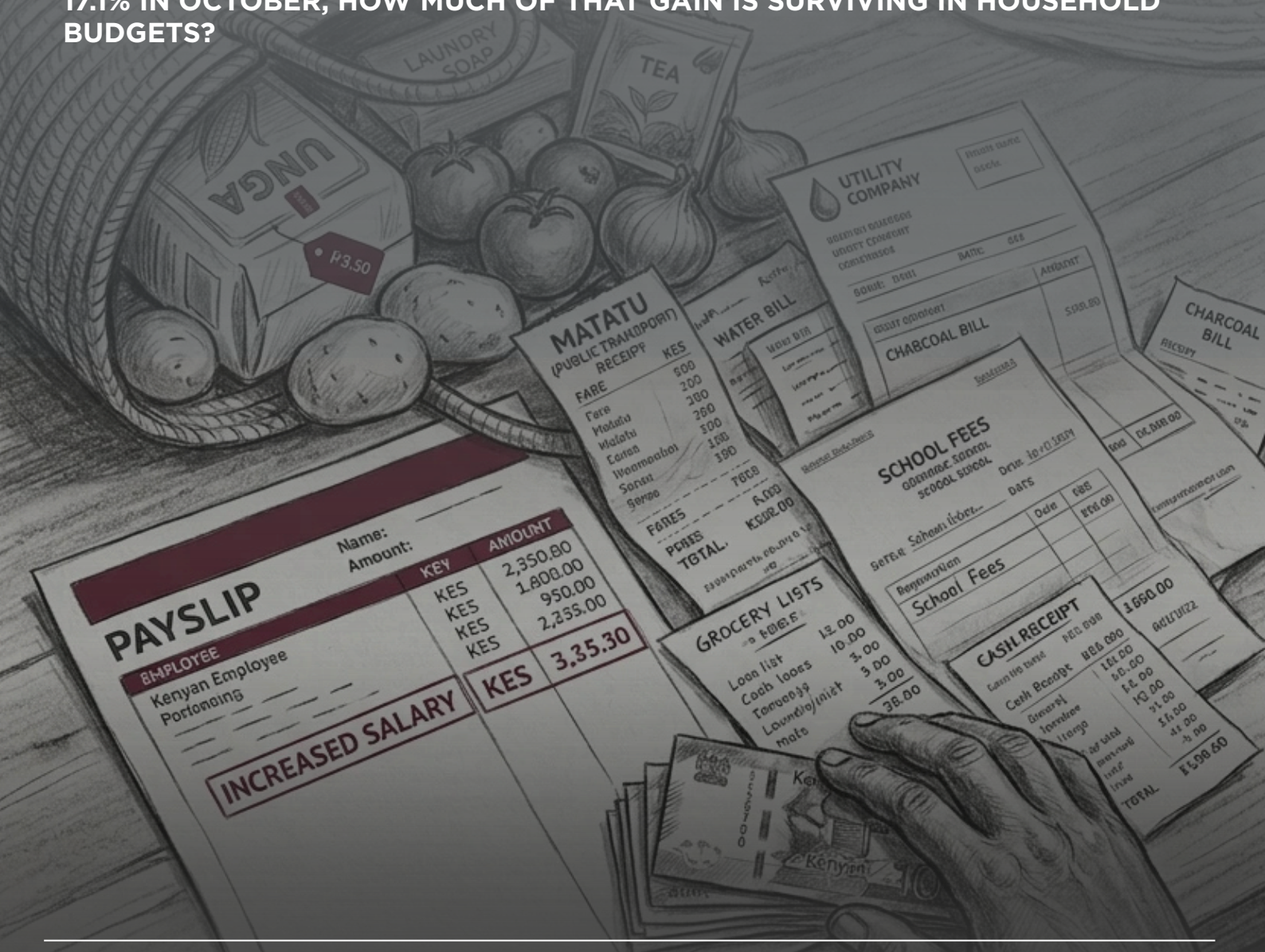
The Chronicle

WEEKLY

ISSUE 0022 NOVEMBER 2, 2026

Cost of Living: The pay rise inflation is taking back

REAL EARNINGS RECOVERED IN 2025. WITH FOOD UP 10.2% AND TRANSPORT 17.1% IN OCTOBER, HOW MUCH OF THAT GAIN IS SURVIVING IN HOUSEHOLD BUDGETS?



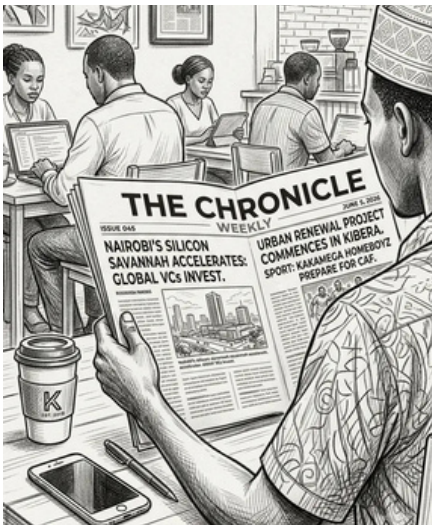
A partnership of power, not yet a partnership of ideas

UDA, ODM ARE BUILDING A COALITION, A MANIFESTO AND A POWER-SHARING DEAL. KENYANS STILL CAN'T SEE WHAT THEY WOULD DO WITH THE POWER.

The match is one night, the sports economy must last

BAYERN MUNICH AND AJAX OPEN THE NEW RAILA ODINGA INTERNATIONAL STADIUM ON JANUARY 5. THE REAL TEST IS WHAT KENYA BUILDS AROUND THE GAME.

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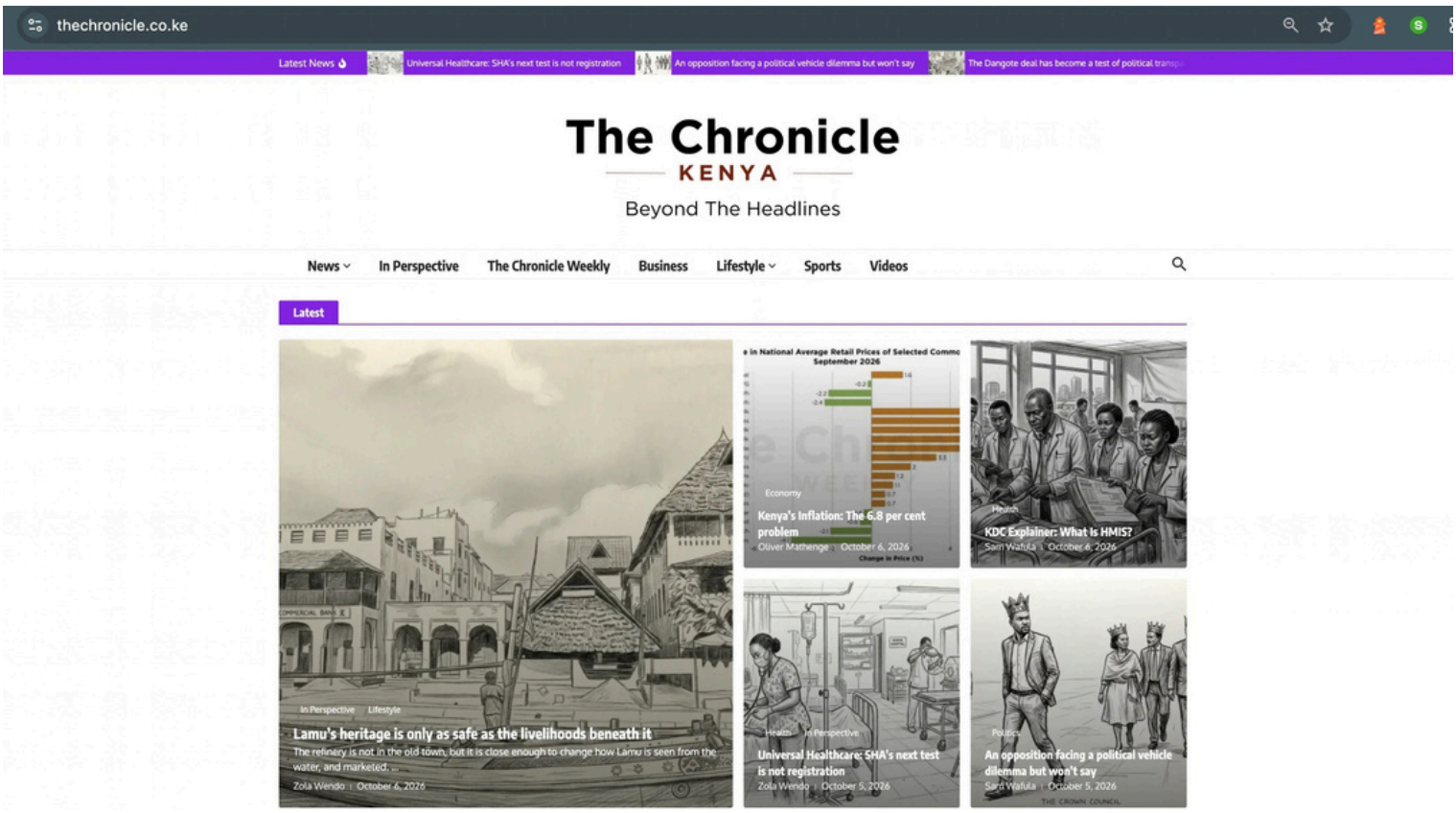
SPORTS

The match is one night, the sports economy must last

Bayern Munich and Ajax will inaugurate Talanta's new stadium in January. The bigger question is whether Kenya can turn the spectacle into a lasting sporting industry.

The Chronicle

WEEKLY



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.

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



This issue is about what happens after the announcement.

Kenya's pay data show real earnings recovering in 2025. October's inflation of 7.3 per cent, led by food and transport, raises the harder question: how much of that recovery remains in the household budget?

Digital lenders' outstanding loans nearly doubled last year, which widens access to money. Access is not security, and many households now live in the gap between the two.

The same gap runs through our politics. UDA and ODM have a coalition framework, a manifesto committee and a negotiation over positions. They have yet to show what they would do with the power they are assembling. The opposition says it needs one candidate, but has not agreed when, or by what rules, to choose one. A deal between leaders is not a programme for the country.

President Ruto returned from Moscow with a commitment on recruitment and five agreements. Families still waiting to learn whether their sons are alive will judge that visit by what is verified, not by what was announced.

In January, Bayern Munich and Ajax will open the Raila Odinga International Stadium. The match lasts 90 minutes. The question is what Kenya builds around it and keeps.

Even our look at digital life ends on the same test: connectivity is worth what it gives people control over.

None of this argues against ambition. The Chronicle's position is to support the ambition and interrogate the delivery. A pay rise, a coalition, a treaty or a stadium is an intention until it changes an outcome in someone's life. This issue puts that test to each of them.

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 bi-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.

With in-depth analysis, data-driven insights and balanced reporting, **The Ballot** will go beyond the campaigns to give you the full picture — from coalitions and manifestos to the voter's agenda.

First Edition:
November 13



Cost of Living: The pay rise inflation is taking back



After years of rising prices that had eroded the value of earnings, the latest annual data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) showed that average real earnings had recovered in 2025.

However, the relief may prove short-lived for households whose budgets are dominated by food, transport and other unavoidable expenses.

In October 2026, consumer prices were 7.3 per cent higher than a year earlier. Food and non-alcoholic beverages rose 10.2 per cent, while transport prices rose 17.1 per cent. Housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels rose by 3.7 per cent over the same period.

Together, these three expenditure categories account for more than 57 per cent of the weights used to calculate Kenya's Consumer Price Index.

The figures reveal a tension at the heart of Kenya's economic story. The economy is growing, jobs are being created, and average earnings have risen.

Yet the cost of essentials is increasing in ways that can quickly erode the benefit of a pay raise, especially for people with little flexibility in how they spend.

The question is not whether Kenya's economy is expanding but whether the improvement in earnings recorded last year is translating into a more secure standard of living, or whether households are once again losing ground.

The Recovery That Came In 2025

Average annual nominal earnings per employee across the covered private and public sectors increased from approximately Sh933,100 in 2024 to Sh988,200 in 2025, an increase of about 5.9 per cent, according to the KNBS Economic Survey 2026.

