The Chronicle

WEEKLY

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Kenya's infrastructure pipeline: big promises, uneven progress

60 PPP PROJECTS. 27 REMAIN IN EARLY-STAGE PREPARATION. WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO TURN KENYA'S AMBITIOUS INFRASTRUCTURE PIPELINE INTO COMPLETED PROJECTS AND RELIABLE PUBLIC SERVICES?



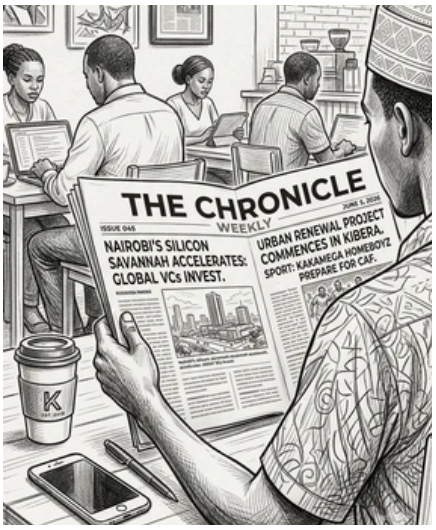
Pending bills: How government debt is strangling local businesses

CABINET APPROVED SH23.74 BILLION FOR VERIFIED CLAIMS, BUT APPROVAL ISN'T PAYMENT. HOW DO DELAYED PAYMENTS AFFECT SUPPLIERS, JOBS, AND SMALL BUSINESSES?

Cost when the government cannot deliver essential services

UNIVERSITY STAFF STRIKES AND A PROLONGED HEALTH OFFICERS' STRIKE REVEAL THE COSTS OF UNRESOLVED EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS, FUNDING DISPUTES, AND DELAYED COMMITMENTS.

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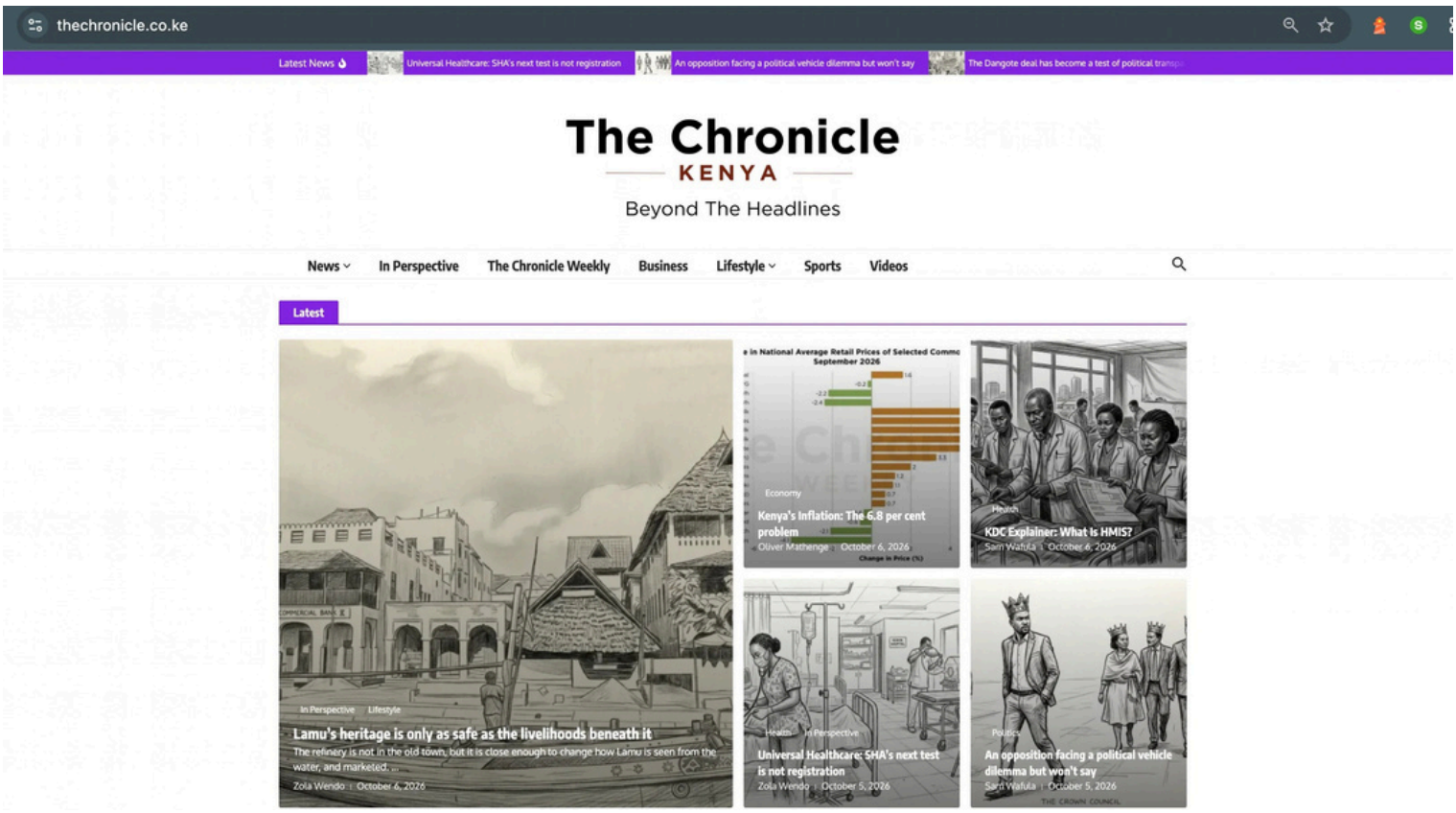
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The Chronicle

WEEKLY



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While *The Chronicle Kenya* 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 week's most important stories into a single, authoritative edition. It brings together *The Chronicle Kenya'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 Chronicle Kenya*. 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



In public life, announcements arrive quickly, and services arrive slowly. This week's issue is about the distance between the two.

Kenya's latest PPP status report lists 60 projects. Only 10 are operating, in maintenance, or under construction. Twenty-seven remain in early preparation. Behind those numbers are water plants not yet built, a Nairobi mortuary and mobility hub still at concept stage, and a streetlight programme waiting for approval of its feasibility study. None of this means the pipeline is failing. It means a pipeline is not a scorecard, and we should say so plainly.

The same pattern runs through the rest of the issue. Cabinet has approved Sh23.74 billion to settle verified pending bills. That is welcome, but it is about 15 per cent of the Sh155.34 billion recommended for settlement, and approval is not payment. University and public health workers have withdrawn their labour while students and communities wait. Manufacturing, mitumba and cycling each ask the same question in a different setting: what will it take to turn ambition into something people can use, afford and rely on?

We have tried to treat these stories the way we believe the public should treat any promise. We acknowledge progress where it is documented, and we are careful about what has not yet been shown. We are not arguing against private investment, ambitious plans or generous settlements. We are asking what each one delivers, at what cost, and for whom.

Thank you for reading, and for writing to us. If you have a view on this issue, our editorial team would like to hear it.

Your Chronicle. Your Call.

The Chronicle Weekly asks whether promises deliver in Parliament, county halls, budgets, factories, and stadiums. We report from the desk, but the evidence is often in your clinic queue, fuel receipt, county ward, SACCO statement or fields.

Send us your views. Do you think we got something wrong or missed the point? Tell us. Keep letters under 250 words and make a testable claim; we prefer evidence-based arguments over expressions of mood.

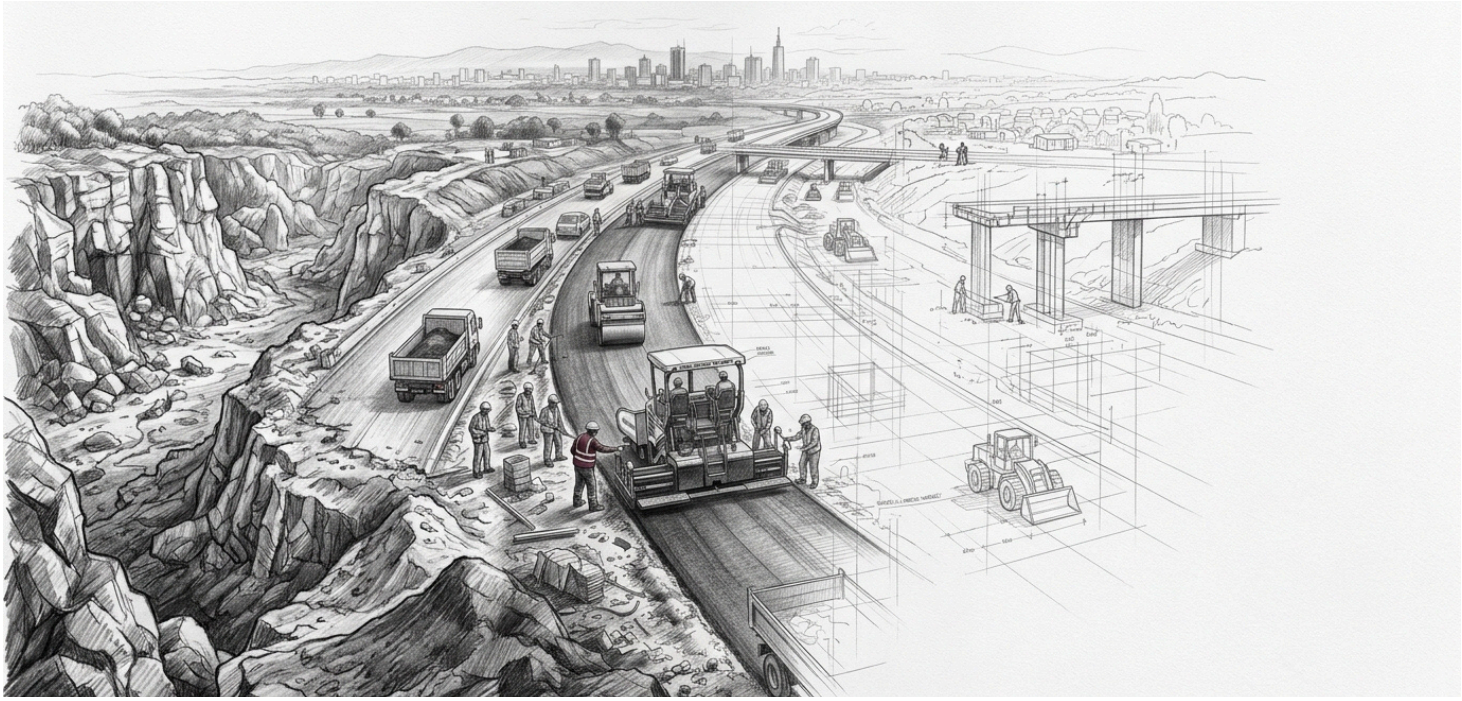
Make tips useful: tell us what happened, where and when, and point to supporting documents, data or witnesses. We verify before publishing, so evidence-backed tips beat rumours.

Email editor@thechronicle.co.ke with "Reader View" or "Story Idea" in the subject, or reply to a Chronicle Weekly social post or WhatsApp broadcast. Include your name and county; tell us if you want to remain anonymous in print.

We read every message, though we can't reply to all. The best ideas shape next Monday's issue.

The Chronicle WEEKLY

Kenya's infrastructure pipeline: big promises, uneven progress



Kenya is pursuing major projects in highways, water, electricity, irrigation, and urban facilities to boost economic activity, improve public services, and expand productive capacity.

Yet the Public Private Partnerships (PPP) Directorate's latest status report raises a key question: how much ambition is nearing delivery, and how much remains on the road from proposal to implementation? The report covering the period to September 30, 2026, lists 60 projects at different stages of the PPP cycle.

The pipeline includes projects operating or under construction, commercially closed agreements, projects in negotiation or procurement, and early-stage proposals.

That's a substantial investment pipeline, but planned projects aren't delivered infrastructure, and their number alone doesn't show the economic value citizens will receive.

The key question is what happens between promise and delivery: which projects secure financing, pass technical and commercial scrutiny, stay on budget, and deliver benefits worth their financial obligations.

From Announcement To Delivery

Of 60 projects, 27 remain in early preparation, 12 are in feasibility or development, six are in pre-tender or tender, three are in negotiations, and two have reached commercial close.

The report groups another 10 projects under operation and maintenance or construction. These categories reflect maturity: early-stage projects may need feasibility work and a transaction adviser; tender-stage projects are further along, but procurement isn't construction.

Commercial close means the parties have signed the project agreement, but financial close may await fulfilled conditions. Assess construction progress against completed work, the schedule, and the eventual service.

The road sector shows the contrast: major proposals alongside projects under construction.

The Sh183 billion Nairobi–Nakuru–Mau Summit Highway and Maai Mahiu–Naivasha section are under construction. The 139-kilometre project upgrades the Rironi–Gilgil and Rironi–Maai Mahiu–Naivasha routes. By the end of September, early works were 34.96 per cent complete on Section 1 and 10.38 per cent on Section 2.

By contrast, the Nairobi–Mombasa Expressway remains in early-stage preparation. The proposed 461-kilometre project would expand the existing road from two lanes to at least four and convert it into an access-controlled tolled road.

Its estimated project value is listed as undetermined, and the procurement of a transaction adviser was still underway, with bids under evaluation at the reporting date.



Both projects serve key transport corridors but are at different stages of delivery — which matters to businesses planning logistics, communities expecting better connectivity, and policymakers gauging how quickly investment can drive economic gains.

Costs matter too. The Sh183 billion highway estimate doesn't prove that amount was spent, just as no final Nairobi–Mombasa Expressway cost doesn't mean it will be cheap. The public needs details on financing, risk allocation, repayments and tolls to assess the project.

The Projects That Touch Everyday Life

The PPP pipeline affects households and businesses beyond roads and transport corridors. Delays in water supply and food production can raise living costs, alter investment decisions and limit local economic opportunities. Two proposed water projects illustrate the scale of the ambition.

The Lamu desalination plant is estimated to cost Sh106.1 billion, with an initial capacity of 120,000 cubic metres daily. The Sabaki Water Carrier is estimated at Sh27.9 billion, with a planned capacity of 80,000 cubic metres daily. Both were listed as under negotiation in the September report.

These investments could provide water for households, businesses and future development. Their scale makes affordability and financing unavoidable concerns.

