–0.59), D (0.20–0.39), and E (0.00–0.19).

Why It Exists

The Senate has constitutional oversight of county revenue under Article 96, but until now had no standardised, comparable tool for exercising it, relying instead on separate reports from the Auditor-General, the Controller of Budget and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, each measuring different things in different formats. The CFPMI pulls those sources into one composite score, which PBO says is intended to be published annually and used to direct Senate scrutiny toward the worst-performing counties.

What It Covers

The inaugural report scores all 47 counties across two financial years, FY 2023/24 and FY 2024/25, allowing year-on-year comparison for the first time.

Mombasa's DP World Bet: Can the Coast turn a port into an economy?

For decades, Mombasa has lived with a peculiar economic paradox. It sits beside one of East Africa's most important gateways to the global economy, yet much of the value generated by that gateway has historically flowed elsewhere.

Containers arrive at the Port of Mombasa carrying machinery, consumer goods, raw materials and industrial inputs. Others leave carrying tea, coffee, horticultural products and manufactured goods. Around the port sits an economy of transporters, clearing agents, warehouses, hotels and traders.

But the industrial ecosystem that turns a port into a centre of manufacturing, processing, distribution and regional commerce has remained comparatively underdeveloped. That is what makes the proposed Special Economic Zone in Jomvu potentially more important than its headline numbers suggest.

The project announced this week by Suleiman Shahbal's Gulf Group of Companies, in partnership with DP World, is being presented as a Sh12 billion investment on 535 acres, with a projection of 7,972 direct jobs and participation by 67 companies.

The formal signing is scheduled for September 8 at State House. Those figures should still be treated as announced projections rather than delivered economic outcomes, particularly since DP World's public disclosure has so far been less expansive on the investment value, and the agreement remains subject to formal conditions.

There is a more interesting question than whether those numbers are eventually reached. What if the real significance of the project is that it could begin to change the economic function of the Coast?

