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The Voice of Meru, Isiolo & Tharaka Nithi

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## NEWSPAPER

# Auditor General exposes shocking loss of billions in Meru, Tharaka Nithi and Isiolo

## Kawira, Njuki and Abdi on the spot over financial irregularities of more than Sh3 billion



Governor Kawira Mwangaza



Governor Muthomi Njuki



Governor Abdi Ibrahim Hassan

Story on page 2...

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# Auditor's report exposes shocking rot in Meru, Tharaka Nithi and Isiolo

...from page 1

By Rugendo Antony

In a devastating expose, the latest Auditor's report for the year ended 30 June, 2023 has laid bare a cacophony of financial mismanagement and staggering irregularities across Meru, Tharaka Nithi, and Isiolo Counties, raising profound questions about accountability in public spending.

With public funds disappearing into a black hole of corruption, officials are left scrambling to explain the extensive rot that has taken root in these local governments.

The misappropriation of funds has reached staggering amounts, alarming citizens and stakeholders alike, as the urgency for accountability escalates.

## Meru County: The heart of irregularities

Meru County stole the spotlight for all the wrong reasons, with various alarming financial irregularities emerging, including irregular payments to the Council of Governors and County Public Service Board National Consultative Forum.

The County Executive made unwarranted payments amounting to Sh5,000,000 and Sh300,000 to these entities, respectively. This action was in direct violation of Section 52 of the Intergovernmental Relations Act, 2012, which mandates that operational costs for the Council of Governors must be funded by the National Government and appropriated to the council.

In addition to this, an eye-watering Sh74,340,000 was reported in irregular payments made to health workers disguised as emergency call allowances.

Despite payments being pegged at Sh126,120,000, the Auditor's report noted that the salaries should have been capped at Sh30,000 as per national guidelines that had since expired.

"Although Management provided a circular referenced which was issued after negotiation with the striking health workers and was one of the issues contained in the return-to-work formula agreed between the ministry of Health and the unions of the medical practitioners, it was only valid for four (4) years from the date of the circular which had expired. Had the correct rates been applied, doctors and medical officers were entitled to Kshs.51,780,000 instead of Kshs.126,120,000 paid, resulting to irregular payments of Kshs.74,340,000," the Auditor-General report revealed.

The report emphasized that "the payment rates used were higher than the Sh30,000 per month

stipulated in the Salaries and Remuneration Commission Circular," indicating a blatant disregard for the law.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. The Auditor's report highlighted unsupported expenditures approximating Sh1.473 billion, including an oddity of Sh224,878,549 on purported legal fees, which were not substantiated by any documents.

The lack of documentation raises red flags about the transactions' legitimacy.

"The statement of receipts and payments and as disclosed in Note 4 to the financial statements reflects use of goods and services totaling Sh1,473,938,327 which includes other operating expenses totaling Sh224,878,549 out of which Sh1,233,000 was incurred in respect to legal fee notes for petition No. E047 of 2021.

However, the payments were not supported by

### REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

#### Basis for Qualified Opinion

##### 216. Irregular Payment of Emergency Call Allowances

The statement of receipts and payments and as disclosed in Note 3 to the financial statements reflects compensation of employees totalling Kshs.4,982,899,999 which includes Kshs.126,120,000 paid to one hundred and sixty-one (161) doctors and medical officers as emergency call allowances. However, it was observed that the payment rates used of Kshs.72,000, Kshs.66,000 and Kshs.80,000 were higher than the Kshs.30,000 per month stipulated in Salaries and Remuneration Commission Circular.

Although Management provided a circular referenced MOH/ADM/CONF/STAFF/76 VOL.1 (19) dated 18 April, 2017 which was issued after negotiation with the striking health workers and was one of the issues contained in the return-to-work formula agreed between the ministry of Health and the unions of the medical practitioners, it was only valid for four (4) years from the date of the circular which had expired. Had the correct rates been applied, doctors and medical officers were entitled to Kshs.51,780,000 instead of Kshs.126,120,000 paid, resulting to irregular payments of Kshs.74,340,000.

In the circumstances, the accuracy and completeness of the allowances paid totalling Kshs.74,340,000 could not be confirmed.

#### A section of the Auditor's report showing irregular payments in Meru

records indicating how the law firm was identified and the respective service provided, service agreements signed and the proceedings or outcomes of the court cases or matters which the law firms provided legal services. 97 In the circumstances, the accuracy and propriety of the legal fee amount of Kshs.1,233,000 paid could not be confirmed," the Auditor's report further stated.

Construction projects, such as a new ablution block and clubhouse costing Sh2,280,870, were flagged for lacking proper tender documentation and oversight.

"This amount includes payment for the construction of a new ablution block and clubhouse to upgrade sacred lake at Kshs.2,280,870 which was not supported by advertisement, notice to tender, bid documents, the estimate for the works and market surveys, site handover minutes, work progress status reports and Clerks of Works daily log sheets detailing work done," the Auditor-General insisted.

Further complicating the county's financial integrity is the staggering Sh699,994,936 in transfers to other government entities, a discrepancy rife with unconfirmed amounts.

"The amount includes Kshs.50,000,000 in respect to Meru County Investment Development Corporation while the Meru County Investment Development Corporation statement of cash flows reflects receipts from County Government of Kshs.30,000,000 resulting in an unreconciled variance of Kshs.20,000,000... In the circumstances, the accuracy and completeness of transfers to other

Government entities amount of Kshs.83,229,347 could not be confirmed," read part of the report.

Adding to the complexity of financial discrepancies are the unsupported bank balances, which reflect an alarming Sh521,507,371 as disclosed in Note 10A of the financial statements.

"The certificate of bank balance held at a local bank reflects a bank balance of Sh26,191,722 and a closing cashbook balance of Nil as at 30 June, 2023," the report stated.

This raises significant alarms as the bank reconciliation shows a staggering amount of Sh377,986,928 in unpresented cheques without any details provided for their clearance.

Further complicating matters, receipts in the cashbook not recorded in the bank amounting to Sh351,795,206 remain unexplained, merely described as "returned RTGS or account transfer without further details as to their nature."

The Auditor further uncovered incidents of significant financial mishaps, revealing that Sh87,513,683,015 in payments to merchants had been returned as R&D cheques due to missing information from the payees, yet no status was provided for these cheques.

Additionally, 729 transactions totaling Sh1,463,955,922 were voided during the year 2022/2023, with no explanation or status update on these transactions released for audit.

The Audit also revealed an under-funding and under-performance which he noted affected the planned activities and may have impacted negatively on service delivery to the public.

"The statement of comparison of budget and actual amounts reflects final receipts budget and actual amounts on a comparable basis of Sh11,260,373,489 and Sh10,242,588,658 respectively, resulting to an under-funding of Sh1,017,784,831 or 9% of the budget. Similarly, the County Executive spent Sh9,990,234,931 against an approved budget of Sh11,260,373,489 resulting to an under-expenditure of Sh1,270,138,558 or 11% of the budget," the report stated

Adding to the chaos, the County Executive was found operating two payroll systems: a manual payroll system alongside the Integrated Personnel and Payroll Database System (IPPD). The auditor flagged the manual system as problematic, citing the risks associated with manual calculations of deductions and net pay that are susceptible to errors and manipulation.

"The Management did not provide a justification of maintaining a manual payroll and demonstrate mechanisms put in place to protect payroll data integrity in respect to the manual payroll. In the circumstances, the effectiveness of payroll management system could not be confirmed," the Auditor General added

In yet another blow to the County Executive's accountability, the Auditor revealed that Meru

has failed to develop a County Spatial Plan and Cities and Urban Areas Plans, as mandated by Section 107 of the County Governments Act, 2012.

This critical oversight raises serious concerns about the county's ability to guide, harmonize, and facilitate development effectively. As a result, the potential for uncoordinated growth and ineffective resource allocation now looms large over Meru.

Moreover, the revelation of over Sh1.04 billion in pending bills, coupled with the absence of a transparent asset register, showcased a depraved negligence that hinders service delivery and diminishes public trust in this resource-rich region.

## Tharaka Nithi: A tale of discrepancy and deceit

Tharaka Nithi is equally mired in financial woes, as the Auditor revealed significant discrepancies in its financial statements.

The statement of receipts and payments for the financial year reflected total payments of Sh4,497,849,902, while budget execution detailed payments of Sh4,459,904,594, resulting in an unreconciled variance of Sh37,945,308.

In light of this discrepancy, the Auditor cautioned that the accuracy and completeness of total payments could not be confirmed.