What will consumers pay, and how will construction and operating costs be recovered? Which public entities or consumers will bear the burden? What safeguards will ensure affordability and maintain the infrastructure? The report estimates project costs and capacity but sets no final tariffs or confirms financial close.

These are central — not peripheral — considerations in deciding whether new water infrastructure will be financially sustainable and accessible to intended users.

The same test applies to proposed agricultural projects. The Tana Delta Irrigation Project would lease 10,000 hectares of undeveloped land to private investors for irrigated rice.

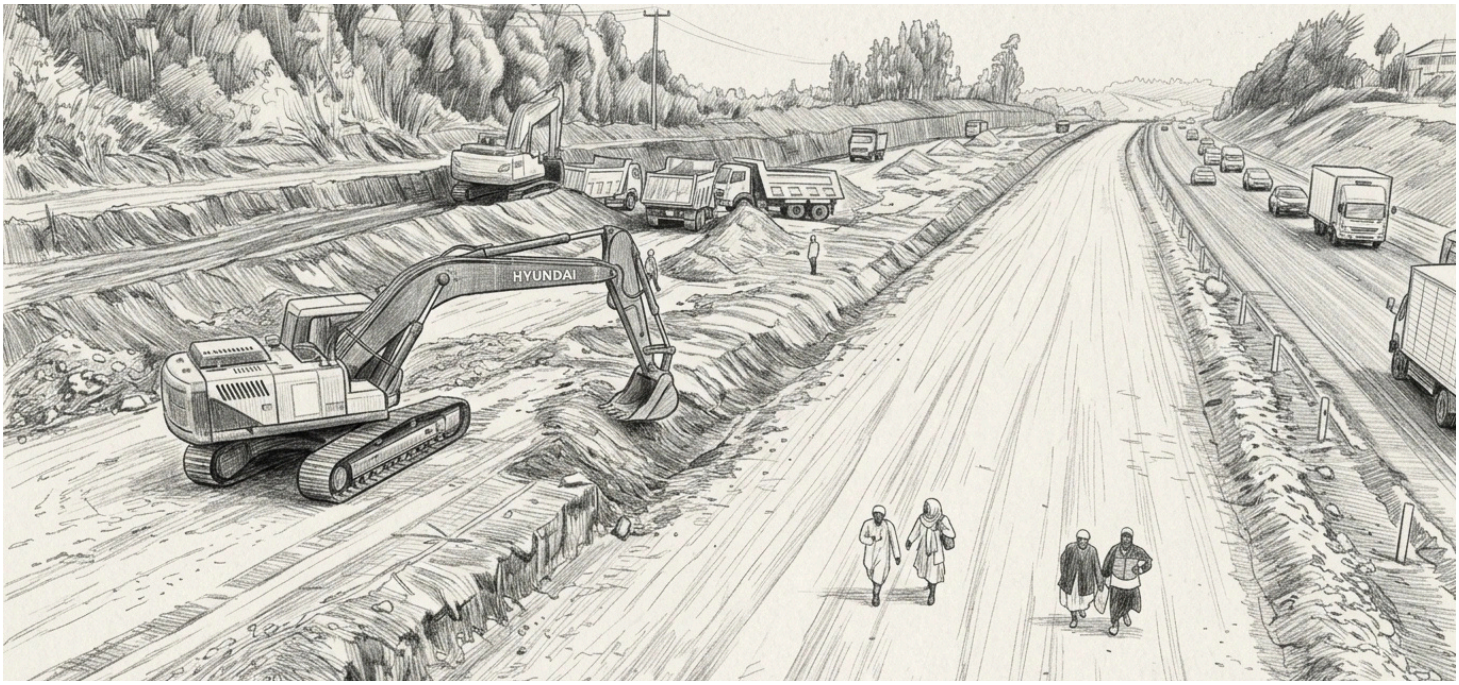
The Tana Integrated Sugar Project, part of the 31,000-hectare Tana Delta scheme, would allocate 6,000 hectares to sugarcane, with biofuel, power and livestock-feed facilities. Both remained in early preparation after their concept notes were approved in June 2025.

The proposals reflect a wider ambition to use infrastructure to boost domestic production, develop agro-industrial value chains and create jobs. But their contribution to food security will depend not just on planned acreage, but also on water availability, environmental safeguards, land and community issues, market access, financing and commercial viability.

Newer pipeline initiatives also need scrutiny. In Q1 2026/27, the government approved seven projects, including a National Food Crops initiative under the Warehouse Receipts System and a Makueni County Fruit Processing Plant. Approval advances projects through the cycle but does not mean new storage or processing capacity is operational.

The Funding Test Behind The Public Promise

The PPP model brings private capital, expertise, and operational capacity to public infrastructure. But private participation neither eliminates project risk nor erases costs; it changes investment structures, responsibilities, and returns.



Public assessments of projects must look beyond headline value. Citizens and legislators need to understand funding, the risks the state retains, the consequences of lower-than-expected demand, and whether the proposal offers better value than viable alternatives.

The proposed Thuci Dam Infrastructure and Associated Facilities illustrates why scrutiny matters. In August 2026, the privately initiated proposal was terminated during development after its proponent failed PPP due-diligence requirements. The contracting authority was directed to consider another procurement route.

This termination does not prove the wider PPP programme is failing. It shows that infrastructure promises alone are not grounds to proceed: responsible development requires due diligence and a willingness to stop or reconsider proposals.

The public must also be able to assess the reasons for major decisions. For projects advancing toward agreements and financing, this requires access to feasibility findings, risk assessments, payment commitments, and the terms investors expect to recover their investment.

Assess proposed tolls, tariffs, and other user charges for affordability, and disclose public funding and guarantees in clear terms, including the state's potential exposure.

The September report provides a useful status snapshot, but it does not answer all these questions. Answering them requires examining individual project agreements, feasibility studies, financial and risk assessments, procurement documents, and subsequent progress reports.

A Pipeline Is A Starting Point, Not A Development Scorecard

Kenya's PPP portfolio should not be judged only by project counts, estimated investment or strategic language. These show ambition, not whether needed infrastructure is delivered affordably.

A useful public scorecard would track projects through approval, procurement, contract signing, financial close, construction, completion and performance. It should report schedule delays, explain significant cost changes, identify who bears financial risks and assess whether infrastructure provides its promised service.

For operating projects, ask what service is available, to how many people, at what cost and with what reliability. For construction, verify progress and explain delays. Early proposals need credible evidence of need, affordability and feasibility before projected benefits are treated as likely.

The government's September 2026 report lists infrastructure proposals at varied stages. Some are advancing through construction and procurement; others face technical, commercial or financing hurdles. Explanations and evaluations should make those differences clear.

Kenya has development ambition. The challenge is turning it into completed roads, accessible water, productive power and agricultural infrastructure that helps businesses and farmers build dependable markets.

The pipeline's real measure is not its project count, but how many reach reliable public service — and whether their benefits justify their cost.

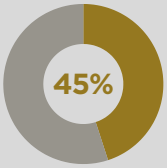
HOW MUCH IS MOVING?

KENYA'S PPP PIPELINE

The September 30, 2026 Private-Public Partnership status report outlines an ambitious pipeline spanning energy, agriculture, roads, water, power and urban infrastructure.

60 **Projects in the pipeline**

Across different stages of development.

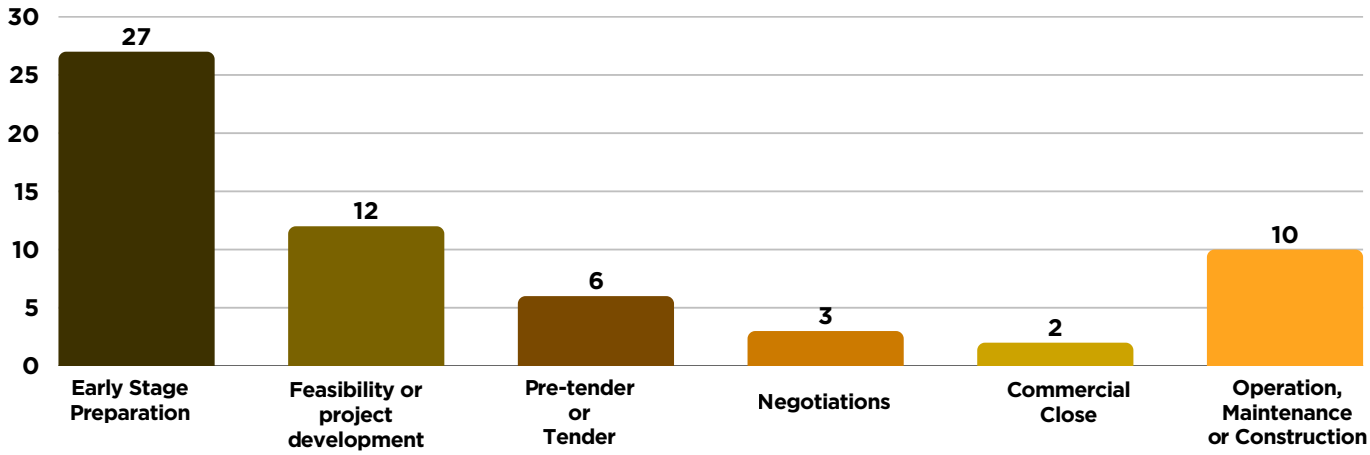


27 **Early-stage projects**

45% of the entire pipeline.

WHERE THE 60 PROJECTS STAND

Number of projects in each reported stage



THE TAKEAWAY

45% of Kenya's PPP pipeline remains at the earliest stage.

More than two in five projects are still in early-stage preparation.

Another 12 are in feasibility or project development.

This is a pipeline of potential investment, not a measure of completed infrastructure or money already invested.

From Pipeline to Progress:

What Kenya's PPP Strategy Must Deliver

Kenya's Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programme can mobilise private capital, bring technical expertise and accelerate infrastructure delivery.

The September 2026 PPP status report outlines an ambitious pipeline spanning energy, agriculture, roads, water, power and urban infrastructure.

Its success will depend not on pipeline size, but on projects reaching financial close, entering construction and delivering tangible benefits to citizens.

A pipeline, not a scorecard

Of the listed projects, 27 are in early preparation, 12 at feasibility or development, six at pre-tender or tender, three in negotiations, two at commercial close, and 10 in operation, maintenance, or construction.

So, 45% of the pipeline remains at the earliest stage. This signals strong investment appetite but highlights the need for discipline, transparency, and rigorous project appraisal.

The financing and risk questions

PPP projects are not just about the headline value. Citizens and legislators need clear answers on:

- How each project will be financed,
- What risks remain with the state,
- Whether the arrangement offers value for money compared to alternative models,
- How tolls, tariffs, or other user charges will affect affordability, and
- What guarantees or contingent liabilities may be created for the public.

The report provides a useful status snapshot, but it does not answer all these questions.



A stronger public scorecard

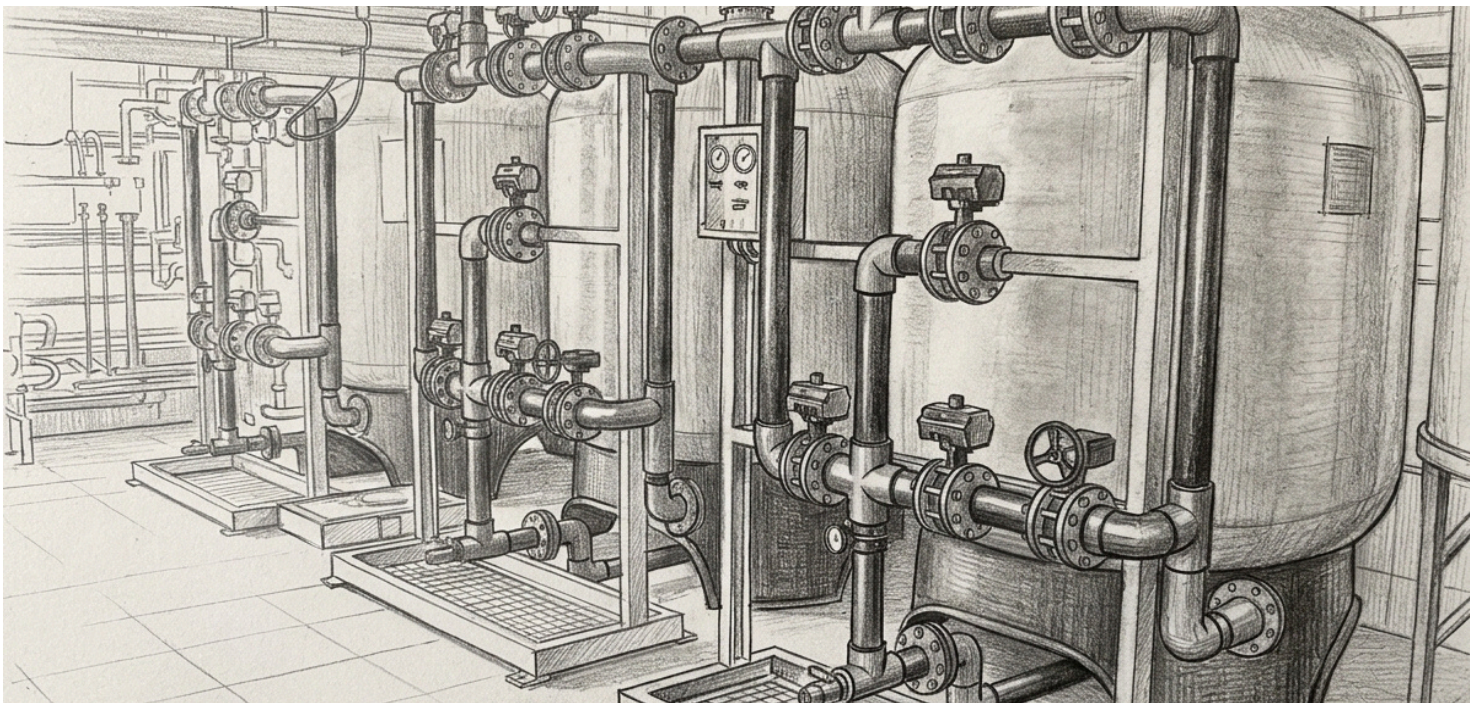
Kenya needs a consistent way to track PPP projects from approval through operation, covering milestones, progress, costs, risks and service outcomes.