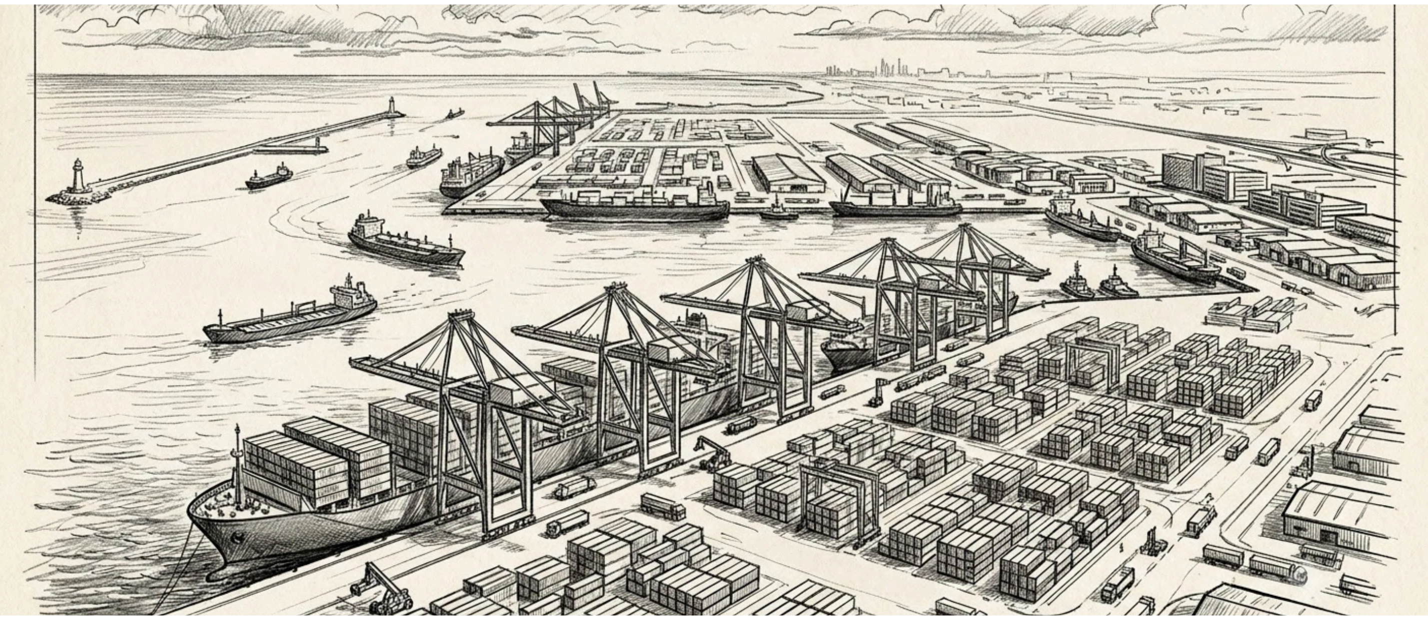
Model Bigger Than A Port

A useful way to assess the proposal is to look at what DP World has built elsewhere. Its flagship example is Jebel Ali Free Zone, or Jafza, in Dubai. The free zone was established in 1985, a year after Jebel Ali Port opened, and the two have evolved as an integrated commercial ecosystem.

Four decades later, Jafza has more than 11,000 companies and has generated $190 billion in trade in the 12 months to May 2025. DP World describes the model as an ecosystem of a major port, logistics infrastructure and business-friendly policies.

The lesson for Mombasa is not that Jomvu will become Dubai. The lesson is that the economic value of a port can change dramatically when businesses are given reasons to locate around it. A container arriving in Mombasa has limited economic significance for the Coast if it is merely trucked onward to an inland destination.

The economic value grows if that container enters a factory in Jomvu, where imported components are assembled; a cold-storage facility, where agricultural products are processed; a distribution centre, where goods are repackaged for the East African market



From Gateway To Production Centre

The second useful benchmark is DP World's Caucedo operation in the Dominican Republic. New research by Oxford Economics published in April 2026, found that Caucedo Port supports about $269 million in GDP and nearly 5,000 jobs, while also creating the infrastructure and connectivity for a much larger future export opportunity.

Ports create the first layer of value through cargo handling, while logistics creates another through warehousing, freight forwarding, transport and distribution. Manufacturing and processing through value addition, and services create others.

This is why the proposed Jomvu project should not ultimately be judged by the number of factories inside its boundary. Its success should be measured by the number of businesses outside the boundary that become viable because the ecosystem exists.

That could mean a Kenyan manufacturer sourcing more cheaply through Mombasa or a Tanzanian or Ugandan distributor locating its regional inventory on the Coast.

It could mean seafood processing, pharmaceuticals, food processing, light assembly, automotive components or cold-chain businesses discovering that Mombasa is a better place to manufacture for regional markets than importing. The opportunity is therefore not merely to create jobs in an SEZ but an industrial geography.

The African Test Is More Revealing

DP World's development of Ndayane in Senegal provides an even more relevant comparison because it is an African project rather than a Gulf success story built over 40 years.

The company is developing a deep-water port at Ndayane alongside plans for an economic and industrial zone near the port and Dakar's international airport. DP World explicitly describes the concept as an integrated multimodal transport, logistics and industrial hub.

That is essentially the strategic question Mombasa now faces. Can the Coast connect port infrastructure, industrial land, logistics, road and rail networks, energy, customs and investment facilitation into one proposition attractive enough to pull in businesses serving the wider region?

Senegal is not yet a finished success story; Ndayane is still being built, with DP World reporting in July 2026 that major dredging had been completed 13 months ahead of schedule and that construction was accelerating towards a planned 2028 completion.

