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The Journal of Association of Professional Societies in East Africa.

THE PROFESSIONAL

8TH EDITION, NOV. 2026: 64 YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICE



THEME:

Recalibrating Professional voices

in Kenya's social, economic & political transformation

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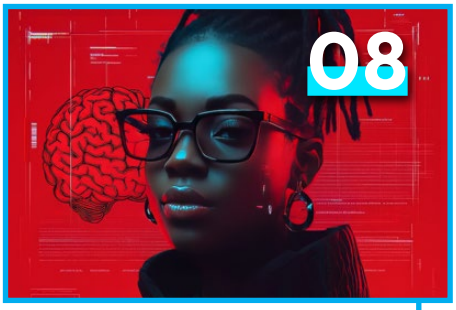
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Message from The Chairman



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Designed & Printed by:
Alpha Osairi Media
0718 105 453

Greetings from

The Association of Professional Societies in East Africa (APSEA)

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 8th Edition of the APSEA Professional Magazine. This edition comes at a significant time when Kenya continues to navigate a rapidly changing social, economic, and professional landscape.

The theme, "Recalibrating Professional Voices in Kenya's Social, Economic, and Political Transformation," reflects the important role that professionals and professional societies play in shaping institutions, influencing policy, and contributing to sustainable national development.

As professional societies, we have a responsibility to uphold the highest standards of integrity, competence, innovation, and accountability. Our collective expertise must extend beyond our individual professions to contribute meaningfully to national conversations and solutions.

APSEA remains committed to strengthening collaboration among professional societies, promoting knowledge exchange, supporting professional excellence and creating platforms where professionals can engage constructively on issues affecting society and the economy.

I encourage our members and partners to embrace emerging opportunities, invest in innovation, and continue providing evidence-based professional perspectives that can contribute to Kenya's transformation.

I extend my appreciation to our member societies, partners, contributors and the APSEA Secretariat for their continued commitment and support. Together, we can strengthen the voice of the professional and make a meaningful contribution to Kenya's development.

I invite you to enjoy this edition and engage with the ideas, insights and experiences shared by our professionals.

Prof. Nicholas Letting', PhD, EBS, HSC, FFA, FCPA, FCS, FKIM, MIHRM & MIoD,
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AI & The Future of the Economic Modeller

A Profession at an Inflection Point



Judgment, not computation, is becoming the profession's defining skill - and East Africa is positioned to help define what that looks like.



By Fred Marime Tai & Jacob Nato
Economic Modelling Hub, Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)

AUTHOR DECLARATIONS

Declaration of Originality:
The authors declare that this article is their own original work, and that all sources drawn upon have been properly acknowledged and cited.

Statement of Prior Publication:
This work has not been previously published, in whole or in part, in any journal, book, or other publication.

Statement of Consent:
The authors consent to the publication of this work by the Association of Professional Societies in East Africa (APSEA) in The Professional journal.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest:
The authors declare no conflict of interest in relation to this work.

Author Contributions:
F. M. Tai conceived the article, conducted the research, and drafted the manuscript. J. Nato contributed to review, editing, and refinement of the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final version.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the following individuals and institutions for their contributions to this work.

We are grateful to our supervisor, Adan Shibia, for his guidance and support throughout the development of this article, and to Benson Senelwa, PhD, for his mentorship and encouragement.

We extend our sincere thanks to Hon. Lynn Naomi Mbeti Michuki for her detailed and thoughtful review of this manuscript. Her feedback substantially strengthened the article's clarity, accuracy, and rigour, and its final form reflects her valuable insights and guidance throughout the revision process.

Finally, we thank the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) and its Economic Modelling Hub for providing the institutional platform, resources, and support that made this work possible. We also acknowledge the Modelling Division Department at large, whose collective expertise and collaborative environment shaped the thinking behind this article.