Reports should show beneficiaries, costs, and reliability. In-progress projects need progress updates and explanations for delays; proposals need credible evidence of need, affordability, and feasibility.

Kenya's ambition is strong. The next step is delivering reliable public services and an economy that works for all Kenyans.

Source: Kenya PPP Projects Quarterly Progress and Status Report, September 2026.

The test of Kenya's big water projects



Water infrastructure is often judged by engineering scale — plant capacity, transport volume or investment. But for households, businesses and institutions, the key questions are simple: Is water available when needed, safe to use and affordable?

That is the test facing two major proposals in Kenya's public-private partnership pipeline. The Sh106.1 billion Lamu Water Desalination Plant would initially supply 120,000 cubic metres of potable water daily. The Sh27.9 billion Sabaki Water Carrier Project proposes to draw 80,000 cubic metres daily from the Baricho aquifer in Kilifi County, with treatment, storage and related infrastructure.

The Public Private Partnerships Directorate's report for the quarter ending September 30, 2026, listed both projects as under contract negotiations. They are not completed infrastructure, and water is not yet flowing to intended consumers. The figures reflect proposed investments and capacity, not delivered outcomes.

The two projects are valued at Sh134 billion, with proposed daily capacities totalling 200,000 cubic metres — a substantial investment. But water security depends not just on funding, but on a credible plan to deliver reliable, sustainable service.

Lamu's Water Crisis And New Supply Costs

The proposed Lamu Water Desalination Plant will produce an initial 120,000 cubic metres of potable water daily for Lamu Town, surrounding areas, and the LAPSSET zone. It also plans to sell products recovered from the minerals.

Approved in December 2023 for development and feasibility studies, the project advanced to contract negotiations in April 2025. A September 2026 report lists it at that stage, naming Rasli Bahari Kenya Ltd as private proponent and the Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation as contracting authority.

Expanding Lamu's water infrastructure supports households, public institutions, businesses and LAPSSET corridor ambitions.

But desalination's economics are central to public debate: beyond plant construction, costs include long-term operation, water treatment and distribution, maintenance and financing.

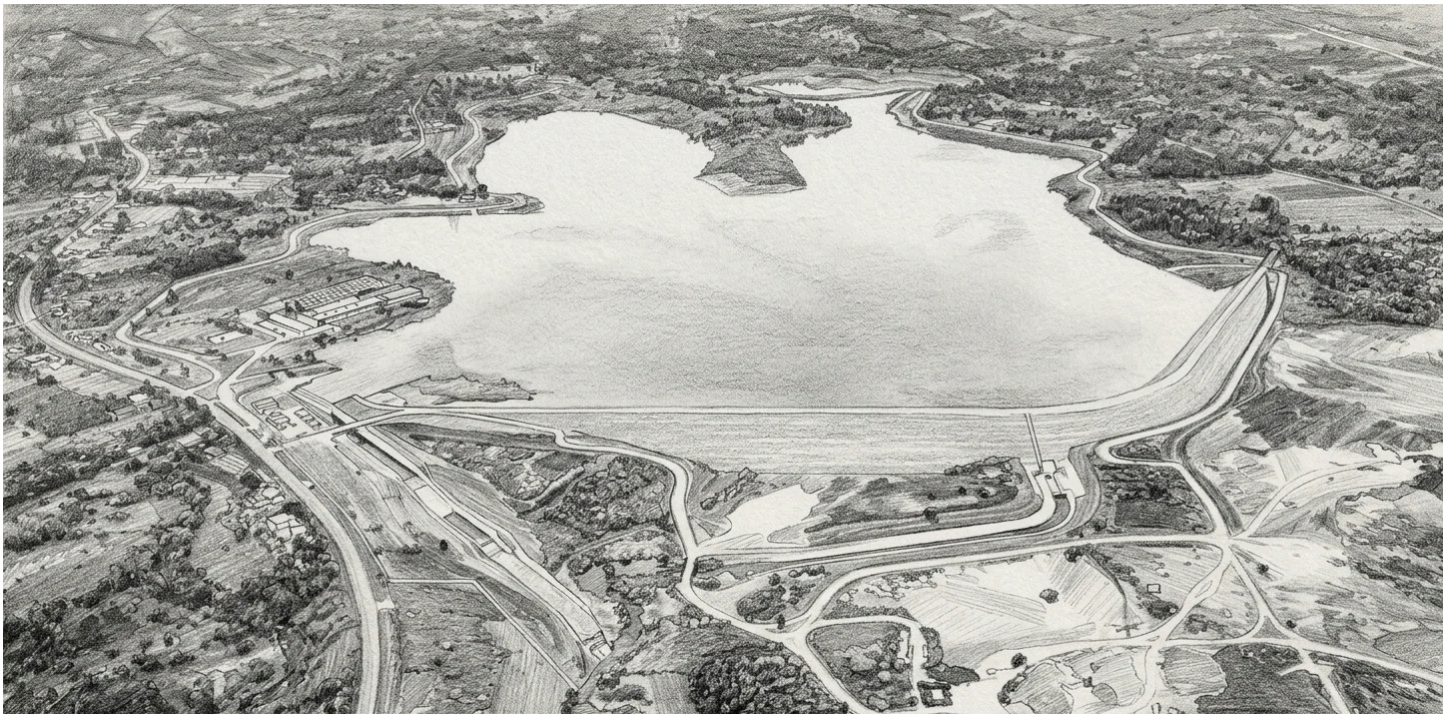
The status report estimates project value and capacity but gives no final consumer tariff, confirmed financing structure, or evidence of financial close. These gaps require answers, not assumptions.

What will it cost to produce and deliver a cubic metre of water? How will the investment be recovered? What costs, if any, will public entities bear, and what will consumers pay? How will the project protect households least able to afford higher bills?

These questions do not weaken the case for desalination. They are essential to determining whether the solution is technically sound, financially sustainable, and socially affordable.

Sabaki And The Wider Economics Of Bulk Water

The Sabaki Water Carrier Project offers a different route to expanding supply.



Estimated at Sh27.9 billion, the project proposes extracting 80,000 cubic metres of water daily from the Baricho aquifer in Kilifi County. Planned infrastructure includes a water treatment and storage plant, sewage treatment units and a sewer network in project zones.

Approved in October 2023 for development and a feasibility study, the project was cleared for contract negotiations in February 2025, subject to conditions. Negotiations were ongoing as of September 2026. The report names Utility Partners One LLP as the proponent.

The project could advance water supply and sanitation goals, but its public value depends on the whole system — not abstraction volumes alone. Treatment, storage, distribution, sanitation and operations determine the service consumers receive.

Bulk-water capacity does not guarantee household access. Benefits depend on distribution networks, institutions, and providers that connect supply to homes and businesses, so planning must address the entire delivery chain.

The project must also show how it will manage water resources sustainably. Before implementation, the public should have access to evidence on the aquifer's capacity, abstraction impacts, allocation among competing needs and safeguards to protect the resource throughout the project.

The September report outlines the project's proposed scope and current stage but does not resolve technical, environmental or affordability questions. Answers depend on the feasibility study, project assessments and negotiated terms.

Missing Link Between Investment And Affordability

Public-private partnerships can bring capital and specialist expertise into infrastructure provision. They can also introduce complex long-term agreements whose costs and risks are not immediately obvious from a headline project value.

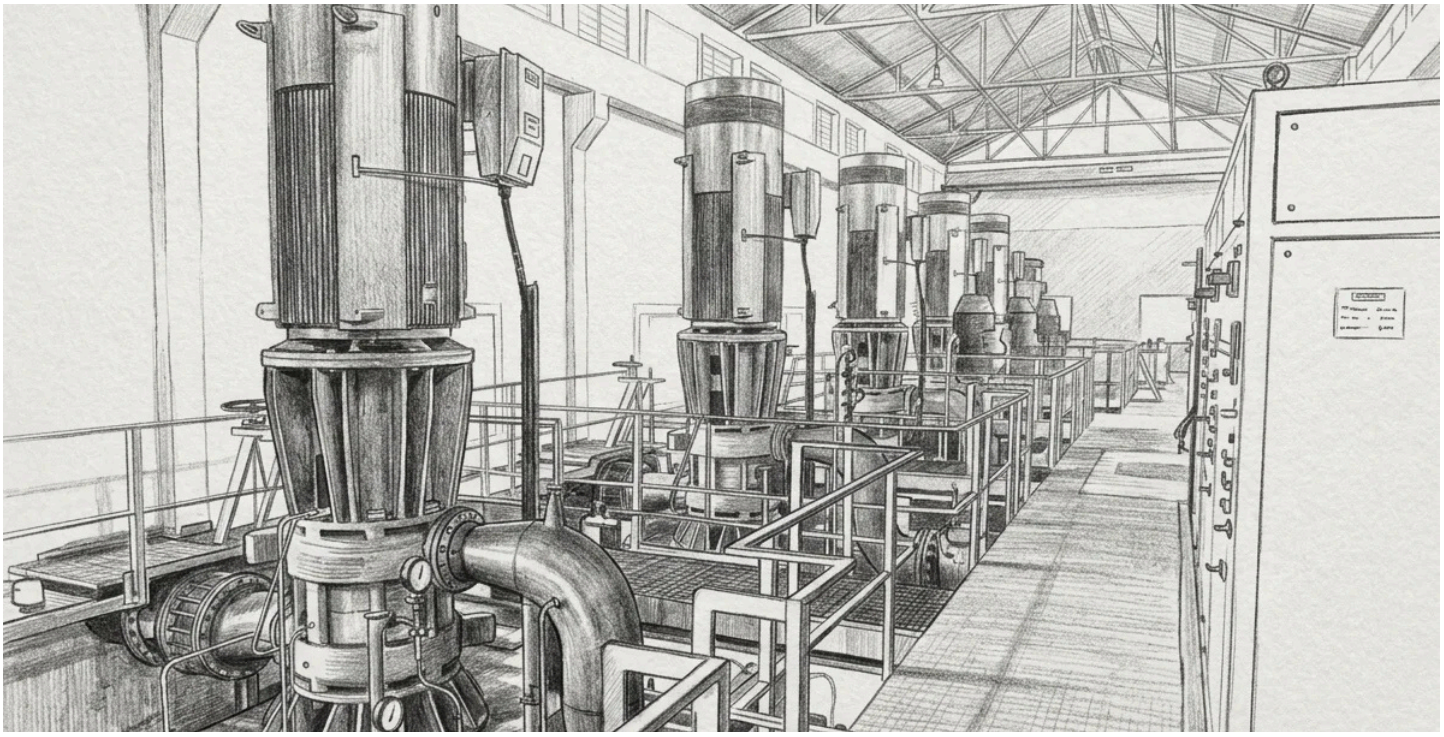
For a water project, the key financial question is whether the arrangement can provide reliable service at a cost users and public institutions can sustain — not simply whether a private investor will participate.

This requires scrutiny of financing, operating costs, demand assumptions, payment mechanisms and risk allocation. If consumer tariffs help recover costs, their basis should be transparent. Any public payments, guarantees or other support should clearly disclose the nature and scale of the state's exposure.

It is equally important to understand what happens when assumptions change. What protections are in place if construction costs rise, demand falls below projections, the project is delayed, or operating expenses exceed forecasts? Who bears the consequences, and how are service continuity and consumer interests protected?

These are not arguments against private participation. They are the standards against which a major public-service investment should be evaluated.

Assess both projects against credible, technically viable alternatives — not simply whether desalination or a bulk-water carrier can be built. Compare value for money, reliability, operating costs, environmental impacts, delivery timelines, and affordability.



That comparison matters because the cheapest initial construction option isn't necessarily the least expensive over an asset's life.

Conversely, a technically sophisticated solution is not automatically the best one if its long-term costs make the resulting service inaccessible to the people who need it.

A Public Scorecard For Water Security

The next stage of scrutiny should be project-specific, rather than relying on general assurances about infrastructure development.

For Lamu, the public needs clear information on the feasibility findings, proposed financing, expected operating costs, tariff implications, environmental safeguards and the conditions that must be met before financial close.

The project's planned mineral-recovery component also deserves explanation: how it contributes to the commercial model, what products are expected and how much of the project's viability depends on their sale.

For Sabaki, scrutiny should focus on the source and sustainability of the proposed abstraction, the design and cost of treatment and storage, the distribution arrangements, sanitation components and the intended consumers.

The public should be able to see how the project's proposed capacity translates into reliable access, and what measures will protect affordability and continuity of service.

For both projects, progress reporting should distinguish between negotiated terms, signed agreements, financial close, construction, commissioning and actual service delivery.

These milestones are not interchangeable.

A project advancing through negotiations shows movement in the development process, but it does not prove the financing is secured or that the infrastructure will be delivered on schedule.

The government should also publish understandable updates on material changes in cost, scope or timelines, subject to legitimate commercial-confidentiality requirements.