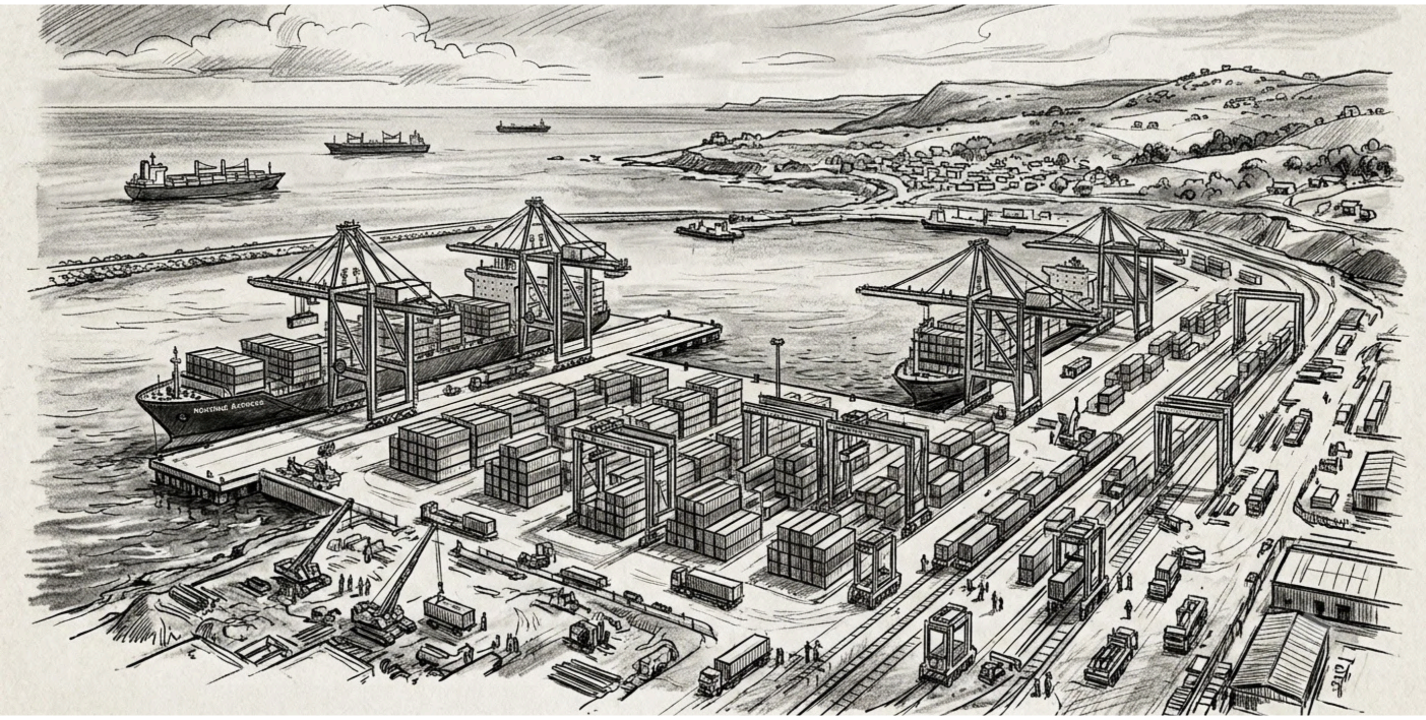
That makes it useful as a benchmark precisely because it demonstrates both the ambition and the difficulty of the model.

Mombasa's Opportunity Is Regional

A successful port-linked SEZ could strengthen the economic relationship between Mombasa, Kwale and Kilifi while connecting the coastal industry efficiently to Nairobi and the wider East African hinterland.

The logic is straightforward since a business does not choose a manufacturing location simply because there is cheap land. It chooses a location where the total cost of getting inputs in and finished products out makes commercial sense.

That means reliable electricity, water, roads, rail, digital connectivity, customs efficiency, warehousing, skilled labour, access to finance, predictable regulation, and, crucially, proximity to a port.



Mombasa already possesses the last advantage, and the SEZ's job is to make the others credible. If that happens, the Coast could begin capturing economic activity currently associated with inland centres. That is how an SEZ stops being an estate of factories and becomes an economic ecosystem.

Kenya Has To Solve Its Own History

Kenya has spent years announcing SEZs faster than it has made them operational, and the Dongo Kundu experience is the obvious warning. The project has long been presented as one of the Coast's major industrial bets, yet financing, infrastructure and investor readiness have repeatedly delayed its development.

The problem is not that the concept lacks merit, but that industrial investors cannot operate on concepts. They need serviced land, power, water, sewerage, access roads, secure tenure and clarity over who is responsible for what.

DP World's global experience may reduce some of the commercial and logistical uncertainty, but it cannot by itself fix every Kenyan constraint. The operator can connect the project to global trade networks. It cannot single-handedly guarantee electricity reliability, resolve land issues, build every access road or eliminate bureaucratic delays.