More importantly, the estimated average real earnings per employee rose from approximately Sh665,400 to Sh678,800. Real earnings adjust nominal pay for inflation and more clearly show how much workers' incomes can buy.

The increase signalled improved average purchasing power, although the experience varied substantially across sectors.

Private-sector employees recorded a 3.9 per cent increase in real average earnings, bringing the measure to about Sh716,100. In the public sector, real average earnings fell by 2.2 per cent to approximately Sh600,600. The aggregate recovery therefore did not mean that all workers benefited equally.

Averages can mask very different experiences. A worker whose earnings outpace inflation may rebuild savings or cover expenses they had put off.

Another, whose pay rises only slightly, or not at all, may continue to feel pressure even as the national average improves.



The figures also reflect formal wage employment covered by the survey, not every Kenyan's income. They do not fully capture the fluctuating incomes of informal workers, casual labourers, traders, and self-employed people.

For many households, the question is not simply whether pay has increased, but whether income arrives regularly enough to cover expenses that must be paid regardless of sales or working hours.

The 2025 figures therefore show a recovery in average real earnings, not proof that every household entered 2026 in a stronger financial position.

The Essentials Are Getting More Expensive

Households can't eliminate food expenses when prices rise. They can change what they buy, switch brands, reduce portions, or move to cheaper alternatives, but these adjustments can come at the cost of nutrition, convenience, and quality of life. Families with limited budgets may have little choice but to make those trade-offs.

Transport poses similar challenges. Commuting is essential for many workers, and higher fares leave less of their wages. Businesses moving people or goods may absorb higher costs, pass them to customers, or accept lower margins and earnings.

The impact of rising prices varies by household. A salaried employee who spends a large share of their income on commuting and food may experience inflation differently from a household with employer-provided transport, a short commute, or access to home-produced food.

The national inflation rate is an important measure, but it cannot describe every household's cost of living. There is also a distinction between inflation and the price level. Inflation measures how much prices change over a period; it does not mean prices return to their previous levels when inflation slows.

Even if the rate of increase moderates, households may still pay substantially more than before. For workers whose incomes have not adjusted accordingly, the pressure can persist long after the initial price shock.

This is how a pay rise can lose its practical value. An earnings increase may look meaningful when announced, but the real gain in purchasing power depends on what happens to the prices of the goods and services the household actually buys.

The Arithmetic Behind The Squeeze

Consider a worker whose monthly earnings rise, but whose essential expenses rise faster. The worker may have more money coming in, yet less left after paying for food, transport, rent and utilities. Nominal pay rises, but the improvement in living standards may be small or nonexistent.

This distinction matters most for households that spend most of their income on essentials. Higher-income households may absorb increases by drawing on savings, postponing discretionary purchases, or changing their spending patterns.

Lower-income households often have fewer such options because food, housing and transport already consume most of their available income.



Headline inflation alone cannot show the extent of the squeeze. To assess whether 2025's earnings recovery was substantially eroded in 2026, compare consistent periods using an appropriate earnings measure.

You cannot simply subtract October's annual price increase from the 2025 real-earnings gain: the figures cover different periods and measure different things.

A clearer test asks how much prices and wages have changed since end-2025, how much households spend on food and commuting, and what remains. It should also examine whether workers take home less despite higher gross salaries.

Answering these questions requires examining household budgets, not just national averages. Tracking income and spending over time for a salaried household, a casual worker, and a self-employed trader could reveal how different groups experience the same pressures.

Though not representative of the whole country, these cases could show how price changes affect money available for other needs.

This approach would also separate higher spending caused by rising prices from spending driven by buying more or changed circumstances. Establishing the difference is essential to explain the squeeze, not merely describe it.

Growth Does Not Settle the Household Question

Kenya's economic outlook offers both optimism and caution. KNBS reported real GDP growth of 4.6 per cent in 2025, with gains in agriculture, construction, mining, financial services, and accommodation and food services.

Growth can create jobs, but household finances improve only when gains are widely shared and provide reliable, adequate earnings.

Job numbers alone do not show whether households are secure: people may work but struggle with irregular pay, high work costs, or insufficient income. Rising average wages also do not benefit every worker.

The outlook remains uncertain. In its September 2026 Market Perceptions Survey, the Central Bank of Kenya said respondents expected inflation to stay above 5 per cent, though within the target range, over the next three months.

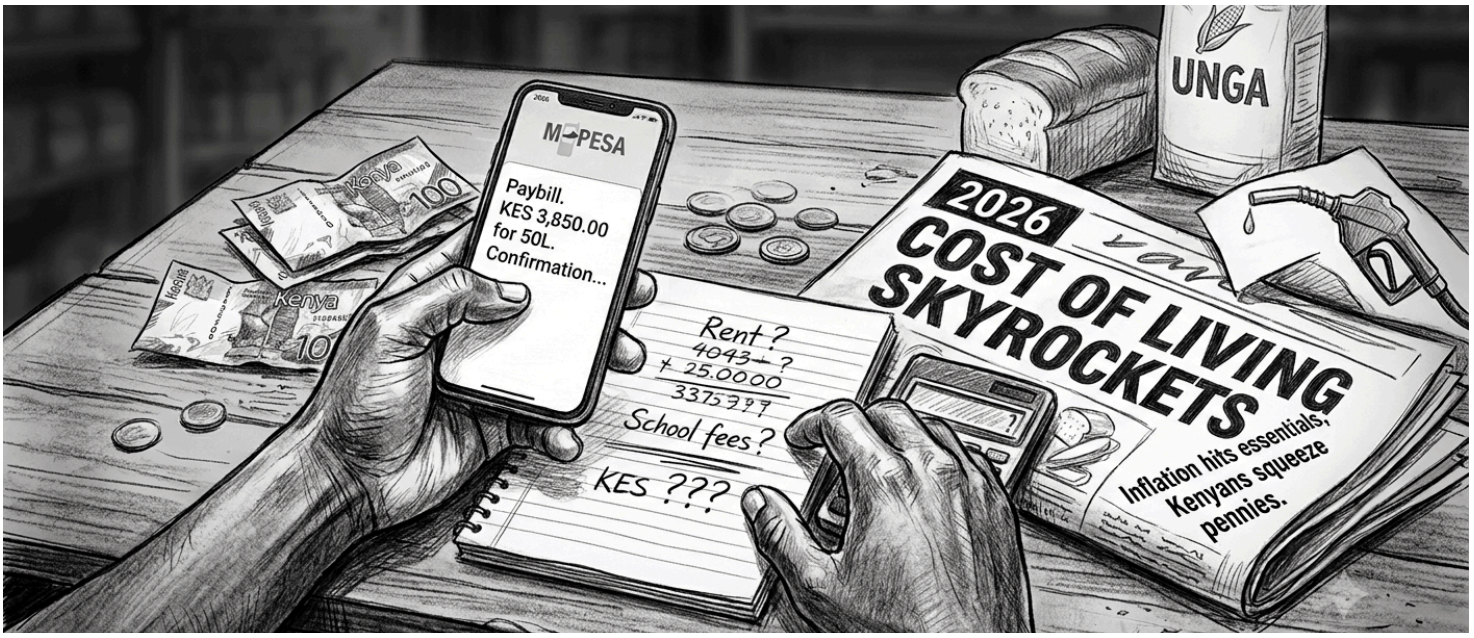
They cited higher fuel and transport costs, weather-related food-supply constraints, and external shocks. This is not a guarantee, but signals continued pressure on essential spending.

Policymakers must turn economic progress into tangible gains through productive jobs, better earnings, and action on essential costs. Employers should consider pay, productivity, and whether wage increases protect purchasing power. Households still face difficult choices when costs are unavoidable.

No single measure can address every pressure. Food prices depend on production, weather, storage, transport, and markets; transport costs on fuel, fares, distance, and alternatives; and earnings on productivity, labour demand, bargaining power, and available work. Solutions must target specific problems.

The immediate task is to assess how much purchasing power has been lost, who is affected, and what can realistically limit it.

Cost of Living: Borrowing to bridge the month



As households and small businesses turn to mobile lenders for quick cash, borrowing is becoming part of monthly survival. But when loans pay for food, transport and school fees rather than investment, where does inclusion end and vulnerability begin?

A delayed salary, medical bill, school fees due before payday or a business short of stock can leave Kenyans facing a timing problem, or a persistent gap between income and expenses.

Mobile loans bridge that gap quickly, without bank visits or extensive paperwork. Yet regular borrowing raises a key question: does credit help people move forward, or merely carry them to payday with another repayment due?

Kenya's digital credit market illustrates this tension. In July 2026, the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) said it had licensed 25 more providers, bringing the total to 252. By May 2026, providers had issued 8.37 million loans worth Sh150.56 billion. The market now extends far beyond a handful of lending apps.

Credit can help households manage uncertainty and pursue opportunities. But repeated borrowing for everyday expenses may signal that income is not keeping pace with living costs.

When the Next Payday Is Already Spent

Digital loans are attractive because they are fast and convenient. Unlike conventional bank loans, they often require less documentation and no collateral, and can provide small sums to people who lack access to traditional credit.

The problem arises when borrowing shifts from occasional emergencies to routine necessity. A household might borrow for an unexpected hospital bill, expecting to repay from its next salary.

A trader might buy stock ahead of a busy period, expecting sales to cover the debt and earn a profit. In both cases, the loan has a specific purpose and plausible repayment source.

But borrowing repeatedly for food, rent, transport or to repay another loan may ease immediate pressure without fixing an underlying shortfall.

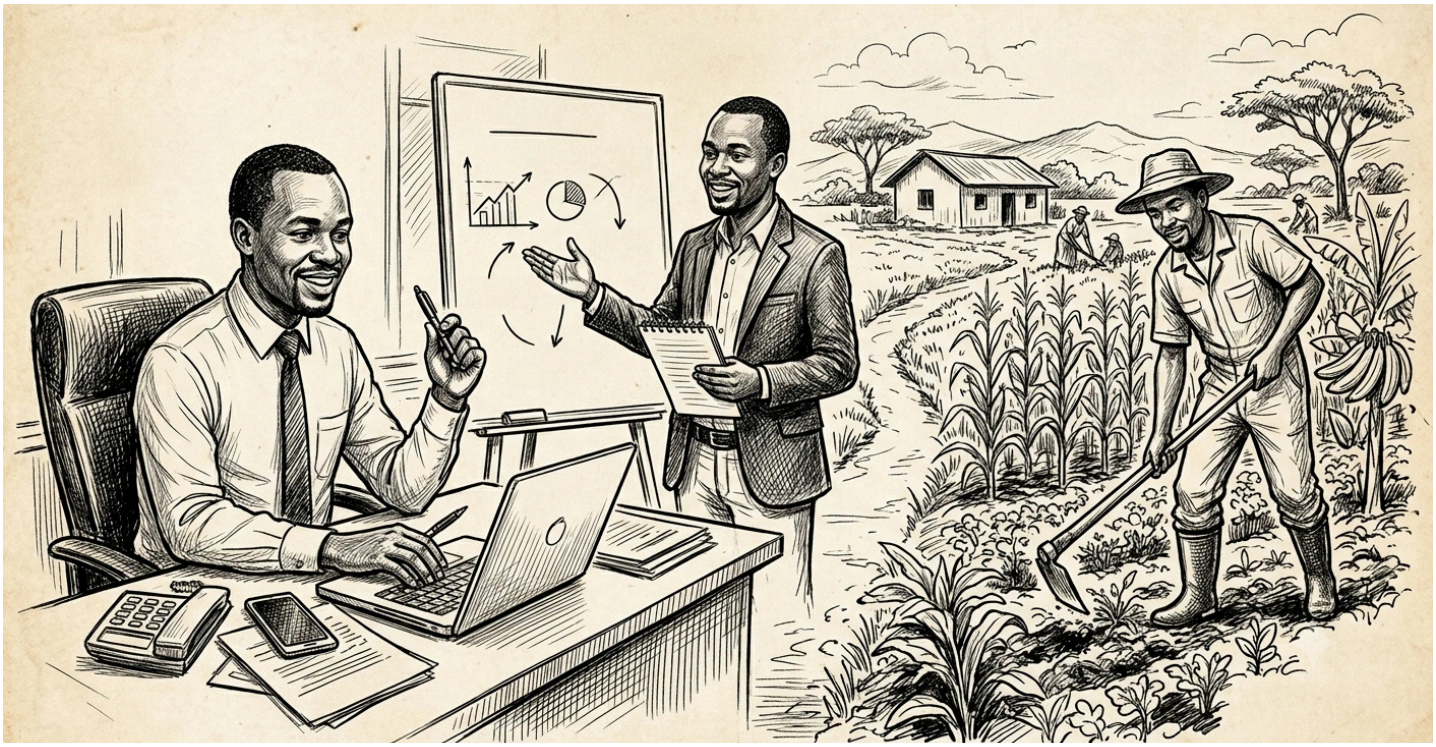
Repayments then leave less for future expenses, prompting another loan. A temporary cash-flow problem can become a borrowing cycle.