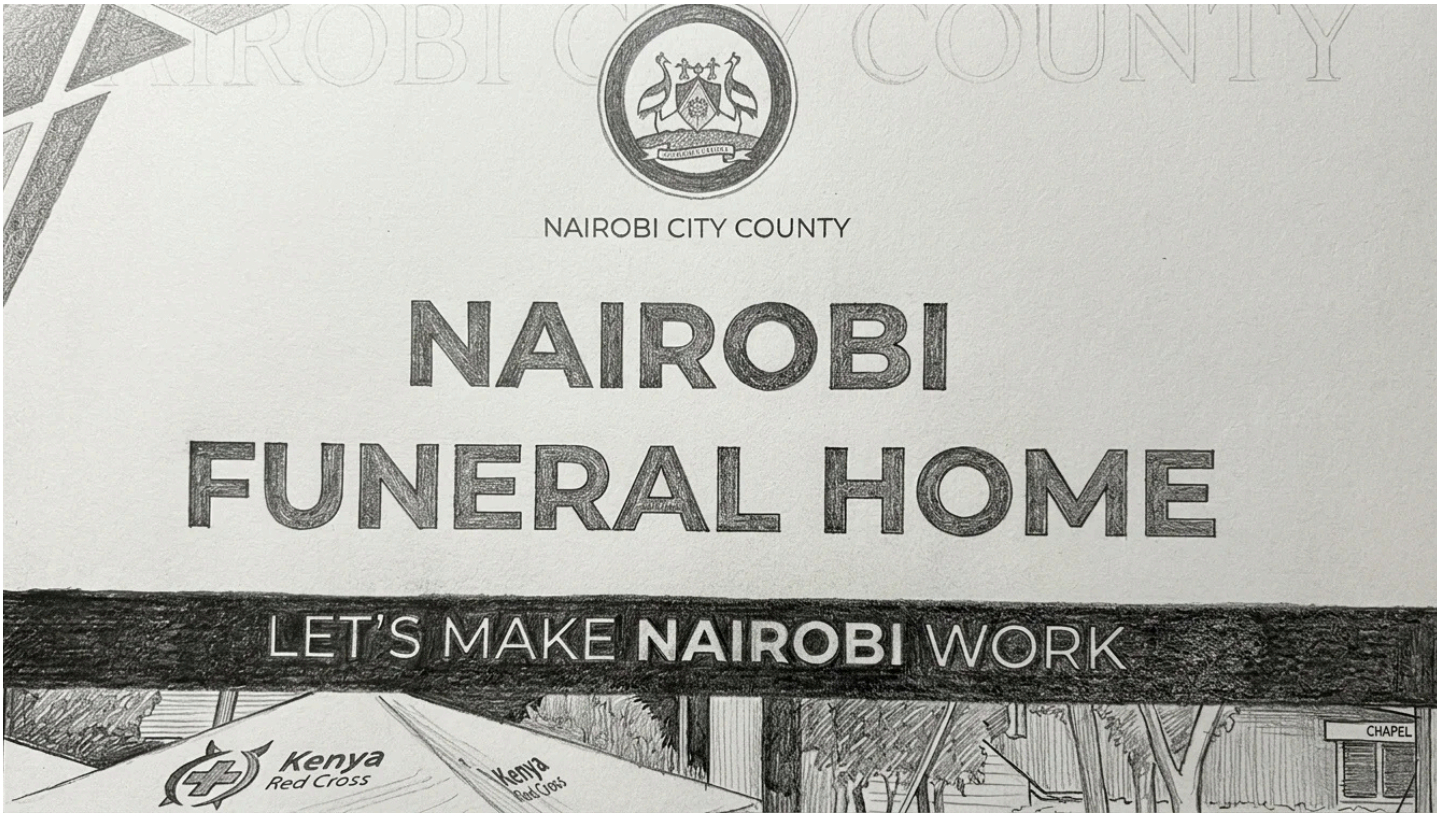
Transparency should let citizens, county governments, legislators, regulators, and independent experts evaluate progress without confusing a proposed investment with a completed public asset.

Kenya needs infrastructure that can expand water access and support economic development. The Lamu and Sabaki proposals could become important parts of that effort, but their ultimate value will depend on what they deliver, at what cost, and for whom.

Success is not measured by the Sh134 billion attached to two project estimates, nor by the 200,000 cubic metres of proposed daily capacity.

It is the reliable, safe and affordable water that reaches consumers after the financing is secured, the infrastructure is built, and the systems are operating.

Nairobi's next big projects must deliver more than concrete



Nairobi's urban problems are easy to identify. In the Central Business District, parking competes with movement; street lighting needs ongoing maintenance; and infrastructure for managing deaths, forensic investigations and disaster-related casualties must keep pace with a growing city.

The harder question is how City Hall turns these needs into dependable public services without creating arrangements whose costs, obligations and benefits are difficult to assess. Three projects in Kenya's latest public-private partnership (PPP) pipeline offer a window into that challenge.

The proposed Nairobi Dignity Centre: Funeral and Forensic Services, a multi-storey mobility hub at Sunken Park and a smart street lighting programme could address distinct urban needs. But they are all at different stages of development.

The Dignity Centre and mobility hub are among seven projects newly approved to proceed through the PPP process during the first quarter of the 2026/27 financial year.

Both received approval of their project concept notes on September 8, 2026. The smart street lighting project is further along, having completed its feasibility study in October 2024, although the report says the contracting authority was still expected to submit the study for approval.

The proposals ask whether private participation can improve Nairobi's urban services while ensuring transparency, affordability and public accountability.

Infrastructure For A Service That Cannot Wait

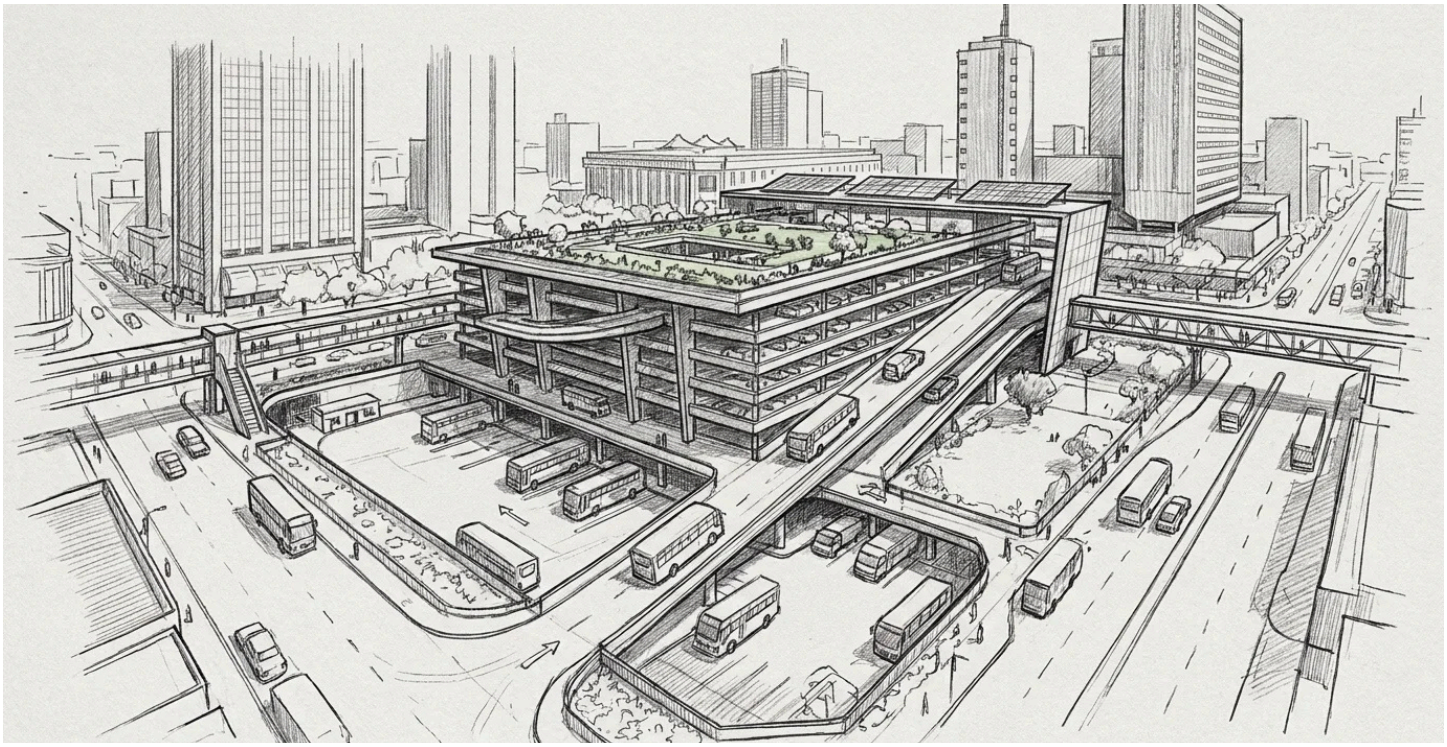
The proposed Nairobi Dignity Centre is perhaps the most consequential because it concerns a public service whose importance becomes most visible during moments of grief, uncertainty and crisis.

According to the Treasury report, the project seeks to modernise the existing City Mortuary by developing the Nairobi City Funeral Home and Forensic Services.

Its objectives are to improve facility effectiveness, efficiency, and economy; expand storage for 1,000 bodies plus disaster capacity; establish a forensic lab for 2,500 annual postmortems; and modernise waste management. Its estimated value is undetermined, and the city proposes competitive bidding.

The intended scope extends beyond physical space: mortuary and forensic services are public infrastructure that enable dignified handling of the dead, identification, investigations, and mass-casualty management.

Their effectiveness affects families, law enforcement, health services, and the justice system.



The proposed capacity shows the facility's scale, but capacity alone won't ensure success. The county must explain how it will improve services, staff and maintain them, meet operating standards, and function during peak demand.

Before the project advances, key financial details remain unanswered. The status report provides no project value, financing structure, or implementation schedule, making it too early to assess the facility's lifetime cost to the county or how service costs will be covered.

A modern facility could strengthen public services, but investment should be justified by measurable outcomes: reliable operations, suitable forensic capacity, dignified treatment, effective waste management, and safeguards for families.

Can More Parking Improve Movement?

The proposed multi-storey mobility hub takes on a different challenge: how Nairobi manages limited space in a busy city centre.

The project would redevelop Sunken Park, at the junction of Taifa Road and Harambee Avenue, into a multi-use, multi-storey mobility hub under a PPP arrangement. The Treasury report describes the proposal as a response to the shortage of structured parking in the CBD, aiming to ease traffic congestion and unlock the value of underutilised urban land.

The proposed facility would provide 3,800 structured parking spaces and could serve up to 5,700 vehicles daily, replacing the existing 240-slot surface parking lot.

The estimated project value is listed as undetermined, and the concept note was approved on September 8, 2026, allowing it to proceed to a feasibility study.

The proposed increase in parking capacity is substantial. But the central policy question is whether adding parking will improve how people move through the CBD, rather than simply increasing the number of vehicles that can enter it.

Assess a mobility hub within the wider transport system. Its design, access, circulation, pedestrian links and public transport connections determine whether it eases traffic or creates bottlenecks. Consider effects on nearby streets and businesses.

Translate the project's ambition for cleaner, safer transport into measurable outcomes: assess links to walking routes and public transport, peak traffic management, and improved access to nearby public spaces.

Affordability is another consideration. The report does not specify parking tariffs, the proposed commercial model or the eventual allocation of revenues and costs. These are important matters for a project intended to operate in a central business district where the cost of accessing work, services and commercial premises already shapes how people use the city.

Feasibility work should therefore establish not only whether the proposed hub is commercially viable, but whether its design and operation are likely to improve urban mobility. More parking may be part of the solution, but the number of spaces alone does not measure reduced congestion.



The Long-Term Cost Of Keeping The City Lit

Nairobi's smart street lighting proposal is a more mature project in the pipeline, but it also shows why maintaining infrastructure can be as important as installing it.

The project is estimated at Sh10 billion and proposes developing, modernising, expanding, operating, and maintaining approximately 100,000 street lighting assets to agreed standards over a 10-year period.

The planned system includes new lighting fixtures and LED lamps, retrofitting existing fixtures with LED technology, and establishing a common management system supported by ultra-narrowband technology.

The feasibility study was completed in October 2024, but the Treasury report stated that the contracting authority was expected to submit it for approval by September 30, 2026. The project was listed under feasibility and development, with competitive bidding as the procurement method.

The proposed scale goes beyond replacing streetlights: it creates a long-term system to manage urban assets. Its success will depend on improving lighting reliability, speeding fault repairs, and transparently monitoring performance.

A connected management system could help the county track equipment and maintenance needs, but the technology itself is not the outcome. Residents experience whether streets are adequately lit, whether faults are addressed promptly and whether lighting remains functional.

Those are the results against which the programme should be judged. The proposed 10-year period also makes the operating arrangement particularly important.

The county needs to understand what the Sh10 billion estimate covers, how payments would be structured, how maintenance standards would be enforced and what happens if agreed service levels are not met.

The report does not provide the final payment structure or contract terms, so these details require further scrutiny.

The county should also establish a baseline before implementation. Without a reliable record of the existing network's condition and performance, it will be difficult to determine whether the project has delivered improvements.

Public reporting should make it possible to assess the proportion of lights functioning, the time taken to repair faults and performance against contractual standards.

The strongest case for a smart lighting partnership will not rest on the sophistication of its technology, but on the quality and consistency of the service it provides.

The Accountability Test Begins Before Construction

The three projects illustrate different ways in which Nairobi could use PPP arrangements to address urban needs.



The Dignity Centre would upgrade funeral and forensic services; the mobility hub would reorganise CBD parking and transport; and the street lighting programme would modernise and maintain public assets. Their common feature is that the public benefits remain prospective.

The Dignity Centre and mobility hub received concept-note approval only by early September 2026. The smart lighting project completed a feasibility study but still needed approval. None had a signed agreement, reached financial close, or begun construction or operation.

That distinction matters because PPPs are not simply a means of obtaining infrastructure. They create contractual relationships that can shape how services are financed, maintained and delivered over many years.

The county needs to understand not only what will be built, but what it will be required to pay, what risks it retains, and what remedies it will have if performance falls short.

Before these projects advance, Nairobi should publish clear explanations of their feasibility findings, estimated lifecycle costs, proposed financing structures and expected public benefits.

Procurement contracts should set measurable performance standards, transparent payments, and meaningful consequences for persistent underperformance.

The county should also explain how each project compares with feasible alternatives.

For the mobility hub, that includes examining the relationship between parking provision and wider transport management.

For street lighting, it means showing how the proposed arrangement will improve on existing maintenance and operating practices.

For the Dignity Centre, it means demonstrating how the facility will strengthen service quality and operational resilience.

These questions are not reasons to abandon private participation. They test whether it offers value for money and a credible way to improve public services.

Nairobi's infrastructure needs are real, and the projects in the PPP pipeline point to areas where investment could make a difference.

But a concept note is only a beginning, a feasibility study is not a finished facility, and a contract is not proof of a service delivered.

City Hall's real achievement will not be the number of projects it advances through the PPP process. It will be whether Nairobians receive better services, whether those services remain reliable, and whether the public can see clearly what it is paying for.

In Numbers

25 per cent

PURCHASE

The stake that Aliko Dangote's firm bought in Kenya Pipeline Company as part of its strategic investments related to the Lamu refinery.

362,846

EMPLOYEES

The additional formal employees who are to benefit from Kenya's plan to scap income tax for those earning less than Sh32,333.

39 per cent

GROWTH

The jump in value of fish produced in Kenya from Sh39.62 billion in 2024 to Sh54.86 billion in 2025 due to higher production.

10,900

REFUGEES

The number of Ethiopian refugees who fled to Kenya sheltered in Moyale camps and who the Red Cross says face food and water shortage.