The Coast, therefore, needs to think of the project not as a private investment sitting on 535 acres, but as an economic platform whose success depends partly on what happens outside those 535 acres. That is the central lesson from Jafza, Caucedo and the emerging Ndayane model: the port is the anchor. It is not the economy.

The Number That Ultimately Matters

This is why the 7,972-job projection, while politically attractive, is actually too narrow a measure of success.

The bigger question is how many jobs the project makes possible indirectly, how much new manufacturing it attracts, how much cargo is processed rather than merely transhipped, how much Kenyan production becomes exportable, how many regional companies establish operations on the Coast and how much local enterprise enters the supply chains created around the zone.

That is the multiplier Mombasa should be pursuing. The scepticism around the project is therefore warranted, but it should not obscure the opportunity. There is a danger in treating every Kenyan mega-project as either a miracle or a scam before it has been built.

The more useful position is to ask what the underlying economic proposition is, whether the partners have the capacity to execute it, and whether the government will deliver the infrastructure and policy environment required to make the private investment productive.

DP World's global record suggests that the port-plus-economic-zone model can be extraordinarily powerful when the pieces work together.

Jafza shows the scale that can eventually emerge, Caucedo demonstrates how port and logistics operations can translate into wider economic value, and Ndayane shows that DP World is still betting on the model in Africa.

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KENYA'S SEZ PROMISES VS. DELIVERY

A decade of groundbreakings, funding gaps and revised job numbers, mapped against the newest announcement: Shahbal and DP World's Sh12bn Jomvu deal.

THE SYSTEM AT A GLANCE

36
Gazetted Special Economic Zones across 14 counties

$960.7M
Realised SEZ investment nationally by early 2024

4,392 vs 26,000
Jobs actually delivered vs. originally projected (-17%)

2015
SEZ ACT ENACTED
Legal framework for Special Economic Zones passed, promising tax incentives and integrated infrastructure to industrialise Kenya.

2019
DONGO KUNDU BREAKS GROUND
Uhuru Kenyatta presides over groundbreaking at Mombasa's flagship SEZ. Land, roads and utilities still to be built.

2021
NAIVASHA SEZ STALLS
Work described as brought to a "near standstill" for two years for lack of funding, one of several zones to stumble on financing.

EARLY 2024
NATIONAL GAP BECOMES VISIBLE
Government's own strategy document shows 36 zones have delivered $960.7M of investment and 4,392 jobs against a 26,000-job target.

FEB 2025
DONGO KUNDU FINANCING SIGNED
Six years after groundbreaking, an Afreximbank deal worth roughly Sh30bn is signed to unlock construction.

AUG 2026
INFRASTRUCTURE STILL INCOMPLETE
Standard site visit finds access roads, power, water and sewerage still under procurement at Dongo Kundu; investors adopt a "wait-and-see" posture.

AUG 2026
JOMVU: SH12BN DEAL ANNOUNCED
Shahbal's Gulf Group and DP World announce a Sh12bn SEZ on 535 acres, projecting 7,972 jobs. Signing set for Sept 8 at State House.

WHAT TO WATCH BEFORE SEPTEMBER 8

Does DP World itself confirm the Sh12bn figure, or does it remain a promoter-side number?	Who funds the access roads, power and water Jomvu will need, the bottleneck that stalled Dongo Kundu?
What is the land tenure position, given the site is leased from Mombasa County, not owned outright?	If history holds, what share of the 7,972 projected jobs will actually materialise on the ground?

Source: Sources: National Investment Strategy 2024–2028; Kenya Ports Authority Disclosures|