Alarming irregularities concerning Mukothima Stadium were also flagged, with Sh20,297,293 spent on construction but lacking any tender documentation, including contracts and evaluation minutes. The Auditor emphasized that without these critical documents, the expenditure could not be deemed regular or accurate.

The Auditor also highlighted unsupported expenditures on fuel and lubricants amounting to Sh67,824,129 within a total expenditure of Sh913,933,748 on goods and services.

The County Executive failed to provide quarterly analyses and consumption patterns for fuel procured through framework agreements, making the reported figures highly suspicious.



Governor Muthomi Njuki

Moreover, payments totaling Sh16,252,200 incurred on research studies and appraisals were deemed unsupported due to the absence of vital documents such as signed reports and details of their implementation.

Further financial mismanagement came to light with the revelation that

Continued on page 4...



Governor Kawira Mwangaza



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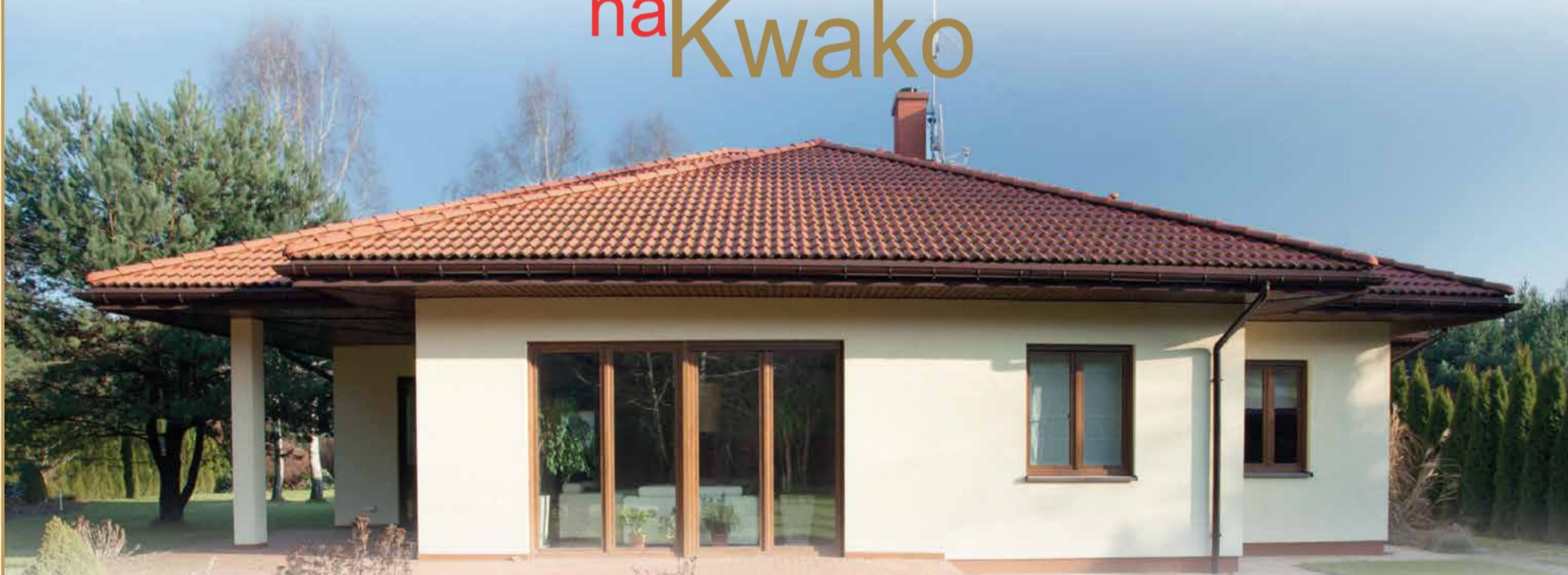
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# Report raises serious financial concerns about Isiolo Gov't

...from page 2

Sh 810,774,700 in unpaid bills remained unaddressed, with Sh343,100,882 dating back to transactions between 2014 and 2019.

“Management did not explain why the bills were not settled during the year when they occurred, or the failure to pay them as a first charge in the subsequent years. This was contrary to Regulation 41(2) of the Public Finance Management (County Governments) Regulations, 2015 which states that debt service payments shall be a first charge on the County Revenue Fund. Failure to settle bills during the year they relate to distorts the financial statements and adversely affects the budgetary provisions for the subsequent year as they form a first charge,” the Auditor noted

The audit also noted alarming weaknesses in governance, with a lack of a functional Audit Committee and unresolved prior-year issues.

The Auditor also raised serious concerns regarding payroll practices, observing irregular salary payments made to employees that exceeded recommended rates and breaches in temporary employment protocols.

## Isiolo: Erosion of financial integrity

Isiolo County also finds itself in dire straits, with significant discrepancies unveiled in its financial practices.

The Auditor reported alarming inaccuracies in the financial statements, revealing a stark contrast between budgeted revenues of

Sh5,223,402,709 and actual projected revenues of Sh6,316,282,100 during the 2022/2023 financial year, resulting in unexplained variances exceeding Sh1.09 billion.

Furthermore, unexplained variances in total receipts and payments were alarming, with discrepancies of Sh625,302,139 and Sh597,252,682 respectively.

Budgeting irregularities didn't stop there as the Isiolo County Appropriation Act of 2023 indicated a total approved budget of Sh6,460,705,128; however, the statement failed to reconcile with final receipts and expenditures, leading to additional unexplained variances.

During the financial year, Sh1,501,486,520 was reported in transfers to other government entities, but this does not align with cash flow statements, which reflected significantly lower amounts.

In relation to employee compensation, discrepancies arose as Sh90,275,000 was budgeted for temporary employees, but this did not match the expenditures recorded.

The Auditor's scrutiny further revealed Sh415,895,241 in pending accounts payable, some dating back to previous financial years without any provided explanation for their unresolved status.

Additionally, the lack of project implementation status reports for the Sh1,567,020,813 earmarked for development raises serious concerns about whether these budgeted projects

were commenced or completed.

Concerns regarding statutory compliance were prevalent, particularly with Sh168,128,800 drawn from emergency funds breaching the legal limit of 2% of the total County Government revenue. The absence of supporting documentation for these payments further exacerbated transparency issues.

Revenue management was also highlighted as inadequate, with Sh152,700,178 in own-source revenue collected without approval from the County Assembly for the relevant finance bill, raising questions on the legitimacy of these collections.

Delays in transferring revenue to the County Revenue Fund, as well as failures to enact the liquor licensing bill, compromised the county's financial management and revenue-generation efforts.

Further audits pointed out irregular procurements, including payments for cleansing and sanitary materials that exceeded the maximum required by law and lacked sufficient documentation, leading to skepticism regarding their legitimacy.

Under the employment laws, deviations were noted, as payroll records indicated that 19 employees surpassed the mandatory retirement age. The county also faced scrutiny for payments made for the Governor's rental allowance, while failing to construct an official residence.



Isiolo Governor Ibrahim Hassan

## A community in outrage

As the fallout from these revelations begins to unfurl, public outcry is growing. Local leaders are calling for urgent reforms to restore integrity and accountability to county governance.

“The Auditor's findings are a wake-up call for immediate reform. We cannot let mismanagement continue to drain resources meant for public services,” remarked Eliud Kiriimi, a Meru resident.

With accountability at the heart of this crisis, residents of Meru, Tharaka Nithi, and Isiolo Counties are demanding swift action from their leaders to confront and rectify these severe financial lapses.

# Tharaka residents grapple with poverty despite rich mineral wealth

By Gerald Mukembu

Residents of Tharaka constituency are calling on both the national and county governments to commence the extraction of iron ore, copper, gemstones, and lime minerals believed to be located in areas such as Kibung'a, Kithioroka, Maragwa, and Marimanti.

For over 50 years, these community members have harbored hopes that the valuable minerals beneath their feet could boost their livelihoods.

Local miners, like James Mugwika—a seasoned iron ore extractor for more than two decades—lament that despite the discovery of these minerals over five decades ago, poverty and vulnerability still plague the community.

Mugwika stated that they have demarcated areas suspected to hold deposits of copper, lime, and iron ore.

Although they have been selling lime to local



James Njeru Mugwika (right) who has been extracting Iron Ore and also packaging limestone in Kithiori, Tharaka Nithi county. Photo/Gerald Mukembu

farmers, the equipment they relied on recently malfunctioned. He emphasized that if the minerals are exploited, establishing a processing factory could provide much-needed employment for the residents.

Agnes Muthoni shared her frustrations, recalling how in 1987, many homes were razed to pave way for mineral extraction, which ultimately stalled without compensation.

“Had iron ore mining thrived, I wouldn't have had to drop out of school due to financial strain,” she lamented.