Quote of the Week



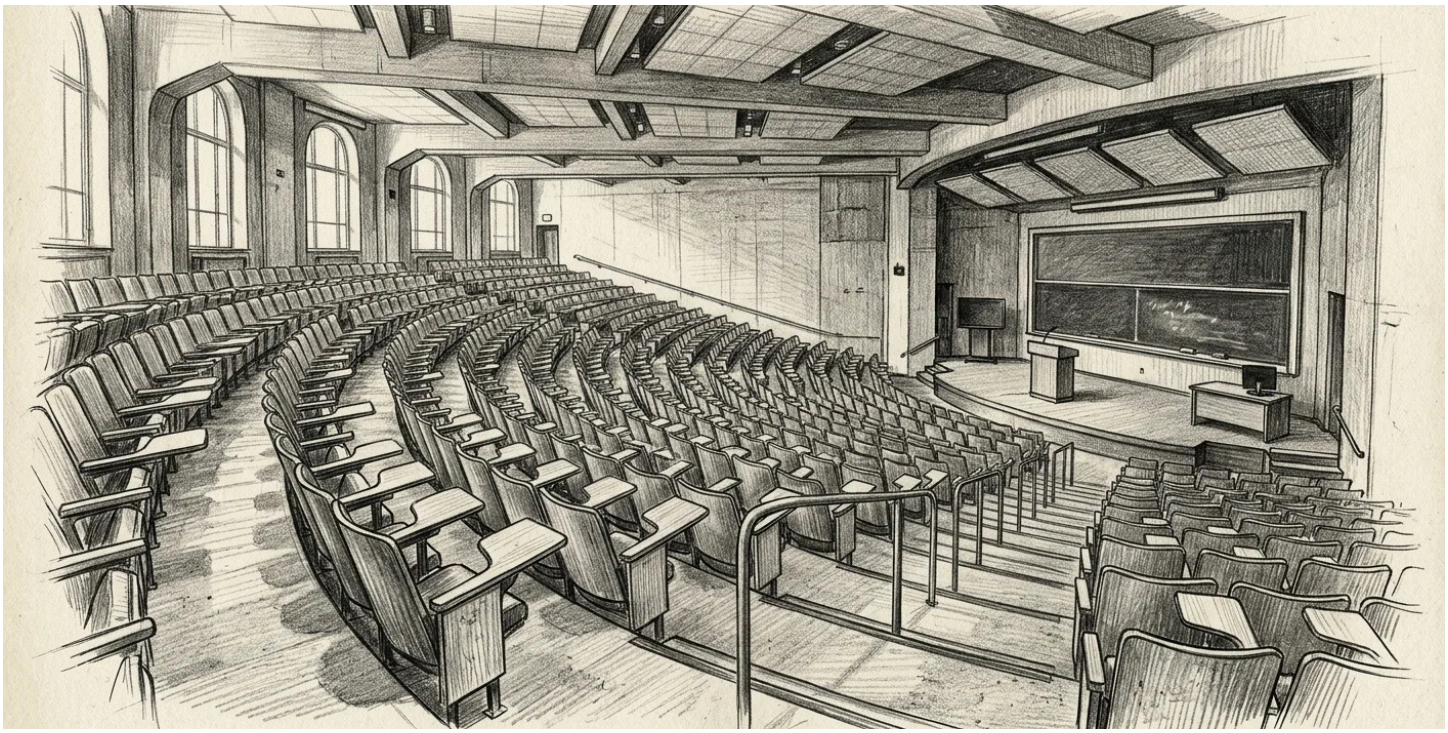
"Counties must be empowered to take firm action against rogue developers who disregard building regulations and put lives at risk. Even when such offenders are arrested and taken to court, the penalties can be as low as Sh5,000, which is not a sufficient deterrent.

- Nairobi Governor Johnson Sakaja

Advertisement



Cost when the government cannot deliver essential services



Governments are often judged by their ambitions — promised roads, jobs, investments and reforms. But citizens judge the state more immediately by whether essential public services are available when needed.

Kenya's prolonged public university disruption and ongoing public health officers' strike merit joint examination. Though they involve different institutions, responsibilities, and demands, both question the government's ability to turn commitments into services.

When lecturers stay away from classrooms for weeks, and public health officers spend months away from their workplaces, the consequences extend well beyond the negotiating tables.

By October 23, the nationwide strike by university academic and non-academic staff had entered its fourth week after negotiations over the 2025–2029 collective bargaining agreement (CBA) collapsed.

Public health officers, meanwhile, were marking the 92nd day of their nationwide strike, demanding, among other things, the signing of their collective bargaining agreement and the recruitment of additional personnel.

The length of these disputes points to more than an inability to reach agreement; it raises questions about planning, financing, accountability, and how seriously the government treats its commitments.

Universities' Strike Is More Than Salaries

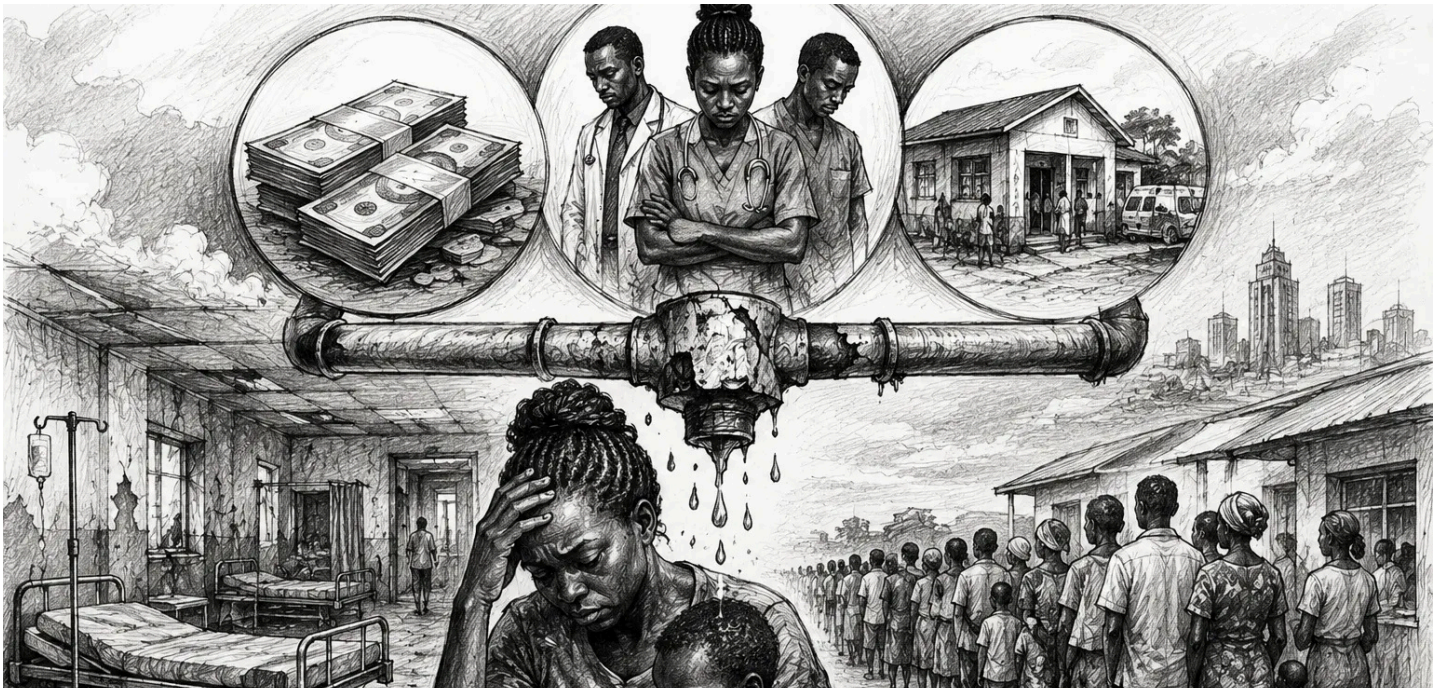
The university dispute shows how failing to resolve an employment agreement can expose deeper weaknesses in public institutions' financing and management.

The Universities Academic Staff Union (UASU), Kenya University Staff Union (KUSU) and Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions, Hospitals and Allied Workers (KUDHEIHA) began a nationwide strike on October 2 after talks with the Inter-Public Universities Councils Consultative Forum failed to reach an acceptable settlement.

The unions want the government to conclude and implement the 2025–2029 CBA, settle outstanding salary arrears, and provide a clear, binding commitment on how it will finance the resulting obligations.

They also raised concerns about allowances, medical cover, pensions, staffing and workloads. They argue agreements cannot be reliably implemented without credible funding, and have petitioned Parliament to intervene and secure a binding commitment.

The government, however, faces a substantial fiscal question. Education Cabinet Secretary Julius Ogamba told Parliament that the unions' demands would cost about Sh100 billion, calling the amount unaffordable and unsustainable.



The government is considering an offer above the initially discussed Sh9.7 billion, while unions reject proposals they deem inadequate and poorly negotiated. These are competing positions, not a final settlement.

The dispute is not simply about workers seeking higher pay versus government spending cuts. The key question is whether the state has a credible process to agree on employment obligations, cost them, identify funding and deliver funds to institutions on time.

If commitments are repeatedly deferred until workers withdraw their labour, industrial action becomes the mechanism that forces unresolved public-finance questions back onto the national agenda.

That pattern costs students who have no control over the negotiations. University of Nairobi students have protested against the disruption, while students across public universities face uncertainty over teaching schedules, examinations and graduation dates.

Consequences vary: programmes with tightly sequenced practical requirements, such as medicine, may find lost learning time harder to recover than courses that can rearrange teaching. Families also face costs beyond fees, including accommodation, transport, and extended study.

The government and university management must be judged not only by the settlement, but by how long it took, the reliability of funding and protections against repeated student disruption. Resuming classes ends the immediate crisis, but not the structural weaknesses that enabled another prolonged strike.

When Essential Health Services Remain Disrupted

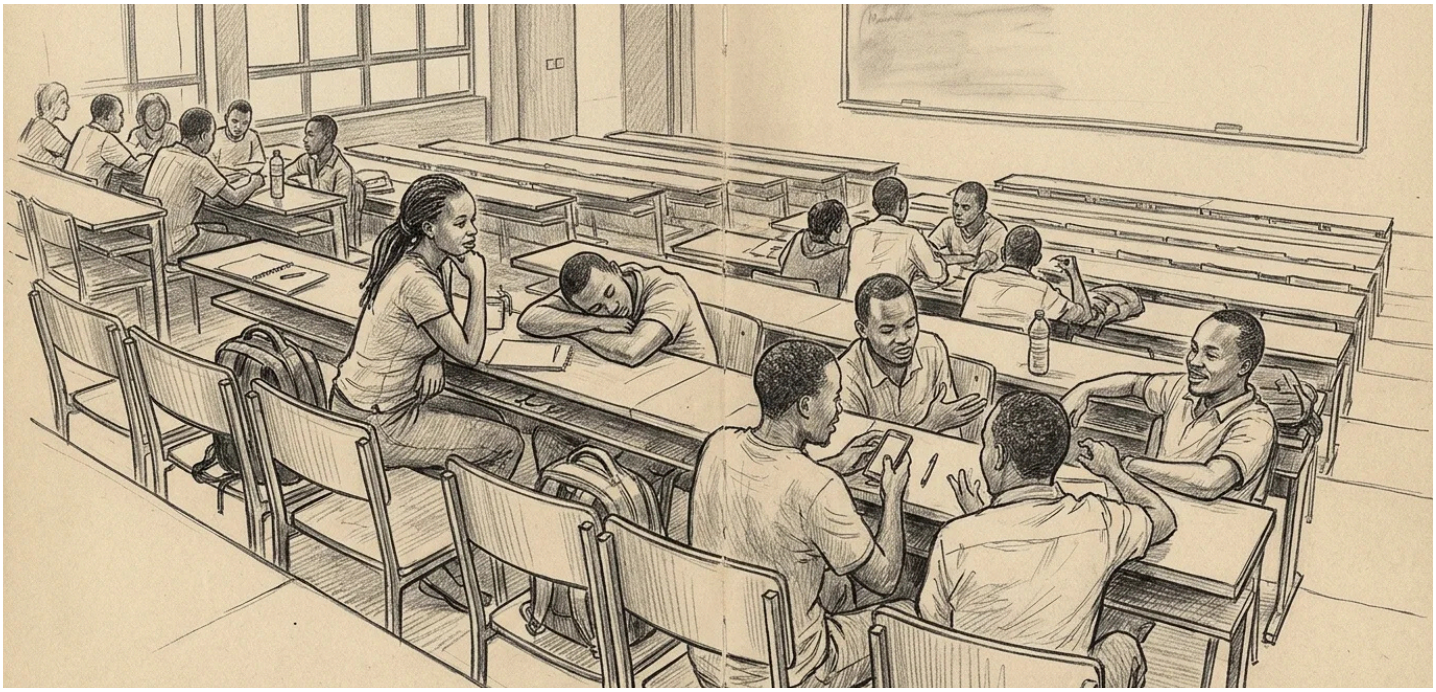
The public health officers' strike is another serious test of the state's ability to maintain essential services. On October 21, the Kenya Environmental Health and Public Health Practitioners Union demonstrated in Nairobi, 92 days into its nationwide strike. It cited unresolved employment terms, a collective bargaining agreement and the need to recruit more officers.

Though less visible than hospital care, public health officers help prevent illness and protect communities through environmental inspections, sanitation oversight, food safety, and disease prevention. Staffing and service disruptions can undermine this preventive work when consistent oversight is most needed.

A strike's duration alone doesn't prove all services have stopped or caused an outbreak. Assessing its full impact requires evidence from affected counties, public health facilities and authorities. Still, a dispute lasting over three months raises legitimate questions: What contingency plans are in place? Which services are affected? Who ensures essential functions continue during negotiations?

It shows industrial action is not merely a human resources issue. When agencies fail to settle agreements, meet staffing needs or plan implementation, disruption can spread across the system. Citizens may not know who caused delays, but they feel the impact when public services falter.

Prolonged negotiations, disputed funding, and service disruptions show why public institutions must anticipate obligations and resolve disputes before they escalate.