Introduction

In May 2026, researchers gathered at KIPPRA's Nairobi offices for a two-day training hosted jointly with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) on Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) modelling, delivered through a new platform called RIAPA-AI. What made the training notable was not the modelling technique itself, long used by economists, but the interface: a chat-driven tool letting users run full policy simulations without writing specialised modelling code.[1],[13] A participant could pose a policy question in plain language and receive a structural, economy-wide simulation within minutes rather than the days or weeks a conventional CGE exercise usually takes.

For a profession whose value has rested on technical mastery few others possessed, this is a quiet but significant moment. The economic modeller's authority has traditionally come from being the person who could build and defend a model no one else in the room fully understood. That asymmetry conferred both status and job security. AI and machine learning are steadily compressing it. The question is not whether economic modelling as a discipline will survive, but whether the professionals who currently define it will recalibrate quickly enough to remain central to it.

This article argues that the economic modeller's relevance in Kenya and East Africa is not disappearing, but is being redefined faster than most professional training pipelines currently account for. The voice that mattered most over the last three decades was the one that could compute: the analyst who could build a model or run a simulation others could not.

The voice that will matter most over the next decade is the one that can judge, interpret, validate, and communicate what an increasingly AI-assisted computation actually means for a real policy choice, a distinctly different, and in some ways harder, standard, because it cannot be automated away in the same manner as the computation itself.

The professional voice that mattered most over the last three decades was the voice that could compute.

The voice that will matter most over the next decade is the one that can judge, interpret, and communicate what an AI-assisted computation actually means for a real policy choice.



"The professional voice that mattered most over the last three decades was the voice that could compute. The voice that will matter most over the next decade is the one that can judge, interpret, and communicate what an AI-assisted computation actually means for a real policy choice."

The argument proceeds in four parts: what AI is actually doing to macroeconomic modelling today; what this shift means for modellers' professional relevance; why East Africa's regulatory and institutional context makes this an especially important moment to get right; and concrete steps professionals, institutions, and professional bodies can take to recalibrate deliberately rather than reactively.

The Shift: What AI is Actually Doing to Macro-Modelling

Since the popular narrative around AI in economics tends toward exaggeration in both directions, either that AI will replace economists outright, or that it is a passing novelty, it is worth noting the actual change taking place. The evidence points to something more specific and more useful than either extreme.

The clearest gains have come in "nowcasting": estimating the current state of the economy before official statistics are released. GDP figures in many countries, Kenya included, arrive with a six-to-twelve-month lag, a serious constraint when authorities need to respond to shocks in near real time.

Machine learning models drawing on high-frequency indicators have been shown, across multiple country studies, to produce estimates within weeks of the reference period, often matching or outperforming traditional statistical methods.

[2] The IMF's 2026 working paper on nowcasting growth explicitly explores combining machine learning with satellite data to address this gap, with coverage extending across Sub-Saharan Africa.



[3] Similar exercises have been attempted elsewhere, including Madagascar,[4] where researchers used machine learning alongside limited official data to estimate real GDP more responsively than conventional methods allow.

This matters for a country like Kenya, where statistical capacity constraints have long limited how responsive policy can be. An institution such as KIPPRA, whose mandate spans economic forecasting and policy analysis,[10] sits precisely where these tools could sharpen the timeliness of the advice it gives government, provided the underlying models are used and validated correctly.

Beyond nowcasting, AI applications in African economics have expanded into poverty prediction using satellite imagery and alternative data; into credit scoring and financial inclusion analysis; and into central bank applications spanning inflation prediction, exchange-rate forecasting, and financial stability monitoring.[6] Convolutional networks for geospatial imagery and recurrent networks for time-series data have become the dominant tools underpinning this work.[6]

A systematic review of AI applications in African economics found substantial and growing use of machine learning, but also flagged persistent challenges around interpretability, data quality, and the risk of models trained on thin African datasets producing misleading results.[2] Structural breaks (a currency shock, a drought, an abrupt fiscal shift) remain a genuine weak point for models lacking economic reasoning in their architecture; a purely data-driven model can struggle precisely when the economy behaves in a way it never has before, often exactly when policymakers most need a reliable forecast.

