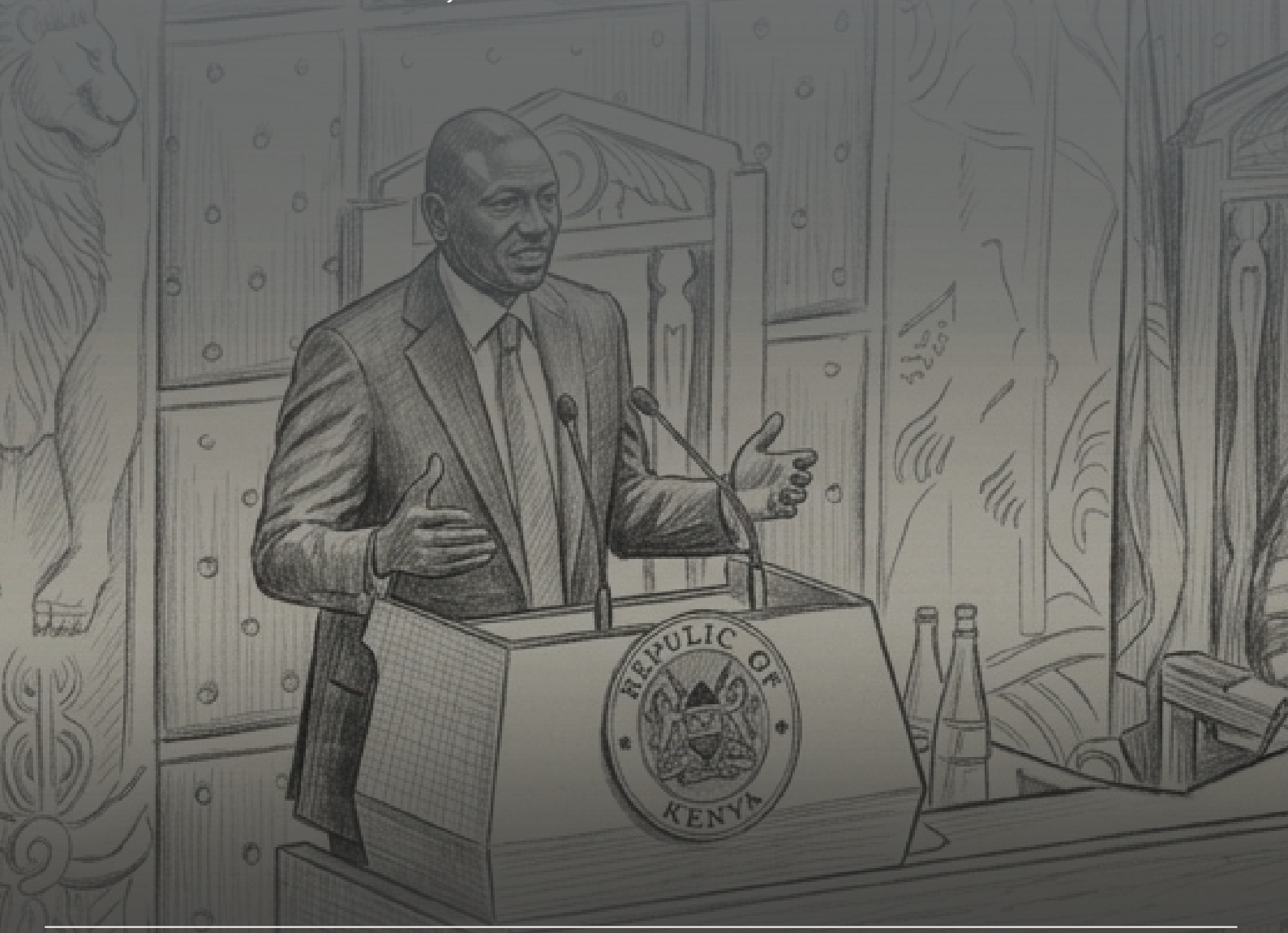
The Chronicle
WEEKLY

ISSUE 0024 NOVEMBER 16, 2026

What to watch in Ruto's last State of the Nation before 2027 poll

ON NOVEMBER 18, THE PRESIDENT DELIVERS HIS FINAL FIRST-TERM ADDRESS BEFORE KENYANS VOTE IN AUGUST 2027. WE CHECK WHAT WAS PROMISED LAST YEAR, WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS SO FAR, AND THE NUMBERS TO WATCH.



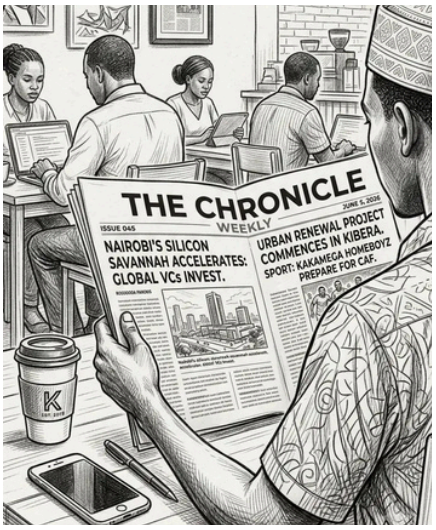
Economy is growing, why are Kenyans finding it harder to get ahead?

THE PBO RAISES AN IMPORTANT ISSUE: WHY AN ECONOMY CAN KEEP GROWING WITHOUT GENERATING ENOUGH PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT, AND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE.

Affordable housing has a buyer problem, not just a construction problem

THE CONVERSATION HAS CONCENTRATED ON HOW MANY UNITS ARE BEING CONSTRUCTED. THE PBO ASKS HOW MANY COMPLETED HOUSES CAN ACTUALLY BE SOLD TO THE TARGET POPULACE.

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Affordable housing has a buyer problem, not just a construction problem

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The sports we don't watch may be the next sporting opportunity?

From university kabaddi to a national pool circuit, emerging sports need pathways, not just tournaments.

Editorial Note



The Chronicle Weekly is the flagship publication of *The Chronicle Kenya*, Kenya's trusted digital news platform owned by *StrategiCrest Ltd.*

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.

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Measuring what matters

Every government publishes numbers. The harder question is whether those numbers measure what people actually need.

That question runs through this issue of *The Chronicle Weekly*. On Wednesday, President William Ruto delivers his final State of the Nation address before Kenyans vote in August 2027.

Our lead Perspective does not try to predict the speech. It sets out what he promised a year ago on roads, the railway, fertiliser, irrigation and teachers, and what the public record shows so far, so that the address can be tested against evidence rather than applause. A law is not a road, and a launch is not a railway.

The same test applies across these pages. The economy is growing, yet the Parliamentary Budget Office's November reports show productivity falling and a shrinking share of working-age Kenyans taking part in the labour force.

More than a million people have registered for affordable housing, but registering is not buying. Kenya is preparing to take over health services that the United States has helped to finance, and the question is whether the budget has made room for them.

Carbon credits are being generated at scale, and the question is who sees the money. Even in our Life & Culture and Sports pages, the issue is whether the places and pathways exist behind the enthusiasm.

Our Data Story adds the political frame. TIFA's latest poll has the President and Senator Edwin Sifuna level at 31 per cent, with 15 per cent of Kenyans still undecided. Nine months from the vote, that is a large pool of people who will be deciding on what they can verify.

It is the standard we set for ourselves as well: support the ambition, interrogate the delivery.

As the campaign gathers pace, our sister publication, *The Ballot*, will carry that approach into the choices before voters.

INTRODUCING

THE BALLOT

Beyond the Campaign Into the Choices

Kenya is heading into a defining **election in 2027** — and *The Chronicle* is launching a new, special publication to help you make sense of it all.

The Ballot is a semi-monthly election intelligence publication that will examine the big questions: who wants to govern, what they're offering, how they've performed, and what it means for Kenya's future.

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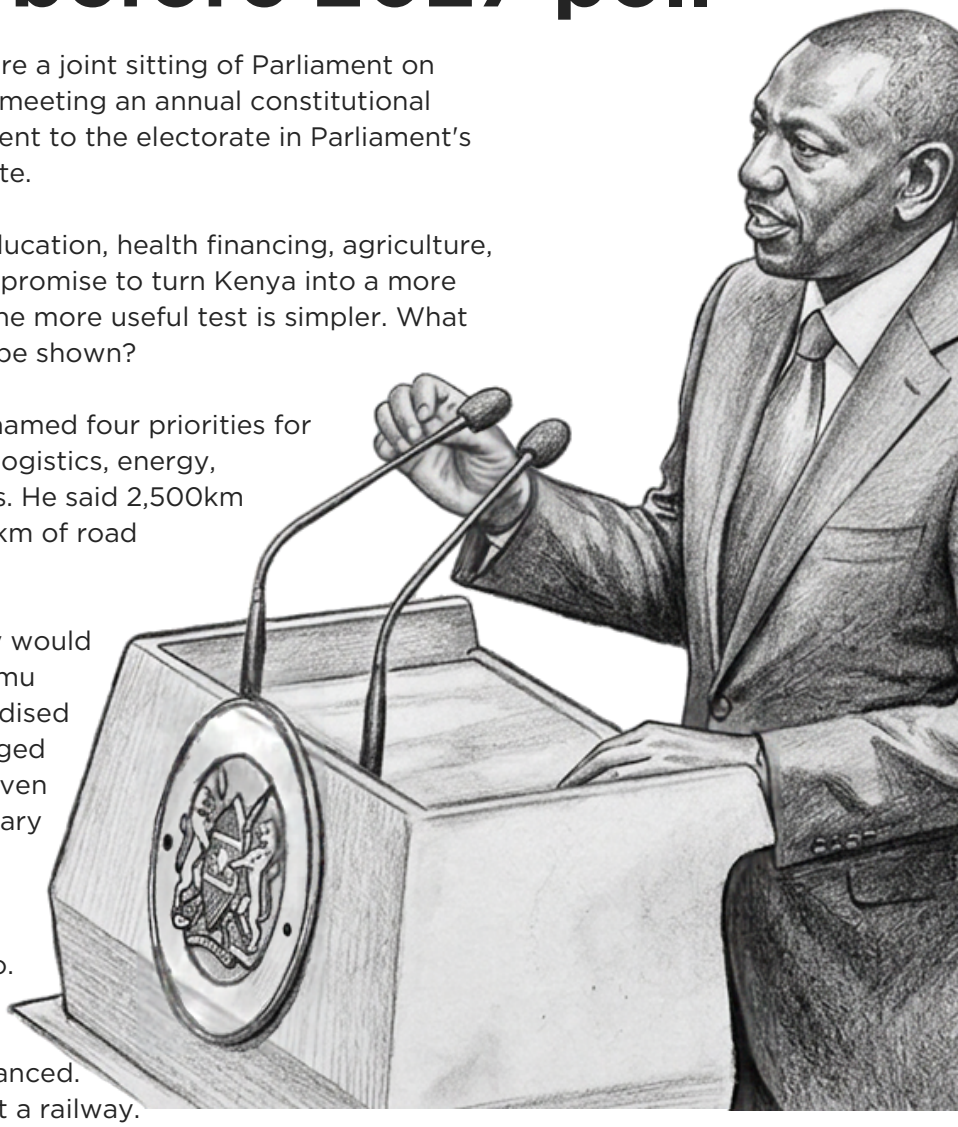
Read The First Edition:



What to watch in Ruto's last State of the Nation before 2027 poll

When President William Ruto stands before a joint sitting of Parliament on November 18, he will be doing more than meeting an annual constitutional duty. He will be making his closing argument to the electorate in Parliament's chamber, nine months before Kenyans vote.