Price Of Delay Extends Beyond Government

The clearest cost of a strike is interrupted services, but harder-to-capture costs in government statements or wage bills also matter.

Students lose teaching time and face uncertainty about academic progress, graduation and employment. Disrupted calendars may prolong the need for financial support from parents and guardians, and universities face planning challenges and added pressure on limited resources.

Communities reliant on public health services may experience gaps in preventive and environmental oversight; these should be measured, not assumed, and included in assessments of industrial disputes.

When agreements are repeatedly delayed, citizens may question whether institutions can meet commitments made in their name, thus eroding public confidence. Promised talks aren't signed agreements; proposed allocations aren't released funds; announced settlements don't ensure institutions can restore services.

Accountability must be specific so the Ministry of Education, National Treasury, Salaries and Remuneration Commission, university councils and staff unions have distinct mandates. The record should determine responsibility for the impasse, rather than assigning blame indiscriminately.

In the public health dispute, ministries and employers must likewise explain outstanding issues, resolution efforts and plans to sustain services. Parliament's role goes beyond calling for resolution, as it can scrutinise financial commitments, question those responsible for delays, and demand clear timelines for action.

The Executive must show how it will fund and implement agreements, rather than leaving institutions without reliable financial support. Unions, too, must explain their demands, negotiate in good faith and consider how strikes affect people relying on public services.

Progress should be tracked in a public record listing each dispute's outstanding commitments, responsible agency, required funding, deadline and proof of completion. This would discourage vague assurances and help the public distinguish genuine fiscal limits from administrative failure.

Measure Delivery In Services, Not Statements

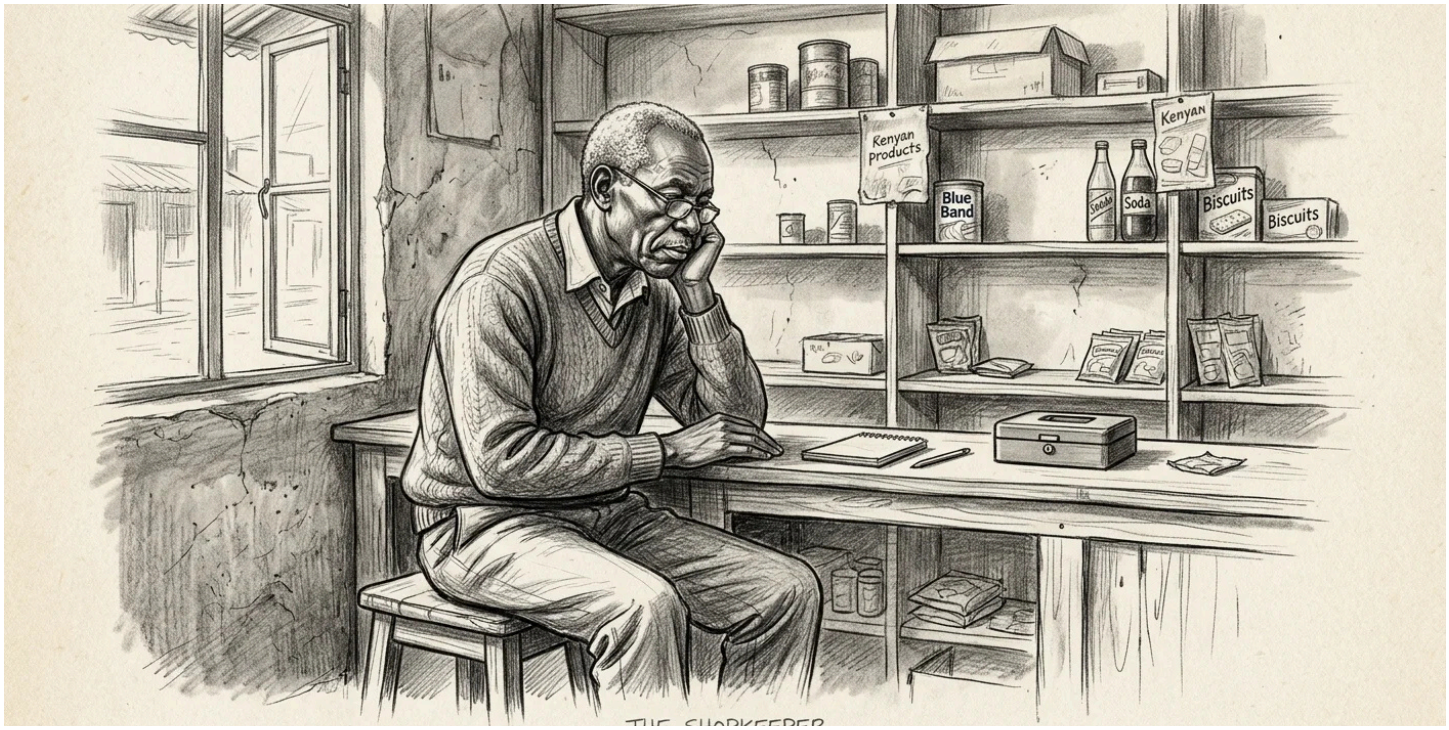
Kenya has policies, public commitments and formal employment-negotiation procedures. The test is whether they prevent foreseeable disputes from causing prolonged service disruptions.

The lecturers' and public health officers' strikes should be judged not just by workers' return, but by whether underlying problems are resolved: funding negotiated obligations, timely implementation, adequate staffing, clear responsibilities and early dispute resolution.

Fiscal discipline means assessing affordability and national priorities before committing public funds — and planning realistically. Unfunded agreements, broken commitments, and escalating disputes carry costs, even when they don't appear in the budget.

Citizens, with little control over decisions that disrupt services, pay in lost time and money, uncertainty, and diminished trust. Ending strikes is urgent; preventing future ones means turning negotiated commitments into reliable services.

Pending bills: How government debt is strangling local businesses



A government contract may look like a business opportunity: a supplier delivers goods, a contractor builds a road, a hospital receives equipment or a county hires a company for essential services.

But delivery or certification does not complete the transaction; payment does. That distinction lies at the heart of Kenya's pending-bills problem.

For small businesses that borrow to fulfil public contracts, unpaid invoices can become a trap. Salaries, rent, fuel, suppliers and loan repayments remain due, even as government payment dates slip. A company may secure substantial work yet run short of the cash needed to operate.

On October 9, 2026, Cabinet approved Sh23.74 billion to settle 28,726 verified government bills worth Sh50 million or less each. The move is expected to help thousands of suppliers and contractors, including some reportedly awaiting payment since 2005.

The National Treasury will oversee implementation, prioritising micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, especially those owned by women, young people and persons with disabilities.

The approval is significant, but a harder question remains: how much government debt to businesses has been cleared, and how long must suppliers keep financing public services with money they have yet to receive?

The Numbers Behind The Latest Payment

The latest Cabinet decision followed a verification exercise that shows the scale of the challenge. The Pending Bills Verification Committee reviewed 115,617 claims worth Sh664.8 billion and recommended settling 29,257 worth Sh155.34 billion. Cabinet approved Sh23.74 billion for 28,726 claims.

The figures tell two stories. By number, approval covers about 98 per cent of claims recommended for settlement, suggesting many smaller claims have been cleared. By value, however, Sh23.74 billion is only 15.3 per cent of the recommended Sh155.34 billion. The high share by number does not mean a similar share of the debt has been cleared.

The announcement authorises settlement; it does not confirm suppliers have been paid. Cabinet provided no detailed schedule for individual businesses. Until the Treasury publishes disbursement figures and suppliers confirm receipt, the approved amount should not be described as paid.

The verification also leaves a substantial gap between claims submitted and those recommended. The Sh664.8 billion submitted is not automatically a verified government liability: claims may be rejected, disputed or require more documentation.

Businesses whose claims were not recommended also need clear decisions, so legitimate suppliers are not left uncertain indefinitely.



The government has previously reported progress. In January 2026, it said it had approved Sh255 billion from a historical Sh606 billion backlog, including more than Sh80 billion in roads-sector bills reportedly cleared, with more to follow.

The latest approval forms part of that effort, but announcements must be reconciled to avoid double-counting approvals or presenting commitments as payments.

The real test is whether valid unpaid obligations are declining, new arrears are prevented, and suppliers can predict when they will be paid for completed work — not how often the government announces settlements.

A Contract Can Become A Liability

Businesses suffer when scarce resources fund government obligations. Suppliers buy stock on credit, cover transport and staff costs, and expect timely payment. Months- or years-long delays turn them into involuntary, interest-free lenders to the state, without conventional financiers' bargaining power.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are hit hardest. Unlike larger firms, they often lack reserves, bank credit and diverse customers, relying on a few contracts and short credit cycles. One overdue invoice can prevent them from paying workers, restocking or meeting supplier obligations.

Borrowing to bridge the gap incurs interest and penalties, eroding margins and disrupting investment and hiring. Some firms may exit government procurement, shrinking the pool of suppliers willing to accept risky payment terms.

The strain ripples through local economies: an unpaid contractor delays paying a hardware shop, which cuts distributor orders. The distributor reduces transport work, leaving workers with less to spend locally. One unpaid invoice creates a chain of private-sector liabilities.

The latest approval may ease pressure on smaller firms with verified claims under Sh50 million. Relief depends on how quickly the Treasury releases funds, whether suppliers receive the full amounts and can resume normal operations after prolonged financial strain.

County Problem Is Not Just Inherited Debt

County governments matter because procurement gives local businesses reliable customers. However, unpaid county bills remain a serious concern despite successive administrations' promises to clear inherited debts.

Controller of Budget figures released in July 2026 showed counties owed Sh156.84 billion by March 31, 2026, including Sh84 billion outstanding for over three years. National announcements alone won't solve this; county administrations must verify obligations, budget for them and demonstrate payments.

Inherited bills can be difficult to resolve as new administrations may review prior work, investigate procurement, or reconcile incomplete records to protect public funds from unsupported, inflated, or fraudulent claims. But verification should not indefinitely delay decisions.

Otherwise, administrations will keep inheriting and generating unpaid bills.



National and county figures should not be combined without checking reporting periods, definitions and overlaps.

Considered separately, they show that pending bills are a recurring public-finance problem across government levels, not merely a temporary cash-flow issue.

State Must Stop Treating Payment As Afterthought

Pending bills signal poor planning. Governments must match procurement commitments with revenue forecasts, cash availability and priorities.

Without realistic financing, agencies risk failing to pay contracts on time — not just delaying processing.

The Treasury should publicly track the latest Cabinet decision, listing approved claims, payments, balances, and timelines. It should also explain how it will progressively pay verified claims above Sh50 million.

For suppliers, approval is not payment: a Cabinet decision cannot settle loans, pay workers or restock businesses.

Suppliers need payment dates, and institutions need systems that prevent repeated lobbying after they meet contractual obligations.

The government must prove it isn't clearing old bills while accumulating new arrears.

Parliament, county assemblies and auditors should track verified arrears, invoice payment times and compliance with approved budgets.

Clearing old claims while unpaid obligations grow offers temporary relief. Instead of abandoning procurement or paying every invoice without question, verify claims promptly, document decisions, budget realistically, pay valid obligations on time, and hold accounting officers accountable for avoidable arrears.

Relief Is Not Resolution

The Cabinet's approval of Sh23.74 billion is welcome for businesses awaiting payment, some for over two decades. It gives the Treasury verified claims to settle and shows it is considering smaller suppliers. But it covers only a fraction of claims submitted for verification, and approval doesn't mean businesses have been paid.

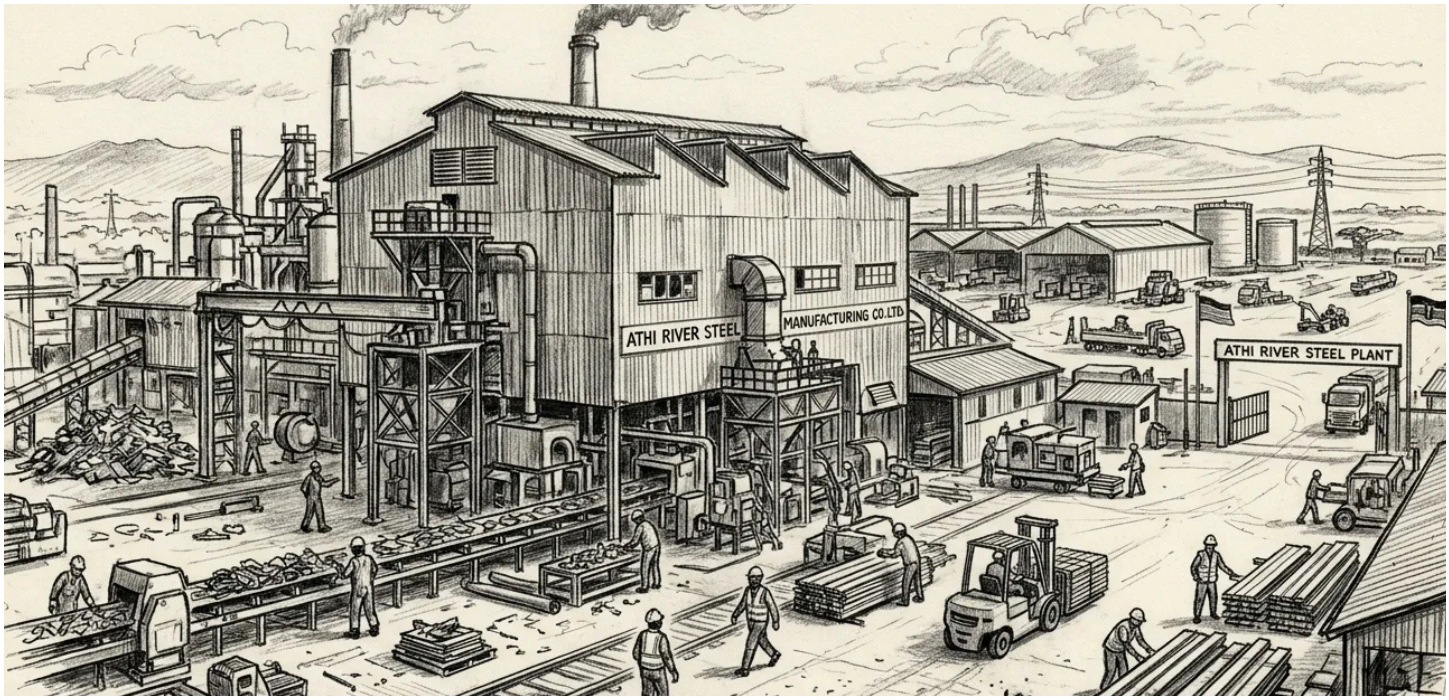
Large allocations mean little if payments are delayed, major claims unresolved, or arrears grow. Track actual payments, the age of valid outstanding debts, and whether the government prevents recurring arrears.