Some central banks are consequently using machine-learning nowcasts to complement, rather than replace, structural frameworks such as Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium (DSGE) models that embed economic theory directly into their equations.[7] The pattern emerging globally, and now visibly at KIPPRA through the RIAPA-AI training, is AI layered onto established modelling frameworks as a co-pilot, not a wholesale substitute for economic theory and professional judgement.

This pattern is spreading widely. National nowcasting exercises using machine learning are now documented in contexts as varied as Madagascar[4] and Indonesia, where researchers have used interpretable models drawing on payments-system data to predict inflation for central bank use,[5] alongside familiar examples from advanced-economy central banks. What is common across these cases is not that AI has replaced the analysts involved, but that it has changed the division of labour: the machine increasingly handles first-pass number-crunching across large, messy datasets, while the analyst's role shifts toward specifying which data sources are trustworthy, sense-checking results against local knowledge, and communicating uncertainty honestly. KIPPRA's adoption of RIAPA-AI[1] places it within this global pattern, rather than as an outlier experimenting alone.

What This Means for Professional Relevance

AI is augmenting structural economic modelling rather than replacing it. The more useful question is which parts of current work are being augmented, and what that leaves for professionals to do, and to be valued for.

The most automatable tasks are the most routine: cleaning and reconciling datasets, running standard forecasting specifications, generating baseline projections, producing first-pass scenario outputs. These historically consumed a disproportionate share of a junior or mid-career modeller's time, and are also what AI tools currently



On regulation, Kenya's legal framework has not caught up with the pace of AI adoption in analytical work.

do fastest and cheapest. Far harder to automate is judgement. This means deciding which model assumptions genuinely suit Kenya's structural realities, such as a large informal sector and rainfall-dependent agriculture, rather than defaulting to templates built for other economies; recognising when a forecast is distorted by a data anomaly rather than reflecting a genuine signal; and defending modelling choices under public or political scrutiny, where explaining why a model behaves as it does matters as much as the output itself.

This places a new premium on a skill traditionally undervalued in technical economics training: explaining a model's output in terms a non-specialist policymaker, journalist, or member of the public can use and trust. As machine learning becomes more embedded in policy analysis, explainability techniques such as SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) have grown correspondingly. SHAP is a method that breaks down a model's prediction into the contribution of each input factor, showing which variables pushed the forecast up or down and by how much, making otherwise opaque outputs interpretable to human decision-makers.[8] This is causing the technical frontier of the field to shift toward transparency, not away from it. The economic modeller of the near future will need fluency not only in building models, but in explaining, in plain and defensible language, why a model produced its result and how much confidence to place in it.

The risk in tools like SHAP and RIAPA-AI, which are explicitly designed to let non-specialists run policy simulations directly without mastering the underlying software,[1] is that if professional modellers do not reposition themselves as interpreters, validators, and quality-controllers of AI-assisted analysis, faster but less rigorous sources, such as underqualified analysts, consultancies, or automated tools, may be used without expert oversight and fill the space trained economists currently occupy in public debate. Recalibration, in this context, means economists deliberately shifting where they add value: from producing outputs themselves to validating, interpreting, and standing behind the outputs AI tools produce. Understood this way, recalibration is not optional professional development; it is closer to a survival strategy for the discipline's standing, and for the credibility of institutions like KIPPRA that depend on that standing to be heard by government.

Early-career professionals are often more comfortable with AI tools than senior colleagues, but less experienced in the structural judgement that gives those tools meaningful guardrails. Senior modellers often hold exactly that judgement, but may be slower to adopt the tools themselves. Institutions that recalibrate most successfully will likely be those that deliberately pair these two forms of expertise, rather than treating AI adoption as generational disruption to manage defensively.