He will have plenty to claim: reforms in education, health financing, agriculture, housing, energy and infrastructure, and a promise to turn Kenya into a more productive, industrialised economy. But the more useful test is simpler. What did he promise a year ago, and what can be shown?



In his November 20, 2025 address, Ruto named four priorities for the next phase: education, transport and logistics, energy, and irrigation. Several came with numbers. He said 2,500km of highway would be dualled and 28,000km of road tarmacked over ten years.

He promised the Standard Gauge Railway would be extended from Naivasha towards Kisumu and Malaba, and 12.5 million bags of subsidised fertiliser distributed in 2026. He also pledged 2.5 million acres under irrigation within seven years, and 24,000 more teachers by January 2026.

The bill, by his own estimate, was at least Sh5 trillion. There is movement to point to. The National Infrastructure Fund is law, SGR construction has begun, fertiliser was released, and several dams have advanced. But a law is not a road, and a launch is not a railway. Those gaps are what Wednesday's speech should close.

The Four Priorities

Education: the money is up. Is the classroom?

Ruto reported that the education budget rose from Sh490 billion in 2021 to more than Sh700 billion in 2025. Last year he said 76,000 teachers had been hired, with 24,000 more to come by January 2026.

Parents will want to know whether those teachers are in classrooms, and on what terms. The sector still faces disputes over capitation, teacher shortages, the rollout of Competency-Based Education, and university financing, and the government has had to address concerns about teachers on internship contracts.

Listen for: what was actually spent rather than budgeted; how many of the promised 24,000 teachers were deployed; how many are permanent and pensionable; capitation disbursed to schools; university funding.

Transport: launches versus finished roads

The SGR extension was launched in March 2026, and Kenya Railways says construction on the Naivasha–Kisumu section began in July. That is real progress, but it does not yet say how much track is laid or when trains will run.

The roads record is harder to read. The State Department for Roads reports 2,089.25km built across the three financial years from 2023/24 to 2025/26, with 189.83km rehabilitated and 48 bridges.

That shows activity, but the figures predate the 28,000km programme and cannot be counted against it without a breakdown.

Listen for: kilometres completed under the 28,000km programme, highways actually dualled, SGR physical progress, costs, financing and revised completion dates.



Agriculture and irrigation: from the harvest to the plate

Last year, Ruto cited maize output rising from 44 million bags in 2022 to a projected 70 million. The Treasury's 2026/27 budget statement puts 2025 output at 67 million bags, with imports down to 3.3 million bags from 9.9 million in 2022. That is encouraging, but it falls short of the 70 million target.

On fertiliser, the Ministry of Agriculture said in January that the 12.5 million bags had been released for the long rains. Release is not receipt. The test is how many bags reached registered farmers in time for planting.

Irrigation is the longest bet: 50 mega dams and 200 medium and small ones. Thwake and Mwache have advanced, though the government concedes funding and resettlement problems. Dams under construction add no irrigated acres until they are finished.

Listen for: final 2025 and projected 2026 maize output, fertiliser actually collected, new irrigated acreage, dams completed and operating, and what food prices have done.

Energy: more capacity, but cheaper and more reliable power?

The regulator, EPRA, reports installed capacity of 3,987.2 MW as of June 2026, up 3.81 per cent in a year, with renewables supplying 81.13 per cent of generation. Capacity is not the same as supply, however. Manufacturers and small businesses care about price and outages, and households about connection costs.

Listen for: capacity commissioned since November 2025, transmission and distribution completed, new household connections, reliability, and tariffs.

The Reforms People Feel At Home

Health. The Ministry of Health says 31.39 million Kenyans have registered with the Social Health Authority (SHA), KSh147.37 billion has been paid in claims, and 11,034 facilities are contracted.

Registration is not treatment. Patients want to know whether hospitals are accepting their cover and being paid on time, whether medicines are in stock, and whether families still pay heavily out of pocket. Counties, which run most public facilities, are central to that answer.

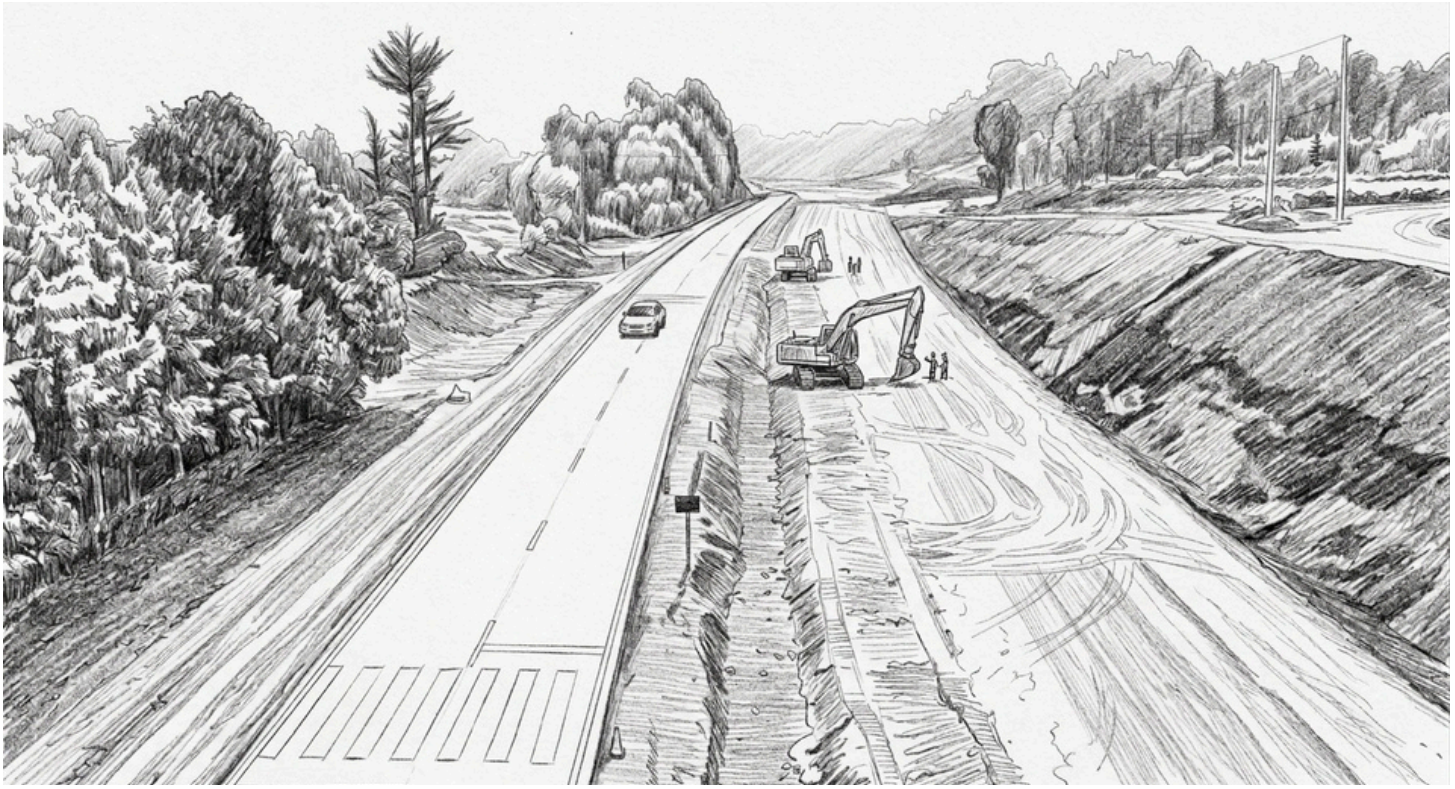
Listen for: active membership, claims settled and arrears owed, medicine availability, and how many poor households have premiums paid for them.

Jobs. The 2026 Economic Survey recorded 822,100 new jobs in 2025, taking recorded employment to 21.6 million. But 87.2 per cent of the new jobs were informal, meaning irregular income, little security, and no social protection for most.

Listen for: formal versus informal job numbers, wage growth, youth employment, and results from government job programmes.

The Money Behind The Promises

Ruto's Sh5 trillion estimate rests on two vehicles: the Sovereign Wealth Fund and the National Infrastructure Fund.



The NIF Act was signed in March 2026, and the fund holds Sh340 billion in seed capital.

In October, its chief executive said that the money is going first into domestic government bonds. By the fund's own account, deployment of the full amount is expected to finish only by June 2027.

In practical terms, the NIF is unlikely to have built much by polling day, and its first act has been to lend to the same government whose borrowing it was meant to ease.

A parliamentary committee has also flagged gaps in its safeguards. The fund may well prove a sound instrument, but for now it is a promise.

The wider picture is sobering. The 2026/27 Budget Policy Statement projects a fiscal deficit of 5.3 per cent of GDP, financed by domestic and external borrowing.

Kenyans need to hear how infrastructure ambitions fit alongside debt service, pending bills and taxes.

Listen for: the latest fiscal outturn, debt and debt-service figures, pending bills, projects the NIF has actually financed, and the rules governing it.

Beyond The Projects

Article 132 requires the President to report on measures taken and progress made towards realising the national values and principles of governance, and on Kenya's international obligations.

The address is therefore also an account of governance, integrity, security and public institutions. The President should say what has become of audit queries, investigations and the recommendations of oversight bodies.

What Can Kenyans Expect Before August 2027?

Not everything will be finished, and no fair observer expects it. The 28,000km road programme, the irrigation drive and the railway extension run well past one election cycle.

But progress can still be measured: financing in place, schedules published, milestones reached and honestly reported.

Three questions will do. What has been delivered since November 2025? What is unfinished, and why? And what can Kenyans realistically expect to see before they vote?

The commitments are on the record, the budgets are published, and the projects launched. Ruto will give his account on Wednesday. The country has the figures to test it.

The measure of this presidency will not be the promises made or the speeches given, but whether public services work better, businesses can grow, young people can find decent work, and households can afford more.

The question is no longer what the President intends to do. It is what he can prove he has done.

Economy is growing, why are Kenyans finding it harder to get ahead?



Kenya's economy continues to grow, but the key question is whether growth is raising productivity, creating meaningful work and enabling more working-age people to participate in economic activity.

The numbers make this increasingly urgent. Economic performance is often measured by growth rates, investment and major infrastructure projects.

These matter, but do not show whether the economy is becoming better at turning labour and capital into goods, services, incomes and opportunities. Growth can come from adding resources without using them more effectively.

That distinction underlies a warning in the Parliamentary Budget Office's November 2026 report on the budget options for FY 2027/2028.

It cites declining labour force participation, rising unemployment and falling total factor productivity (TFP) — trends that raise concerns about the quality and sustainability of growth.

Growth Is Not Productivity

Kenya's real GDP grew by an average of about 4.6 per cent between 2017 and 2025, below the Fourth Medium Term Plan's 6.5 per cent ambition.

The problem is not only slower-than-target growth, but also weak productivity gains from existing resources. TFP measures how effectively an economy combines labour and capital to produce output, beyond increases in those inputs.

The PBO says Kenya's TFP rose from 874.7 in 2015 to 952.5 in 2018, then fell to 739.0 in 2025—a 15.5 per cent decline over the decade.