For business owners, payment can mean staying open; for workers, it means getting paid; and for the public, it means whether projects are completed and services continue.

The state can't promote entrepreneurship while forcing businesses to fund its operations with unpaid invoices. Government contracts should help companies grow, not test how long they can survive without payment.

Until timely payment is a public-sector performance measure, pending bills will burden businesses least able to absorb fiscal weakness.

Manufacturing Promise: What would it take to make more things in Kenya?



Manufacturing is central to Kenya's development ambitions, offering a shift from exporting raw materials and importing finished goods to creating value locally.

Processing agricultural products can benefit farmers, factory workers, transporters, suppliers and retailers. A stronger manufacturing base could also reduce reliance on imports and diversify exports.

Yet industrialisation is easier to promise than deliver. Factories need reliable power, affordable finance, skilled workers, suitable raw materials, efficient logistics and customers willing to pay competitive prices. When these conditions are lacking, policies to promote local production may fail to create viable businesses and lasting jobs.

Kenya's latest official survey shows both promise and challenges. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics reported manufacturing growth slowed to 2.0 per cent in 2025 from 3.0 per cent in 2024, while its GDP contribution fell from 7.3 per cent to 7.1 per cent.

Still, formal sector employment rose 5.2 per cent to about 388,600. The sector is creating jobs, but its growth remains too slow to make industrial transformation an assured success.

Local Production Needs More Than A Factory

Kenya must first determine what it can produce competitively, at what scale and for which markets. Manufacturing is diverse: food processing relies on consistent, quality agricultural supplies; textiles on fibres, energy, machinery and responsiveness to demand; pharmaceuticals on strict quality systems and reliable inputs; and construction materials on energy, transport costs and building activity.

Treating every industry alike could dilute public support. Kenya should focus on areas where it has an advantage, local demand can sustain production, and regional or global markets offer growth. It should also acknowledge that locally made goods may remain costlier than imports unless production costs fall.

The 2025 figures show uneven progress. KNBS reported strong growth in cement-related production and vehicle assembly, but weaker agro-processing. Sugar manufacturing fell 24.8 per cent, as did production of some foods, including made tea and milled coffee. Industrial progress therefore depends not just on investment announcements, but on each value chain's inputs, market conditions and operating efficiency.

The Cost Of Producing In Kenya

For manufacturers, competitiveness depends on the combined costs of electricity, transport, imported machinery, financing, taxes, compliance and working capital. Even with a strong domestic market, firms must compete with imports that may benefit from larger production runs, established supply chains or lower costs elsewhere.



Before investing in a production line, a company must assess whether sales will cover the investment, raw materials will be available year-round and affordable financing will last until revenue begins.

Small manufacturers also face proportionately higher costs for standards, packaging, distribution, and compliance when spread over low production volumes.

These constraints affect jobs: underused factories may retain workers but delay expansion, uncertain demand may favour machinery over hiring, and limited working capital can cost firms orders despite spare capacity. Industrial policy should help existing firms grow, not just attract new investors.

The public sector can support industry with infrastructure, predictable regulation, reliable energy, technical training and export access.

Any incentives or tax concessions should be transparent, time-limited and tied to measurable gains in production, jobs, skills or exports; otherwise, they may subsidise activity that would have happened anyway.

Import Substitution To Export Competitiveness

Reducing reliance on imports is understandable, but urging consumers to buy Kenyan products is not enough. Manufacturers must meet standards, ensure reliable supply and keep prices affordable. Without productivity, protection can raise costs, shelter inefficient firms and stifle innovation.

The real test is whether firms can compete beyond a protected domestic market. Regional trade lets Kenyan producers reach East African customers, while exports earn foreign exchange and grow production beyond local demand.

Success depends on certification, customs, logistics, predictable rules and the ability to deliver large orders on time.

In July 2026, the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency reported that exports rose from Sh60.5 billion in 2024 to Sh66.9 billion in 2025, supporting over 82,000 formal jobs. Amid uncertainty over US access under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, it urged market diversification. The figures show progress despite challenges in domestic production.

Manufacturing policy must boost domestic production and export competitiveness. Export processors may thrive as local producers struggle because of differing supply chains, incentives and customers. Policymakers should connect exporters, local suppliers, technical institutions and Kenyan consumers.

What Would Industrial Success Look Like?

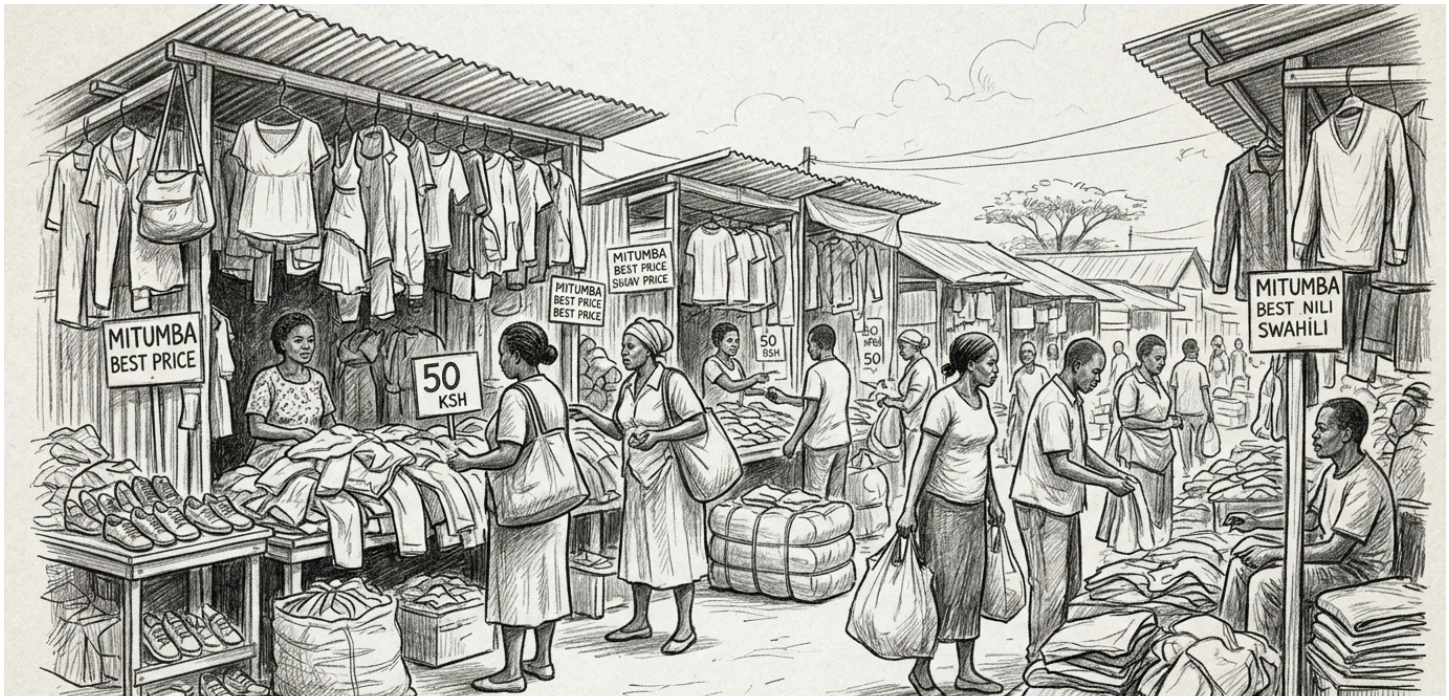
A credible manufacturing strategy should be judged by a few outcomes: sustained growth in manufacturing value added, more productive jobs, greater domestic value addition, stronger exports, economically viable use of local inputs, and more small and medium-sized manufacturers surviving and expanding.

For tax incentives, report whether production and employment increased. For industrial parks, distinguish land allocated from operational factories and jobs created. For local-content rules, track whether they build capable suppliers or raise costs.

Kenya need not choose between ambition and realism. It needs industrial policy that distinguishes announcing production from making it commercially sustainable.

The Chronicle WEEKLY

Mitumba, local fashion and the price of looking good



At a mitumba market, shoppers sift through imported second-hand clothes and may find a jacket, jeans, or a dress for less than many new garments. Others pay more at boutiques for locally designed outfits with a particular fit, finish or identity. Both shape Kenya's clothing economy from different points in the market.

This contrast reflects a dilemma for Kenya's fashion and textile industries. The country wants to add value through local cotton, fabric, garment production and design, while millions rely on mitumba for affordable clothes.

The debate often pits local industry against second-hand imports, overlooking a key question: why used clothes work better for so many consumers, and how can local producers offer genuinely affordable alternatives?

Affordability Is Not A Fashion Trend

Mitumba's popularity reflects not just changing tastes or imported-label appeal, but household budgets: when rent, food, transport, school fees and essentials take priority, even consumers who prefer local goods may rationally choose cheaper clothes.

Kenya's Economic Survey valued second-hand clothing imports at about Sh28 billion in 2024, versus roughly Sh60 billion in textile imports. It also reported average quarterly household spending of Sh409 on used clothing and Sh783 on new items.

Although these figures cover different categories and don't capture the entire market, they highlight the price gap that shapes consumer choices.

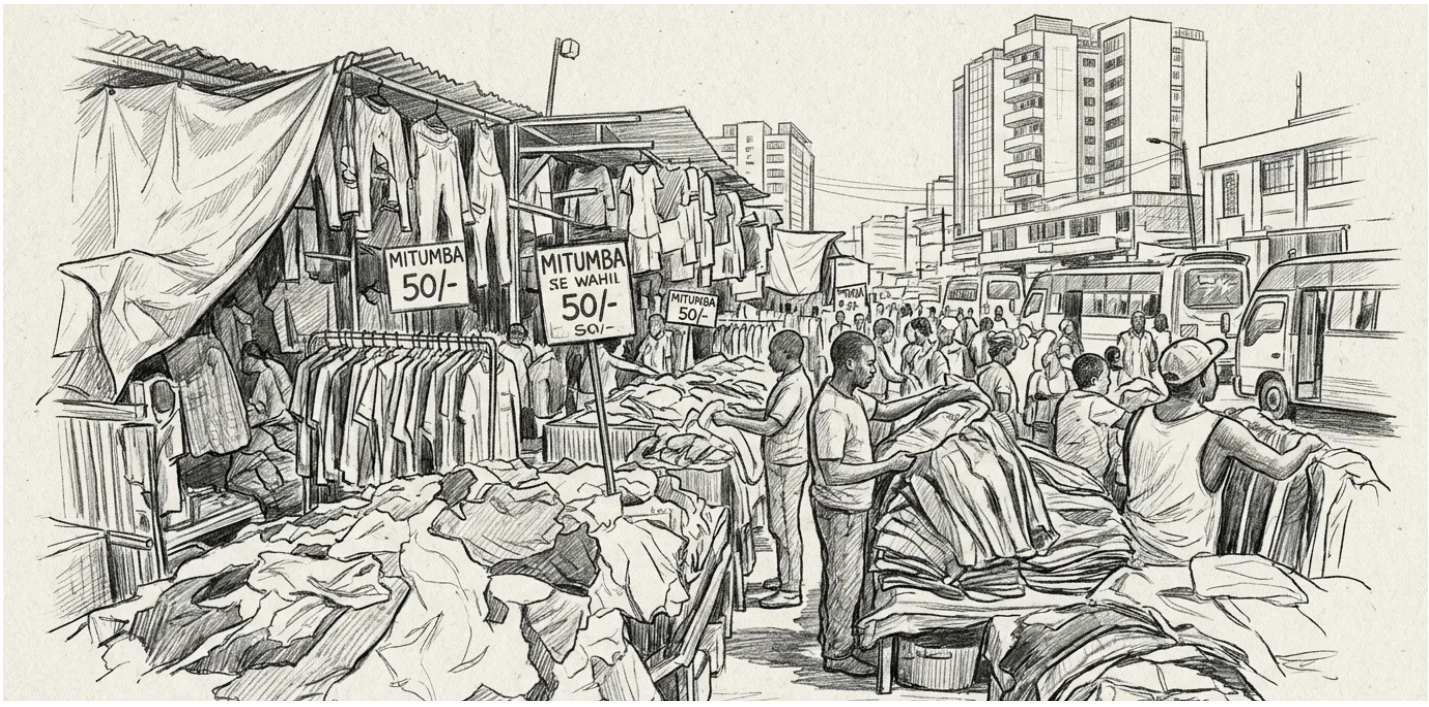
Mitumba supports importers, wholesalers, traders, transporters, tailors and retailers. Policies that overlook them risk treating established jobs as barriers to industrialisation. For traders, clothing provides income to pay rent and support families.

This does not exempt the sector from scrutiny over quality, waste, working conditions or domestic production. But market changes must consider both those who depend on Mitumba and consumers drawn to its affordability.

Why Local Fashion Struggles To Win More Wardrobes

Kenya has talented designers and manufacturers serving local and export markets, but their presence alone does not create a mass market. Locally made clothing prices cover more than design: fabric, labour, rent, equipment, packaging, distribution, financing, taxes and small production runs all add costs.

Small-run designers often face higher unit costs than traders importing in bulk. Manufacturers may also depend on imported fabrics and accessories, so making clothes in Kenya does not mean most value is created locally. Limited or inconsistent textile supplies leave producers vulnerable to global prices and exchange-rate shifts.



Consumers value variety, fit, durability and convenience. Patriotism alone won't build loyalty; brands need appealing, fairly priced clothing with consistent sizing, reliable availability and reasons to return, such as distinctive design, cultural identity, durability, workplace suitability or easy alterations.

The goal is not merely to persuade Kenyans to buy local, but to help businesses produce more desirable garments at competitive prices while offering consumers genuine choice.

A Clothing Industry Needs A Value Chain

The long-term opportunity is to link every stage, from raw material to finished product: farmers need reliable markets and suitable varieties; ginners need steady supply and working equipment; textile producers need competitive costs; garment makers need materials, skills, and machinery; and designers need partners who deliver consistent quality.