East Africa's Specific Inflection Point

This recalibration will look different in Kenya and East Africa than in the United States and the Eurozone, where most AI-in-economics literature originates, for two reasons: the regulatory environment, and the institutional response already underway.

On regulation, Kenya's legal framework has not caught up with the pace of AI adoption in analytical work. Existing laws, including the Data Protection Act (2019) and its 2021 regulations, and the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act (2018), provide a general foundation for data governance and cybersecurity, but instruments specifically addressing AI use, including the AI and Emerging Technologies Policy, a Robotics and AI Society Bill, and an AI Code of Practice, remain in draft or consultation stage[27], unlike the European Union and South Korea, which already



have comprehensive AI-specific laws in force.[9],[26] This leaves open what standards should specifically govern AI-assisted models in public policy analysis, though Kenya is not without any governance foundation: the National AI Strategy (2025)[21] sets a general direction, and the forthcoming National Data Governance Policy[22] is expected to introduce oversight mechanisms for automated decision-making. What remains unresolved is how much human validation should precede an AI-assisted forecast informing a budget decision, or how transparent an institution must be about which parts of a published analysis were AI-generated versus expert-derived. In the absence of settled regulation, professional bodies and research institutions have both an opportunity and a responsibility to set these standards themselves, rather than waiting to import them once legislation eventually closes the gap.

On the institutional response, beyond the RIAPA-AI training itself, KIPPRA and IFPRI have proposed an annual regional capacity-development programme on CGE modelling for researchers across Eastern Africa, intended to strengthen regional expertise in evidence-based policy analysis on an ongoing basis.[1] This is recalibration in concrete, institutional form. Rather than treating AI-assisted modelling as a threat, it is being folded into a structured capacity-building agenda aimed at keeping regional researchers at the frontier of the tools shaping their field, and distributing the expertise to use them responsibly across the region rather than concentrating it in a handful of international institutions.

Much of the existing AI-economics literature is built on data-rich environments: the United States, the Eurozone, and large emerging economies with extensive statistical infrastructure, such as Brazil, India, and China. Kenya and its East African neighbours operate differently, with greater reliance on informal-sector activity official statistics struggle to capture, thinner historical data series, and higher exposure to structural shocks such as drought and commodity price swings that can break patterns a model has learned from history. There is a genuine opportunity for Kenya, in particular, to help define, through practice and published professional standards, what rigorous, transparent, AI-assisted policy modelling looks like in a data-constrained developing-country context, one where local judgement about data quality, informality, and structural realities will matter more, not less, than in data-abundant settings.

What Recalibration Should Look Like in Practice

Several shifts seem most urgent for the profession in Kenya over the next few years, at three levels: the individual, the institution, and the professional body.