This is not simply about responsible choices. Workers with irregular earnings, casual labourers and small traders with fluctuating sales may have few alternatives when essential costs cannot wait. Credit helps them manage uncertainty, but repayments remain fixed even when income does not.

A Rapidly Expanding Credit Market

The CBK's 2025 Bank Supervision Annual Report says licensed digital lenders' outstanding loans rose 99.6 per cent, from Sh55.2 billion in December 2024 to Sh110.1 billion in December 2025. Loan accounts grew from about 3.9 million to 6.74 million.

Accounts do not equal individual borrowers: one person may borrow from several providers or hold multiple accounts.



Nor does market growth mean every borrower is struggling. Digital lenders offer business, education, development, asset-financing and short-term personal loans.

Still, the market's scale merits attention alongside household financial-health data. The 2024 FinAccess Household Survey, conducted by the CBK, KNBS and Financial Sector Deepening Kenya, found formal financial access reached 84.8 per cent of adults, up from 83.7 per cent in 2021. Yet only 18.3 per cent of Kenyans were financially healthy, and 16.6 per cent of borrowers had defaulted entirely.

Access does not guarantee financial security. People may have bank accounts, use mobile money and qualify for loans, yet lack savings for emergencies or income disruptions. Inclusion is meaningful when it helps people manage money, withstand shocks and pursue opportunities. If credit access grows faster than repayment capacity, convenience can deepen vulnerability.

The Real Cost of Quick Money

A loan's cost is more than the amount received. Borrowers should understand the total repayment, including interest, fees, other charges and penalties for late payment.

A small loan may seem manageable for an immediate expense, but repeated borrowing changes the equation. Loans from multiple platforms make repayment dates and total debt harder to track, especially when lenders assess each loan separately.

The risk extends beyond interest: repayments may leave too little for essentials, forcing borrowers to take another loan simply because they lack cash.

The effects can affect entire households: spending falls, savings run out, and funds for education or business investment go to debt repayment. For small businesses, repayments drain working capital for stock, suppliers, and staff.

Credit can be productive, raising future income or helping households weather temporary shocks. But repeated consumption borrowing without higher income leaves borrowers with less room each month.

Regulators and lenders must pair credit expansion with clear pricing, responsible affordability checks and effective consumer protection.

Regulation Cannot Replace Financial Resilience

The CBK intervened in digital lending partly because of concerns about unregulated providers, including high costs, abusive debt collection, and misuse of personal information.

The Digital Credit Providers Regulations, 2022, created a licensing and oversight framework for non-deposit-taking digital lenders and established consumer protections.

Providers must address complaints, acknowledge transactions, and issue statements on request. They may not threaten, publicly shame, or use borrowers' phone contacts without authorisation to collect repayments.



Licensing has expanded: in July 2026, the CBK announced 252 licensed providers. However, it continues to warn about unregulated operators. Consumers should check a provider's licence and not assume an app is legitimate simply because it is available on a phone.

Regulation cannot address every reason people borrow. Even a licensed lender may offer an unsuitable loan. Transparent pricing supports informed choices, but does not provide the income needed for repayment.

If households repeatedly borrow for food, transport and other essentials, tighter lending rules are not enough. Policy must also address unreliable earnings, limited savings, high essential costs and lack of affordable emergency finance.

Employers, financial institutions, government and consumer groups all have a role. Employers can consider the effects of delayed or unpredictable pay. Lenders can improve affordability checks and clarify repayment terms. Consumer education can help borrowers compare total costs, understand the risks of multiple loans and seek help before arrears become unmanageable.

Flexible savings options may help households with irregular earnings build a buffer, though they cannot replace adequate income. Better-suited working-capital facilities and predictable payment arrangements can help small businesses avoid costly short-term loans.

A Loan Should Open A Door, Not Become The Door

Digital credit has transformed access to financial services in Kenya. Millions of loans are now available through platforms at almost any time, offering convenience traditional lenders often could not match.

That achievement matters. Credit can support business, education, investment and emergencies. The goal is not to discourage borrowing, but to distinguish loans that create or protect future value from those that merely delay financial hardship.

Financial inclusion should be measured not by how many people can get loans, but by whether they can borrow fairly, repay without sacrificing essentials and emerge better off.

When people borrow each month for the same expenses, the question is no longer how easily they can access credit, but why their income is insufficient.

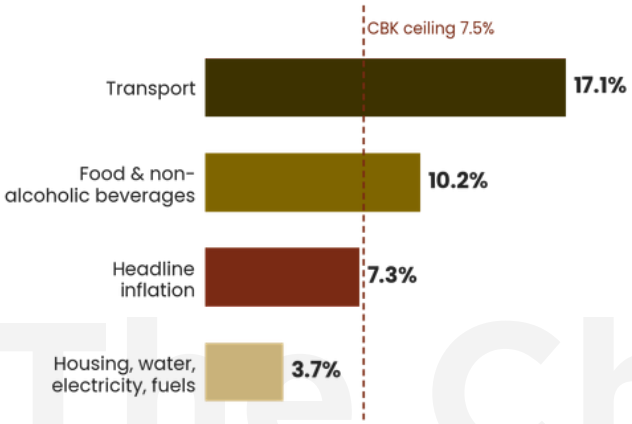
A loan to buy business stock may be an investment; one for a temporary emergency may offer vital breathing room. But when a family must borrow again to pay for the month it has just lived through, credit no longer bridges the gap — it becomes part of it.

The real test of Kenya's expanding credit market is therefore not the volume of money lent, but whether that money helps households build financial security — or simply finances the wait until the next payday.

COST OF LIVING LEDGER

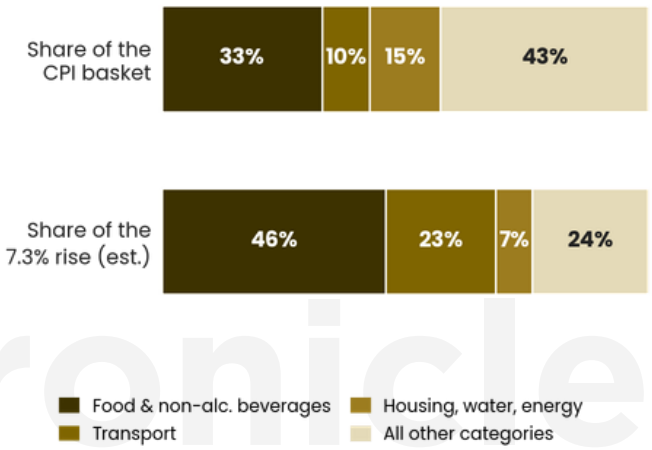
What a 7.3% inflation rate does to a household budget: what prices took, what pay gained in 2025, and how many households are bridging the gap with credit. Read it as a ledger, not a verdict.

WHAT PRICES DID (OCTOBER 2026, YEAR ON YEAR)



Transport and food are running well ahead of the headline rate. Headline inflation, at 7.3%, sits just 0.2 points under the 7.5% ceiling of the CBK target band (5% ± 2.5).

THREE CATEGORIES, THREE-QUARTERS OF THE RISE



Food, transport and housing are 57% of the CPI basket but roughly 76% of this year's rise. Estimate: KNBS base weights × October annual rates; not a KNBS-published contribution.

WHAT PAY DID (2025, KNBS ECONOMIC SURVEY 2026)

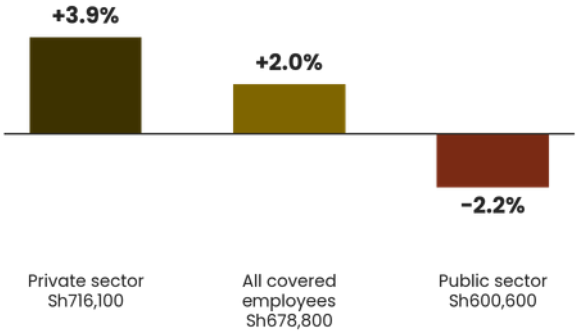
+5.9%

Norminal average earnings
Sh933,100 to Sh988,200

+2.0%

Real average earnings
Sh665,400 to Sh678,800

CHANGE IN REAL AVERAGE EARNINGS, 2025

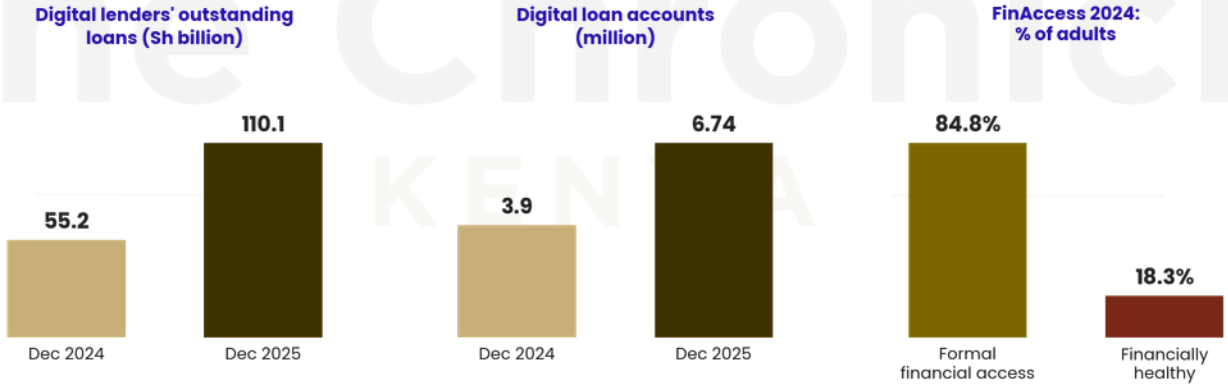


THE YARDSTICK

~7.3%

Pay rise needed over the 12 months to October 2026 to hold purchasing power on the headline measure. **Different periods: a yardstick, not a subtraction.**

HOW HOUSEHOLDS ARE BRIDGING THE GAP



Digital lenders' outstanding loans nearly doubled in 2025. Accounts are not borrowers: one person can hold several. Access is not security: in 2024, 84.8% of adults had formal financial access, but 18.3% were financially healthy.

Source: KNBS (CPI, Economic Survey 2026); CBK (Bank Supervision Annual Report 2025); FinAccess 2024

A partnership of power, not yet a partnership of ideas



The partnership between the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) is becoming a defining calculation of the 2027 General Election.

What began as a political accommodation within government is now being organised into a possible electoral coalition, complete with joint committees, a proposed manifesto and negotiations over how the two parties will share political power.

The arrangement has obvious political logic. President William Ruto gains access to a party with a substantial national following and established political networks, while ODM gains proximity to government and the chance to translate its support into influence over the next administration.

Both sides have every reason to believe cooperation could improve their electoral prospects. But an alliance built around the distribution of political advantage is not automatically a partnership built around a common national programme.

The danger is that Kenya could be presented with a coalition whose internal negotiations are more developed than its answers to the country's problems. That is the test UDA and ODM must confront before they ask voters to endorse their partnership.

A coalition agreement can determine who gets which position, but a manifesto must explain what those positions will be used to achieve.