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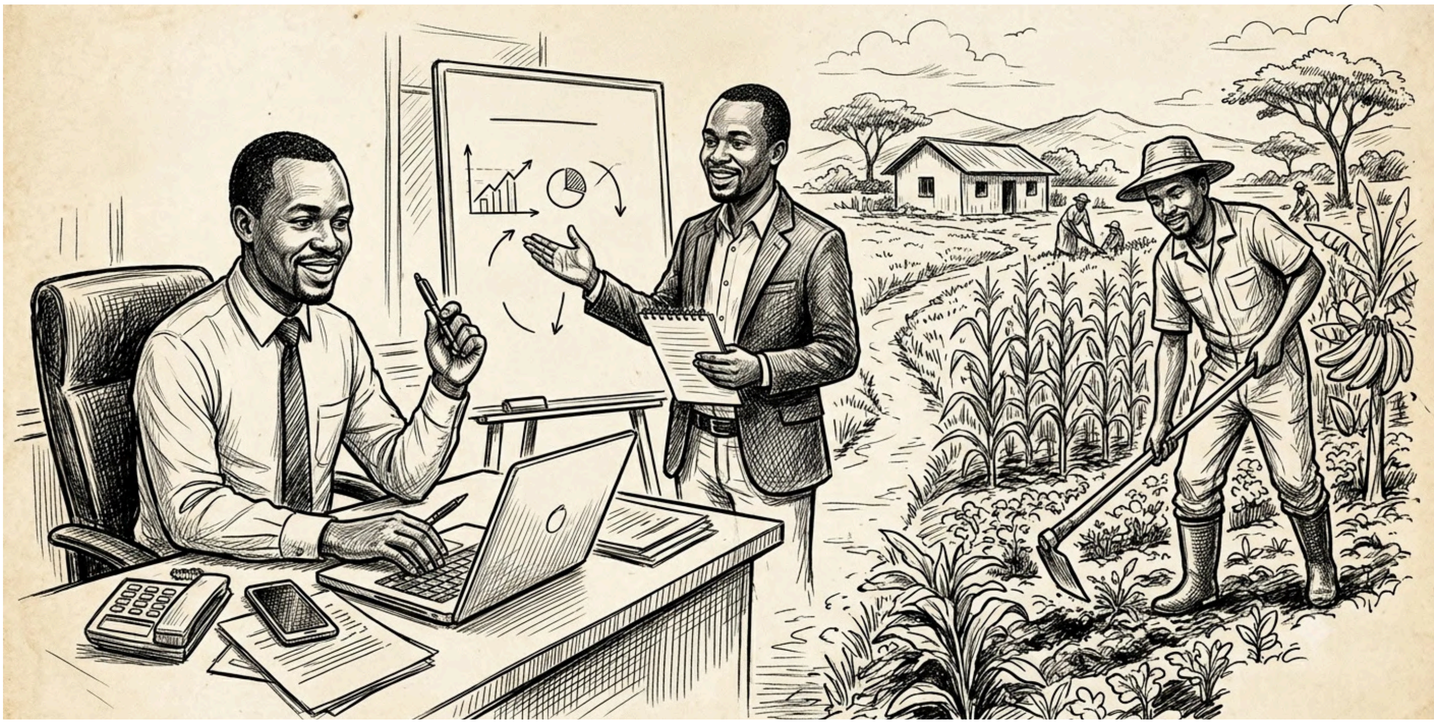
Side Hustles in Kenya: Why multiple income streams are the new normal



There was a time when having a job was, in itself, synonymous with having an income that could sustain a household, where one would go to work, receive a monthly salary, meet basic obligations, save what was possible, and gradually improve one's circumstances as earnings rose over time.

Any additional source of income was typically viewed as either a temporary response to unemployment, an entrepreneurial experiment, or simply a way of supplementing an otherwise complete financial arrangement. That distinction, however, is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

Across Kenya, the idea that one income can adequately support an entire household is under growing strain, not because salaries have disappeared, but because their purchasing power and their ability to absorb the full complexity of modern living have weakened.

This has resulted from the combined pressure of rising housing costs, transport expenses, school fees, medical bills, taxation and statutory deductions, as well as expanding social and family obligations that extend well beyond the nuclear household.

In response, one of the quietly unfolding shifts in Kenya's labour economy has taken shape, as individuals increasingly construct portfolios of income rather than relying on a single paycheck.

The employee has become a consultant, the teacher also engages in farming, the banker operates an online shop, the civil servant is investing in rental property, the journalist takes on freelance assignments, the designer monetises social media platforms, the professional rents out assets such as vehicles, and the graduate is working remotely for international clients while building a local business.

End Of One Paycheck Household

The importance of this shift lies in how it is reshaping the relationship between employment and financial security.

While formal employment remains highly desirable in Kenya due to its provision of stable income, social recognition, and, in some cases, access to credit and benefits, it is increasingly being treated as a foundation rather than a complete financial solution.