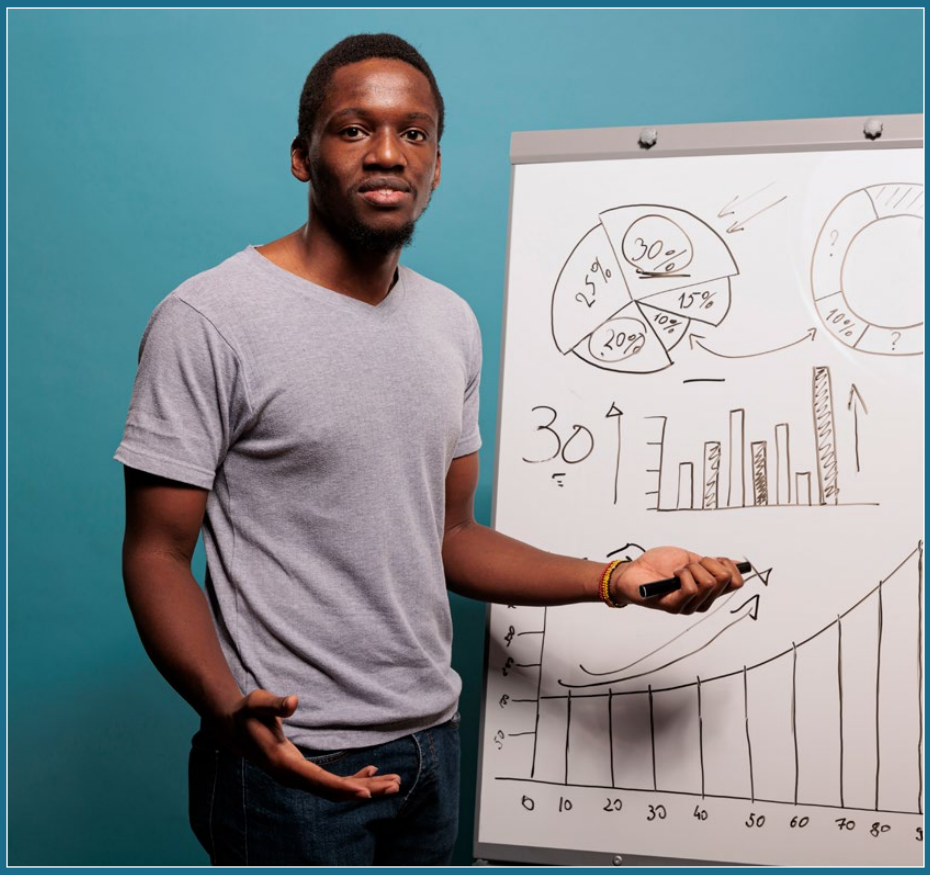
At the individual level, technical training alone will no longer suffice for career relevance. The modellers who thrive will be those who invest, alongside technical skills, in communicating complex, AI-augmented analysis to non-technical audiences, including policymakers, media, and the public, with the same rigour they bring to building models. This means treating policy writing, public presentation, and plain-language explanation of technical uncertainty as core professional competencies, not "soft" add-ons.

At the institutional level, organisations producing policy-facing analysis, KIPPRA included, would benefit from formalising "human-in-the-loop" standards for AI-assisted outputs: clear expectations about which stages of a model's development require expert human validation before informing government advice, and clear disclosure practices around where AI tools were used in published analysis. This protects institutional credibility as much as it is a technical safeguard: a flawed AI-assisted forecast that informs a budget decision is a reputational risk for the institution whose name is attached to it, not just the individual analyst.

At the professional-body level, bodies such as the Institution of Engineers of Kenya, the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya, and equivalent economics and statistics associations across the region should build AI literacy explicitly into continuing professional development (CPD) and certification requirements, rather than treating it as an optional specialism. APSEA itself, convening professional societies across East Africa, is well placed to help coordinate what a shared regional standard for AI-assisted professional practice in economic and policy analysis might look like, rather than leaving each institution or country to develop standards in isolation.

None of this requires professionals to become AI specialists or software engineers. It requires them to become fluent users, informed critics, and clear communicators of tools already being adopted around them, with or without their formal endorsement. This recalibration carries a real cost: it asks professionals who have spent





years mastering one set of technical skills to invest further effort in a second, less familiar set. Such an investment is easier to justify and sustain when institutions and professional bodies treat it as a shared priority rather than leaving each analyst to manage the transition alone.

This is also where generational strengths can complement each other: senior economists bring institutional memory and judgement about local data quality, while junior colleagues often bring greater fluency with the tools themselves, and pairing the two deliberately, through mentorship rather than parallel tracks, turns recalibration into a collaborative opportunity for professional growth rather than a solitary burden.

The RIAPA-AI training and the KIPPRA-IFPRI regional capacity-development programme already offer a ready-made venue for this: pairing senior researchers, who bring years of judgement about Kenya's data landscape, with junior colleagues newer to the tools, turns each training cohort into a two-way exchange rather than a one-directional transfer of skills.