She also expressed concerns about the hazardous, abandoned sites, which can no longer be used for farming.

Echoing the community's sentiments, former Tharaka Nithi Deputy Governor Nyamu Kagwima supported the claims of mineral presence.

He revealed that he commissioned French Army consultants, who confirmed the potential viability and quality of the minerals through extensive professional analysis conducted in South Africa.

Kagwima is now advocating for support from both county and national officials to advance mining initiatives.

He noted that lime plays a crucial role in improving soil quality, while iron ore is essential for steel production and other industries.

Tharaka MP Gitonga Murugara has also urged the Mining ministry to hasten research efforts to determine the minerals' viability.

“The Mining Act provides hope for our community,” he added, urging patience among residents amidst ongoing discussions.

Frustrations abound regarding local leadership, as residents feel their representatives have not pushed hard enough for mineral exploration.

“My father is buried at one of the iron ore sites. He never benefited from the resources that lie beneath us,” shared 74-year-old Nkirang'a Mutiria.

He highlighted past efforts by Kagwima when he served as Tharaka MP, but expressed disappointment with the current stagnation.

Residents urged politicians to prioritize investment in machinery and the establishment of processing facilities in Kithiori.

“Iron ore is vital for steel production,” Mutiria

added, reflecting on missed opportunities due to political disputes that have hindered investment.

Kagwima reassured the community by promising to collaborate with stakeholders to secure major industrial machinery from China and beyond.

He also revealed plans to revive iron ore production and establish a limestone plant in Maragwa, which he claims could generate around 500 jobs. They currently aim to increase lime production from 200 bags per day to a staggering 1,000 bags.

The hopes of Tharaka residents remain vibrant, as they await concrete action from their leaders to finally unlock the mineral wealth that has been a long-time promise but far from reality.

They believe it's time the government invests seriously in mining initiatives, treating them with the same urgency it does for other local industries, like miraa cultivation.



Mugwika (right) demonstrate how he has been mining the minerals



Nkirang'a Mutiria, 74, from Kithiori, has been in the business for years with little to show for it



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A display of some of the prizes in the Pepea Na Capital Sacco draw, including a brand new Toyota Probox. Participants stand a chance to win these exciting rewards

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# Kimeru Institute unveiled: A bold step towards revitalizing Meru culture and language

By Harun Mugambi

**K**eMU Towers in Nairobi buzzed with excitement as cultural icons, leaders, and passionate advocates gathered for the launch of the Kimeru Institute.

This significant new initiative seeks to revitalize the Kimeru language, history, and cultural practices that are increasingly at risk of being lost.

In collaboration with Kenya Methodist University (KeMU), the Kimeru Institute aims to become a cornerstone for preserving the unique identity of the Meru people. Attendees at the launch included a diverse group committed to safeguarding their rich heritage. Professor John Kobia Ataya, PhD, Vice Chancellor of KeMU and the event's chief guest, highlighted the institute's significance, stating, "The Kimeru Institute is more than a cultural initiative; it serves as a beacon of hope for our language and traditions. Our unique Kimeru language, distinguished by its seven vowels, deserves to be preserved and taught, and this institute will facilitate that crucial mission."

He also announced plans to develop academic programs that will promote Kimeru as an international language.

The Kimeru Institute was established as a semi-autonomous program under KeMU's Centre for Leadership and Professional Development.

Former Meru Governor Kiraitu Murungi, who championed the project, articulated its goals: "Our language, music, and traditions face a serious threat of assimilation. If we do not act now, we risk losing our cultural identity. This



Former Meru Governor Kiraitu Murungi (right) and KeMU VC Prof. Kobia Ataya during the unveiling of Kimeru Institute at KeMU Towers in Nairobi

institute will be a platform for teaching Kimeru, celebrating our traditions, and conducting research to ensure our heritage endures."

Murungi called for community support, urging for unity. "Let us come together for the sake of our future generations. Kimiiru Kiri Bata," he stated

Prominent dignitaries like Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi, former Education Cabinet Secretary, endorsed the institute's importance. "We are witnessing a troubling trend where

Kimeru songs are fading away, even in celebratory settings like weddings. This institute will help restore our music, poetry, and language," he remarked.

North Imenti MP Rahim Dawood expressed his long-held dream of documenting the Kimeru culture.

"With this institute, we finally have the opportunity to make that dream a reality. It is essential that this program reaches every corner of Meru and beyond," he stated.

Dr. Susan Laimaru, Principal of KeMU's Nairobi Campus, conveyed her enthusiasm: "We are laying down a foundation today—not just for ourselves, but also for future partnerships with diverse communities. Understanding one's culture is vital for unity, and unity enables us to achieve great things."

The institute's interim board of directors includes a range of distinguished figures dedicated to its mission: to inspire, educate, and connect individuals through the preservation and celebration of the Kimeru language and cultural heritage.

The launch featured lively performances from popular Kimeru artists like Kamanu M'tuamwari, Mc Alingo, and Karimi Bruno, bringing the essence of Meru music and dance to life. Attendees enjoyed traditional attire, crafts, and cuisine, enriching the cultural experience of the event.

As the proceedings concluded, participants left filled with optimism and renewed pride in



Mr. Murungi (left) and Prof. Ataya pose for a photo during unveiling of Kimeru Institute at KeMU Towers in Nairobi

their heritage, committed to supporting the Kimeru Institute's mission.

This launch signifies not only a glimpse into the region's cultural legacy but also a concerted effort to ensure the vibrancy of Meru history, language, and traditions in an ever-modernizing world.

The words of former Governor Kiraitu Murungi resonated strongly: "Our culture is our foundation, and this institute is the key to preserving it for generations to come."

## A faction of Isiolo MCAs criticize Municipality for delayed response to school fire incidents



A section of the Isiolo MCAs when they visited Isiolo Girls High School on September 9, 2024

By Harun Mugambi

**A** group of Isiolo MCAs has criticized the Municipality leadership for not responding promptly to the fire incident at Isiolo Girls School last Saturday.

Wabera MCA Salesio Kiambi, leading the group, expressed disappointment that despite calls for help from residents and the school management, the county fire engine did not respond.

"The community expects the fire engine to be ready at all times. Timely response could have saved some items," Mr. Kiambi stated.

Nicholas Lorot from Burat expressed sorrow over the fire department's inability to handle emergencies despite having funds allocated for such incidents.

He urged Municipality Manager Osman Halakhe to address the poor response to fire emergencies at both the school and homes.

"It is disgraceful that other agencies responded hours later while the county's fire engine remained idle. The manager should be allowed to use the allocated funds properly so that we can hold him accountable if he fails," Lorot said.

The fire, which started at 7:30 PM on Saturday, destroyed property, including essentials for 159 students. Fire engines from the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) and Isiolo International Airport were unable to salvage anything.

The dormitory, according to the school management, housed 159 students, most of whom were in Form One.

Bulapesa MCA David Waithaka called for teachers to be closer to students to understand their concerns and emphasized the need for increased patrols in boarding schools to ensure student safety.

He also highlighted the importance of parents having positive discussions with their children to foster a love for their schools.

"With night patrols, it will be easier to detect and address any unusual behavior among students before it escalates into a crisis," Waithaka said.

## Galbatula High school alumni unite to restore former glory

By Gerald Mukembu

**T**he alumni of Galbatula High School have rallied together to restore the institution to its former glory from the 1980s and 1990s.

Principal David Ruito mentioned that the school has struggled to regain its prestige since it was closed for two years in 2000.

"This school wouldn't be in such a poor state if all stakeholders were committed. We have a responsibility to manage and run this institution," he stated.

He explained that parents withdrew their children due to security concerns, leading to the school's closure in 2000. It reopened in 2002 as a District School but faced challenges in registering students for two years.

Despite these difficulties, the school has produced prominent leaders, lawyers, teachers, and professionals respected both locally and internationally.

Currently, the school has seen improvements in student population, academic performance, and facilities, including the acquisition of a school bus and the installation of DST.



Photo: Galbatula High School gate. The school's alumni are determined to restore the glory of the once famous academic giant institution

To further enhance the school's infrastructure, the alumni are renovating six dormitories, upgrading classrooms, and providing necessary software and

equipment to transform the school into a leading institution once again.

During the school's 50th anniversary, several leaders pledged their support to elevate the institution's standards.

Area MP Muhamed Tupi Tupi emphasized the initiative's goal to restore the school's former status, where it once competed with top schools like Alliance High School and Mang'u High School.