This shift is driven by a simple but powerful logic: when household expenses rise faster than income, and when wages remain relatively stable while the cost of living fluctuates unpredictably, additional income streams become less of an option and more of a form of financial insurance.

As a result, the central question around work is gradually changing from what one earns in a single job to how many different ways one can earn, a transformation that also complicates how employment statistics are interpreted.

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It is now possible for an individual to be employed while still experiencing financial insecurity and relying on multiple supplementary income streams to meet basic obligations, separating the idea of having a job from the reality of being financially secure.

Side Hustle Becomes Infrastructure

The Kenyan side hustle has long functioned as more than a simple economic activity, operating instead as a deeply embedded social and economic institution.

Family members pool resources to acquire land, friends invest in small businesses, professionals refer one another for freelance work, WhatsApp groups evolve into marketplaces, and social media platforms double as commercial spaces where personal networks effectively become distribution channels.

This system has been strengthened by technology, which has lowered the barriers to entry by eliminating the need for physical storefronts and allowing a mobile phone to function simultaneously as a marketing platform, payment system, customer service channel and logistics coordinator.

This enables professionals to reach clients they have never met, farmers to access markets beyond their locality, photographers and designers to build audiences without physical premises, and individuals with spare assets such as rooms, vehicles or land to convert them into income-generating resources.

However, while technology has expanded the range of possible income-generating activities, it has not created the underlying demand for multiple incomes, which is instead rooted in economic pressure, with technology simply making it easier to respond to that pressure in more diverse and flexible ways.

The Professional With A Side Business

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of this change is not found among those actively seeking jobs, but among those who are already formally employed.

They are finding it necessary to build additional income streams, as Kenya's professional class increasingly adopts entrepreneurial behaviour not out of ambition but necessity.

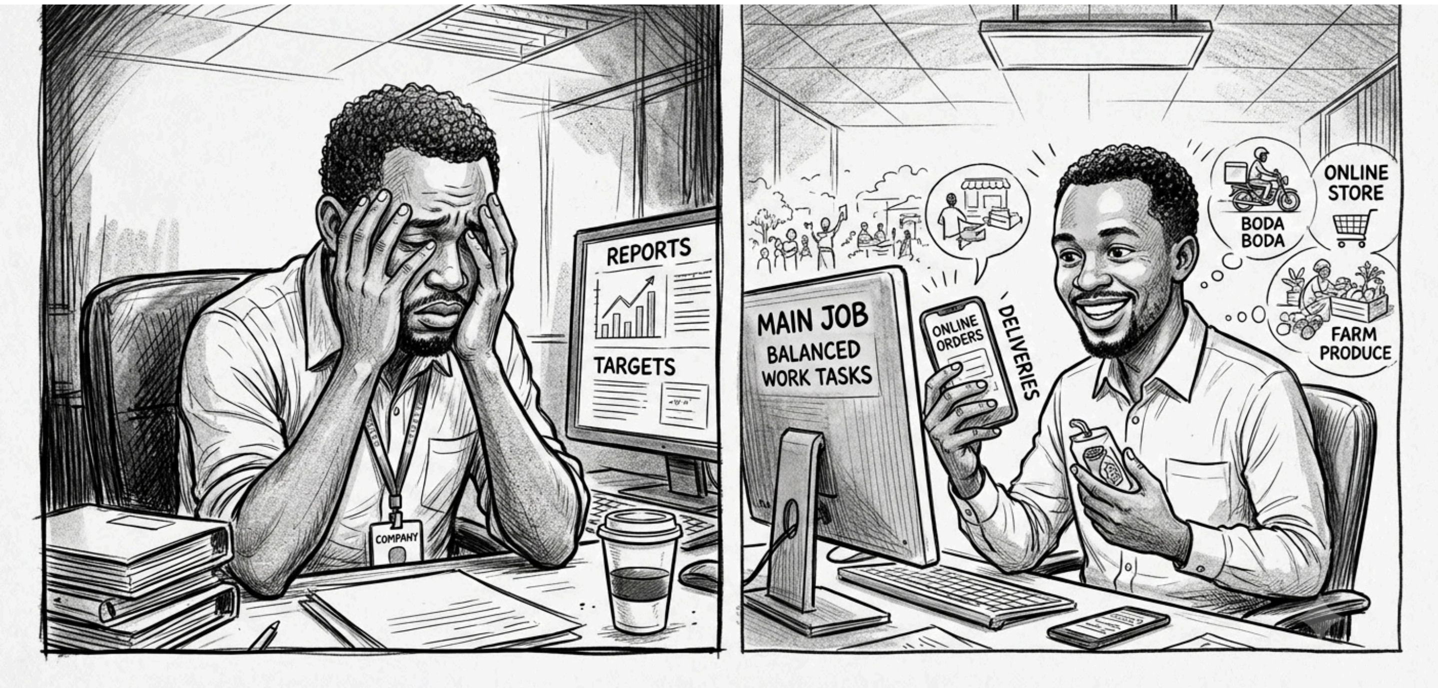
In this context, a salary provides stability but rarely sufficiency, since a second income may be required to cover school fees, a third may be directed toward mortgage commitments, small investments may serve as buffers against job loss, and consultancy work may be used to manage emergencies or fund discretionary spending.