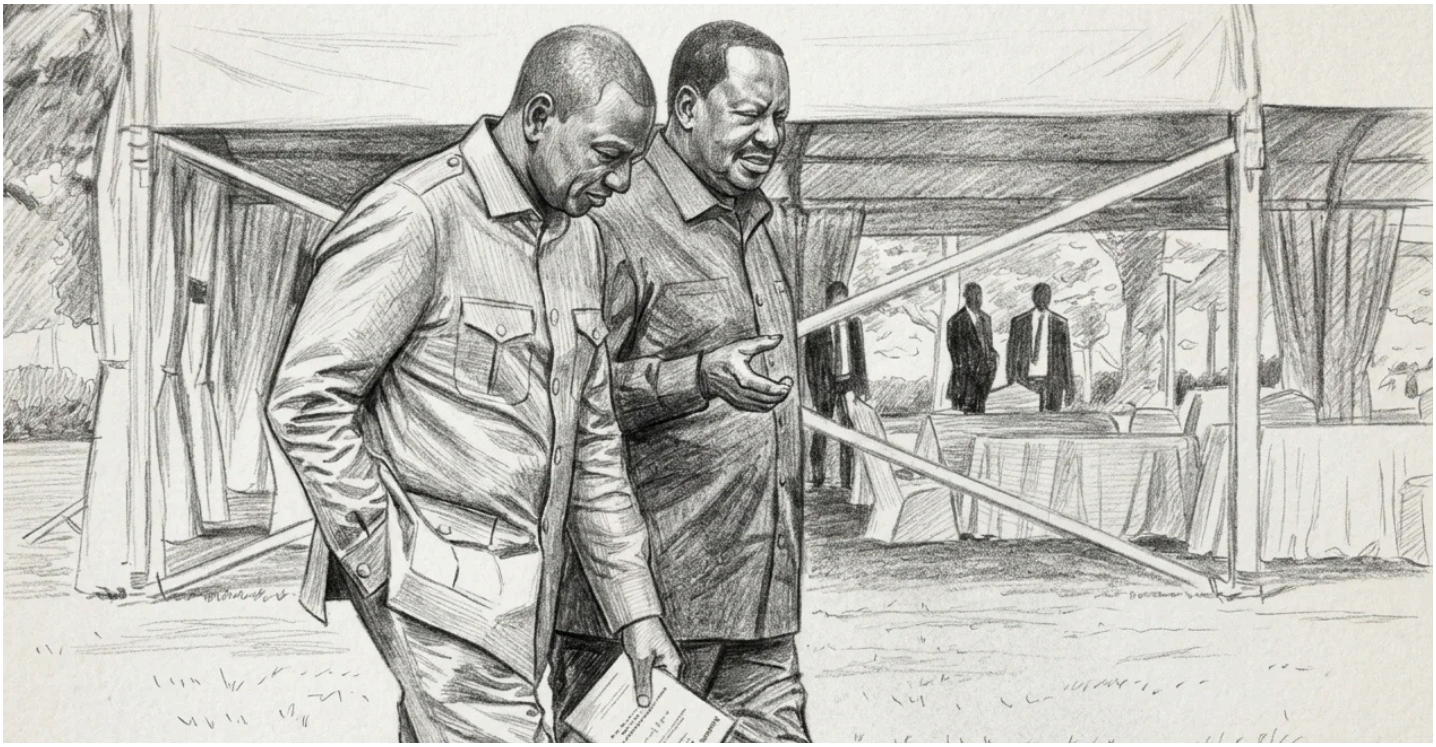
Negotiations Moving Faster Than Policy Debate

The two parties have taken concrete steps towards formalising their relationship. In August, ODM announced plans to work with UDA on a joint manifesto, with both sides appointing representatives to develop a shared policy agenda. The process has since moved towards a formal coalition framework for the August 10, 2027 General Election.

By October 27, UDA was reporting progress by the joint manifesto committee, saying the proposed document would be anchored on President Ruto's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) and the philosophy of Usawa Ni Sawa.

The committee is expected to build on existing government programmes, identify areas where delivery has fallen short and develop commitments for the next electoral cycle.

There is nothing inherently wrong with two political parties developing a common manifesto. Coalitions need shared priorities, agreed decision-making structures and mechanisms for resolving disputes.



The public conversation around this partnership has focused on who will receive what, rather than the more important question of what the country should expect in return.

ODM seeks an arrangement reflecting what it sees as an equal partnership: more political appointments, a possible Deputy President's position, and negotiated electoral deals where the parties might otherwise compete.

Some leaders have proposed 50–50 power-sharing and zoning in selected strongholds. UDA has resisted, with Interior Principal Secretary Raymond Omollo warning against forcing the ruling party into conditional pre-election deals.

These negotiations matter politically, but they cannot replace policy. A Deputy President's post, cabinet appointments or a pact to avoid competing candidates may stabilise a coalition, but none explains how the next government will lower living costs, create sustainable jobs for graduates or shield public institutions from political interference.

The alliance is therefore at risk of confusing the architecture of political cooperation with the substance of governing.

Unfinished Business Of The Original Bargain

The partnership's political foundations stem from an understanding between Ruto and the late Raila Odinga, which brought the opposition leader into a broad-based arrangement and launched the National Dialogue Committee (NADCO) process to address the country's political and institutional tensions.

That history matters: the 2027 alliance cannot credibly claim to be entirely new without accounting for the commitments that enabled it.

NADCO recommended electoral, governance, inclusion and political competition reforms. Implementing them was part of a broader bargain to ease confrontation and establish a more stable framework for national engagement.

Key reforms remain unfinished, raising concerns about electoral readiness as the next election nears. The commission warns that reforms enacted too close to polling day could disrupt preparations.

Electoral credibility is no technical footnote to coalition negotiations; it underpins any political partnership seeking a national mandate. Parties negotiating post-election power-sharing should also ensure election institutions are prepared and trusted.

A broader accountability question also remains. If NADCO produced commitments in exchange for political cooperation, who is responsible for ensuring that those commitments are implemented?

Will ODM make fulfilment a condition of continued partnership, or will demands for institutional reform fade once positions and electoral arrangements are settled?

The same applies to UDA: a governing party cannot claim the benefits of broad political consensus while treating its accompanying institutional reforms as optional. Elite-negotiated stability remains fragile if the public sees little improvement in the institutions that shape their lives.



Joint Manifesto Must Go Past Repackaging BETA

Anchoring the manifesto on BETA poses a challenge: Ruto's economic agenda already guides the administration. To build their 2027 platform around it, the parties must say what worked, what failed, and what they would change.

A credible manifesto should begin with an honest assessment of the administration's record, not a list of programmes and promises detached from the experience of the people expected to finance and benefit from them.

The questions are straightforward but difficult.

What has happened to the promise of expanding employment opportunities? Have households experienced a meaningful improvement in purchasing power? Are healthcare reforms delivering reliable access to services without transferring unpredictable costs to patients?

Has the education system received the resources necessary to meet its obligations? Are counties receiving predictable and adequate resources to deliver the services assigned to them?

What has the government achieved in tackling corruption, reducing waste and improving public accountability?

ODM has historically presented itself as a political movement concerned with devolution, equitable distribution of national resources, social protection, access to healthcare and education, human rights and the fight against corruption.

These priorities appear in its stated demands for the proposed joint manifesto.

The difficulty is not identifying areas where the two parties can agree in principle. Almost any political formation can endorse better healthcare, more jobs, improved education and equitable development.

The real test is whether the coalition can agree on the difficult decisions required to deliver those outcomes, including how much they will cost, how they will be financed, which programmes will be prioritised and what happens when promised results are not achieved.

For instance, a manifesto that promises expanded public services without explaining how it will finance them risks repeating the familiar cycle of ambitious announcements followed by budgetary constraints, delayed disbursements and incomplete projects.

A promise to fight corruption means little without a commitment to protect independent oversight institutions, enforce procurement rules and ensure that political allies are not shielded from accountability.

The coalition must also explain how its partners will resolve policy disagreements.

If UDA and ODM disagree over taxation, public spending, devolution or the management of state corporations, which party's position prevails?

Will the coalition have a transparent mechanism for making those decisions, or will the political leadership have the final word?



Without such clarity, a joint manifesto risks becoming a negotiated document of agreeable language rather than a binding government programme.

Voters Shouldn't Endorse a Political Blank Cheque

Kenyan politics has a temptation to treat coalition-building as evidence of national consensus. Bringing together parties that once competed against each other can be presented as a sign of maturity, stability and inclusivity.

But the presence of more political actors around the table does not automatically mean that more citizens are represented in the decisions being made.

A partnership between UDA and ODM must be judged by what it does with the political influence it is assembling.

If the principal achievement is an arrangement that gives the two parties a stronger chance of retaining or gaining power, then the coalition will have served its immediate political purpose without necessarily advancing the public interest.

The opposition, too, has a responsibility to offer voters a credible alternative and to scrutinise the coalition's claims. But the existence of competing political formations should not lower the standard against which the emerging alliance is judged.

The country needs more than a contest over which political leaders can assemble the largest electoral bloc.

UDA and ODM still have time to make the proposed partnership more substantive. They can publish the draft manifesto, disclose the principles guiding their coalition agreement, set measurable targets, provide timelines and identify the institutions responsible for delivering each commitment.

They can also publish a clear assessment of the NADCO commitments and explain which reforms have been implemented, which remain outstanding and why.

Most importantly, they can make the manifesto a public contract rather than a campaign document, with clear indicators citizens can use to assess the coalition's performance.

The 2027 election should not be reduced to a negotiation over who occupies State House, who becomes Deputy President or how political influence is distributed between the two parties. Those are legitimate questions in a competitive democracy, but they should not define the country's political future.

UDA and ODM are entitled to pursue an alliance that improves their chances of winning. Kenyans, however, are entitled to demand an alliance that improves the chances of good governance.

Until the partnership shows it has a common answer to the country's most pressing problems, it remains a partnership of political convenience whose greatest achievement may be consolidating power, rather than a shared vision for what that power should deliver.

United Opposition: Where no one wants to go first



There is a peculiar contradiction at the centre of Kenya's emerging opposition coalition.

Nearly every principal says the country needs a single candidate to challenge President William Ruto, but the leaders who must agree on that candidate appear reluctant to establish when, and by what rules, the decision will be made.

The argument for waiting is not without merit. A presidential candidate announced too early becomes an immediate target for the governing party, must sustain a national campaign for months and risks becoming the centre of internal competition before the coalition has consolidated its support.

Former Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua has made precisely this case, warning that naming an opposition candidate now could expose that individual to political pressure, including what he described as the possibility of being placed under house arrest by the Ruto administration.

Gachagua has repeatedly described himself as the most suitable person to carry the opposition ticket, while insisting that he would support another candidate if an agreed selection formula did not favour him.

He has challenged his fellow aspirants to make the same public commitment, arguing that declarations of unity mean little if their supporters continue threatening to vote for Ruto should their preferred candidate lose the nomination.

This is a reasonable demand in a coalition that wants to avoid splitting its support, but it raises a more fundamental question. Why should the public trust a promise of unity when the leaders making it have yet to agree on the process that will produce their candidate?

The opposition's difficulty is not simply that it has several presidential hopefuls. Competitive coalitions routinely bring together politicians with different ambitions, constituencies and political histories.

The difficulty is that the negotiations appear to be advancing without a publicly established framework for resolving those differences.

Disagreement Goes Beyond The Calendar

The dispute over when to name a candidate has become a visible expression of the wider contest over influence within the coalition.

The camp associated with Wiper leader Kalonzo Musyoka wants the presidential ticket settled as early as December 2026, arguing that the eventual flag bearer needs sufficient time to build national support, mobilise resources and establish international networks ahead of the August 10, 2027 election.

Gachagua, by contrast, has suggested that the selection can wait until March or April, arguing that the immediate priority should be political mobilisation rather than settling the ticket.



Both positions carry strategic considerations.

An early decision could give the chosen candidate more time to organise the coalition's campaign, build a national profile, and coordinate the parties supporting the ticket.

Delaying the announcement could let the coalition broaden its reach, avoid prematurely exposing its preferred candidate, and give rival aspirants more time to demonstrate their political support.