Annual TFP growth, around 3 per cent in 2018 and 2019, contracted sharply in 2020, recovered in 2021 and slowed to about 0.5 per cent in 2025.

This does not mean Kenya's total output is falling. Rather, the country is getting less additional output from its labour, capital, technology and other resources. Growth increasingly depends on adding inputs instead of using them more effectively.

Without productivity gains, it may be harder to raise incomes, compete in export markets and create better-paying jobs.

Labour Market Signals

The PBO reports that labour force participation fell from 72.3 per cent in 2017 to 67.4 per cent in 2025, while unemployment rose from 3.5 to 5.4 per cent. The employment-to-population ratio also declined, from 69.7 to 63.7 per cent.



Unemployment counts people without work who are actively seeking it and available to work. Participation measures the working-age population that is employed or looking for work.

Its decline suggests the challenge goes beyond those counted as unemployed, raising questions about who can enter, remain in or return to productive activity.

The figures alone do not explain the decline. More research is needed into the experiences of young people, women, informal workers, people outside urban centres and those who have stopped looking for work.

They do show why unemployment alone cannot capture labour-market conditions. Kenya must assess not just how many jobs are created, but who can access them, how productive they are and whether they improve household incomes.

Connecting Investment To Opportunity

The PBO points to better infrastructure, affordable energy, technology adoption, skills, industrialisation and stronger support for productive sectors and micro, small and medium enterprises as ways to reverse the slowdown. Their impact depends on how they work together.

Manufacturers need affordable energy; farmers need reliable irrigation, storage, transport and markets. Skills training matters only when jobs demand those skills.

Small businesses need more than registration or loans: they also require infrastructure, customers, predictable regulation and investment in better equipment and processes.

Productivity, therefore, depends on the conditions in which businesses operate, and workers earn.

Kenya's plans recognise manufacturing, agriculture, technology, and MSMEs, but success should be measured by output per worker, competitiveness, wages, and employment.

Research and innovation are also important. The PBO estimates that research and development spending is about 0.8 per cent of GDP, below the 2 per cent target in the Science, Technology and Innovation Act.

It calls for stronger links between research, national priorities and commercial use.

Ideas raise productivity only when they lead to improved methods, products, services and businesses able to compete in larger markets.

Measuring More Than Growth

Kenya has ambitions for industrialisation, affordable housing, agricultural transformation, digital growth and job creation.

The question is whether it measures progress in ways that show how much productive capacity is being built.



The next phase of economic management should place greater emphasis on the quality of growth. That means tracking whether firms are becoming more productive, whether workers are moving into more secure, higher-value employment, whether technology is improving output, and whether investment is creating durable economic opportunities.

It also means examining how those gains are distributed. Growth that is concentrated in a few sectors or locations may raise national output without creating enough opportunities for the wider population.

The PBO's figures are a warning, not a full diagnosis. They do not prove that every government intervention has failed, nor do they identify a single cause of the productivity decline.

But they reveal a weakness in how we understand economic progress.

A growing economy is not necessarily a more productive one. And a country cannot sustainably improve living standards if a shrinking share of its working-age population is engaged in economic activity while productivity gains remain weak.

The more demanding measure of Kenya's economic progress is not simply how much the economy grows each year.

It is how much more value the country can create from its people, businesses, skills, technology and resources.

That is the growth question Kenya must now answer.

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Read The First Edition:



THE 2027 BALLOT

RUTO, SIFUNA TIED AS FRONT-RUNNERS

The latest opinion poll by TIFA suggests that the 2027 presidential race is now between President William Ruto and Nairobi Senator Edwin Sifuna. Other opposition leaders have seen their rating decline with 15% of Kenyans still undecided.

PRESIDENTIAL RACE





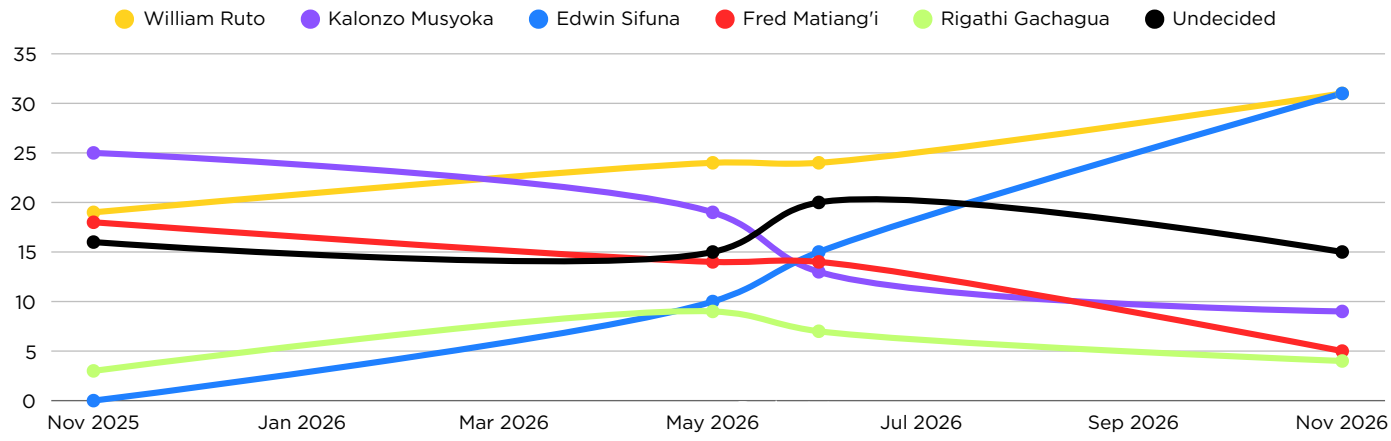








PRESIDENTIAL POPULARITY TREND OVER TIME



POPULARITY OF TOP ASPIRANTS BY REGION

	Central Rift	Coast	Lower Eastern	Mt Kenya	Nairobi	Northern	Nyanza	South Rift	Western
William Ruto	59%	40%	20%	11%	13%	62%	35%	29%	25%
Edwin Sifuna	16%	36%	8%	32%	39%	20%	33%	31%	55%
Kalonzo Musyoka	2%	3%	55%	6%	11%	3%	5%	12%	0%
Fred Matiang'i	4%	2%	2%	8%	10%	1%	12%	5%	0%
Rigathi Gachagua	1%	4%	1%	11%	3%	3%	1%	3%	0%
Undecided	16%	12%	10%	21%	17%	10%	12%	14%	14%

Source: TIFA, November 2026

Affordable housing has a buyer problem, not just a construction problem



Kenya's affordable housing programme is now judged not only by how many homes it builds, but by whether intended households can afford to buy them. Construction figures may look impressive while completed units remain unsold or unoccupied, limiting funds for future building.

The Parliamentary Budget Office's November 2026 expenditure report highlights this shift from construction to helping households purchase homes, and the gap between stated demand and actual purchasing power.

By mid-2026, about 1.26 million prospective beneficiaries had registered on Boma Yangu, where applicants save, select units and take part in allocation and financing. They had saved Sh5.47 billion, including Sh1.76 billion converted into purchase deposits. This shows strong interest, but not that all registrants can afford a home.

A Growing Pipeline, A Tougher Market

More than 260,000 units were under construction, up from 8,872 in 2022; the wider pipeline was nearly 300,000. The report anticipates about 45,000 completed units by December 2026 and another 15,000 by June 2027.

The challenge is moving these homes from construction sites to households. A home is affordable only when its price, deposit, financing and ongoing payments fit the buyer's means.

Yet mortgage-financed purchases account for just 3–5 per cent of housing acquisition, according to estimates cited by the PBO.

Rent-to-own represents 10–15 per cent, short-term instalments 8–12 per cent, and renting 55–65 per cent nationally and 80–90 per cent in urban areas. With ownership mortgages limited and renting widespread, registrants cannot be treated as guaranteed buyers.

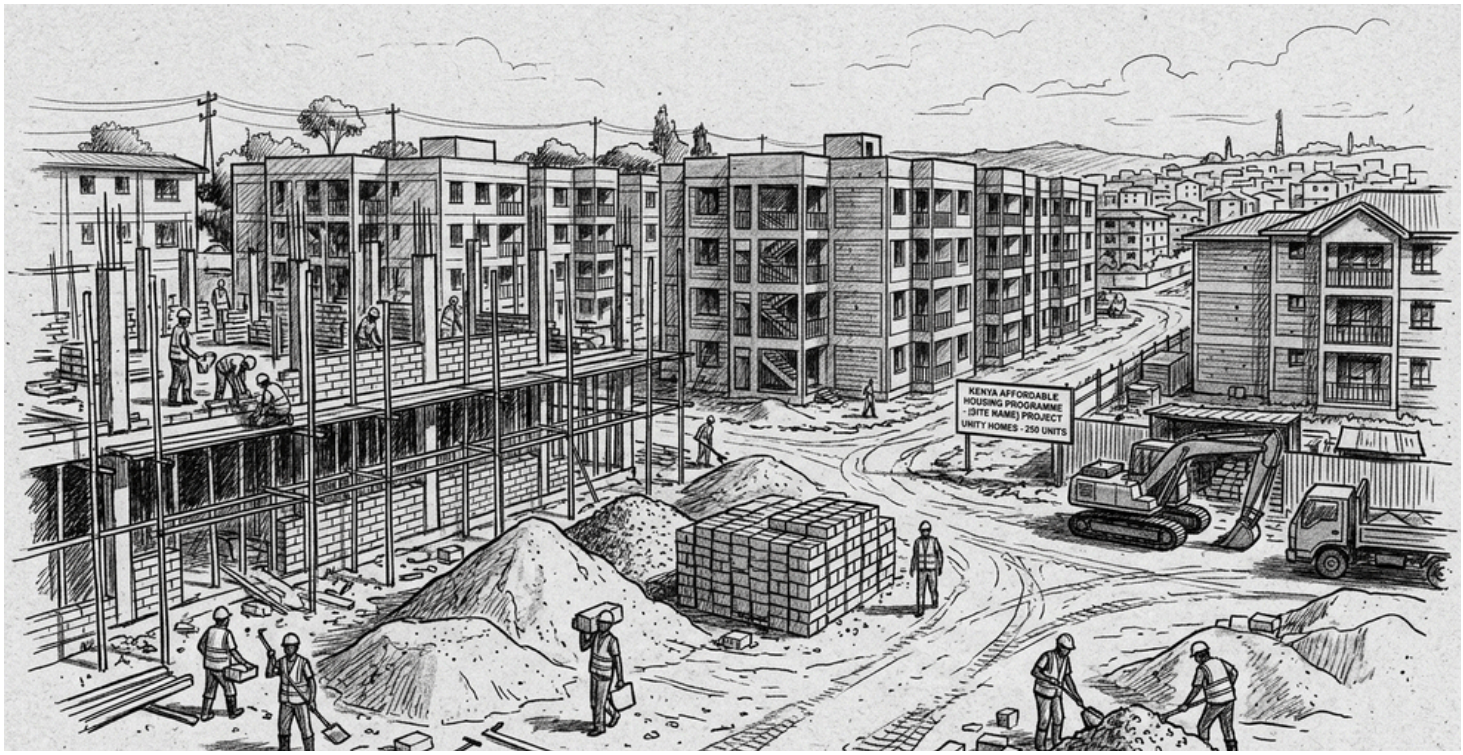
Assess Affordability Before Allocation

Applicants can currently select units before their ability to pay is assessed. They may choose homes beyond their means, resulting in failed allocations, late payments and vacancies.