"In the 80s and 90s, this was one of the most renowned schools in the country. We, the alumni, have come together to address the issues that led to its decline, such as insecurity, poor infrastructure, and bad roads. My office has taken steps to improve these conditions, including road tarmacking and building police camps. Nothing will stop us from restoring the school's glory," the MP declared.

# SOLUTION SACCO LIMITED

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## Solution Sacco's stellar management drives unprecedented success!

In a landscape bustling with financial institutions, Solution Sacco stands out as a transformative force committed to elevating its members' lives.

Founded with a vision to promote financial inclusion and community welfare, Solution Sacco has not only become one of the most trusted names in cooperative banking but has also fundamentally changed the lives of its members through innovative financial solutions, education, and unwavering support.

This narrative explores the compelling journey of Solution Sacco, delving deep into its structure, triumphs, and the essence of its mission: to empower its members to achieve their financial goals.

### A vision realized

The journey of Solution Sacco began in 1976, a pivotal year when a small group of individuals recognized the glaring gap in access to financial services in their community and the need to champion social economic prosperity of its members. Initially, it was part of Meru Mwalimu Sacco, which served teachers in the greater Meru District. In 1993, Solution Sacco split from Meru Mwalimu SACCO to become an independent entity

In a time when traditional banks often



Solution Sacco C.E.O Daniel Marete helps a young client access his hippo savings kit

avored larger businesses and individuals with significant assets, these visionaries understood the need for a cooperative that would prioritize people over profits.

With a cohort of just a few enthusiastic individuals, Solution Sacco was established to create a financial platform that would serve not just as a lending and savings institution but as a community-focused organization dedicated to cultivating financial literacy and resilience.

As they navigated the challenges of early operations, the founders of Solution Sacco remained steadfast in their commitment to

uplift their members. They focused on fostering a culture of saving, ensuring that members had the financial resources they needed to overcome life's uncertainties.

Over the decades, the cooperative expanded exponentially, embracing advancements in technology and adapting to the shifting economic landscape.

Today, Solution Sacco proudly serves over 30,859 members, each of whom has a unique story of growth and empowerment rooted in their association with this cooperative.

### Exceptional financial performance

One of the hallmarks of any successful financial institution is its ability to achieve sustainable growth while maintaining robust financial health. Solution Sacco has demonstrated exceptional performance year after year,

reflecting its effective management and commitment to meeting the needs of its members.

By December 2023, Solution Sacco reported total assets exceeding Sh9.47 billion from Sh8.3 billion in the year 2022. This remarkable growth is a testament to the prudent financial practices employed by the Sacco's management team, which emphasizes transparency, accountability, and responsive service.

The cooperative has also greatly enhanced its loan portfolio, which has burgeoned to over Sh7.65 billion. This influx of loans enables members to pursue essential personal and business ventures, thereby spurring economic activity within their communities.



The sacco members follow proceedings during a past AGM

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## Solution Sacco's exceptional performance and innovation redefine financial success

Moreover, the collective deposits of members now total to over Sh6.15billion, demonstrating a strong savings culture nurtured through the Sacco's educational initiatives and tailored products.

Members of Solution Sacco enjoy competitive dividends on their savings, further incentivizing a culture of financial prudence and long-term investment.

The default on loans is a critical indicator of a Sacco's success, and Solution Sacco stands proud with a low default rate. This reflects not just the responsible lending practices of the Sacco but also the financial literacy initiatives in place to equip members with essential skills to manage their finances effectively.



Solution Sacco C E O Mr Daniel Marete and Mr Patrick Mugendi Kwiriga from MEWASS when they met to discuss areas of partnership between the two Companies

to funds is crucial. This is where the FastTrack Loan facility comes into play.

Designed specifically for emergencies, this product allows members to receive loan approvals within 24 hours, offering a seamless application process that minimizes bureaucratic red tape.

Through this service, Solution Sacco underscores its commitment to empowering members during financial setbacks, thus fostering resilience within the community.

### Microfinancing options

Recognizing the vital role micro-entrepreneurs play in Kenya's economic landscape, Solution Sacco has developed dedicated microfinance solutions. These loan products are specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of small business owners and individual entrepreneurs.

The streamlined application process and flexible repayment terms empower members to access capital without the stringent requirements often encountered in traditional banking.

By facilitating access to finance for small businesses, the Sacco is not only helping individuals improve their livelihoods but is also contributing to the growth of local economies.

### A toolbox of innovative financial solutions

Understanding that the financial landscape is ever-evolving, Solution Sacco has consistently expanded its product offerings to meet the diverse needs of its membership. The cooperative has tailored its services to be inclusive, enabling members from all walks of life to benefit from the power of collective financial management.

#### Fast track loans

In a world where emergencies can arise at any moment, quick access

during financial setbacks, thus fostering resilience within the community.

### Investment growth program

To further incentivize members to save and invest in their future, Solution Sacco introduced various savings products. This innovative savings product offers attractive interest rates encouraging members to cultivate a habit of saving and investing for long-term prosperity. Every member can start with Solution Sacco, making it accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic background.



Solution Sacco members of staff display trophies won during the Meru National Agricultural Show early this year



Solution Sacco officers receive a trophy during the Meru National Agricultural Show



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# SOLUTION SACCO LIMITED

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## Solution Sacco's financial literacy drives members' prosperity

### Comprehensive digital banking services

In an age where technology drives convenience and efficiency, Solution Sacco has fully embraced digital transformation.

The Sacco's user-friendly online banking platform and mobile application enable members to manage their accounts, transfer funds, and access loan services on-the-go.

By investing in technology, Solution Sacco ensures that its members can access critical financial services whenever and wherever they need.

This digital transition not only enhances user experience but also aligns with the digital banking trends emerging globally. The convenience afforded by these platforms fosters greater financial inclusion, particularly for younger members who are increasingly reliant on technology for their financial transactions.

### Commit to financial literacy and empowerment

The founders of Solution Sacco understood early on that access to financial resources alone was not enough to guarantee success for its members. Financial literacy is paramount in empowering individuals to make informed choices about their finances.

Consequently, the Sacco has placed a strong emphasis on education, designing programs



Solution Sacco Chairman Francis Rimberia addresses participants during a past tree - planting CSR activity

that equip members with essential knowledge and skills.

These workshops cover a wide range of topics, including budgeting, debt management, investment strategies, and retirement planning. Members receive tools and resources that aid them in navigating their financial journeys effectively. Furthermore, Solution Sacco offers personalized financial guidance and counseling, allowing members to receive tailored advice relevant to their unique circumstances.

The impact of these initiatives can be seen in the financial behaviors of members, many of whom report enhanced budgeting practices and increased savings rates.

With financial empowerment at its core, Solution Sacco is dedicated to creating a community of financially savvy individuals who can make informed decisions that positively affect their lives.

### Championing Corporate Social Responsibility

Solution Sacco recognizes that its role extends beyond mere financial transactions. The cooperative takes its responsibility to the community seriously, actively engaging in various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives that aim to improve the lives of those in need.

One of the standout initiatives in 2023 was the launch of a tree planting campaign dubbed A journey to 30,000 trees. The Society aimed at planting 30,000 trees as it marked 30 years of excellent service and empowering communities

Through its tree-planting campaigns, the Sacco has successfully contributed thousands of

trees to local communities, demonstrating its commitment to preserving the environment and combating climate change. These efforts not only beautify the landscape but also provide essential resources for future generations.

The cooperative also allocates substantial resources to support education. This initiative helps ensure that needy learners have access to quality education, providing them with opportunities to break the cycle of poverty and build a brighter future.

6<sup>th</sup> September 2024

To All Members,  
SOLUTION SACCO LIMITED

RE: MEMBERS EDUCATION DAY

This is to notify you that there will be education to members meetings during the months of September and October 2024 as per the below schedule. The meetings will start at exactly 10:00am.  
Come all and learn about the different topics lined up for you.

DATE	ELECTORAL AREA	VENUE
21/09/2024	Igoji/Kiomyo/Kanyakine	Igoji Catholic Hall
21/09/2024	Abothuguchi	Kariene Primary
21/09/2024	Nkuene/Igoki/Kithangari	Nkubu MCK Hall
21/09/2024	Buuri East& Timau	Timau Porters Hall
21/09/2024	Miriga Mieru	Gitoro Pastoral Centre
05/10/2024	Igembe North	Laare Social Hall
05/10/2024	Igembe South	Kilalal High School Hall
05/10/2024	Tigania East	Mikinduri Primary School
05/10/2024	Tigania West	Ngundune Redeemed Church

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Francis Murithi Rimberia  
CHAIRMAN

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# SOLUTION SACCO LIMITED

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## Solution Sacco leads in empowering members financially



Solution Sacco Chairman Francis Rimberia (right) and C.E.O Daniel Marete (left) shake hands with Meru County Woman Representative Karambu Kailemia during a meeting at the Meru headquarter offices

Transparency is a cornerstone of Solution Sacco's governance philosophy. Members receive regular updates and reports on the Sacco's financial health and strategic direction, particularly during its annual general meetings. These meetings serve as a platform for members to voice their opinions, share ideas, and assess the cooperative's progress, reinforcing a culture of

success stories of its members highlight the transformative power of community-based financial services.