Putting the Modelling Hub to Work: Applications for Professionals and Their Institutions

The RIAPA-AI training illustrates a template that extends well beyond KIPPRA's own research programme. Once a chat-driven modelling interface exists, the binding constraint on using it shifts from technical mastery to institutional habit: which questions get modelled, how often, and by whom. For individual professionals, and for the societies that represent them, the practical opportunity is to build modelling tools of this kind into routine analytical work, rather than treating them as occasional research instruments reserved for major studies.

The clearest immediate application is faster and better-evidenced into Kenya's public policy process. The Finance Bill review and the Budget Policy Statement submissions typically operate on compressed timelines, often a matter of days between publication and the deadline for stakeholder comment. A professional or professional body able to run a CGE or RIAPA-AI scenario internally can turn a submission around with a modelled estimate of a proposed tax or expenditure change behind it, rather than a qualitative position alone. This is precisely the kind of policy question RIAPA-AI was built to answer in minutes rather than weeks, and precisely the kind of submission that carries more weight with Treasury, Parliament, or a County Assembly when it is quantified.

The proposed KIPPRA-IFPRI regional CGE capacity-development programme for researchers across Eastern Africa points to a second, less obvious application: building modelling capacity that survives individual staff turnover.[11] A single trained analyst who leaves an institution takes years of tacit modelling knowledge with them; a shared regional programme, refreshed annually and open to researchers from partner institutions, distributes that knowledge more widely and keeps it current as the underlying tools change. IFPRI's broader RIAPA model, on which RIAPA-AI is built, is already maintained across roughly thirty countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, each with its own Social Accounting Matrix calibrated to local conditions.[12] Kenyan professionals joining this network gain access not only to a modelling platform but to a standing community of national researchers in Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania, among others, who are solving comparable problems with comparable data constraints and can be consulted directly rather than through published literature alone.

A third application is in the same value-chain mapping and nowcasting methods used to forecast GDP can be scaled down to track county revenue performance, assess the case for a specific infrastructure investment, or monitor employment in a particular sector as conditions change. Devolved government in Kenya generates exactly the kind of localised, time-sensitive policy questions these tools are suited to, and while county governments are not without access to national support, through programmes such as KIPPRA's county capacity-building initiatives on economic planning[23], they rarely have sustained, in-house modelling capacity of their own, embedded within county planning units rather than delivered periodically from the national level. Professional societies, rather than individual firms, are well placed to fill that gap: a body such as the Economics Society of Kenya or the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya (ICPAK) could offer modelled scenario analysis as a member service, delivered through structured partnerships with the

Council of Governors or individual county treasuries, on request, ahead of budget cycles or major investment decisions, to county governments and civil society organisations that cannot otherwise access it, in the same way equivalent bodies elsewhere, such as the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in the United Kingdom, already build technical services, including local government benchmarking and financial analysis tools such as CIPFAStats+, into membership value.[24]

Professional bodies elsewhere, such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), have already begun treating this kind of tool fluency as a certification expectation rather than an optional extra.[28] Accounting bodies internationally, including ISACA through its Advanced in AI Audit (AAIA) credential[25], have moved to build AI-assisted analysis into continuing professional development and, in some cases, into the audit methodology junior staff are trained against from their first year of practice.[18] ICPAK, the Economics Society of Kenya, and equivalent bodies across the APSEA network could take a comparable step: incorporating structured RIAPA-AI or CGE literacy into CPD points and certification pathways, so that modelling tool fluency becomes a baseline professional expectation rather than something individual members acquire, or do not, on their own initiative.

Examples from other countries illustrate what this looks like once it becomes routine rather than exceptional. At the Bank of England and the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, economists do not run machine-learning nowcasting models as a one-off research exercise; the models sit as standing tools inside the regular forecasting cycle, producing a real-time GDP estimate that staff interpret and qualify before it reaches policy committees.[14]

The European Central Bank has gone further, publishing a shared nowcasting toolbox specifically so that analysts across the euro area do not each have to build their own from scratch, complete with a breakdown of which incoming data moved the estimate and why, information used to brief the Governing Council rather than to replace its judgement.[15] Bloomberg Economics has built comparable natural-language indices tracking central bank communication from the Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank, and the Bank of England, giving market economists a standing, updated read on policy sentiment that once required manually reading every speech and statement.[16] None of these are research curiosities; they are now part of how economists in those institutions do their jobs every week. The opportunity for Kenyan professionals and professional societies is to close that gap: to move RIAPA-AI and comparable tools from a one-off training exercise to routine use.