But the calendar is only one part of the problem, as the coalition has not publicly settled the more difficult questions.

Will party delegates, coalition principals, polling, or a combination choose a candidate? Who sets the criteria, weighs regional representation and party strength, and resolves disputes if a principal rejects the result?

Without answers, a December deadline or a March deadline is little more than a date on a political calendar.

The appearance of a separate grouping involving Jubilee's Fred Matiang'i, People's Party of Kenya leader Ndindi Nyoro and Martha Karua has further complicated the picture.

The three held joint engagements in Njoro, Nakuru County, on October 21, a development interpreted as a challenge to the emerging alignment around Gachagua and Kalonzo.

Nyoro has, in previous public remarks, called for the opposition to unite behind one candidate, saying he would support whoever the coalition selected.

His participation in the Matiang'i–Karua grouping adds another layer to the negotiations: the question is no longer only who wants the ticket, but which political networks and alliances will shape the process through which it is awarded.

We also have the Edwin Sifuna axis. On Friday, they launched the party headquarters in a function attended by Gachagua and Kalonzo.

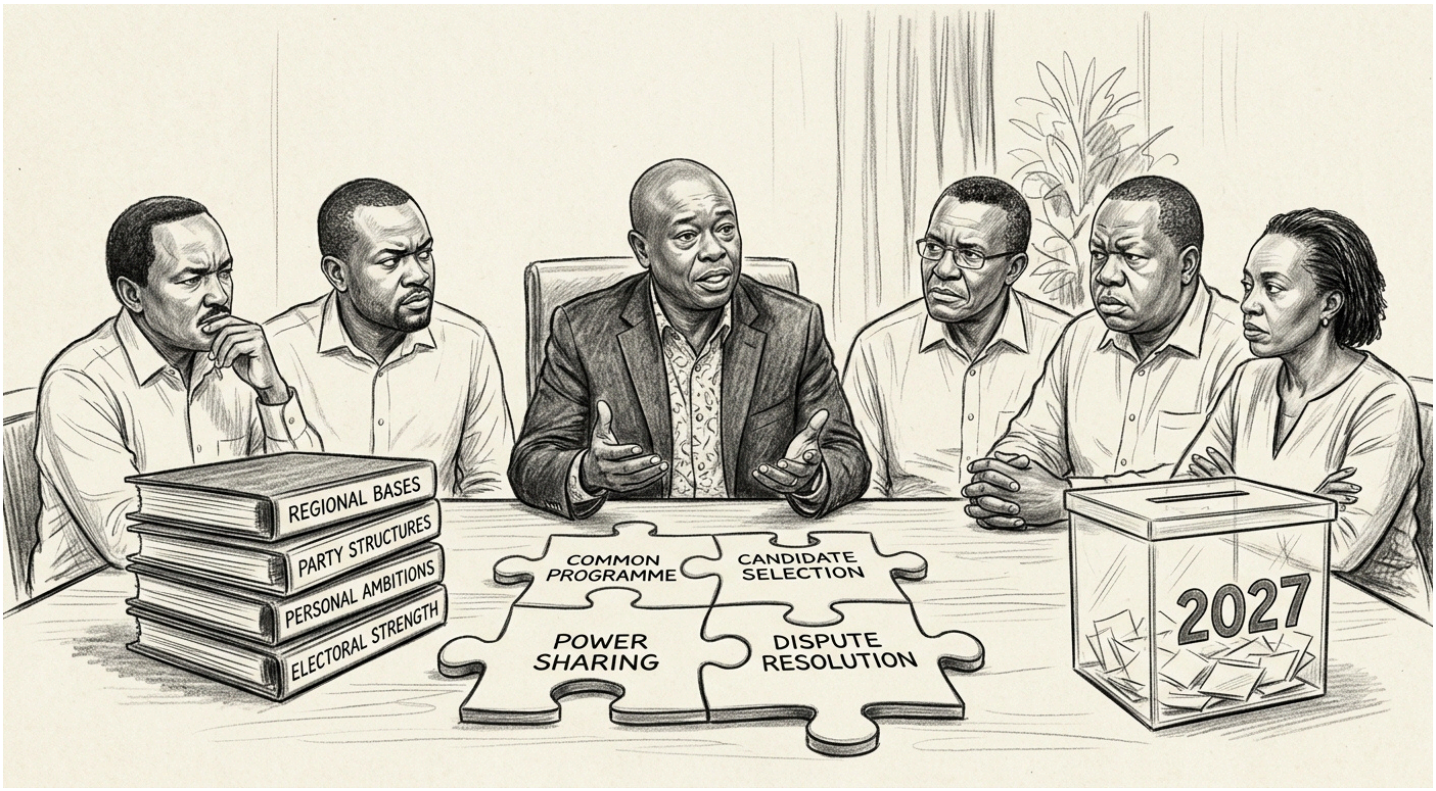
As seen in the booing of Kalonzo, the Linda Mwananchi brigade has already decided that its presidential candidate will be Sifuna and no one else, complicating the coalition arithmetic.

A coalition can accommodate several centres of political influence, but it cannot indefinitely operate as a collection of parallel arrangements while claiming to be preparing a common presidential campaign.

The Coalition Has Yet To Set Its Contest Rules

The public declarations of support for a single candidate are useful, but they do not resolve the problem of trust among the principals.

A pledge to support whoever emerges matters only if the leaders first agree on a process they consider legitimate for choosing the candidate in the first place.



Gachagua's insistence that every aspirant publicly commit to backing the eventual candidate addresses one part of this problem: the possibility that a politician who loses the ticket will walk away with their supporters.

His challenge is directed at both the principals and their political bases, where threats to support Ruto if a preferred candidate is overlooked could undermine the coalition's unity.

A leader may promise to support the winner while privately disputing the process. Another may accept the coalition's decision while negotiating for a running mate role, senior appointment, or influence over political opportunities.

Unless these issues are addressed transparently, the coalition may simply postpone its disagreements until the stakes are highest.

The opposition also needs to distinguish between political mobilisation and presidential selection. Building support across regions is necessary for any national campaign, but the leaders doing the mobilisation need to know how their contribution will be recognised.

Gachagua has argued that candidates must show they can attract voters rather than expect to receive the ticket through negotiations alone.

He has also rejected the idea that some principals should mobilise support for another aspirant without having a meaningful say in the coalition's leadership arrangements.

That argument exposes the coalition's unresolved bargaining problem. Each principal wants assurance that their political support, party machinery and regional influence will count in the final decision.

If every leader expects their contribution to earn a place on the ticket, candidate selection risks becoming a negotiation over constituencies' relative value instead of a transparent choice of a common candidate.

There is no reason to assume that these negotiations will be easy. The principals have different political histories, party structures and ambitions. But that is precisely why the coalition needs rules before it needs a candidate.

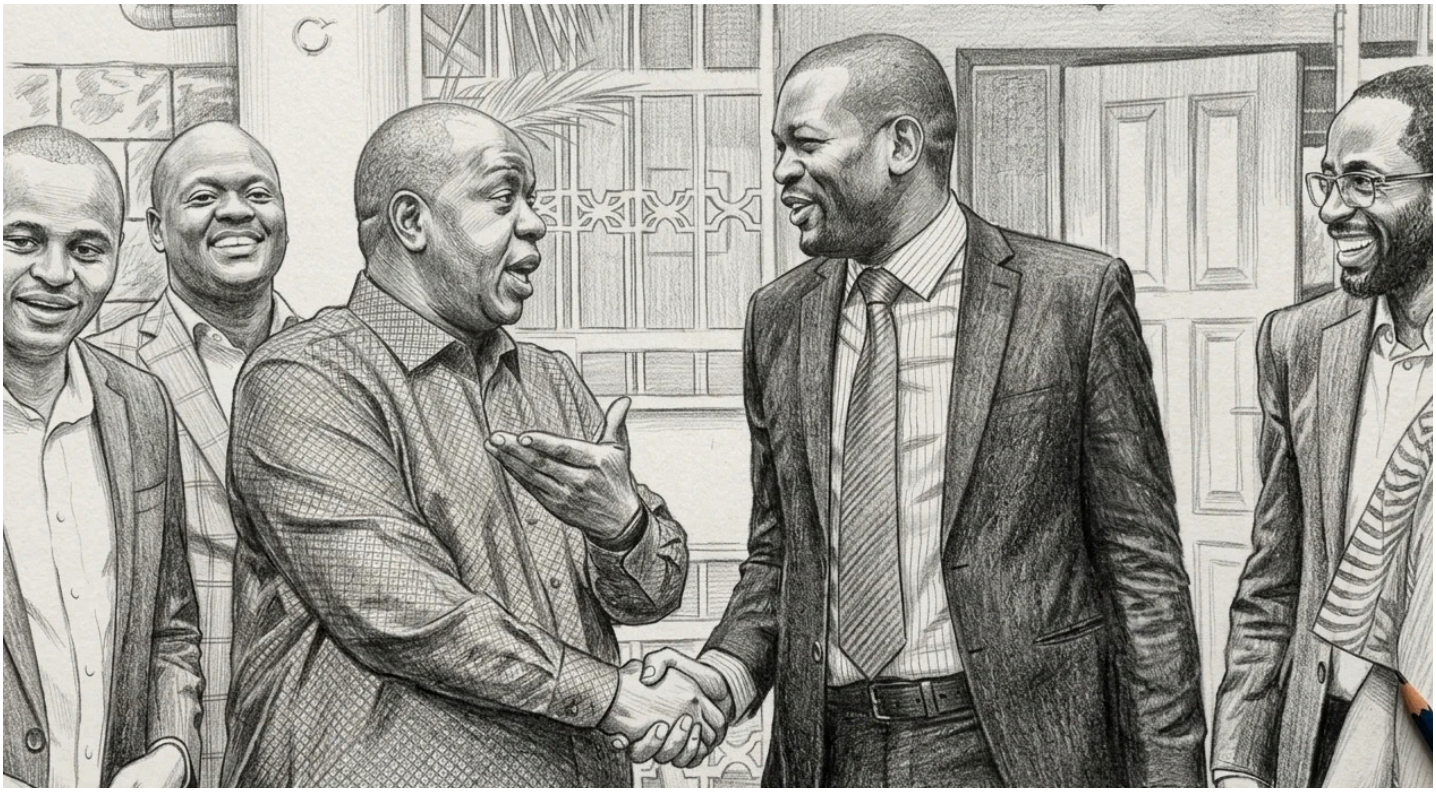
What Else Does the Opposition Offer?

The larger concern is that the debate over the ticket is consuming political attention that should also be devoted to defining the coalition's purpose.

An opposition coalition must do more than unite support against an incumbent; it must also offer an alternative vision for governing the country.

That requires agreement on economic policy, public finance, healthcare, education, devolution, institutional independence and the management of public resources.

The opposition has made broad statements about the need for accountable leadership and better governance, and individual principals have articulated policy priorities.



Nyoro, for example, has publicly identified affordable education, stronger healthcare, manufacturing, and tourism as areas he believes the next administration should address.

But the public still needs to see how these ideas fit together into a common programme. What would the coalition do differently on taxation and public expenditure?

How would it finance its commitments? What would it retain, reverse or reform from the current administration? How would it prevent the political compromises required to hold the coalition together from undermining its stated reform agenda?

These questions cannot wait until after the candidate is chosen. A shared policy programme could show whether the principals share a political destination or merely want the same electoral vehicle.

There is a legitimate case for delaying the public announcement of a presidential candidate. The 2002 opposition experience, often invoked by Gachagua, demonstrates that political formations can settle on a joint candidate relatively late in the electoral cycle.

But that historical comparison does not remove the need for preparation. The opposition of 2002 operated within a particular political context, and its eventual agreement cannot be treated as proof that every coalition can safely postpone its most consequential decisions.

The current opposition must therefore explain what it is doing with the time it has chosen to preserve. If the delay is meant to facilitate national mobilisation, the coalition should show how it is coordinating that mobilisation.

If it is intended to allow aspirants to establish their support, the criteria for assessing that support should be made clear. If the leaders are negotiating a power-sharing arrangement, the public should know the principles governing it.