For example, Mary Esther Mwangi, an entrepreneur was struggling to find her footing in the business world. That is before she met Solution Sacco. She joined Solution Sacco and started saving before applying for a loan which significantly increased her business.

"The soda distribution business journey started proper after joining Solution Sacco. We started saving with them before applying for a loan. The Sacco staff used to come for the savings from our offices every day," said Mwangi.

Mwangi's story illustrates the broader impact Solution Sacco has on the community- by enabling individuals to seize opportunities, the cooperative fosters economic growth that uplifts entire neighborhoods. Members often re-invest in their communities, creating a self-sustaining cycle of prosperity.

continually looking for innovative solutions that improve member experience and convenience. As part of this vision, Solution Sacco is also driven to deepen its engagement in educational initiatives to ensure that financial literacy becomes ingrained in the community's cultural fabric.

In essence, the remarkable journey of Solution Sacco encapsulates much more than financial success. It personifies resilience, innovation, and unwavering commitment to uplift individuals and communities.

By becoming a member of Solution Sacco, individuals are not just joining a financial institution; they are becoming part of a transformative movement committed to societal betterment.

By engaging in CSR initiatives, Solution Sacco actively demonstrates that it is more than just a financial institution; it is a community partner dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all its members.

### Governance: A pillar of trust

The success of Solution Sacco can be traced back to its unwavering commitment to good governance practices, which foster member confidence and trust.

Operating under the regulatory framework established by the Sacco Societies Regulatory Authority (SASRA), Solution Sacco ensures compliance with all legal obligations while maintaining the highest ethical standards.

accountability.

The board of directors comprises seasoned professionals with extensive experience in finance, management, and community development. Their diverse backgrounds bring a wealth of knowledge that informs strategic decision-making.

Prioritizing the welfare of members, the governance structure ensures that every choice made aligns with the cooperative's mission to serve its constituency effectively.

### The Ripple Effect: Empowering members and communities

The influence of Solution Sacco transcends financial metrics; it impacts lives. The individual

### The future with Solution sacco

As it looks to the future, Solution Sacco remains committed to its foundational mission of empowering individuals and communities.

With plans to continue expanding its reach into underserved areas, the cooperative aims to ensure that all Kenyans have access to vital financial resources.

Moreover, the Sacco is keen to enhance its digital banking services,

# How a young lady is bridging digital divide in Meru through AGCCI

By Rugendo Antony

In the heart of Mutonga, just a stone's throw from the bustling Meru-Nairobi highway, lies Gicici Primary School—a modest institution laden with the marks of time.

Its wooden structures stand resilient against the elements, while weather-beaten stone walls tell tales of resilience and determination.

Inside the quaint classrooms, an extraordinary transformation is underway, filled with the laughter and chatter of eager children, captivated by the world of technology flickering before them on brand-new laptops.

The spark igniting this vibrant scene is none other than Ms Betty Mwende, a passionate scholar and advocate for digital literacy.

Supported by the MasterCard Foundation and a graduate of the African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI), Mwende has made it her mission to bridge the digital divide that holds back many young people in her community.

Armed with her own experiences and the desire to empower others, she's on a journey to change the narrative for her village youngsters, one computer lesson at a time.

“Watching these kids engage with computers for the very first time is nothing short of magical,” Mwende shares with glowing enthusiasm.

“For many in rural areas like ours, technology is a foreign concept. By teaching them digital literacy, we are not just bridging a gap; we are laying the groundwork for their futures.” She adds

## An Initiative of Change

Launched by UN Women in partnership with the African Union Commission (AUC), and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Siemens, AGCCI aims to equip young women across Africa, aged 17-25, with essential skills in coding and IT.

This initiative resonated deeply with Mwende, who embraced the program as an opportunity to foster change in her community.

Recognizing the potential of the younger generation, she decided to give back by providing hands-on training at Gicici Primary School.

Since kicking off on August 20, the program has brought interactive lessons that cover Microsoft Word, Excel, and a taste of coding with HTML. The program has also received support from other organizations such as Africans Read, Think and See (ARTS)



Ms Betty Mwende a graduate of the African Girls Can Code Initiative (AGCCI) guiding learners in a digital literacy lesson

With the ten-day training still underway, Mwende is already envisioning future sessions that may include Scratch—a platform designed to teach coding in a fun, engaging way.

“We're facing challenges with internet access. We're actively seeking partnerships with telecommunications companies like Safaricom and Airtel to enhance our connectivity, which is crucial for our future training sessions,” Mwende explains, outlining the logistical hurdles.

## Community Impact

Mwende's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Mrs Kaaria Lucy, headteacher of Gicici Primary, echoes her sentiments, emphasizing the significant impact of the AGCCI initiative.

“We are immensely grateful for the resources and opportunities provided to our students. The waves of change have rippled through our community, as parents and local educators see their children acquiring valuable tech skills,” Mrs Kaaria states.

The digital literacy program, according to Mrs. Kaaria, has not only transformed classroom engagement but also aligns seamlessly with the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) that emphasizes active learning.

“The laptops have created dynamic, practical lessons. Our students are no longer just memorizing information; they're actively participating in their education, which is so crucial for their development,” she adds with palpable warmth.

For the young learners at Gicici Primary, this initiative represents a life-changing opportunity.

Eleven-year-old Prince Munene, a fifth grader, beams, “I love learning about computers! For the first time, I can search for my favorite games and cartoons all by myself. It feels amazing to have these skills!” Munene's enthusiasm is infectious, and it captures the essence of what Mwende hopes to achieve.

Another student, Nesy Kendi, a sixth grader with ambitions of becoming a nurse, reflects on her newfound knowledge: “This digital

literacy lesson has opened my eyes! I never interacted with computers or laptops before, and now I'm learning how to type and navigate technology. It's going to have a massive impact on my future!”

The gleam in her eyes is a testament to the belief that these skills will help her achieve her dreams.

## A Vision for the Future

Ms Queenie Meria, a Program Associate at UN Women, elaborates on the organization's mission to empower women and girls throughout Africa.

“We aim to create a sustainable ecosystem where young women can envision and pursue careers in technology. Digital literacy is more



Ms Queenie Meria—a Program Associate at UN Women, an organisation that aims to empower women and girls across Africa

than just using a computer; it's about enabling young people, especially in resource-scarce communities, to navigate the digital world with confidence and critical thinking,” she states.

The AGCCI initiative aims to train at least 5,000 girls, addressing the gender imbalance in the tech sector and promoting women's active participation in STEM fields.

Following its successful launch of the inaugural coding camp in Kenya in August 2023, the program underscores the need for gender inclusion by equipping young women with valuable technical skills.

“This is a significant effort to not only develop young women's technical capabilities but also to usher in a more inclusive and equitable digital economy across Africa,” Meria articulates.

## Mwende's Journey

Betty Mwende's journey is particularly inspiring. Once a student herself, she understands the challenges of limited access to technology.

“I didn't touch a laptop until after high school,” she recalls. “I am committed to ensuring that these kids have a different experience from the start. They deserve every

chance to thrive.”

Her unwavering commitment is clear as she envisages a future where learners can connect their newfound skills to vast career opportunities.

“I want to stay involved with them until they graduate. I dream of a day when I see them working for renowned tech companies like Google. With the right training and opportunities, they can achieve anything they set their minds to!” Mwende confides.

In her interactions with the students, Mwende finds immense joy in witnessing their curiosity blossom.

“One of the best moments was when kids began coding in HTML and CSS for the first time. Their enthusiasm was contagious!” Mwende exclaims, her voice filled with pride.

## A Bright Future on the Horizon

With plans to expand the initiative come December, Mwende is keen on long-term commitments to the community.

“This isn't just a short-term project for me; it's about ensuring that these kids can continue to grow and succeed,” she declares resolutely.

Each successful keystroke echoes a broader desire— to equip these young learners not only with digital skills but also with the confidence required to navigate an increasingly technological world.

As the program unfolds, it becomes evident that Gicici Primary School is more than a humble educational institution—it's a beacon of hope for the future.

The children are not just learners; they are tomorrow's leaders, poised to turn dreams into reality. With newfound skills and confidence, they stand on the cusp of a future filled with endless possibilities.