This reality is gradually eroding the traditional distinction between an employee and an entrepreneur, as many individuals now occupy both roles, working full-time for an employer during the day while managing businesses at night.

While inflation plays a role in this shift, the deeper structural issue lies in the increasing complexity of household expenditure.

Housing costs remain high, transport consumes both time and money, healthcare expenses can arise unpredictably, and education continues to absorb a significant share of income

At the same time, digital connectivity has become essential for both work and commerce, taxation reduces disposable earnings, and extended family obligations persist in a way that distributes financial responsibility across multiple households.



In such a context, a salary that appears adequate on paper can feel insufficient in practice, not necessarily because individuals are earning less, but because they are carrying more financial responsibility than before.

Although the rise of side hustles is often celebrated as evidence of Kenyan ingenuity and resilience, it also carries a less visible burden in the form of increased labour intensity. Individuals who work full-time jobs and then spend additional hours managing their side hustle are not always experiencing entrepreneurial freedom so much as extended working hours driven by financial necessity.

In this sense, multiple income streams can indeed create resilience, but they can also translate into multiple jobs. The distinction between the two becomes critical when households are effectively required to maintain several income sources simply to achieve what a single stable salary might once have provided.

The risk, therefore, is that the normalisation of side hustles may obscure deeper structural issues in the labour market, particularly if the existence of multiple income streams is interpreted as success rather than as a response to insufficient primary earnings.

Informal Economy Gets More Sophisticated

This evolution also blurs the long-standing boundary between formal and informal economic activity, as individuals increasingly combine salaried employment with informal business operations and manage multiple income sources such as rent, farming and wages within a single household without categorising them as separate enterprises.

As a result, the economy becomes significantly more difficult to measure using traditional indicators, since official employment data may capture whether individuals have jobs but fails to reflect how households actually generate income.

The outcome is a labour market in which individuals simultaneously occupy multiple economic roles, functioning as employees, entrepreneurs, investors, landlords, farmers, freelancers and consumers, sometimes all within the same household structure.

Alongside these structural changes, a cultural shift is also emerging in which traditional markers of success, such as job titles, company cars, large homes or formal offices, are gradually being supplemented or replaced by a different form of status, namely financial optionality.

This refers to the ability to make life and work decisions without being entirely dependent on a single source of income. It includes the ability to decline unfavourable employment opportunities, withstand periods without a salary, meet unexpected expenses without borrowing and generate income without physical presence in a workplace.

It is this pursuit of reduced vulnerability, rather than simply increased wealth, that helps explain why investment, entrepreneurship and multiple income streams have become central to middle-class aspiration in Kenya.

The language used to describe this phenomenon may itself need to evolve, since the term “side hustle” understates the importance of what is happening by implying that these activities are secondary or temporary, when in reality they are an integral to how households function economically.

Three Golds: What Glasgow says about Kenya's shrinking sporting base

Kenya left Glasgow with 12 medals from the 2026 Commonwealth Games - three gold, four silver, five bronze - finishing 13th on the final table.

It is, on the numbers alone, the country's weakest Commonwealth showing in more than a decade, ahead of only the 17-medal return from Gold Coast in 2018.