AI as Redefining the Profession, Not Replacing the Professional: A Kenyan and Global Perspective

AI absorbing routine technical work while professional judgement moves to the centre, is not unique to economic modelling. It is visible across professions and countries wherever AI tools have moved from pilot to routine use, and the consistency of that pattern is itself evidence that Kenyan economic modellers are not facing something unprecedented so much as arriving somewhat later at a transition other professions have already begun to navigate.

In banking and corporate law, JPMorgan Chase's Contract Intelligence system, known internally as COIN, offers one of the most concretely measured examples. Before its deployment, lawyers and loan officers spent an estimated 360,000 hours a year manually reviewing commercial loan agreements, work widely described as repetitive and error-prone.[17] COIN now extracts the relevant contractual attributes from thousands of these agreements in seconds. Legal and credit staff at the bank were not made redundant by this; their work shifted toward risk assessment, negotiation strategy, and client advisory work that the contract-review process previously left little time for. The lesson generalises: automating the most mechanical, highest-volume component of a technical job does not eliminate the

professionals who did it, it changes what proportion of their week is available for the judgement-based work that was always harder to automate.

The accounting profession offers a parallel example closer to economic modelling in its technical character. Entry-level accountants historically spent much of their early careers manually matching transactions against supporting documentation, a process now substantially handled by AI tools that flag exceptions for review rather than requiring every line to be checked by hand.[18]

The effect reported across the profession is not fewer junior accountants, but junior accountants reaching client-facing, judgement-driven work earlier in their careers than the traditional apprenticeship model allowed, because the mechanical groundwork that used to occupy their first two or three years is now substantially automated.

The redefinition is generational as much as technical: what a competent entry-level professional is expected to know and do has shifted upward, toward the judgement-based work once reserved for more senior staff, rather than disappeared.

A COMESA analysis of AI and big data in regional central banking argues that AI is reshaping how central banks communicate as much as how they forecast: AI-assisted sentiment analysis across text, speech, and other unstructured data allows a central bank to monitor how its own communications are being understood in near real time, and to adjust accordingly, a role that did not exist in this form a decade ago and that requires precisely the interpretive, judgement-based skill this article has argued will define the modeller's future value.[19]

The pattern recurs at the Bank of England, the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, and the European Central Bank, where nowcasting tools handle the underlying arithmetic while economists are left to interpret what shifted, defend the resulting number under scrutiny, and brief policymakers in language a rate-setting committee can act on.[14],[15]

Kenya already has a live domestic example outside economic modelling. From January 2026, the Kenya Revenue Authority's automated validation system began cross-checking declared income and expenses against invoicing, withholding, and customs data in real time, flagging mismatches for investigation rather than requiring officers to review every return manually. [20]

Tax officers have not been displaced by this system; their work has shifted toward investigating the cases the system flags, a smaller, better-targeted caseload requiring more judgement per case rather than less.

Where AI has actually been deployed at scale, the consistent effect has been to compress the time professionals spend on mechanical, rules-based work and expand the share of their time spent on judgement, interpretation, and communication. Economic modellers in Kenya are invited to make a transition that lawyers, accountants, central bankers, and now tax officers in their own country have already begun, and to make it deliberately rather than reactively.

Conclusion

The RIAPA-AI training [1] is a small but telling image of where the profession stands. The tool did not replace the researchers who gathered to learn it; it changed what they will spend their time on. Less time will go into the mechanics of running a model from scratch; more time will go into judging whether its assumptions fit Kenya's realities, validating its outputs against structural knowledge no model currently possesses, and explaining what those outputs mean to the people who must act on them.