The PBO recommends assessing finances before matching applicants to units. With consent, the Affordable Housing Board could work with banks, SACCOs and other regulated institutions to review income, transaction records, savings, obligations and repayment capacity.

Applicants could still choose locations, while unit size and price would reflect what they can afford.

The Affordable Housing Act, 2024, sets three income bands: social housing for those earning below Sh20,000 monthly; affordable housing for Sh20,000–Sh149,000; and affordable middle-class housing for incomes above Sh149,000.



At Sh20,000 a month, the 30 per cent benchmark implies payments of about Sh6,000. A conventional mortgage may still be unaffordable once interest, insurance and other costs are included. Financing therefore matters as much as construction.

Match Financing To Household Needs

The report proposes different pathways rather than one financing model for all. Households eligible for bank or SACCO loans could use mortgages for affordable and middle-class units.

The Government could work with the Kenya Mortgage Refinance Company and lenders to expand long-term products, improve credit guarantees for irregular-income borrowers and explore pension-fund financing for mortgage refinancing.

For lower-income social housing beneficiaries, especially those earning below Sh20,000, tenant-purchase schemes and deposit assistance may offer more manageable monthly payments. Encouraging cash purchases of affordable and middle-class units could also speed the return of funds to the Affordable Housing Fund.

Faster sales and repayments could help finance future construction. The PBO estimates these measures have no additional quantified budgetary cost, assuming they use existing Fund resources.

This does not make them administratively costless or guarantee results; it means they are expected to fit within current resources. Ultimately, the programme must be judged by whether it matches diverse household incomes with genuinely accessible homes.

A household earning Sh18,000 a month, a salaried worker earning Sh70,000 and a professional earning Sh200,000 do not face the same housing market. They do not have the same ability to raise deposits, qualify for credit or sustain monthly payments.

A programme that builds units without accurately matching them to these financial realities risks confusing supply with access.

The next phase therefore requires a more transparent account of what happens after registration. How many applicants have been assessed for affordability? How many have received allocations? How many have paid deposits?

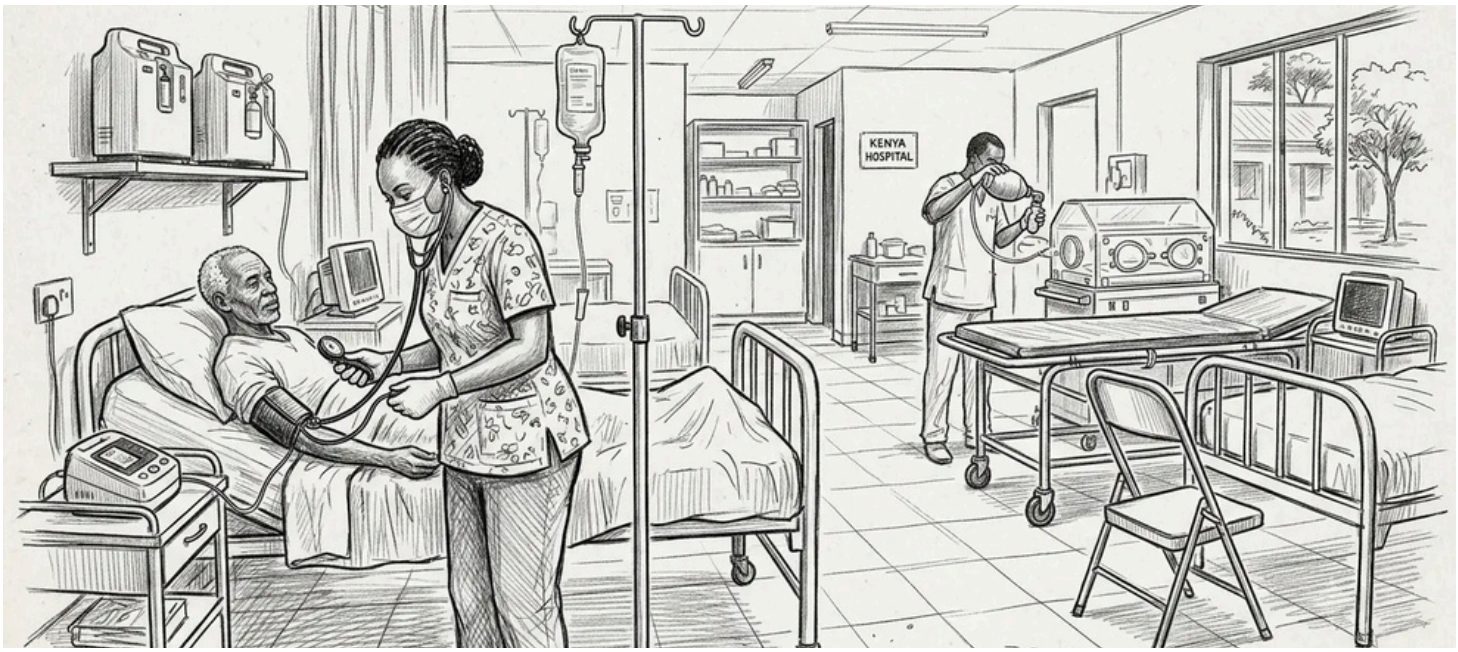
How many have completed purchases? How many units remain unsold or unoccupied? What are the monthly payment obligations across the different housing categories, and what proportion of intended beneficiaries can meet them?

These numbers will reveal whether the programme is moving beyond construction into actual housing access.

Kenya needs more adequate and affordable housing. The constitutional right to accessible and adequate housing cannot be realised through construction figures alone. It requires homes that people can afford to occupy, maintain and, where intended, own.

The programme's success will ultimately be measured not by the number of people who register their interest or the number of units announced, but by the number of households for whom the promise of affordable housing becomes a sustainable reality.

Kenya is taking over its health system; has it budgeted for the responsibility?



Kenya's health system is approaching a major transition. Over the next five years, the Government is expected to assume more of the financial and operational responsibilities currently supported by the United States, placing a greater burden on domestic institutions and public finances for essential services.

This is an important test of national ownership as essential services cannot depend indefinitely on external support, but taking responsibility does not guarantee the resources, systems or capacity to sustain them.

The Parliamentary Budget Office's November 2026 report outlines the transition under the Kenya–United States Government-to-Government Health Cooperation Framework.

This five-year partnership covers disease surveillance and outbreak response, laboratories, health-product supply chains, the workforce, digital infrastructure, and integration of priority disease programmes into Kenya's health financing and service delivery. Its central aim is to gradually transfer financing and implementation to the Kenyan Government.

The key question is whether domestic budgets, procurement and institutions can take on these responsibilities without disrupting services.

The Financing Burden Is Shifting

The PBO expects United States support to fall from US$414.294 million in 2026 to US$161.494 million in 2030.

Against the 2025 baseline, Kenya's additional health expenditure is projected to rise from Sh10 billion in 2027 to Sh20 billion in 2028, Sh35 billion in 2029 and Sh50 billion in 2030.

These funds must sustain ongoing services, not just new projects, including healthcare workers, medicines, laboratory services, digital systems and supply chains. Unlike time-limited development projects, these services must continue as donor funding declines.

United States support is also tied to Kenya meeting its co-investment commitments. If the Government misses them in a given calendar year, the United States may give nine months' notice to reduce or end funding, the PBO reports. Kenya must therefore both prepare for declining support and meet agreed commitments.

Medicines And Supply Chains

The agreement covers commodities for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria programmes, as well as maternal, newborn and child health. United States financing for specified commodities is expected to decline as Kenya's share rises. By 2030, Kenya's additional financing is projected at about US$59.8 million, increasing to US$74.8 million in 2031.

The United States plans to transfer procurement, warehousing and distribution of its commodities to the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) by 31 December 2026, supported by a framework and readiness assessment.



The PBO also calls for stronger traceability, including GS1-based systems to detect loss, diversion and falsified products. Even with funding, poor planning, unreliable suppliers, inadequate storage or weak distribution can cause shortages. Kenya must finance both medicines and the systems that deliver them.

The same applies to staffing. The PBO says the United States intends to fund 28,668 frontline healthcare-worker full-time equivalents in 2026 and 21,407 in 2027. As support declines, domestic institutions must sustain these services. Kenya must ensure facilities retain enough staff to provide care.

Budgets Must Match Responsibilities

The transition comes amid competing spending demands. The PBO cites high interest payments, rigid recurrent expenditure and pressure on public finances. Health must compete with debt, infrastructure, education and social protection.

An international commitment may appear in policy documents without being secured in predictable annual budgets. A sustainable transition requires clear allocations, timely releases, reliable procurement and accountability, not merely a headline pledge to increase domestic spending.

National and county governments must also coordinate. Facilities, staff, commodities, and budgets must work together. Central planning that is poorly aligned with county-level delivery could leave service gaps, even when funds are allocated.

The PBO's projections are a planning challenge, not proof that the transition is secure. The real test is whether funds are appropriated, released and turned into functioning services.

What Should Patients Expect?

Patients will judge the transition by whether public facilities have medicines, laboratories operate, surveillance and outbreak response are funded, frontline workers remain, and commodities arrive on time.

The Government should publish a transition scorecard detailing annual funding commitments, domestic funds secured, KEMSA and other institutions' readiness, and progress on workforce and commodity transfers.

Parliament should scrutinise whether the annual budgets align with the commitments made under the framework, while county governments and health facilities should be able to report where financing or operational gaps are emerging.

The broader principle is straightforward: domestic ownership of a health system is not demonstrated by transferring responsibility on paper. It is demonstrated by the ability to finance and deliver services reliably.

Kenya has a legitimate interest in reducing dependence on external funding and in building a health system sustained by its own institutions and resources. But the transition must not become an accounting exercise in which donor commitments decline faster than domestic capacity grows.

The real measure of success will be whether patients experience continuity of care, whether health workers have the resources to do their jobs, and whether essential services remain available throughout the transition.

In Numbers

31%

POPULARITY

The support that William Ruto and Edwin Sifuna have in the 2027 presidential race, according to the latest opinion poll by TIFA.

Sh34 million

FORFEITURE

The amount of money that The Court of Appeal has been ordered the Asset Recovery Agency to businessman Kepha Odiero.

Sh1.6 billion

FUNDING

The amount of money that UDA and ODM received from the Political Parties Fund during the 2025/26 Financial Year.

17

DEATHS

The number of rhinos that have died at the Ol Pejeta conservancy in the last 8 months with management saying there are now 179 animals.