Otherwise, the continued insistence that there is no hurry risks becoming a convenient way to avoid decisions the coalition will eventually have to make.

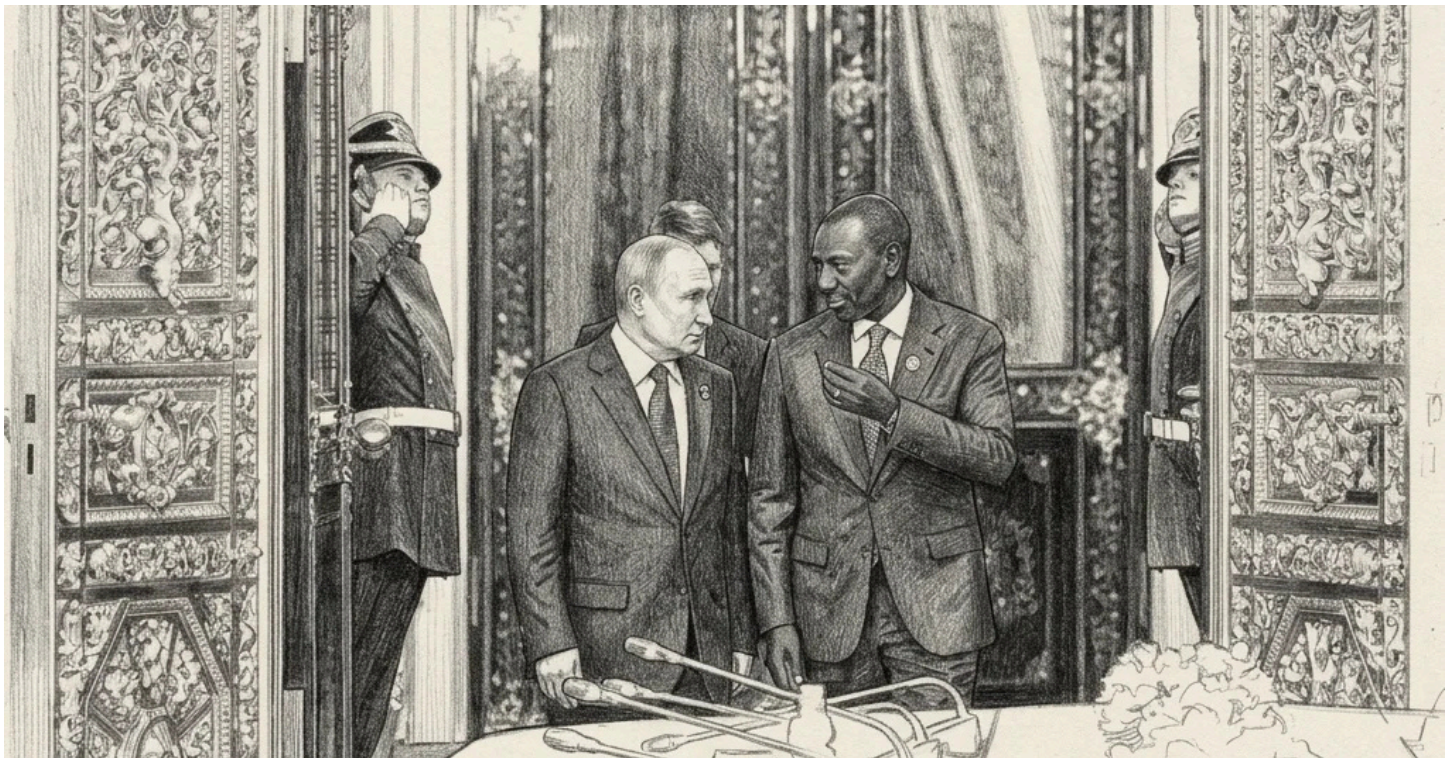
The opposition does not necessarily need to name its candidate immediately. It does, however, need to set a timetable, publish or communicate a credible selection framework, define the obligations of its principals, and begin explaining the programme around which it intends to seek a national mandate.

A coalition that cannot agree on when and how to choose its leader will inevitably face questions about how it intends to make decisions in government.

The challenge is not that its leaders have ambitions; presidential politics is built around ambition. The question is whether they can develop rules that let those ambitions compete without paralysing the organisation they are trying to build.

For now, the opposition is asking Kenyans to believe that unity will emerge when the time is right. The more useful question is what evidence it can offer that the time will ever be right without an agreed process.

Moscow gave Kenya a promise; families need a process



President William Ruto travelled to Moscow to expand Kenyan exports, investment and cooperation in agriculture, energy, infrastructure and technology, and to address Kenyans' recruitment into Russia's military and seek answers for families of those killed, captured or missing in the war against Ukraine.

At their October 30 meeting, Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed Kenya would be treated as a non-source country for military recruitment. The leaders also discussed returning and compensating Kenyans recruited for military service, as well as scholarships, labour cooperation and investment.

The visit's success depends not on Kremlin announcements, but on whether commitments protect Kenyans, deliver economic opportunities and let Kenya safeguard its interests while engaging a country at the heart of a major conflict.

The Citizens Behind The Diplomatic Breakthrough

The most urgent issue is the fate of Kenyans who travelled to Russia and entered its military system, reportedly after being offered civilian jobs.

Ruto said Putin confirmed Kenya would no longer be considered a source country for Russian military recruitment. He also announced a Defence Attaché at Kenya's Moscow embassy to work with Russia's Defence Ministry to return affected Kenyans safely and process compensation.

The commitment must be considered alongside the crisis's history. On October 9, Prime Cabinet Secretary and Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi told a joint Senate committee that Kenya had already been placed on a Russian stop-list to prevent enlistment. The embassy reportedly had received no new enlistment cases since it took effect.

The latest announcement may reinforce that arrangement, but the Government should explain what has changed operationally since it told Parliament Kenya was already on the list.

Putin's commitment carries diplomatic weight; its value depends on implementation and verification. Kenyan authorities must identify recruitment networks, investigate those responsible and stop deceptive job offers from channelling vulnerable jobseekers into military service.

On October 9, Mudavadi told senators the Government had recorded 354 Kenyans connected to the conflict: 77 reportedly on front lines, 38 in military camps, 52 with unknown or unclassified whereabouts, 84 killed or missing in action, 34 hospitalised, 62 repatriated, five prisoners of war in Ukraine, one detained and one whose military contract had ended.

Families, represented by Peter Kamau, submitted a list of about 841 recruits. The Government said it had not received the list before and needed to verify it.



The gap between these figures underscores the need for reliable data on Kenyans who travelled to Russia, signed military contracts, and are alive, dead or missing. For families, whether someone was killed, disappeared, detained or captured determines whether they can grieve, seek the return of remains or keep waiting.

The Defence Attaché should be assessed by results: verified identities, consular information, contact with prisoners of war, survivors' return and repatriation of remains. Compensation also matters, but Ruto gave no amounts, eligibility rules or processing timeline.

The Government should establish a public process for families to submit cases, track them and receive updates. Without it, the commitment will be difficult to assess.

The Economics Of Engaging Moscow

The recruitment crisis should not overshadow Kenya's economic goals. Before the summit, State House sought better market access for Kenyan exports and Russian investment in agro-processing, manufacturing, energy and infrastructure, alongside cooperation in AI, digital innovation and technology transfer.

These are legitimate interests. Kenya needs export markets, investment and partnerships to drive industrialisation, job creation and trade.

Russia could contribute in some areas. It supplies agricultural commodities, including wheat, and has industrial and technological capacity relevant to fertiliser production, energy and infrastructure.

Putin said Russia-Kenya trade almost doubled from January to August 2026. Higher trade does not necessarily benefit Kenya. If imports rise faster than exports, commercial ties may deepen without substantially increasing Kenyan export earnings.

Tea highlights the challenge. Although Kenya is a major producer, direct, competitive access to Russia depends on distribution, logistics, payments and international sanctions. A presidential meeting alone cannot resolve these barriers.

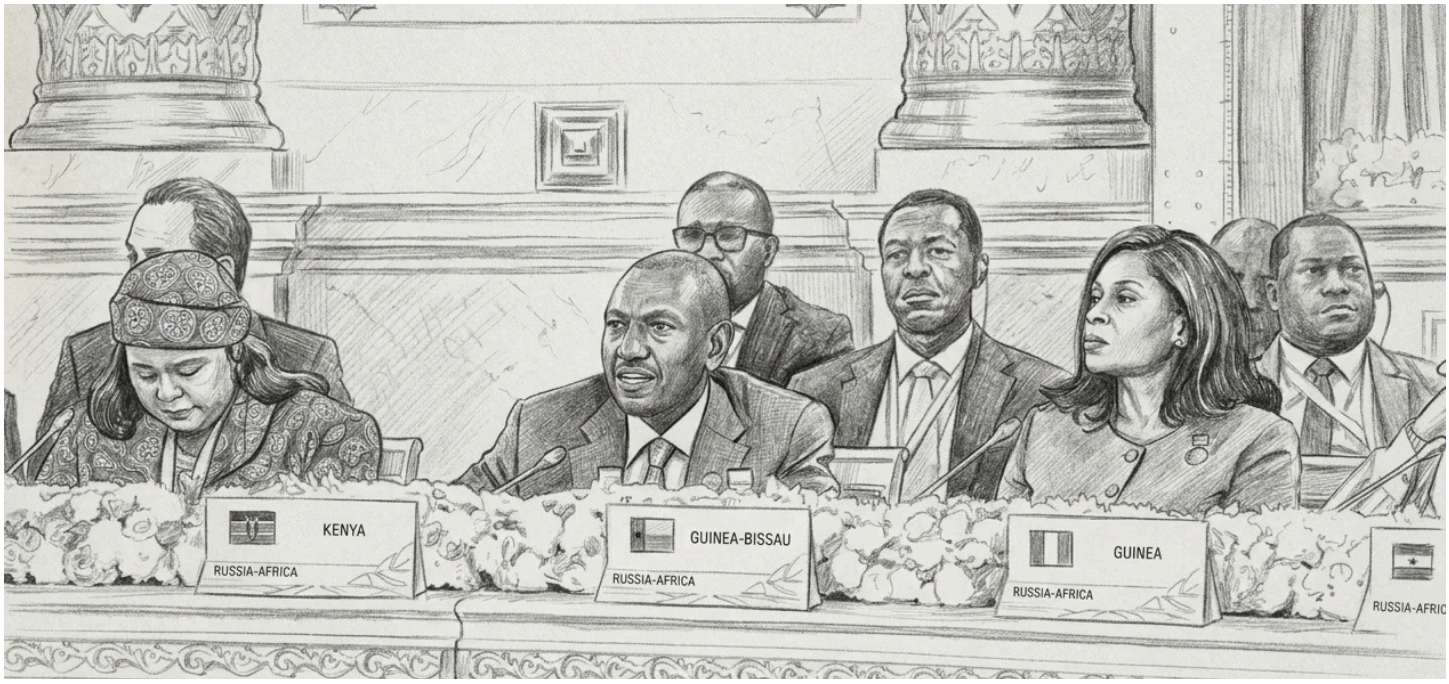
The same applies to investment. Talks on fertiliser, infrastructure and manufacturing are useful, but Kenya needs to know whether Russian companies will invest, find local partners, build facilities and operate under clear commercial and regulatory rules.

Five agreements signed during the visit cover economic cooperation, employment and labour inspection, transport, diplomatic training, and visa-free travel for diplomatic and service passport holders.

They create opportunities for engagement, but are not completed projects or binding commitments to finance specific developments.

Expanding scholarships for Kenyan students from 70 to 300 could benefit those pursuing health, technology, AI, aviation and cybersecurity.

The Government should clarify when the additional places will open, selection criteria, covered costs and student welfare arrangements. The goal should be to build skills and strengthen institutions, not simply send more students abroad.



Labour Agreement Needs Safeguards

A key proposal is to negotiate a bilateral labour agreement establishing a framework for Kenyans seeking work in Russia.

Formal labour mobility can benefit both countries through legal jobs, worker protections and less reliance on informal recruiters. But this proposal is sensitive: Kenyans have reportedly been recruited for civilian jobs and placed in military service. The agreement must address failures exposed by the crisis.