Against Kenya's own recent history, 21 medals in Birmingham in 2022, 25 in Glasgow, the last time the city hosted in 2014, and a peak of 33 in Delhi in 2010, the instinct is to call this a decline.

That instinct needs a caveat before it becomes a thesis.

Glasgow 2026 was the smallest Commonwealth programme in a generation: ten sports, against eighteen in 2014 and twenty in 2022, after Victoria pulled out as host over budget overruns and Glasgow stepped in as a late replacement with a slimmed-down schedule.

Fewer sports on the programme means fewer chances to medal for every nation. A raw year-on-year medal count, on its own, is not a clean measure of Kenyan sporting decline.

Narrower Base Than Numbers Suggest

What the count does expose, cleanly, is composition.

All three of Kenya's golds in Glasgow came from distance running.

Edmund Serem led an all-Kenyan podium sweep in the men's 3,000m steeplechase, Faith Cherotich broke the Games record to win the women's steeplechase, and Mathew Kipchumba Kipsang took the men's 5,000m.

The two further athletics medals: Simon Kiprop Koech's steeplechase silver and Diana Wanza's 10,000m silver, extended the same story.

The only medal Kenya won outside athletics was a bronze from weightlifter Joshua Amunga in the men's 60kg category.

This is not a new pattern; Glasgow sharpened it. At the last Glasgow Games in 2014, twenty-three of Kenya's twenty-five medals, including all ten golds, were won in athletics.

In Birmingham in 2022, every medal but one, a para-powerlifting bronze, was again athletics.

Kenya's Commonwealth history dates back to 1954 and boasts a total of 258 medals, with athletics and boxing being the primary contributors.

Notably, thirty-four of those medals came from a single event, the 3,000m steeplechase, in which Kenyan athletes went unbeaten in the medal count between 1994 and 2022.

What has thinned out, cycle on cycle, is everything around that core: boxing, rugby sevens, swimming, wrestling, disciplines that used to contribute to the tally alongside track and field, and now rarely do.

What Broader Competitors Look Like

The contrast with a genuine multi-sport programme is instructive. South Africa's 2014 Glasgow campaign, the last time this city hosted, returned 40 medals across a much wider spread of disciplines, good for seventh overall, nearly double Kenya's tally from the same Games.

Kenya has never approached that kind of breadth; its Commonwealth identity has always leaned on the highland running belt. But a one-sport medal architecture is a fragile one.

It leaves the country's entire Commonwealth standing exposed to the form, health and succession of a small pool of distance athletes, and to whatever events happen to survive the next round of programme cuts.

Government incentives for this year's Games were, notably, athletics-shaped in their scale even if not in their design. The Sports Principal Secretary, Elijah Mwangi, announced increased medal bonuses ahead of Glasgow, gold medallists earning Ksh 2.5 million, up from Ksh 500,000 in 2022, with silver and bronze payouts also roughly quintupling.

Team Kenya's delegation itself was smaller this cycle; 93 athletes in Glasgow, down from 123 competing across 17 sports in Birmingham in 2022, a contraction that tracks the smaller programme but may also reflect fewer disciplines in which Kenya fielded competitive squads at all.

The Question For The Next Cycle

None of this diminishes what Serem, Cherotich, Kipsang, Koech, Wanza and Amunga did in Glasgow. Three golds and a Games record are a serious return by any standard, and the steeplechase sweep in particular extended a Kenyan stranglehold on that event that is now three decades unbroken.

But a national sporting programme that produces gold in one race after another while returning almost nothing from ten other sports on the card is not simply having a strong distance-running year. It is a signal about where investment, coaching and competitive pathways in Kenyan sport actually sit, and where they don't.

As Kenya looks toward the next Commonwealth cycle and the Los Angeles Olympics beyond it, the open question is not whether the country can keep producing world-class distance runners, but whether it is willing to build anything resembling a second and third pillar underneath them before the next slimmed-down Games makes the dependency even harder to miss.

KENYA AT COMMONWEALTH GAMES: LAST FIVE CYCLES

Year	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total	Rank
2010	12	11	10	33	6th
2014	10	10	5	25	9th
2018	4	7	6	17	14th
2022	6	5	10	21	13th
2026	3	4	5	12	13th

Part of the cache of more than 2,000 guns seized by the Special Operations Group (SOG) from bandits and terrorists.

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