Quote of the Week



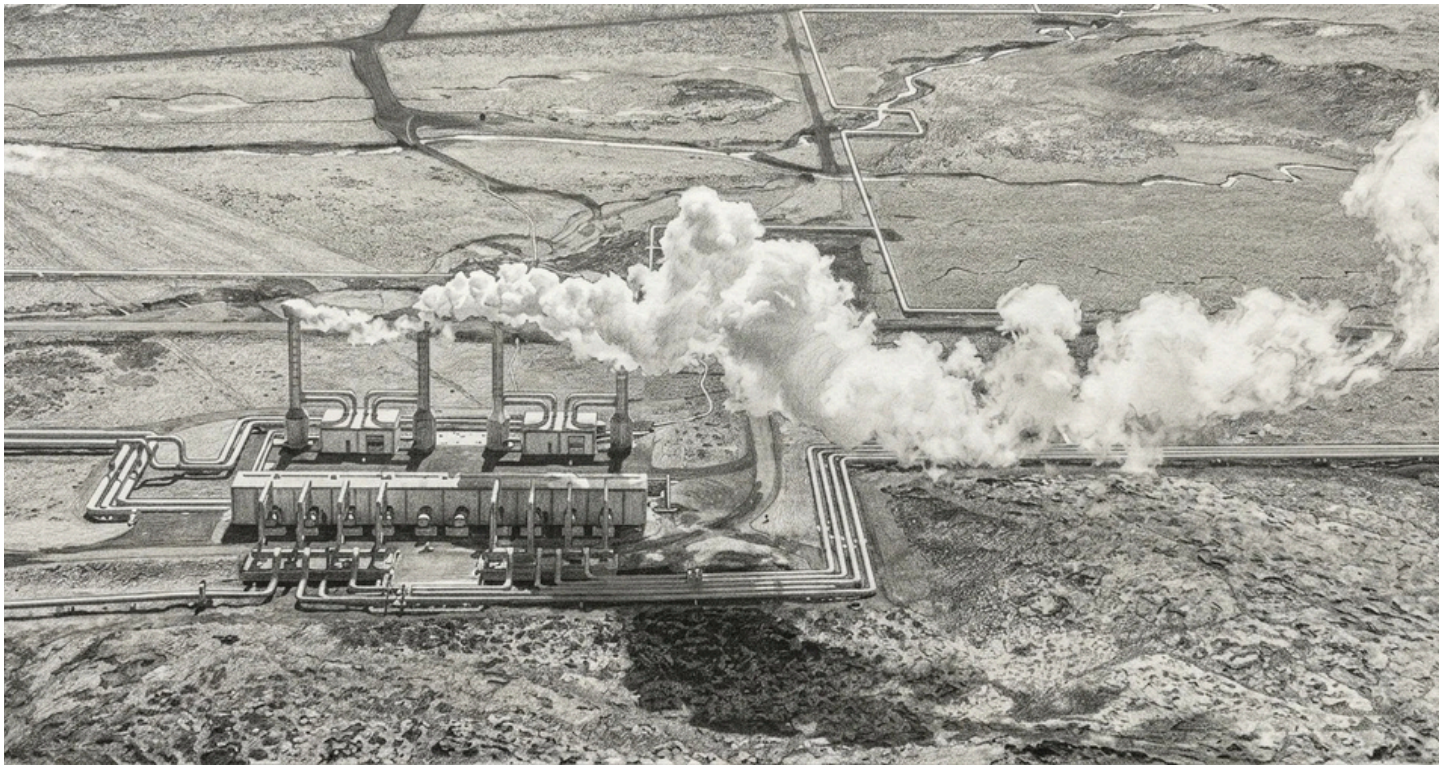
"We cannot speak of meaningful transformation while leaving out the very generation whose future is at stake. Development must be inclusive, leadership must be intergenerational, and opportunities must be created for young people to participate, contribute and lead.

- Mining Cabinet Secretary Hassan Joho

Advertisement



Kenya's carbon wealth: Who benefits when the credits are sold?



Kenya has an opportunity to turn its natural resources into a growing source of climate finance.

From forests and land restoration to agricultural projects that reduce emissions, the country already participates in a carbon market that could generate revenue for communities, investors, and the Government.

But as the market expands, a more important question is emerging: who benefits from the value created by Kenya's carbon credits, and how transparently is that value shared?

The Parliamentary Budget Office's November 2026 report identifies carbon markets as an immediate opportunity for climate financing.

It argues that the legal and institutional foundations are largely in place, but that administrative uncertainty, weak local verification capacity and unclear benefit-sharing arrangements are holding back the sector. The opportunity is significant. So is the need for accountability.

By February 2026, Kenya had generated 22.5 million carbon credits, valued at approximately US$147.3 million, according to the PBO.

The report also cites estimates that the country hosts 46 agriculture-related carbon projects on the Verra and Gold Standard registries.

Of these, 29 were registered or able to issue credits, generating an estimated 5.2 million credits annually, valued at US$27.2 million to US$89.2 million. A further pipeline of projects could add 8.3 million credits a year, potentially raising the agricultural portfolio's value to between US$79.3 million and US$246.4 million annually.

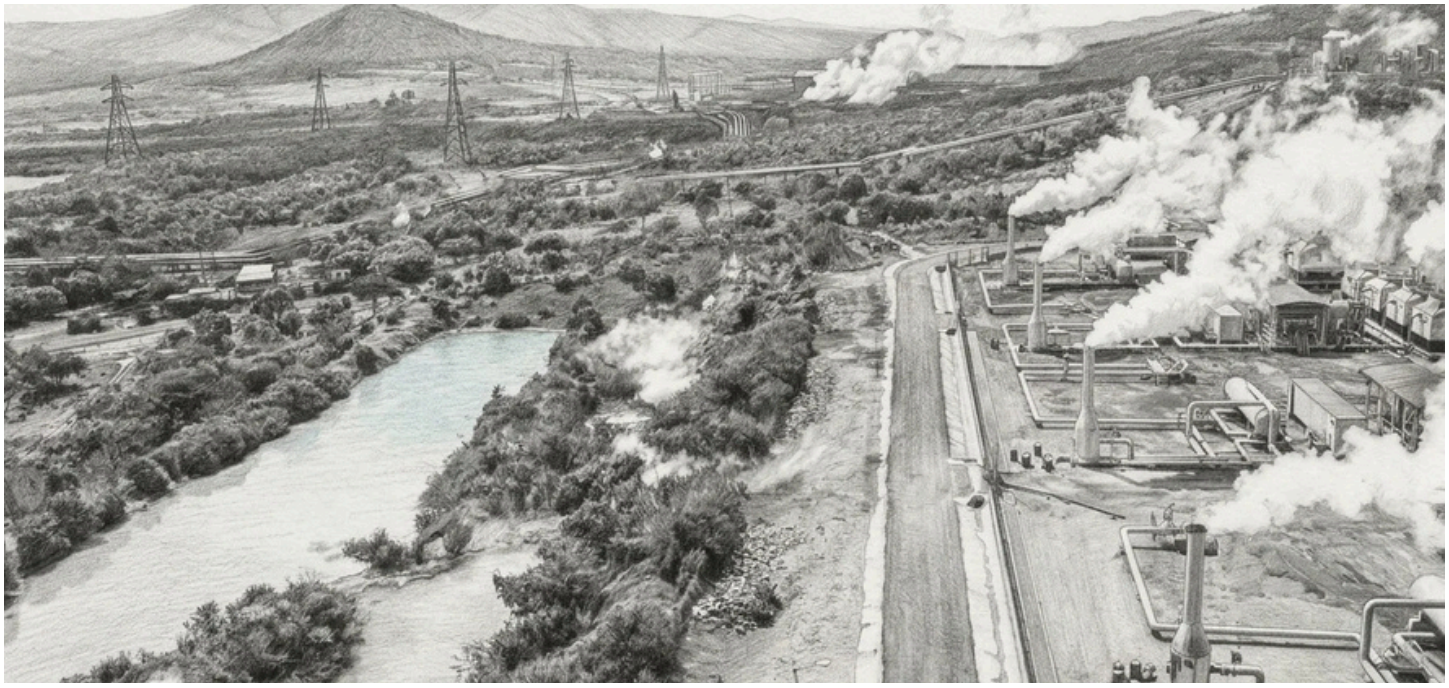
These are estimates, not guaranteed public revenues. The value of credits depends on project performance, verification, market demand and the prices buyers are willing to pay. But they demonstrate why carbon markets are becoming an increasingly important part of Kenya's climate and economic policy.

A Market With A Public Interest

Carbon credits represent verified reductions or removals of greenhouse gas emissions. Companies and other entities can purchase them to meet climate-related commitments or participate in carbon markets.

For Kenya, the opportunity is linked closely to its natural capital. The PBO notes that forestry and land-use projects have generated more than 99 per cent of the country's carbon credits since 2011.

These activities are connected to sectors and communities that depend on land, forests, water and agriculture.



The report also identifies the potential contribution of climate-smart agriculture. It cites projects in which improved agricultural practices have raised yields by 15–20 per cent.

The economic case is therefore not limited to the sale of credits. Properly designed projects could support better farming practices, land restoration, ecosystem protection and community resilience.

The PBO estimates that Kenya issued about 25 per cent of all African carbon credits and argues that the country is well placed to become a regional carbon trading hub.

But the growth of this market raises questions that the number of credits generated or their estimated market value cannot answer.

Who owns the carbon rights? How are landowners and communities involved in project design? What happens when a project operates on community land? How are benefits calculated and distributed? What information can residents access about the credits generated and the money received?

These questions determine whether carbon markets become a source of locally shared economic value or another system in which communities carry the burden while others control the commercial returns. The rules provide for benefit sharing. Implementation is the test.

Kenya's Climate Change Act, 2023, and the Carbon Markets Regulations, 2024, provide the legal framework for the sector. The PBO also points to Statutory Instrument 48 of 2025, which provides that 30 per cent of carbon credit revenue accrues to the Government through taxes, licences, and fees.

The report states that land-based projects must contribute at least 40 per cent of earnings to community development, while non-land-based projects must contribute at least 25 per cent.

These provisions matter because carbon markets are not merely private transactions: they rely on natural resources, land and ecosystems, and their legitimacy partly depends on whether connected communities share fairly in the benefits.

Yet the PBO identifies a gap between the existence of rules and the certainty required to implement them. One problem is the timing of authorisation.

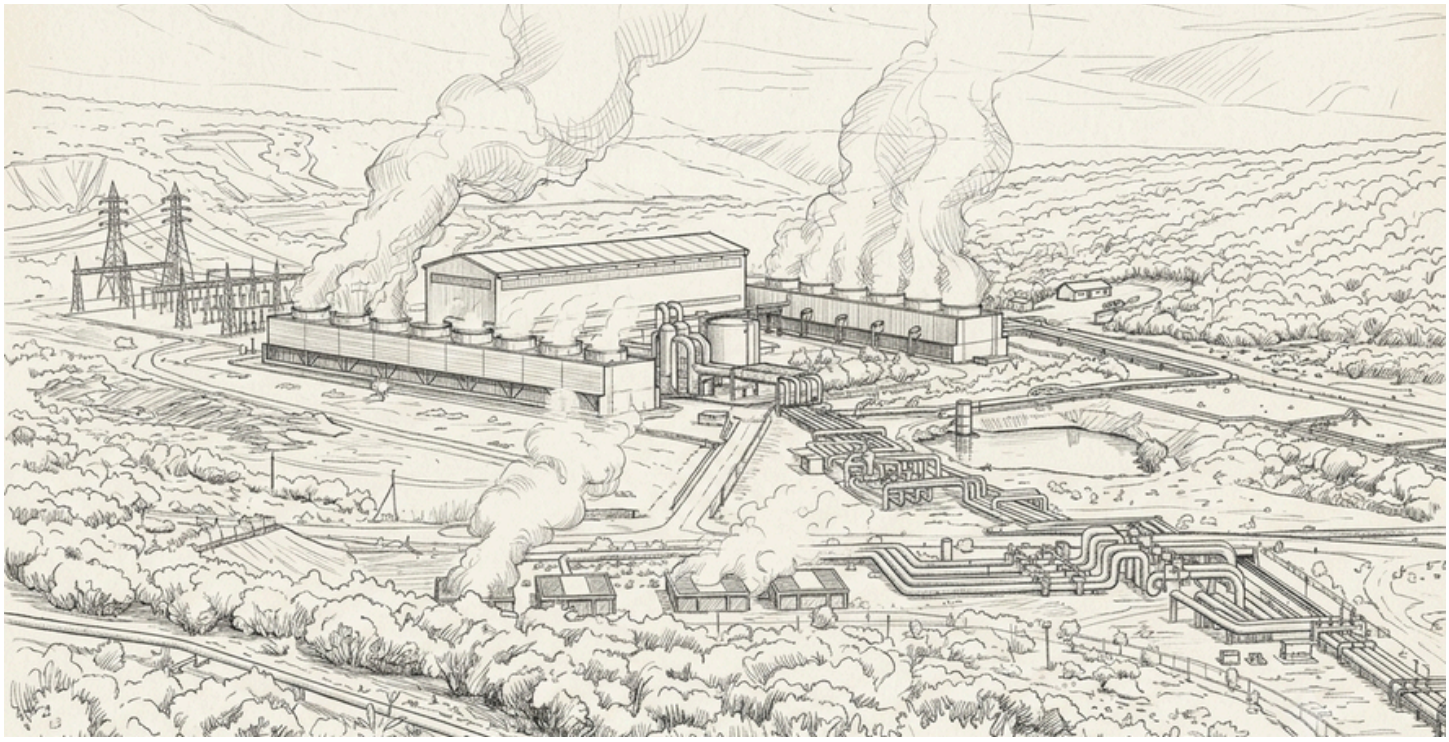
The report notes that Letters of Authorisation are issued after credits have been generated and verified. This means project developers may lack the certainty they need when seeking financing at the beginning of a project.