Betty Mwende's inspiring story, enriched by the robust support from AGCCI and UN Women, marks the dawn of a pivotal movement toward inclusivity in technology.

Through her dedication and belief in the potential of young minds, Mwende exemplifies the power of one individual to make a profound difference.

The children of Gicici Primary are not merely learning; they are poised to transform not only their lives but also their communities, heralding a new era of digital empowerment and opportunity.



Gicici Primary School pupils during a computer training session



Betty Mwende: She is dedicated to countering the challenges of limited access to technology in her community

Tharaka Nithi

# 40-year-old Marigiti demolished as Njuki unveils vision for modern market

By Christine Ngitori

Tharaka Nithi Governor Muthomi Njuki took a significant step towards transforming the region's commercial landscape by launching the construction of a multimillion-dollar, modern Marigiti market in Chuka Igamba Ng'ombe. This exciting new project marks the end of the old market that has served the community for over 40 years. In his remarks, Njuki expressed heartfelt gratitude to President William Ruto for the financial support allocated through the Ministry of Public Works, emphasizing the project as a key component of the government's bottom-up economic strategy aimed at uplifting the livelihoods of women and local traders.

The construction initiative is set to create over 200 job opportunities, all under the keen oversight of Public Works officers, county officials, and local business representatives.

"We are here to make history as we dismantle the old Marigiti market in favor of a new, modern facility," Njuki stated. "This new market will be the largest and most sophisticated in our county, featuring underground loading and offloading bays, areas designated for sewing machines, Wi-Fi and digital stores, offices, a Town Hall, restaurants, and food courts. Once operational, it will spur significant competition among traders. We expect construction to be completed within eight months."

Njuki assured the public that the primary objective of this initiative is to foster a conducive environment for all businesspersons in the area.



Governor Njuki launches demolition of Marigiti Market to pave way for construction of a new modern Market

"This is just the beginning; we look forward to having the President join us for the grand opening once the project is complete," he added. If all goes smoothly, he anticipates the county will eventually boast six fully operational markets.

Expressing appreciation to everyone involved in the project, Njuki recalled the President's campaign promise to construct this market and noted plans for three additional markets in Tharaka Nithi County, specifically in Chuka, Chogoria, and Marimanti.

To avoid common pitfalls that hinder construction projects, Njuki emphasized the necessity of utilizing housing levy funds for financing.

The market's construction represents a collaborative effort between the county

government and the national government's Ministry of Public Works. Njuki insisted that labor and skills for the project must be sourced from the local community, regardless of tribal affiliation.

"If you're fortunate enough to secure a job here, please do not squander your earnings on alcohol and irresponsible behavior. There will be a strict ban on daytime alcohol sales in the county," Njuki warned.

He urged all traders to cooperate during the construction process, emphasizing that opposition to progress would only serve as an obstacle to development.

"Let's avoid jealousy among ourselves. Materials like timber, wire, nails, and stones are available for collection.

However, caution is paramount—everyone must respect one another. Safety first: helmets, reflective jackets, and appropriate tools are mandatory on-site. No material possession is worth the loss of human life," Njuki stated.

Tharaka Nithi County Assembly Speaker John Mbaabu also weighed in, praising the new market for its potential to create a thriving business environment. He criticized those opposing Njuki's initiatives, insisting they lack meaningful contributions to the community.

"You cannot treat jealousy as merely a harmless ailment; it is a disease among politicians who fail to advocate effectively like the Governor. Each leader should focus on fostering development rather than stirring discord. Most government funds remain at the national treasury; why aren't others lobbying like Njuki?" Mbaabu questioned.

Community member Murithi Gaturo celebrated the impending realization of the modern Marigiti market, denouncing leaders who incite unrest.

"The forthcoming Marigiti market will provide ample space for everyone. While there may be minor challenges during relocation for construction, I ask for your patience—these inconveniences will be temporary. This development will serve as the commercial hub for Tharaka Nithi County. I am thrilled, and I'm confident everyone will be pleased with the result once the market opens. We stand fully behind the Governor," Gaturo declared.

Meru County

# Bodaboda riders in Meru threaten action over rising violence

By Gerald Mukembu

Bodaboda riders in Iridii Town, Igembe Central, Meru County, are expressing their frustration and desperation over increasing violence against their colleagues, threatening to take justice into their own hands if authorities fail to apprehend the culprits behind recent killings.

During the burial of a fellow rider, operators from the Igembe South, Igembe Central, and Igembe North regions implored security agencies to strengthen security measures in their area. They highlighted a disturbing trend of armed robberies, where bodaboda operators are regularly attacked, shot, and robbed of their motorcycles.

Just a week ago, 21-year-old Collins Munene, a bodaboda rider, was tragically shot twice in the chest by robbers while performing his duties. His murder has sent shockwaves through the community.

Area politician Jacob Mantili urged local Member of



Boda boda riders ready to ferry customers to various destinations. The operators from the Igembe South, Igembe Central, and Igembe North regions have appealed to security agencies to beef up security in the area.

Parliament Dan Kiili to hold security agencies accountable for their investigations and ensure that those responsible for such heinous crimes are brought to justice. "We demand thorough investigations to

arrest the killers. We cannot allow the lives of innocent young men to be cut short," Mantili stated emphatically.

The riders' concerns escalated to a protest in Laare, where normal business activities and transport ground to a halt, reflecting the community's alarm over rising insecurity.

According to reports, the assailants fled the scene with the deceased's motorcycle. Munene's body was later discovered on the roadside, marked by gunshot wounds, raising further alarm among local residents.

The bodaboda operators have called on Meru County Commissioner Jacob Ouma to convene a meeting with them to address the escalating security issues. They emphasized the importance of personal security, urging every rider to remain vigilant, as individual safety begins with self-awareness.

As tensions rise, the community awaits swift action from authorities to restore safety and prevent further tragedies.

# Governors decry proposed budget cuts

By Gerald Mukembu

In a passionate outcry against proposed budget cuts, governors have vehemently criticized the national treasury's plan to reduce county allocations from last year's Sh385 billion to Sh380 billion.

Ann Waiguru, the Chairperson of the Council of Governors (CoG), raised her voice during the launch of the sixth edition of the Ura Gate Cultural Festival in Tharaka Nithi County, accompanied by local Governor Muthomi Njuki.

"Reducing funds for counties will severely impact vital services such as health and agriculture," Njuki emphasized, reflecting widespread concern among the 47 county governments. "Our ability to deliver essential services hinges on adequate funding."

Waiguru added that the recently dismissed 2024 finance bill fell short of expectations, noting counties had anticipated receiving



CoG chair Ann Waiguru (left) and the area Governor Muthomi Njuki during the launch of the sixth edition of the Ura Gate Cultural Festival in Tharaka constituency

Sh400 billion—still insufficient to meet their growing needs.

"I urge the Senate and the National Assembly to protect the funding for county governments; a reduction from Sh385 billion to Sh380 billion would cripple service delivery," she warned.

Both leaders pointed to the ongoing challenges of devolution, stressing that the benefits have yet to be fully realized,

primarily due to chronic underfunding. "It's high time we implement the Constitution of 2010 effectively," Njuki said.

While the Senate advocated for Sh415 billion for counties, the National Assembly proposed Sh391 billion, illustrating a significant disparity in expectations for funding.

Amidst the budget debates, the Council of Governors also called on Kenyans to celebrate and embrace the nation's rich cultural diversity as a means to foster societal growth and enhance the economy.

Waiguru noted the economic contribution of tourism, highlighting that approximately 1.9 million foreign visitors travelled to Kenya in 2023, attracted by the country's cultural richness and natural beauty.

"This sector accounts for over 6% of total employment and generates over US\$581 million spent by tourists within our borders," Waiguru stated proudly.

The two leaders invited guests to explore the breathtaking Lake Ellis via the Chogoria

route, the majestic Mt. Kenya, and various national parks to witness the iconic Big Five, as well as unique attractions like the Elephant Maternity and the stunning Kibuuka Waterfalls.

Waiguru also championed the need for additional resources to support local industries and the promotion of cultural tourism, emphasizing that counties boast 580 historical sites—40 of which are UNESCO recognized.

"County governments are committed to establishing cultural centers, hosting festivals, and empowering youth through participation in drama and music," she explained.

In a heartfelt conclusion, Njuki reflected on Tharaka Nithi County's vibrant cultural heritage, stating, "We proudly opened the 2024 Ura Gate Cultural Festival, a true crown jewel of our community that celebrates our natural wonders and unity."