Kenya should require transparent recruitment, independently verifiable employers, clear contracts, pre-departure orientation and accessible consular support. Workers must know their duties, work location, pay and protections if circumstances change.

The agreement must explicitly and enforceably distinguish civilian work from military service. Recruitment agencies in Kenya should face effective oversight and penalties for deception or trafficking.

Success should not be measured by how many Kenyans travel abroad, but by whether they can work safely and avoid exploitation. The Government's response to the recruitment crisis will determine the credibility of any future labour partnership.

Foreign Policy Measured By Delivery

Kenya's engagement with Russia takes place amid Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, which has strained ties with Western governments and prompted extensive sanctions and diplomatic tensions.

Kenya should work with diverse partners without taking sides in geopolitical disputes, while recognising the legal, financial, and diplomatic risks of dealing with sanctioned countries.

Kenyan businesses may face barriers to payments, shipping, insurance and markets. Any partnerships with Russian entities must comply with applicable sanctions and financial rules.

Engagement is not endorsement. Meeting Putin to advance Kenya's interests need not compromise sovereignty, territorial integrity or peaceful conflict resolution. Kenya can engage major powers while protecting its interests and citizens.

The Moscow visit created both opportunities and obligations. Kenya must verify recruitment commitments, locate and return citizens, deliver compensation and secure measurable benefits from economic cooperation.

Parliament should oversee the recruitment crisis. Families need regular updates, and the Government should publish progress on agreements and visit commitments.

Ruto secured an important conversation with Putin, but its value depends on results — not warm receptions or broad communiqués.

Those results should include answers for families of missing sons, survivors' return, market access for exporters, scholarships for students and viable business partnerships.

Diplomacy earns its value when it changes outcomes at home. Moscow has offered Kenya promises; the responsibility now is to turn them into results.

Rarely Offline: The social cost of Kenya's digital life



For many Kenyans, the day begins before they leave bed. A message arrives on WhatsApp, a video plays while breakfast is prepared, a work notification appears before the commute begins, and a scroll through social media becomes the first encounter with the day's news.

By evening, the same phone may have served as a bank, office, classroom, entertainment centre, shopping platform and window into the lives of friends and strangers.

This is one of the practical achievements of Kenya's digital transformation. A connected phone can help a small business reach customers, a student find learning materials, a freelancer secure work or a family stay in touch across long distances.

Digital platforms have also created spaces for political participation, cultural expression, and public accountability that were once harder to access.

But the benefits of connectivity come with a less examined question: what happens when being online stops feeling like a choice and starts feeling like an obligation?

When work messages continue after working hours, when social feeds turn ordinary life into a comparison exercise, and when the fear of missing information makes it difficult to put a phone down, connectivity can begin to consume the attention and time it was meant to improve.

The Scale Of The Connected Life

DataReportal's Digital 2026 report estimated that Kenya had 23.4 million internet users at the end of 2025, equivalent to 40.5 per cent of the population, and 18.4 million social media user identities in October 2025.

Social media user identities are not necessarily unique individuals, and internet penetration does not mean that every user has the same quality of access, device or level of digital skill.

Still, the figures show how significant online platforms have become in the country's social and economic life.

Connectivity doesn't show how people spend their time or how it affects them. The same platform can educate a student, help a business sell products, expose users to harassment or misinformation, or keep someone awake past bedtime.

The social cost of digital life cannot be measured simply by counting users or hours spent online; it requires attention to the purpose, quality and consequences of that use.

The Pressure To Be Visible

Social media is not only a place where people consume information; it is also a stage on which they present themselves.



Users choose which achievements, photos, opinions and everyday moments to share. This can foster creativity and community, but carefully curated images of success can make ordinary life seem inadequate.

Comparing one's income, home, appearance or career with others' polished feeds means comparing unlike things. A new car, holiday, business launch or staged lifestyle rarely reveals the debt, family support, risks or setbacks behind it. Still, repeated exposure can shape expectations of success.

This pressure affects more than aspiring influencers, as platforms meant to connect people can encourage them to manage an audience.

Workers may feel they must stay professionally visible; entrepreneurs may fear a quiet feed makes their business look inactive; students may feel obliged to follow every trend; and others may document experiences rather than enjoy them.

Social media does not inevitably harm confidence or relationships; effects vary by person, platform and circumstance. But online environments reward visibility and engagement, while the time and emotional effort they demand are often treated as cost-free.

When Work and Private Life Share a Screen

Digital work has made it possible for people to earn, collaborate and serve customers beyond traditional office hours.

For freelancers and small-business owners, a phone that keeps them connected to clients may be essential to their income.

For workers with limited bargaining power, however, the same connectivity can blur the boundary between being available and being permanently on call.

A message received at night may seem harmless in isolation, but repeated demands for immediate replies can turn personal time into an extension of the workday.

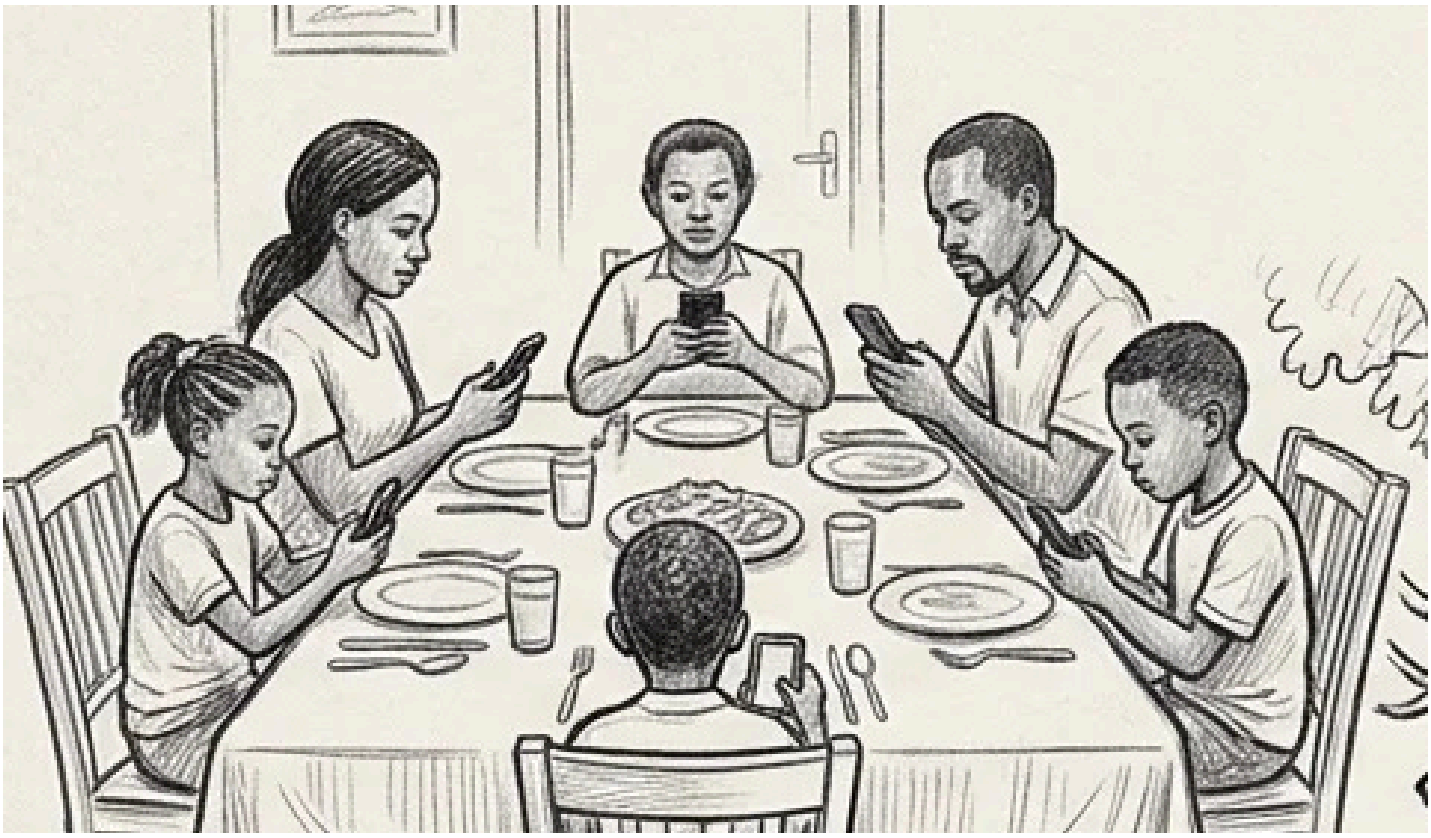
The difficulty is especially pronounced where employment expectations are unclear, where workers fear being judged as uncommitted if they do not respond, or where business owners depend on rapid responses to compete.

The same tension affects family life. A device may help a parent coordinate school arrangements or keep in touch with relatives, but constant interruptions can fragment conversations and shared time.

The question is not whether phones should be banned at dinner or whether every notification is a problem. It is whether individuals and organisations have enough control over when technology demands their attention.

Employers can help by setting clear expectations about after-hours communication, distinguishing emergencies from routine requests and evaluating work by results rather than constant online presence.

Families and individuals can establish boundaries that reflect their circumstances, while recognising that such boundaries are easier for people with control over their work than for those whose income depends on being responsive.



Privacy, Misinformation & Participation Costs

Online activity brings risks: personal photos, location and financial details, and private conversations can be copied, shared, or misused beyond their intended audience. A frustrated post may remain searchable after a dispute ends, and scams can exploit trust in familiar-looking accounts or messages.

Misinformation spreads quickly, often letting dramatic claims outrun verification during disputes, emergencies, or breaking news. Users must identify manipulated images, fabricated quotes, and misleading context as content circulates through family and community networks.

These risks are not reasons to avoid digital life, but to broaden digital literacy beyond operating apps. People need practical skills to verify sources, spot suspicious requests, manage privacy settings, understand how data is used, and report abuse. Schools, employers, media organisations, and technology companies all help make these skills accessible.

Reclaiming The Right To Disconnect

The key question isn't whether Kenyans spend too much time online, but whether they control their attention and use digital platforms in ways that meet their needs.

A student researching, a trader handling enquiries and a person watching videos may spend the same amount of time online for very different reasons. That is why blanket advice to reduce screen time can miss the point.

Better digital habits require individuals to recognise which activities add value, which leave them feeling depleted, and which interruptions they can manage.

They also require institutions to stop treating permanent availability as the default condition of modern life.

Technology companies should make privacy controls, safety tools and meaningful notification settings accessible, while employers and educators should be more deliberate about the demands they place on people outside agreed working or learning hours.