The PBO cites research identifying the absence of clear decision criteria and timelines as a major financing bottleneck for Article 6 projects. Other challenges include uncertainty over land rights, carbon credit ownership and taxation, and limited local verification capacity.

These are not merely technical obstacles. They affect who can participate in the market, how projects are financed and whether communities can independently establish what is being generated and what they are entitled to receive.

Transparency Must Extend To The Money

The PBO recommends that the Government issue Letters of Authorisation in advance, with published criteria and timelines.



It also recommends operationalising the carbon budget, publishing a whitelist of eligible projects, strengthening local verification, and clarifying rules for benefit-sharing disbursements.

The Government's 30 per cent share of carbon revenue should appear as a separate line in the national budget, enabling Parliament and the public to track receipts rather than having them obscured in broader categories.

The report does not estimate how much additional revenue this share could generate, a key limitation. Carbon market value is not equivalent to funds available to the Exchequer.

Community benefit-sharing also raises accountability concerns. The statutory requirement is meaningful only if communities can determine what they are owed, how payments are calculated, who receives them, and how funds are spent.

For projects on community or communal land, arrangements should be clear and accessible, including agreements, payment schedules, local development commitments, and dispute channels.

The Government, meanwhile, needs a transparent system to track the public share of revenue and ensure the administrative framework does not become a barrier to legitimate projects.

Turning Climate Value Into Local Development

The PBO notes that the 2024/25 Budget allocated Sh128 billion to environmental protection, water and natural resources, much of it directed towards water projects.

It also observes that the 2024 floods required resources to be diverted from health and education.

Carbon revenue could provide an additional source of financing for climate-related priorities. But the scale of that contribution will depend on how much revenue is actually realised, how consistently projects generate credits and how effectively proceeds are managed.

The opportunity should not be measured only by Kenya's position in the African carbon market or the value of credits generated. It should also be measured by improvements in local livelihoods, the restoration of degraded landscapes, resilience to climate shocks and the fairness of the arrangements through which communities participate.

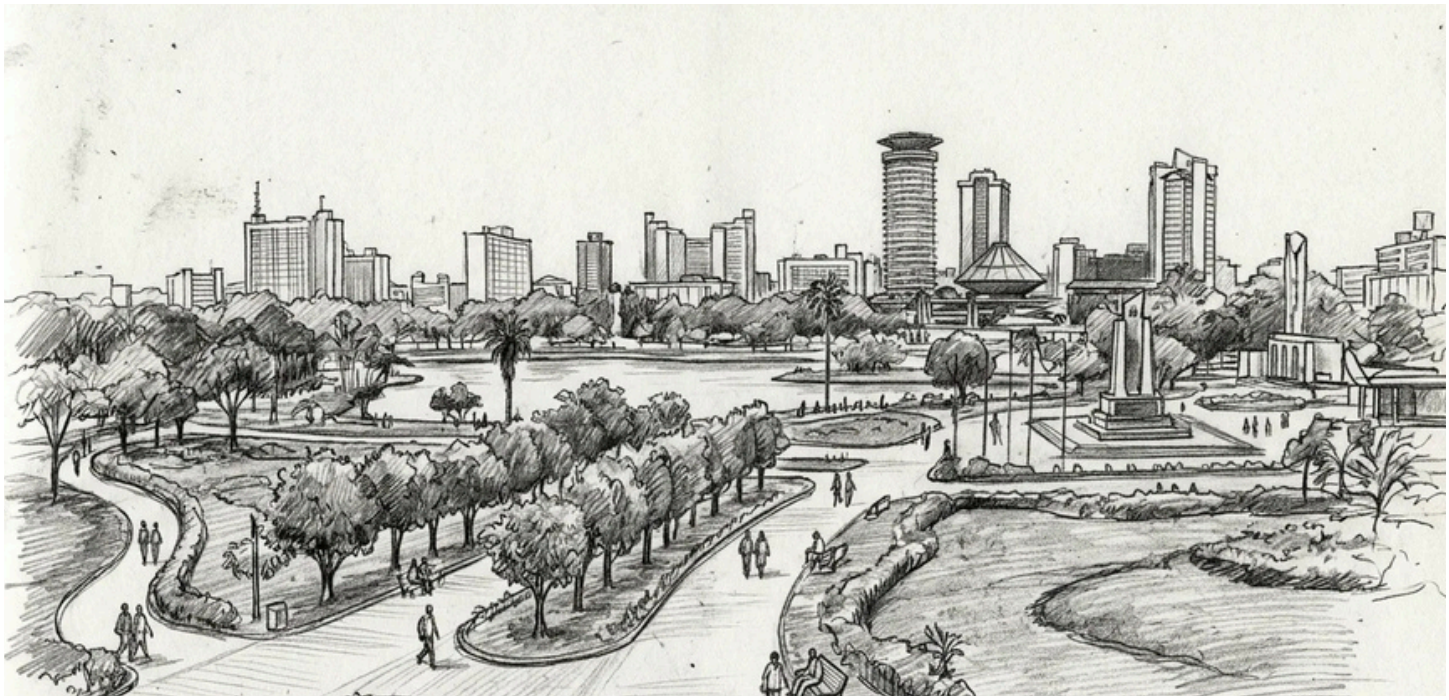
The next stage of the market requires more than attracting investors and issuing credits. It requires credible regulation, predictable authorisation, independent verification and public reporting. Most importantly, it requires a clear answer to who benefits.

Kenya's natural resources are not simply assets to be converted into tradable credits. They sustain communities, livelihoods and ecosystems. If carbon markets are to become a durable source of climate finance, the people connected to those resources must be able to see and verify the benefits.

The country has an opportunity to build a carbon market that attracts investment while supporting local development. Whether it succeeds will depend not only on the credits it sells, but on the value it returns to the people and places that make those credits possible.

The Chronicle WEEKLY

The disappearing third place: where do Kenyans meet outside home and work?



Some places rarely feature in discussions of economic growth, urban development or living costs, yet shape everyday life.

Parks, football grounds, libraries, community halls, markets and other gathering spots bring neighbours together, let friends meet without hosting, give children places to play, and help strangers become familiar. Sociologists call them “third places.”

Popularised by sociologist Ray Oldenburg, the concept describes informal social settings beyond home (the first place) and work (the second). They allow people to meet and build relationships without home or work obligations.

Third places have long been part of Kenyan communities, from public gardens and trading centres to sports grounds, halls, places of worship and roadside meeting points.

As towns and cities change, their availability and accessibility matter. The question is not just whether people have somewhere to go, but whether they can belong without paying for the privilege.

When Socialising Becomes A Purchase

For many urban Kenyans, meeting friends increasingly means entering a commercial space. Restaurants, coffee shops, malls and entertainment venues offer convenience, security and amenities, especially for young professionals and the growing middle class.

Commercial spaces create jobs, support businesses and bring people together, but problems arise when they replace public spaces. Coffee shops require purchases, and mall visits add transport, food and shopping costs, making even modest leisure difficult for households on tight budgets.

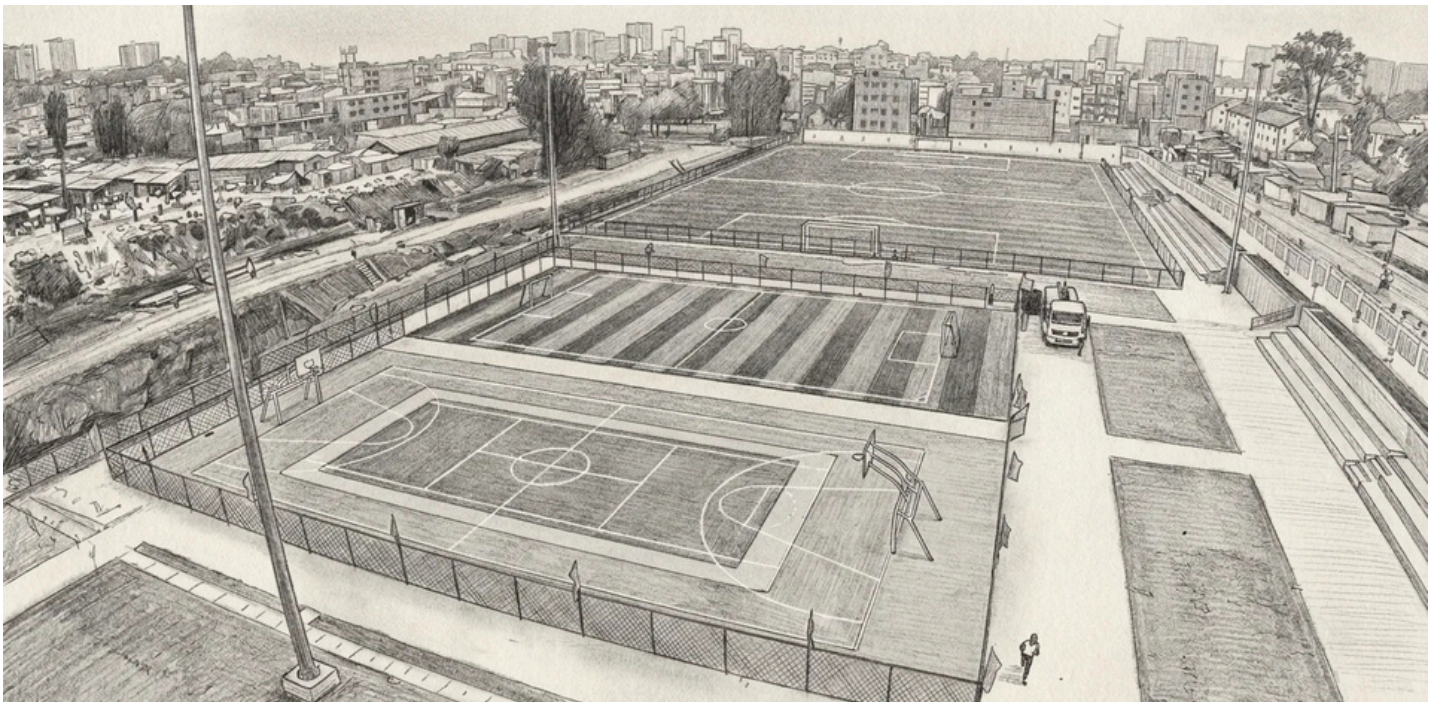
When people are managing rent, transport and food, meeting friends becomes another expense to weigh. Those who can afford commercial venues have more social options; others may lack comfortable alternatives. Socialising continues, but purchasing power increasingly shapes where it happens.