Kirinyaga Governor Waiguru (right), Muthomi Njuki of Tharaka Nithi (centre) and D G Nyagah Mwisiracli at the Ura Gate Cultural Festival in Tharaka constituency



GVN Njuki demonstrate the bowl and arrow game at the Ura Gate Festivals. On looking is Governor Waiguru

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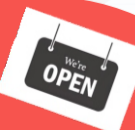
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# Linturi, Kathuri, Munya, Kawira to face off in high-stakes gubernatorial showdown in 2027

...from page 16

deeply with the electorate.

Munya who is Mwangaza's former ally-turned-rival, has made headlines with a dramatic U-turn, publicly withdrawing his support for Mwangaza and announcing his intention to reclaim the governorship.

With a legacy as a seasoned politician and a history in agricultural policy, Munya's return to the forefront comes with substantial experience. "I did not support her to engage in political battles within the assembly. We need collaborative leadership, not discord," he stated in a recent press conference.

With a legacy that includes major agricultural policies, Munya's return to the forefront of county politics has many viewing him as a dark horse candidate capable of reclaiming his former position.

As if that weren't enough, the current senator, Kathuri Murungi, is also throwing his hat into the ring.

Senator Murungi who has emerged as a significant contender-his potential gubernatorial run has sent ripples of worry through Mwangaza's camp.

Alarm bells are ringing with Mwangaza's spouse Murega Baichu, threatening to throw his hat into the political ring, indicating a willingness to compete directly with Murungi.

Political pundits speculate that Baichu might be

preparing himself for a gubernatorial contest, especially if the court rules against Mwangaza and the impeachment efforts are upheld.

"If he runs for governor, I'll vie against him. If he chooses to be an MP, I will too," Baichu confidently declared before a crowd of supporters.

Baichu's entry would add another layer of complexity to an already intricate race, potentially fracturing the support base that Mwangaza requires.

“**If Kathuri runs for governor, I'll vie against him. If he chooses to go for MP, I will too-**”  
**Murega Baichu**

Murungi's relationship with the embattled Meru Governor has become increasingly adversarial, as he faces accusations of instigating divisions within the county assembly.

"I have done everything to bring peace to Meru," Murungi defended himself amid rising tensions. The Senator's significant political capital and respect across different constituencies position him well with undecided voters, particularly as political dynamics shift.

Adding to the political drama is the presence of Kiraitu Murungi, the former governor, whose influence cannot be underestimated. Kiraitu retains a loyal following that may back a candidate he supports.

Known for his ability to mobilize grassroots

support through his famed Devolution Empowerment Party (Bus), he holds the power to sway a portion of the electorate.

Recently, he has been seen engaging closely with Linturi, including their appearances together at a Deputy President event in South Imenti, sparking rumors that he might offer his support to Linturi in the coming elections.

This alliance, if nurtured, could reshape the political dynamics in Meru, forcing Mwangaza's

camp to reevaluate their strategies in light of Kiraitu's potential pivot.

On the other side, Mwangaza's political resolve is further bolstered by a burgeoning coalition of women governors led by Anne Waiguru, who emphasize the importance of female representation in leadership.

"We want to encourage other women to step up because it's difficult to be a governor, especially as a woman," Waiguru noted in a press briefing.

Their endorsement seeks to solidify Mwangaza's image as a transformative leader who commands the respect of her female peers; however, if the impeachment is upheld, it could severely undermine both Mwangaza's political future and the women governors' caucus's efforts

to champion female leadership.

The potential fallout from the impeachment ruling could create a ripple effect, damaging the progress they have worked so hard to achieve.

As these heavyweights prepare for battle, the electorate finds itself on edge, navigating a political landscape rife with complex allegiances and brewing animosities. The stakes have never been higher, and the strategies will only sharpen as the clock ticks down toward 2027.

Reflecting on the controversies and divides of the past election, Mwangaza's decline in favorability now contrasts sharply with Linturi's upward trajectory spurred by high-profile endorsements.

With Murungi's potential candidacy causing unease, Kiraitu's support looming in the background, and Baichu's possible entry driven by judicial uncertainties, voters are left contemplating the emerging dynamics: who among these contenders can genuinely provide the effective leadership that Meru's future demands?

As Mwangaza's fame dwindles in the face of her competitors' revitalized popularity, the 2027 election promises to be a riveting contest, framing a battleground that's both contentious and captivating. Buckle up, Meru-it promises to be an unforgettable ride to the elections!

# Rising cancer deaths leave community in panic and fear

By Gerald Mukembu

**M**eru County, nestled in the heart of the Mt. Kenya region and home to over 1.5 million residents, has become the epicenter of an alarming rise in cancer cases.

Agriculture is the backbone of the community, but the devastating impact of cancer is overshadowing traditional livelihoods and threatening the health of families.

The ongoing strike by medical personnel in the region, lasting over two months, has exacerbated concerns as cancer continues to claim lives at an alarming rate.

Community leaders, patients, and residents alike are calling for immediate action and extensive research into the causes of this health crisis.

Gideon Kimathi, an advisor to Governor Kawira Mwangaza, has rallied for a concerted effort against cancer, which has overtaken HIV/AIDS as the third leading cause of death in the county.

He demands that the national government introduce measures to zero-rate the importation of critical cancer treatment equipment, such as the Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scan, which currently drives patients to seek treatment abroad, often at significant financial cost.

Kimathi emphasizes the need for increased funding for local cancer centers and screening programs.

"We urge our community to prioritize education on healthy diets and cancer screening as



Doctors attend to patients at Kanyakine Sub County Hospital in South Imenti, Meru during a cancer screening exercise

essential steps in managing this disease," he stated. "Thorough research into the disease's origins and causes is imperative for effective intervention," he continued.

In the heart of the community, Meru Hospice is doing its utmost to provide palliative care to over 400 cancer patients, often conducting home visits.

Gladys Mucee, a nurse at Meru Hospice, shared the struggles patients face, relying heavily on pain relief rather than curative treatments due to the unaffordability of intensive therapies.

Mzee Patrick Kiugu, a 70-year-old cancer patient, recounted the onset of his illness, which began with a small growth that he ignored for years.

When his condition deteriorated in 2013, his wife Mary had to sell a goat to afford transport and medical bills. "Now, I rely solely on

medications delivered by Meru Hospice for relief," he shared.

Nearby, Alice Nkirote battles bone marrow cancer after a long journey of misdiagnosis.

"Doctors in Nairobi knew something was wrong but never disclosed the nature of my illness until it was too late," she lamented.

Her sister has taken on the burden of care, which has added a significant financial strain to the family.

The pain of loss is also felt deeply by Rosemary Ntinyari Kirima, who mourns her husband, Thomas Kirima, a prison officer who succumbed to pancreatic cancer shortly after a job transfer.

"I never had a moment to enjoy his promotion before I lost him," she recalls, tears streaming down her face.

Statistics paint a dire picture: less than 15% of cancer patients in Kenya are from Meru County, yet this figure raises alarms about the staggering number of cases emerging from the region.

Local hospitals struggle to keep up with the rising tide of patients, with Laare Private Hospital in Igembe North noting two new cases per month.

The alarm is further heightened by reports that a significant number of Kenyans seeking treatment in India

hail from Meru County.

While the Ministry of Health has made strides, acquiring a machine to diagnose 21 diseases-including cancer-sluggish access to radiotherapy and chemotherapy still hampers recovery efforts.

Early detection and screening remain critical components in the fight against cancer, as highlighted by the inspiring story of Mary Wathanu, a cancer survivor who overcame blood cancer after a prolonged battle.

As Meru County grapples with this healthcare crisis, the urgent call to action has never been clearer.

Community members are encouraged to participate in health education initiatives and regular screenings to tackle this formidable enemy head-on. With unity and determination, it is hoped that the tide can be turned against cancer in Meru County.



Locals turn up for a cancer screening exercise at Kanyakine Sub County Hospital

# The rise of Nembure Sportiff: A bright future beckons

By Gitari Dominic

In a humble cybercafé nestled in Karingari Market, the dream of Nembure Sportiff was born.

Brian Muriuki, a creative graphic designer, shared his vision with friends Munene Denis and Mark Munene, both of whom also play for the team.

Their mission was clear: to establish a football team that would nurture and showcase the abundant talent in Nembure while actively competing against other teams.

In 2022, this dream transformed into reality when they registered Nembure Sportiff FC to compete in the Embu County League.

"We knew we had the talent in our community," Muriuki reflected on their early days.

"We just needed to provide a platform for these young players to shine," he added

In their inaugural season, Nembure Sportiff made a striking impression, finishing second in their zone among twelve teams.