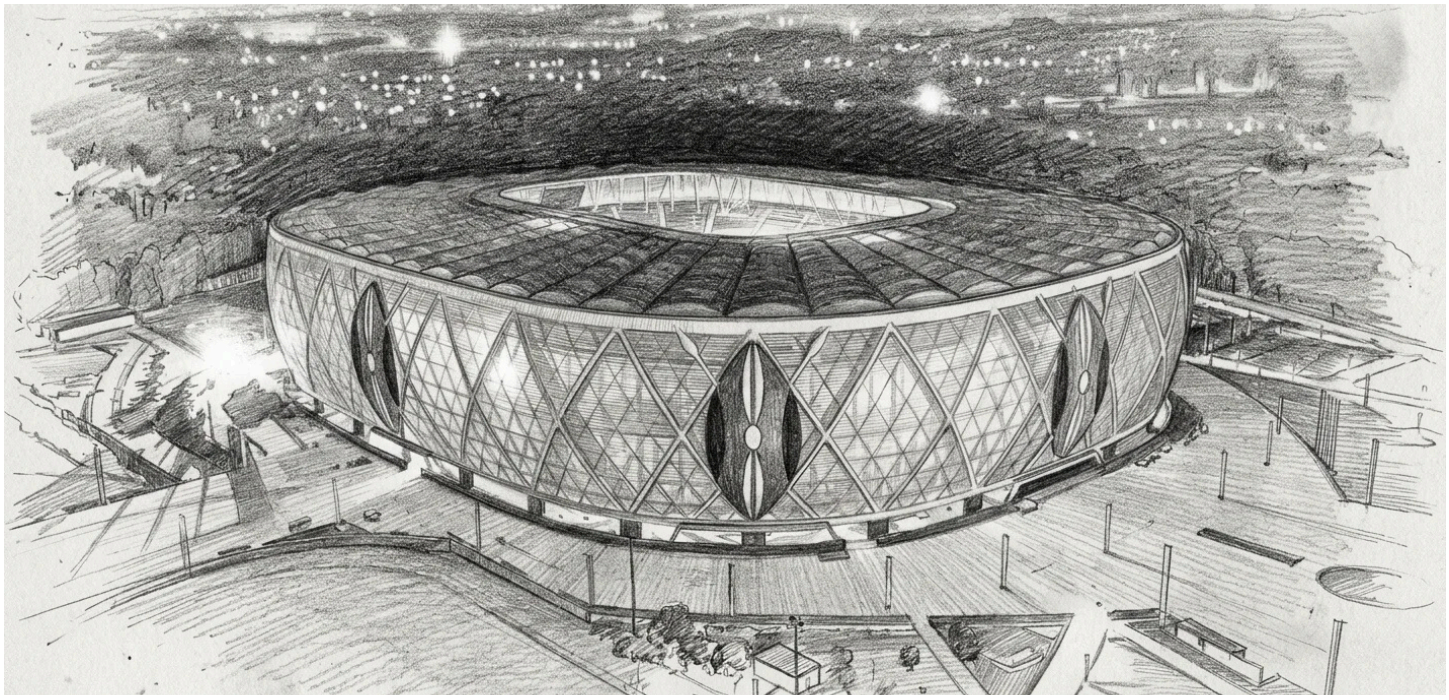
Public discussion should also move beyond the assumption that every new digital habit is either progress or decline. The more useful task is to identify what helps people live, learn and work better, and what undermines those goals.

Kenya's digital future should not be measured only by the number of connections, accounts or transactions it generates.

It should also be measured by whether connectivity expands opportunity without making people feel that they must be constantly visible, constantly productive and constantly available.

The phone can be a tool for greater freedom, but only if people retain some control over when they use it — and when they can put it down.

The match is one night, the sports economy must last



On January 5, 2027, Nairobi will welcome two of European football's most recognisable institutions: Bayern Munich and Ajax Amsterdam. They will play at the new Raila Odinga International Stadium in Talanta Sports City, formally opening one of Kenya's most ambitious sporting facilities.

The match carries considerable symbolism. Bayern have won Europe's premier club competition six times and Ajax four. For Kenyan supporters who follow them through television and digital platforms, seeing the clubs play on home soil will be a significant occasion.

Designed for 60,000 spectators, the stadium is central to Kenya's preparations to co-host the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations with Uganda and Tanzania. Scheduled for June 19 to July 17, the tournament gives January's fixture an added purpose: testing both the venue and Kenya's ability to organise a major international event.

Beyond the excitement, the match raises a question Kenya has not always asked when investing in sport: what happens after the final whistle?

In July, we asked whether Kenya was building stadiums or a sports industry. Infrastructure is only one part of a larger economic proposition. A stadium does not automatically create academies, broadcasting businesses, sports tourism, professional coaching or a sustainable commercial ecosystem.

The Bayern-Ajax fixture offers a chance to begin answering that question. It could be more than an opening ceremony; it could show how a major event connects infrastructure with enterprise.

From Hosting A Match To Building An Industry

Hosting international sport means delivering an event to required standards: a quality playing surface, security, transport, accommodation, ticketing, crowd management, broadcasting and safe logistics.

Building an industry takes longer. It requires businesses that can repeatedly deliver these services, professionals who can build careers in sport, investors willing to finance sporting enterprises, and institutions that develop talent and organise competitions.

The fixture will bring together an international organiser, two major clubs, a stadium, sponsors, broadcasters, suppliers and supporters. Each relationship can create local economic value. The question is how much will stay in Kenya.

Delivering the match will require event production, hospitality, transport, security, communications, digital ticketing, merchandising and media services. Kenyan businesses should participate not merely as peripheral suppliers, but as companies able to meet international standards and win repeat business.



The event also builds professional skills in broadcast production, stadium operations, sports marketing, athlete welfare, event management, and commercial rights — disciplines that matter beyond visiting teams.

If Kenyan professionals gain experience and local companies build capacity, the match's value will extend beyond its 90 minutes. That is the difference between importing an event and developing the ability to host, produce and commercialise sport.

The Business Beyond The Turnstiles

A full stadium is an appealing measure of success, but not a complete economic assessment. Ticket sales are only one part of a modern event's commercial ecosystem, which also includes sponsorship, broadcast and digital rights, advertising, hospitality, licensing, merchandise, tourism, food, transport and accommodation.

The match could link Kenyan businesses with international partners and introduce local institutions to commercial practices in established football markets. But visibility alone isn't enough, as global audiences may see little beyond the stadium and visiting clubs.

Though international broadcasters may show the fixture, local media must build related content, audiences and commercial opportunities.

Merchandise offers another opportunity. Bayern and Ajax's popularity creates demand for their products, but events can also benefit Kenyan designers, manufacturers, retailers and licensing businesses. A match drawing thousands of supporters should not be seen only as a chance to sell imports.

Kenya can also build a market around its own sport. Local clubs need stronger brands, better content, more attractive sponsorships and improved fan engagement.

Commercial success around international football should eventually strengthen domestic competitions.

Broadcasters and digital platforms are crucial because sport is increasingly a content business. Matches generate highlights, interviews, documentaries, analysis, behind-the-scenes material, statistics and social media engagement — extending an event's commercial life beyond the stadium.

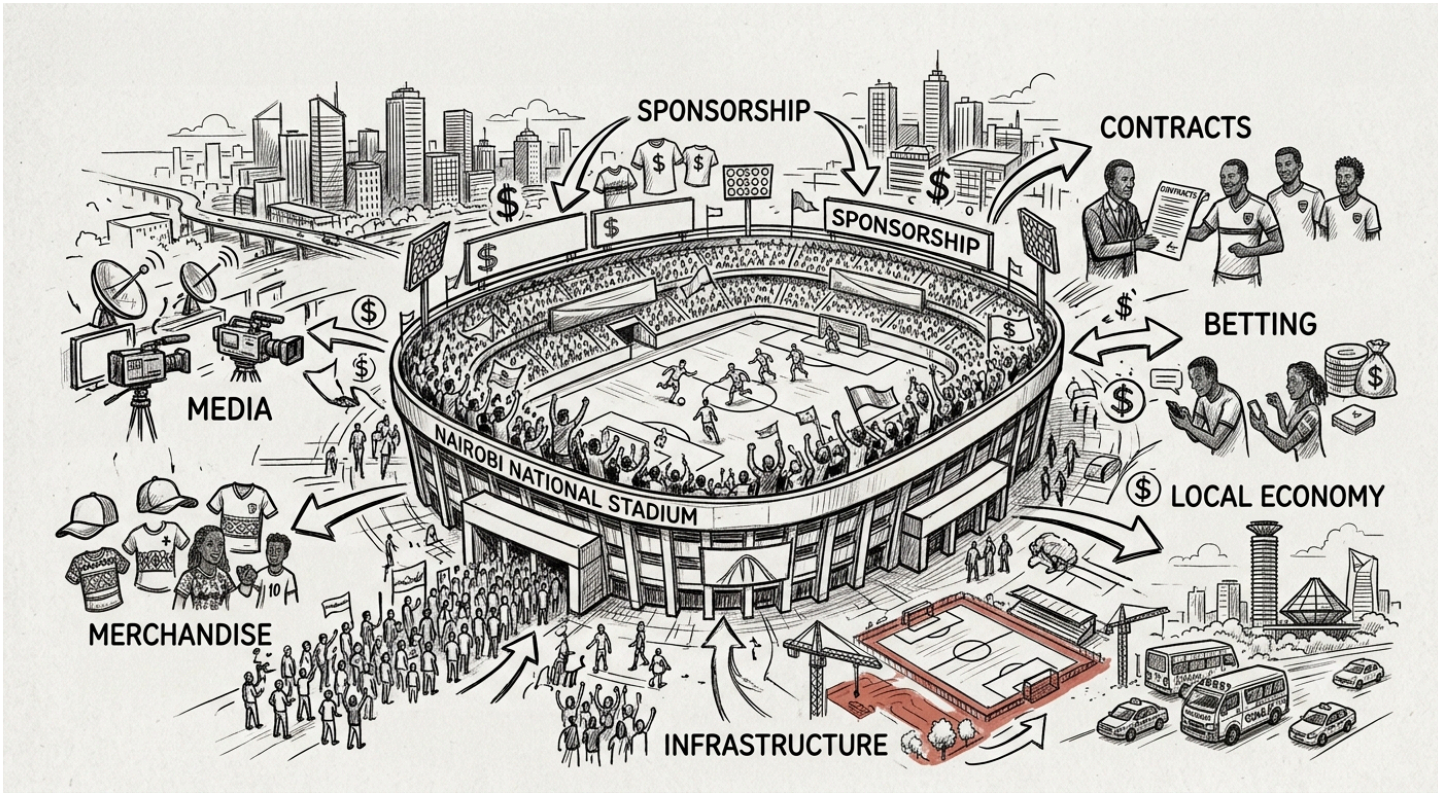
Kenya has the audience, interest and creative talent to take part. It needs a more deliberate strategy for developing businesses and rights structures that make sports content commercially valuable.

Can Stadium Become An Economic Destination?

The toughest test begins after January 5. A modern stadium is an asset, but its long-term value depends on regular use, effective management and enough revenue to cover operations and maintenance.

Talanta Sports City's success should be measured not by international events alone, but by its ability to sustain regular sporting and commercial activity — from domestic football and friendlies to athletics, concerts and exhibitions — and provide sponsors, promoters, broadcasters and businesses with a predictable environment for investment.

The stadium's management model matters: Who controls commercial rights and organises sponsorship, promotion, hospitality, advertising and merchandising? How can local businesses benefit?



These are not administrative details: they determine whether the stadium is simply a public venue or an economic platform for a wider industry.

The Government has promised corporate partnerships and a self-sustaining commercial model. Delivering on these ambitions requires clear operating arrangements, transparent reporting and measurable targets.

The public should be able to assess stadium use, revenue, costs, events and opportunities for Kenyan businesses and workers. Without this information, major infrastructure announcements may again escape scrutiny over their results.

Talent Must Benefit, Too

The Bayern-Ajax fixture raises another question: how can elite international sport support local talent? Ajax is known for youth development; Bayern operates within Europe's advanced football ecosystem, with extensive scouting, coaching, academies and performance systems.

Their visit should offer lessons in player development, academy management, talent identification and pathways from youth football to professional careers.

Kenya has abundant sporting talent, elite distance runners and passionate football fans. Converting this potential into professional opportunities requires grassroots facilities, qualified coaches, youth competitions, sports science, nutrition, physiotherapy, player management and clear career paths.

One match cannot solve these problems, and hosting European clubs does not put Kenyan football at their level. But the event can foster partnerships and technical exchanges that last beyond the visit.

January should be a beginning, not an achievement

Kenya is preparing to co-host AFCON 2027 with Uganda and Tanzania, testing the region's ability to deliver major events and attract international visitors.

The January match can test event delivery, stadium operations, security, ticketing, transport, broadcasting and hospitality ahead of AFCON.

It should also help build a stronger sports economy by connecting government, federations, clubs, schools, universities, investors, broadcasters, tourism businesses and the creative sector to create commercial opportunities and careers.

Kenya should systematically measure major events' economic impact by tracking attendance, visitor spending, local procurement, jobs, sponsorship, media exposure, and Kenyan business participation — not relying on projected visitor numbers or broad tourism claims.

The January 5 fixture may inspire national pride, but one successful opening won't fulfil Kenya's sporting ambitions. Bayern Munich and Ajax will play for 90 minutes; the stadium will remain.

True victory lies not in the score or attendance, but in what Kenya builds around the game — and sustains after the teams leave.



President William Ruto with his host Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin in Moscow on Thursday during their bilateral talks.

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