Weakness anywhere in the chain raises costs. Garment makers using unsuitable or unreliable fabric may lose price competitiveness; mills lacking demand cannot spread fixed costs, and farmers without dependable buyers have little incentive to improve production. Industrial policy must address these links rather than rely on one intervention to rebuild the sector.

Local manufacturers could compete in uniforms, workwear, schoolwear, basics and specialised garments where reliable supply and sizing matter. Designers may earn higher margins from limited collections, occasion wear and craftsmanship- or identity-led products. Businesses and buyers must test these options; success isn't guaranteed.

Government procurement can support demand when local products meet quality and value-for-money standards, but local-content policies require transparent rules and monitoring. Public institutions should not have to buy unsuitable, overpriced products, and procurement should not needlessly hinder capable Kenyan firms.

The Price Of Looking Good

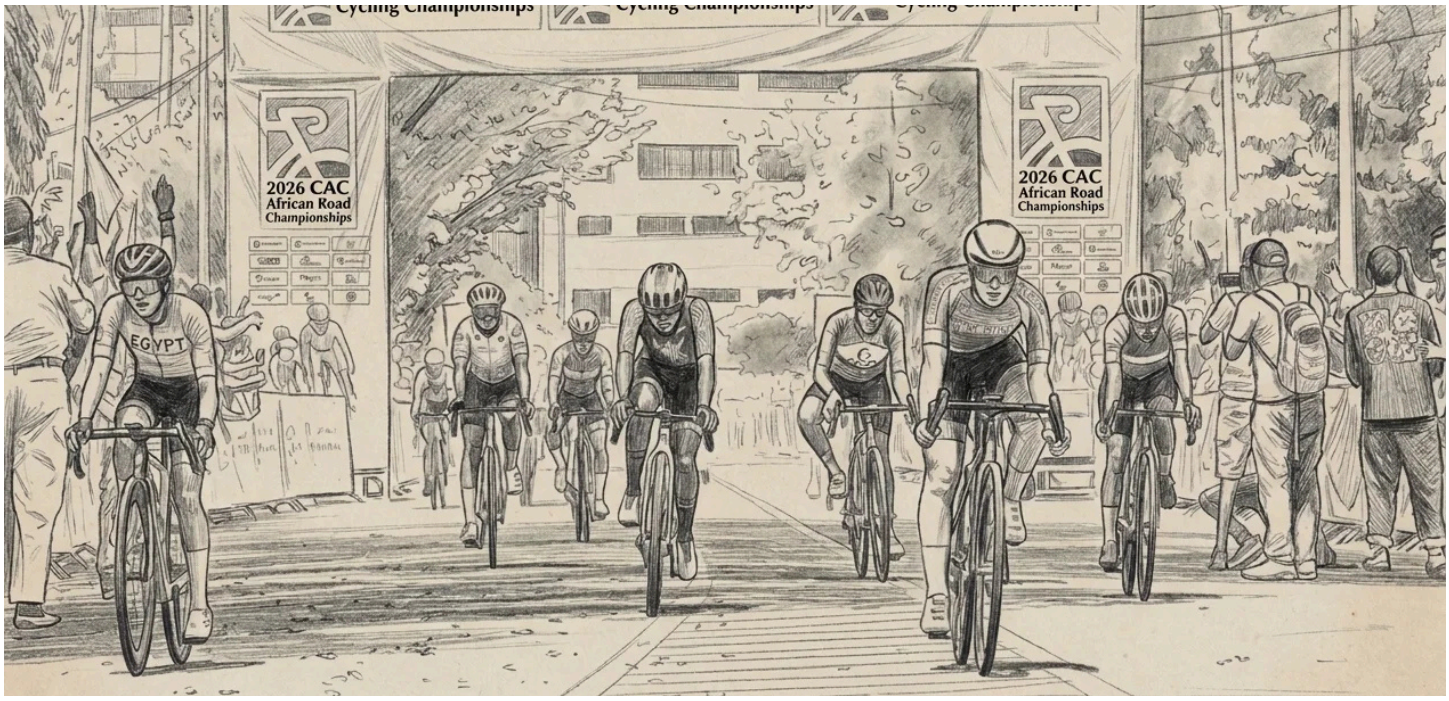
Clothing conveys belonging, confidence, professional identity and taste — not merely protection from weather. On tight budgets, young consumers navigate these pressures and fast-changing digital trends. Second-hand finds offer unique styles; locally designed clothes express identity and support homegrown creativity.

Reuse extends garment life, but its environmental benefits depend on imported items' durability, resale or repurposing potential, and end-of-use waste. Kenya needs evidence on lifecycle impacts and sorting, disposal, and textile-waste costs — not assumptions that second-hand imports or local production are inherently sustainable.

A sound clothing strategy must balance affordability, traders' livelihoods, local manufacturers' competitiveness, designers' growth and responsible waste management. These goals may conflict, but need not be mutually exclusive.

Success isn't mitumba's disappearance or everyone buying local. It's affordable, reliable local clothing without destroying livelihoods before alternatives exist. Until household incomes and production costs improve, calls to buy local will struggle against market realities.

Beyond the Finish Line: Can Kenya build a cycling economy?



Kenya's sporting identity is closely tied to distance running, which has built its reputation and supported training camps, sponsorships and sports tourism.

Cycling offers broader potential, linking competition with retail, coaching, tourism, event management, transport, fitness and athlete development in a growing international sport.

Kenya hosted the African Road Cycling Championships for the third consecutive year. The 2026 event ran in Kisumu from October 21 to 25, with junior, under-23 and elite races. The organiser, African Cycling Confederation, expected about 1,000 cyclists, officials, supporters and other visitors.

The championships raise a broader question: can Kenya develop cycling into a sustainable sport and economic activity whose benefits last beyond race days?

The Economics Of Hosting A Race

A continental championship brings visitors who need accommodation, meals, transport and technical services. Officials and organisers require venues and logistics, while spectators spend on hospitality and attractions. Local businesses may benefit, and the host city gains exposure to potential visitors.

Before the Kisumu championships, organisers and county officials highlighted tourism and business opportunities.

Kenya reported an estimate of more than KSh80 million in tourism-related earnings from the previous edition in Kwale County. This is an estimate, not an independently verified measure of net impact. Its calculation, the share retained locally and the public and private hosting costs all matter.

A busy hotel or restaurant alone does not prove a strong return on public investment. Spending may shift from other places or dates, while hosting incurs costs for security, traffic, roads, infrastructure and administration. Assessment should compare additional economic activity with total costs and identify who benefited.

Kisumu can document the event's results: how many visitors came specifically for the championships, how long they stayed, and what local accommodation, transport, food and equipment businesses earned.

It should also record public spending and which facilities will remain useful. These findings can help future hosts decide whether and how to invest in cycling events.

From An Event To An Industry

The greater opportunity lies in economic activity between championships. Competitive cycling needs bicycles, gear, maintenance, coaching, nutrition, medical care, training facilities and events. Recreational cycling also supports guided rides, rentals, repairs, clubs, safe routes and tourism.



Kenya need not manufacture every component or launch a professional team overnight.

Local businesses can provide repairs, retail, event logistics, coaching, hospitality and tours, while clubs and schools grow participation and talent. The priority is building repeat customers and viable businesses, not relying solely on sponsorships or public events.

Tourism is worth exploring. Kenya's varied landscapes, highlands, coast, and lakes could attract local and international cyclists if routes are safe, services are reliable, and communities benefit.

Race visitors might return for tours or training camps, depending on the quality of the experience, marketing, transport, accommodation, and support.

After Kisumu, the championships could launch a broader programme linking cycling with Lake Victoria tourism, hospitality and regional travel.

This requires evidence of demand — not the assumption that one event creates a destination — and partnerships among county authorities, tourism operators, cycling groups and businesses.

The Barriers Are On The Road, Too

Cycling's commercial potential depends on safe riding conditions, especially where cyclists share roads with fast traffic and have little protection.

Poor road surfaces, inadequate shoulders, dangerous junctions and weak enforcement can discourage participation and make organised rides difficult to sustain.

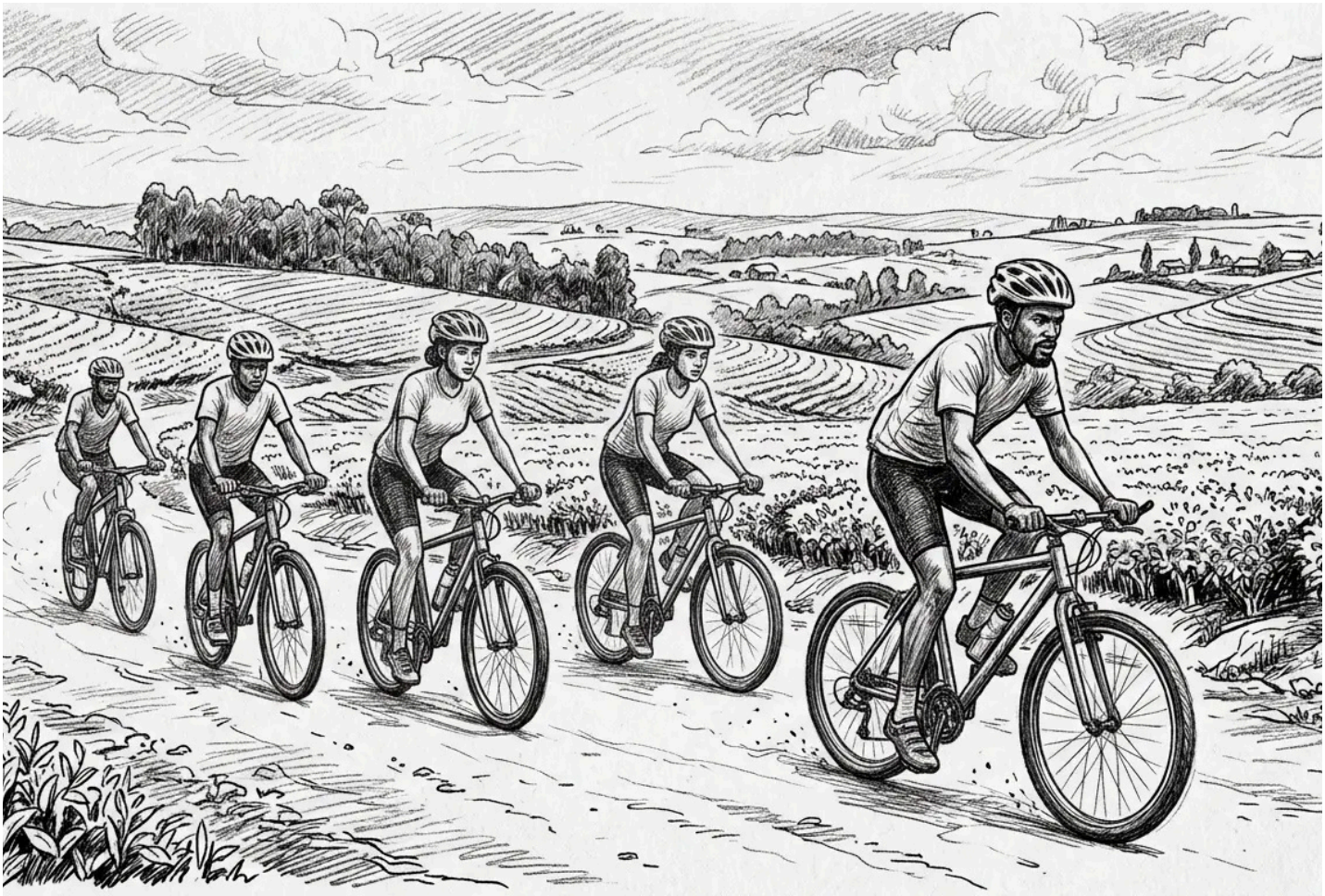
Equipment costs also create a barrier. Competitive cycling requires more than access to a standard bicycle: riders need discipline-specific equipment, maintenance, protective gear, and access to coaching and competition.

Families and young athletes may struggle to meet these costs, while clubs need sponsors, facilities and reliable programmes to develop talent over several years.

A successful cycling ecosystem goes beyond elite competition: schools and clubs introduce young riders, local races help them improve, coaches and mechanics build expertise, and sponsors fund teams and events with measurable audiences.

Talent identification is only the beginning if athletes lack the resources and competitive opportunities to progress.

The international dimension matters as well. The African championships bring together riders from countries with established cycling programmes, offering Kenyan athletes exposure to different competition standards and pathways. But hosting an event does not replace sustained investment in training, coaching, equipment, and participation.



The question is whether Kenya can build the domestic structure needed to turn occasional performances into long-term development.

What Should the Public Receive?

Sporting events often depend on a combination of public support, private sponsorship, commercial partnerships and the work of sporting federations. Each source has a role, but the arrangement should be transparent.

Public money may be justified where an event generates measurable economic activity, expands participation, improves facilities or strengthens the country's international sporting position. It is less convincing when only organisers know the costs and the expected benefits remain vague.

Scrutinize legacy claims too: race-ready roads may not become lasting cycling assets, temporary hotel occupancy may not signal sustainable tourism, and successful championships may not expand the competitive athlete pool.

The legacy must be demonstrated through what remains after the visitors leave. For Kisumu, that could mean publishing a post-event report with visitor numbers, estimated spending, public costs, local supplier participation, media reach and plans for future cycling activity.

It could also mean creating a calendar of local events, building partnerships with clubs and schools, and identifying safe routes that support both recreation and tourism. These are proposals to evaluate, not outcomes to assume in advance.

Kenya's reputation in sport gives it an advantage, but reputation alone does not build an industry.

Athletics offers a useful lesson in the value of sustained training environments and international visibility, while also reminding policymakers that success requires institutions and pathways beyond a single competition.

The Finish Line Of The African Road Cycling

Championships should therefore mark the beginning of a more demanding assessment.

If Kisumu turned the event into repeat business for local enterprises, stronger community participation, safer cycling opportunities and a credible pathway for athletes, Kenya will have gained more than the prestige of hosting another continental competition.

It will have taken a step toward building a cycling economy—one whose value is measured not only in medals or visitor estimates, but in the people, businesses, and sporting opportunities that remain long after the race is over.



Rescue teams in Eastleigh getting a trapped man out of the rubble of the building under construction that collapsed.

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