Their stellar performance earned them a place in a mini-league, where they continued to shine, ultimately securing third place and promotion to the Football Kenya Federation (FKF) Eastern Region League Zone B.

Since its inception, Nembure Sportiff has been



Nembure Sportiff FC players during a recent match day

a breeding ground for top talent, with numerous players emerging from the ranks.

One notable standout is Neddy Kithinji Moses, who caught the spotlight when he was named Most Valuable Player during the 4th edition of Chapa Dimba na Safaricom at the Eastern Region Finals held at Kinoru Stadium in Meru County.

"This recognition has been a big boost for me and the team," said Moses, whose impressive skills led to a contract with 3K FC, where he made his debut in the Division One League in 2024.

Looking ahead, Nembure Sportiff has ambitious plans. "Our goal is to ascend to the

top-tier league in the coming years," Muriuki proclaimed.

To make this dream a reality, the team recently launched fan merchandise, including kits that are proving popular in the market. Additionally, Muriuki has initiated a three-year strategic plan aimed at bolstering the team's infrastructure and player development.

"We want to secure a team bus for logistics, which will also help us generate income," Muriuki

explained.

He also envisions a clubhouse to accommodate players and the coaching staff, fostering a



Fans during the launch of Nembure fc Fans kit and Strategic plan at Nembure Social Hall

strong team spirit. Moreover, the team is committed to empowering girls through football, leading to the establishment of Nembure Queens, a girls' team competing in the Embu County League.

"Football should be inclusive, and we are excited to see our girls take to the field," Muriuki added.

As Nembure Sportiff continues on its upward trajectory, the passion and dedication from its players, management, and supporters are sure to propel the team toward achieving its lofty ambitions.

We have built a strong foundation, and with community support and more sponsors coming on board, the future looks incredibly bright for Nembure Sportiff," Muriuki concluded.

For those interested in supporting the team, Brian Muriuki invites corporate sponsors and individuals to reach out.

"We are eager to partner with anyone looking to invest in grassroots football to create a win-win situation. Interested parties can get in touch with us directly at 0791798024," he said

With an unwavering commitment to excellence, Nembure Sportiff is poised for greatness in the world of Kenyan football.

## Harambee stars our toughest competitors, admits Onana



Manchester United and Cameroon goalkeeper Andre Onana in Uganda during their match against Zimbabwe

By Ann Rita Murugi

Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana views Kenya's Harambee Stars as Cameroon's main rivals in the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) qualifiers. After two matches, Harambee Stars lead the group with four points, followed by the Indomitable Lions. Onana believes the East Africans will be their toughest competition.

"Kenya is the only team in our group that is giving us competition, but I hope we make it to the qualifying rounds," Onana told Sky Sports.

Onana, who previously played for Inter Milan, was part of the Cameroon squad that faced Zimbabwe in Kampala, Uganda, in a match that ended in a goalless draw.

The Manchester United bound player acknowledged that Zimbabwe gave them a tough game.

"The game against Zimbabwe was a little bit hard, but we came out with a point," he added.

While Onana sees Kenya as their biggest rivals, Harambee Stars head coach Engin Firat is confident in his team's abilities.

"Do they (Cameroon) think we are easy? Cameroon should be thinking about how they want to crack us. I'm not afraid of Cameroon; you saw how the boys played before against the Ivory Coast, Russia, and Qatar," Firat said.

Firat emphasized the unity and belief within his team, noting that they are unbeaten this year and recently won a trophy abroad for the first time.

Before the qualifiers began, Firat analyzed the group and highlighted the importance of staying mentally strong throughout the competition.

"Till the last match, everything will be open in this group. Therefore, it is important that we stay mentally ready. In the future, we might have problems. I have never been in the Kenyan camp without problems, so for us, it is important to stay mentally strong," he stated.

Kenya will face Cameroon in October this year, in a match that will determine the group's top tier.



Harambee Stars John Avire celebrate with teammate after scoring against Namibia

## Bumbani Stars and FC Dynamo clinch promotion to FKF Division one -Zone A!

By Gitari Dominic

In an electrifying conclusion to the Division 2 Northern Zone playoffs, Bumbani Stars and FC Dynamo have secured their spots in FKF Division 1 Zone A, rising to the challenge against the region's best. This thrilling tournament showcased the top two teams from Pool A, representing the Coast region, and Pool B, hailing from the Eastern region.

FC Dynamo, based in Kitui, showcased their prowess as they emerged as Northern Zone Champions.

They claimed their playoff berth after topping Pool B, while Ishiara FC, despite a valiant effort, had to settle for second place.

In Pool A, Bumbani Stars dazzled their supporters by clinching the championship, with Ziواني Youth earning the runner-up title.

The playoffs kicked off with a nail-biter as Bumbani Stars faced off against Ishiara FC. With Ishiara reduced to ten men, Bumbani Stars seized the opportunity, ultimately triumphing 3-2 after a nail-biting extra time.

This victory not only secured their ticket to Division 1 but also sent waves of excitement through their fan base.

Meanwhile, FC Dynamo showcased their strength by toppling Ziواني Youth 2-1, propelling them into the finals of Division 2.

The grand finale was a true spectacle, with FC Dynamo exhibiting a masterclass in football as they dispatched Bumbani Stars with a commanding 4-1 victory.



Westo of Ishiara tackling a ball with Bumbani stars player  
Photo/ Ishiara FC

With this win, Dynamo claimed the prestigious titles of both Division 2 Pool B Winners and Northern Zone Champions, cementing their reputation as a force to be reckoned with.

Joining the ranks of newly promoted teams in Division 1 Zone A are Bumbani Stars and FC Dynamo, along with Strathmore FC and Marafiki FC.

The excitement is building as the new league season is set to kick off on the last weekend of September. FC Dynamo will host the newly relegated Kajiado FC, while Bumbani Stars will take on Kibera Soccer FC.

On another thrilling note, Marafiki FC will battle Kibra United at Kinunga Stadium, and Strathmore FC travels to Zetech Titans for what promises to be an action-packed matchup.

*Gitari Dominic is a Sports Enthusiast based within Mt Kenya East Region*

# Linturi, Munya, Kawira and Kathuri to face off in 2027

## ...but should she be impeached, it will be end of the road for Mwangaza

By Duncan Mwirigi and Rugendo Antony

As the clock ticks toward the 2027 general elections, the political landscape in Meru County is heating up, setting the stage for a furious showdown among four heavyweights: the embattled Governor Kawira Mwangaza, former Governor Peter Munya, former Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Mithika Linturi, and current Senator Kathuri Murungi.

As factions form and tensions simmer, Meru is in the throes of a political drama that promises to captivate the nation.

Kawira Mwangaza, the first woman to hold the governorship in Meru, experienced a meteoric rise following her surprise victory in the 2022 elections.

With her campaign focusing on empowerment and grassroots support, she broke through the political establishment, often attracting attention for her defiance of traditional political norms.

However, her administration has been marred by controversy, a series of impeachment attempts, and allegations of mismanagement



Kawira Mwangaza

Peter Munya

Mithika Linturi

Kathuri Murungi

that have significantly diminished her political capital.

Once seen as a beacon of hope, Mwangaza now finds herself grappling with mounting dissatisfaction among constituents, especially in light of a critical report from the Auditor General indicating financial mismanagement within her office.

She has however been terming her political woes as politically motivated vowing not to bow over the pressure.

"I will not surrender. If they take a corner, I will be with them. I am prepared for anything," she recently declared at a rally, but her once fervent supporters are starting to waver.

In stark contrast, Mithika Linturi a former senator and agriculture chief who, despite his own share of controversies, has built a reputation as an agricultural advocate adds to the gubernatorial contest.

His campaign cleverly positions him as a champion of farmers' rights, leveraging the deep-rooted agricultural heritage of Meru to win back voters who feel neglected.

As the son of Igembe-a region historically yearning for leadership-Linturi's promises resonate deeply in a province eager for change.

Linturi is riding a rising wave of popularity. Following praise from Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua, who described Linturi's

tenure as Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture as marked by commendable achievements, Linturi has successfully recast himself as the region's champion.

With substantial backing from agricultural stakeholders and a history of productive initiatives, Linturi's return to frontline politics has garnered him renewed respect and attention.

As Mwangaza's popularity wanes under increasing scrutiny and public disappointment, Linturi's star continues to rise, potentially placing him in a strong position to challenge her in the upcoming election.

On the other side of the political spectrum stands former Governor Peter Munya, a stalwart figure in Meru politics who is keen to reclaim the throne he once held.

With his experience as both the governor and former Agriculture Cabinet Secretary, Munya has launched a campaign focusing on economic revitalization, rural development, and agribusiness-key pillars that resonate

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