Public spaces offer a shared place where no one has to be a customer. Parks, community fields and libraries let people spend time together for free, a vital benefit as living costs rise.

Nairobi's Public Space Question

Nairobi illustrates the challenge. Its image as the Green City in the Sun is tied to parks and open spaces, but urbanisation, changing land use and competition for land increasingly pressure the public realm.

A 2020 UN-Habitat inventory identified 826 public open spaces across Nairobi, covering about 3,106.4 hectares. They included 99 playgrounds, 51 sports fields, 15 parks and 19 gardens, together accounting for about 5.32 per cent of the built-up area; below the 15–20 per cent often cited as a benchmark for successful cities.



The inventory also found gaps in the distribution, access, quality, management, and maintenance of public spaces.

The issue is not simply how many spaces exist, but whether residents can reach and use them safely, find adequate facilities and access them across neighbourhoods.

This matters in a city marked by inequalities in income, density, and private amenities: well-serviced areas offer private recreation and commercial venues, while dense informal settlements rely on public grounds and shared facilities.

A 2025 study of 417 children, parents, and other users in Loresho, Nairobi West, and Kibera found unequal access to public spaces, which were unsafe or hard to use. All three neighbourhoods had less than the WHO benchmark of nine square metres per person, especially Kibera and Nairobi West. Problems included overcrowding, poor lighting, traffic, inadequate maintenance, and facilities that excluded children.

Access to shared social spaces is therefore an urban-inequality issue. Neighbourhood quality should be measured not only by housing, roads and commercial development, but also by opportunities to interact, exercise, relax and participate in community life.

The Places We Are Not Counting

Public-space discussions often focus on parks, but third places are broader. Markets, libraries, sports grounds, community halls, religious institutions, neighbourhood centres and informal gathering points all contribute to community life.

In lower-income neighbourhoods, public spaces serve many purposes. A community ground may host football, meetings and cultural events, while markets support commerce, information-sharing, relationships and belonging.

The Kibera Public Space Project shows the value of resident-led design: through the Kounkuey Design Initiative, residents turned vulnerable, underused areas into productive spaces combining recreation, sanitation, water, laundry, flood protection, and community enterprise.

This approach treats public space as essential social, environmental, and economic infrastructure, not decoration. Residents must help design and manage shared places, since impressive plans can produce unused spaces that fail to meet everyday needs.

County governments and planners beyond Nairobi should recognise public spaces as basic infrastructure, not optional amenities considered after roads, buildings and commercial developments.

The Cost Of Losing Shared Spaces

Losing accessible gathering places harms more than recreation: public spaces promote physical and mental well-being, social cohesion and participation, while giving children places to play, young people chances to build skills, and older residents ways to stay connected.

A December 2024 study, Cities, assessed Nairobi's green spaces' socioeconomic value by interviewing 1,465 people at seven sites: Uhuru Park, Jeevanjee Gardens, City Park, Karura Forest, and community grounds in Kamukunji, Kasarani, and Korogocho.



Green spaces promote health, well-being and social cohesion, but safety, quality, leisure time and gender influence their use. Despite their public value, conventional market measures often overlook it.

This explains why commercial development displaces public spaces: shopping centres generate measurable returns, while parks improve health and strengthen communities. Their lack of conventional revenue doesn't diminish their economic or social value.

Shared spaces also bring people from different backgrounds together, helping communities organise, discuss local issues and build collective identity. When spaces become inaccessible, neglected or overly commercialised, communities lose more than a place to spend an afternoon.

Designing Cities for People, Not Just Property

Kenya's urban debate focuses on housing, roads, transport, commerce and residential growth, but infrastructure alone doesn't determine quality of life.

Article 42 recognises the right to a clean, healthy environment; Article 69 requires the State to ensure its sustainable use and conservation. The Fourth Schedule assigns counties responsibility for parks, recreation facilities and public amenities.

The challenge is creating accessible, well-maintained neighbourhood spaces. Counties should protect public land, improve parks and community grounds, provide lighting and sanitation, and ensure access for children, women, older adults and people with disabilities—not just upgrade major parks occasionally.

Without security, cleaning, landscaping and repairs, renovated parks quickly deteriorate. Businesses, community groups and resident associations can help maintain them, as long as partnerships preserve public access and don't reserve shared spaces for paying customers.

Planners should prioritize streets and small neighbourhood spaces. Not every community needs a large park or costly facility; a safe, shaded square, maintained playground, or community hall can encourage everyday interaction close to home.

Reclaiming The Space Between Home And Work

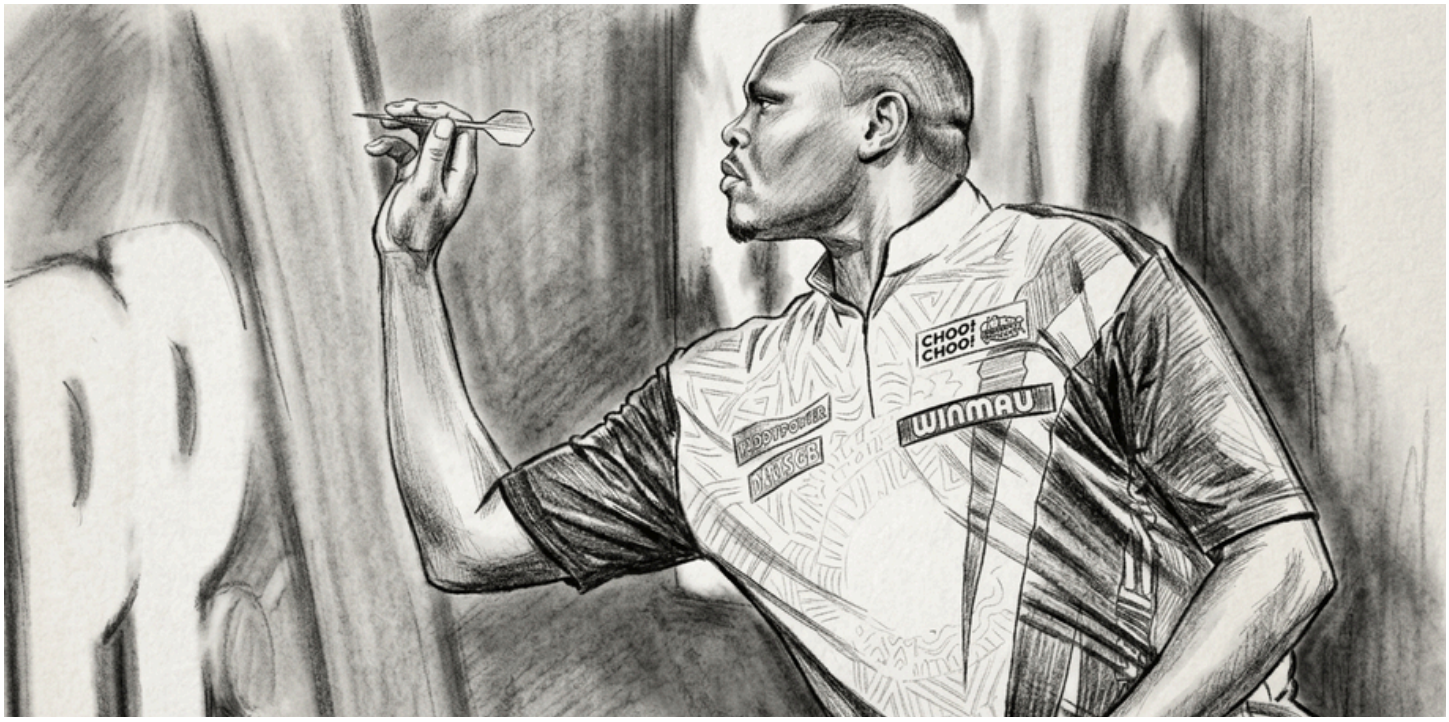
The third-place concept reflects Kenya's vision for cities and towns: places that attract investment, businesses, and housing while helping people live meaningful lives beyond work. Leisure, social interaction and community participation are essential, not luxuries.

As neighbourhoods densify and land grows more valuable, pressure to develop every parcel commercially or residentially will persist. Yet a place's worth is not always measured by its earning potential.

Parks, playgrounds, libraries and community halls are public assets. Their value may not appear in county revenue statements, but it is reflected in residents' quality of life. Counties, planners and communities must protect these spaces, create more and keep them accessible.

Kenyans value shared experiences, but cities need more spaces where people can gather as a community—not just live and work.

The sports we don't watch may be the next sporting opportunity?



Kenya has traditionally measured sporting success through track medals, marathon records, football derbies and rugby sevens. These headline sports attract audiences and sponsors, shaping the country's sporting identity.

Beyond that spotlight, university students compete in lacrosse, kabaddi and ultimate frisbee; pool players are entering national circuits; cyclists seek more competitive opportunities; and more athletes with disabilities are participating.

These sports lack the audiences and commercial support of football and athletics. Some need basic competition structures; others have participants but lack visibility, facilities and institutional backing.

Can Kenya treat them as more than recreation? With its large youth population, sporting culture and ambitions for a broader sports and creative economy, opportunity may lie not only in producing another champion in an established discipline, but also in developing sports still seeking an audience.

Sport Beyond The Headlines

University sport shows the breadth of this potential. In October 2026, the Kenya University Sports Federation held an Emerging Sports Open Tournament at Meru University, featuring baseball, American and flag football, kho-kho, ultimate frisbee, pool, woodball, korfball, kabaddi, floorball, rollball and lacrosse.

The tournament highlights activity beyond mainstream coverage. Though these sports may lack professional structures or established markets, university platforms can enable organised participation, competition and talent identification.

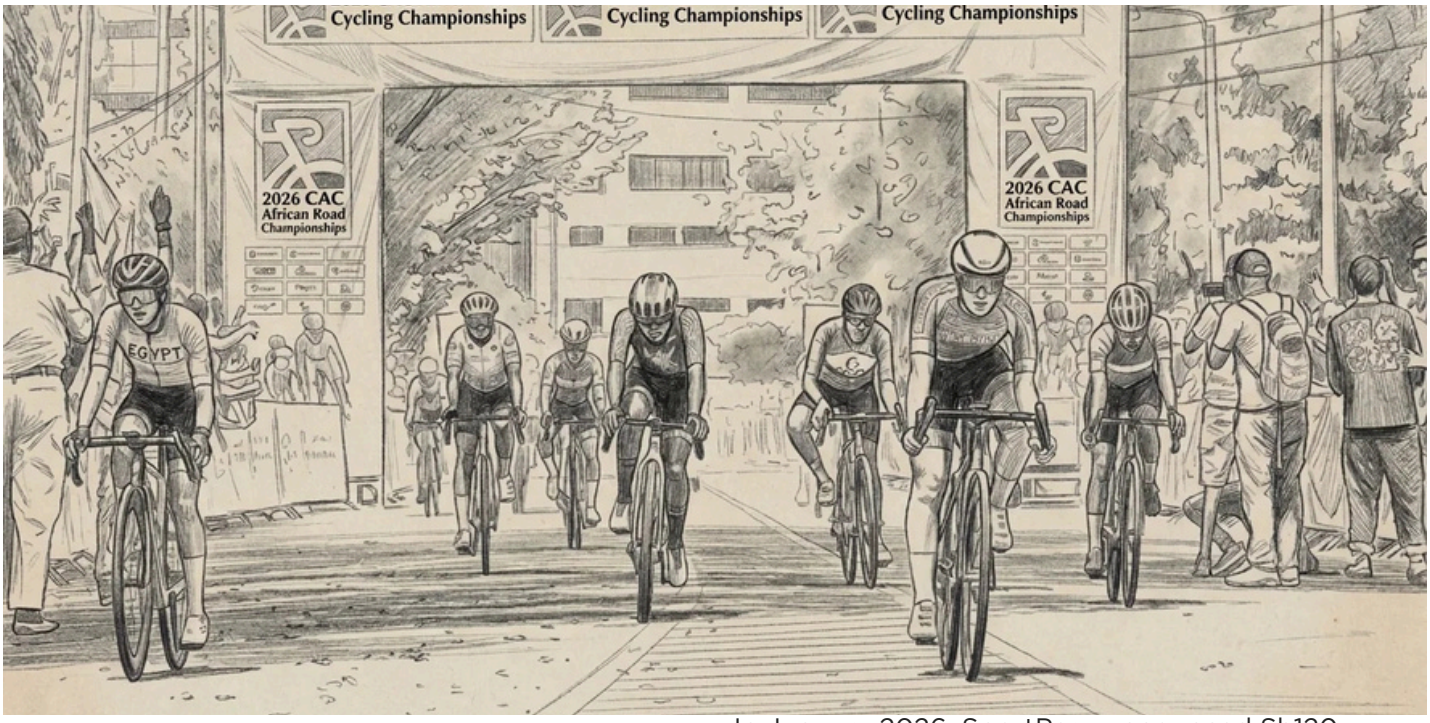
Universities unite young people, provide playing spaces, host inter-institutional competitions, and develop coaches, referees, administrators and organisers. But tournaments are only a start. Sustainable growth needs regular competitions, pathways to national teams and regional events, community clubs, and opportunities for graduates to keep playing. Without these, emerging sports may remain occasional events, not lasting communities.

The same challenge affects sports with recreational followings.

From Pastime To Competition

Pool's popularity hasn't always led to structured competition. In September 2026, SportPesa and Cuevolution Plus Africa announced a multi-million-shilling investment in the inaugural National Pool Circuit, spanning grassroots contests, regional championships and events in Eldoret, Nakuru and Mombasa.

The key contribution is a pathway from local participation to regional competition and a national circuit, developing players, attracting spectators, and offering sponsors more than a one-off event.



Cycling could build on Kenya's endurance and road-racing strengths to grow clubs, races, equipment businesses, coaching, sports tourism and community participation.

Lower-league football also matters. Beyond the Premier League, local and regional competitions create opportunities for communities, players, coaches, officials and businesses. Better organisation could strengthen development and give smaller clubs a clearer path to professional competition.

Sport becomes an opportunity when it has more than participants: it needs regular calendars, rules, recognised institutions, trained officials, venues, athlete pathways and income potential.

The Business Around Sport

Kenya's sports debate often focuses on performance and infrastructure — medals, stadiums and international qualification — but sport's economic value extends further.

Organised sport creates jobs in coaching, officiating, healthcare, events, supply, manufacturing, media, marketing, venues, technology, athlete management, data, ticketing, merchandise and tourism.

Even sports with small audiences can support viable business ecosystems when competitions are regular, participants are engaged, and commercial models are realistic.

Potential should not be measured only by television audiences or international medals. Commercial interest is emerging in the pool circuit.

In January 2026, SportPesa announced Sh120 million in sponsorship for boxing, motorsport and rugby, showing investment extends beyond one competition.

In November 2026, Kenya and the African Sports and Creative Institute proposed a sports industry strategy, business accelerator and SME investment facility targeting technology, digital platforms, media, events, apparel, equipment, hospitality and athlete services.

Enthusiasm won't attract investment alone. Sponsors need credible audiences, measurable reach, reliable schedules and accountable organisations. Without participation and audience data or clear calendars, federations will struggle to prove their sport is investable.

Infrastructure Means More Than Stadiums

Emerging sports expose a weakness in Kenya's infrastructure strategy. Stadiums matter, especially before co-hosting the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations, but many sports need only modest facilities, specialised equipment, community spaces or safe, regular training venues.

The Draft National Sports Policy, 2025, cites inadequate, poorly maintained community facilities, limited rural and marginalised-area access, and barriers for women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

It also flags weak commercialisation: limited private-sector involvement, underdeveloped merchandising and broadcasting, and underused digital content and sponsorship.



Kenya cannot build a broad sports economy while facilities and opportunities remain concentrated in a few cities and established sports.

County governments can provide and manage local facilities, support community competitions, find spaces for emerging sports, and partner with schools, universities and local organisations. The aim is not a stadium for every sport, but access to a training space, a coach and competitions—even for young people outside mainstream disciplines.

Who Gets To Play And Be Seen?

Focusing resources on a few sports narrows who is recognised as talented. Athletes with different abilities or interests are less likely to be discovered or supported.

Para-sports need more than occasional national team selection. Athletes with disabilities require accessible facilities, specialised coaching, equipment, regular competitions and sustained funding.

Women face similar barriers, often receiving less coverage, sponsorship and access to professional opportunities, even in established sports. Emerging disciplines must not repeat these inequalities.

Talent identification should also reach beyond major towns and well-resourced schools, universities and clubs. Counties can build pathways into communities beyond traditional sporting centres.

Education can help. Competency-based training can frame sport as a pathway to skills and careers, not just an extracurricular activity. This requires trained teachers and coaches, equipment, and links between school competitions and recognised sports bodies.

Build audiences before markets

Limited visibility also holds sports back. Media focus on a few competitions creates a cycle: little coverage limits audiences, and small audiences discourage coverage.

Digital platforms offer an alternative. Federations and clubs can document competitions, introduce athletes, share results and build communities without national television. Short videos, livestreams, athlete profiles and schedules can showcase unfamiliar sports.

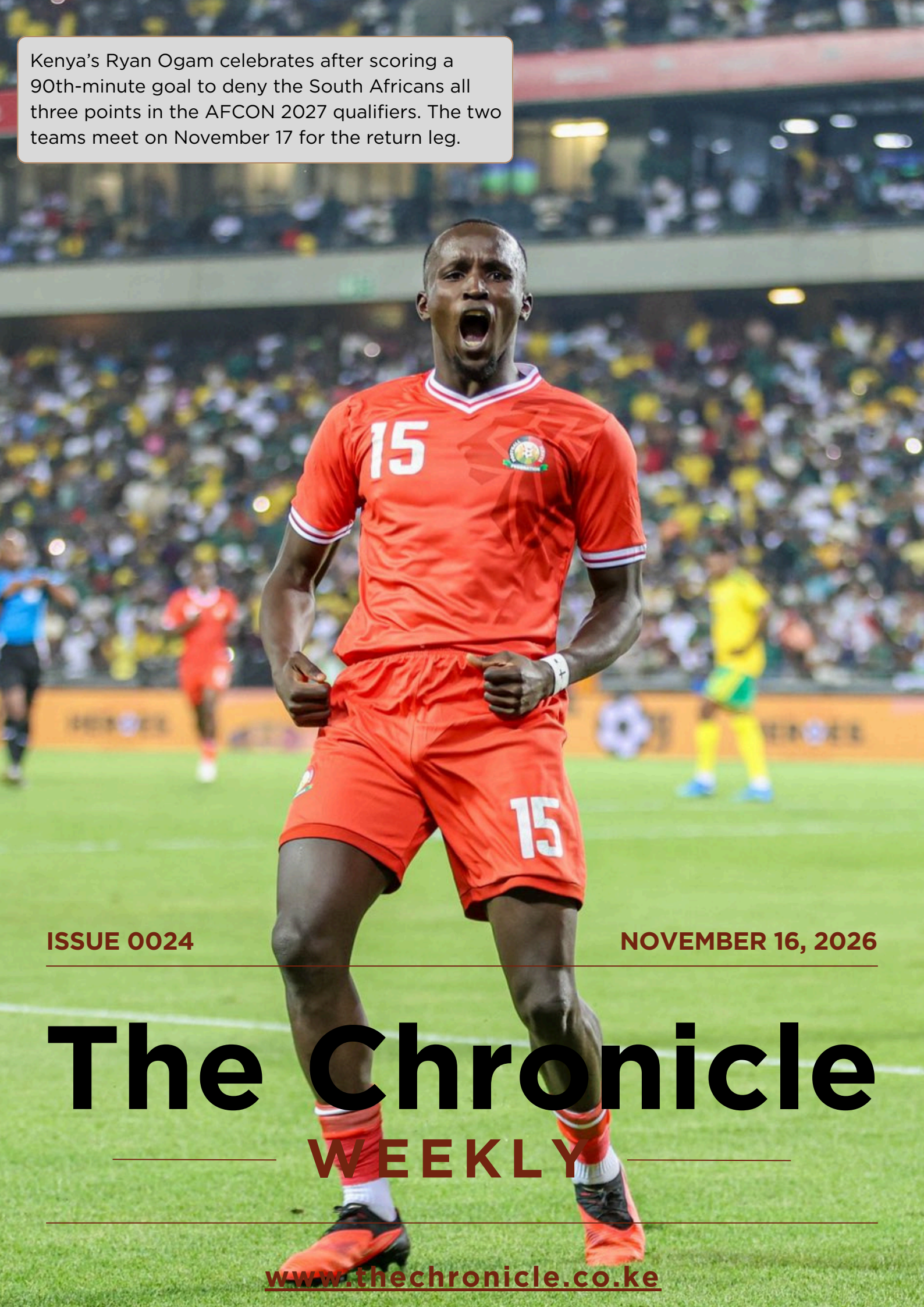
But visibility depends on sound organisation. Social media cannot make up for inactive federations, irregular competitions or missing athlete pathways. Content introduces a sport; consistent, high-quality experiences keep people coming back.

AFCON 2027 can broaden the discussion, drawing attention to stadiums, hospitality, transport and event delivery. Sport's long-term value also depends on what follows: thriving local competitions, clubs, athletes and businesses.

Not every sport needs mass appeal. Some can attract large audiences; others can thrive as sustainable communities. Both create opportunities in participation, employment and enterprise.

Kenya has long produced exceptional athletes. Its next challenge is to recognise talent across sports and support those beyond the public eye.

The next opportunity may be in a university hall, neighbourhood pool club, cycling route or community field. Is the country ready to build a competition, audience and business around it?



Kenya's Ryan Ogam celebrates after scoring a 90th-minute goal to deny the South Africans all three points in the AFCON 2027 qualifiers. The two teams meet on November 17 for the return leg.

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