That is the recalibration this moment calls for: not a profession displaced by artificial intelligence, but one whose voice, to remain credible and central to Kenya's social, economic, and political transformation, must be deliberately repositioned around judgement and communication as much as computation. Institutions and professional bodies across East Africa that make this shift proactively stand to strengthen their influence precisely as their traditional technical monopoly loosens.

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Re-imagining the Role of the Human Resource Practitioner Within a Dynamic Global Landscape



> "Nationally, Kenya's pursuit of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) highlighted the strategic importance of HR in national development."



By Dr. Julius O. Olayo
HR Practitioner and Advocate of the High Court of Kenya

The contemporary professional environment is undergoing an unprecedented transformation, catalyzed by technological advancements, climate change, geopolitical instability, and shifting workforce expectations. These developments have repositioned Human Resource (HR) practitioners at the epicenter of organizational resilience, institutional efficacy, and national development. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) establishes a robust framework for a professionalized public service, anchoring its principles in good governance, accountability, transparency, and meritocratic administration. These constitutional mandates underscore that capacity building is not merely a supplementary organizational activity but a strategic and constitutional imperative. By equipping personnel with future-ready competencies, upholding ethical leadership standards, and fostering innovation, HR practitioners contribute significantly to institutional strengthening, enhanced public service delivery, and the socio-economic transformation of Kenya.

The evolving workplace is characterized by the emergence of the Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), digital integration, automation, and a shifting geopolitical landscape, all of which are fundamentally altering organizational operations and labor dynamics. Conventional work environments are being superseded by flexible, technology-enabled processes that necessitate novel skill sets, contemporary attitudes, and adaptive leadership paradigms. Furthermore, exogenous pressures such as climate-induced disasters, energy insecurity, cyber threats, and supply-chain disruptions are testing the resilience of global institutions. Consequently, organizations are increasingly expected to demonstrate agility in the face of uncertainty while maintaining productivity, accountability, and public trust.

In response to these shifts, organizations, under the stewardship of HR practitioners and corporate leaders, have strived to adapt. In Kenya, the technology sector serves as a notable example; HR leaders at Safaricom PLC have pioneered mentorship programs for young women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). These initiatives have successfully diversified the workforce and challenged entrenched gender stereotypes. Similarly, HR-driven wellness programs within the Kenyan banking sector have mitigated stress-related absenteeism, illustrating that employee well-being correlates directly with societal welfare. According to Safaricom's *Diversity and Inclusion Report (2024),* HR-led mentorship initiatives resulted in a 30% increase in female STEM recruitment. On a global scale, corporations such as Google and Unilever exemplify how HR-led diversity strategies exert a broader influence on cultural norms and societal structures.

Within this volatile operating environment, the youth demographic represents a critical focus for HR practitioners. In Kenya, where 75% of the population is under the age of 35, this demographic reality presents both a challenge and a significant opportunity. HR professionals are instrumental in bridging the gap between academia and employment. For instance, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) has collaborated with HR leaders to develop apprenticeship programs that align technical vocational training with industry requirements, reinforcing the premise that *HR serves as the essential nexus between education and*



economic progress. Furthermore, HR professionals act as pivotal agents in the political-administrative sphere. Within Kenya's devolved county governments, HR managers have implemented equitable recruitment practices, thereby reducing nepotism and enhancing transparency. Their mediation competencies have minimized labor disputes, fostering industrial peace as a cornerstone of political stability. Internationally, HR advocacy was instrumental in labor reforms in South Africa, where HR associations successfully lobbied for enhanced worker protections during the post-apartheid transition. Globally, Germany's dual education system exemplifies the strategic role of Human Resources (HR) in aligning educational curricula with industrial requirements, thereby ensuring a consistent pipeline of skilled labor. This underscores the emergence of HR practitioners as indispensable catalysts for organizational success within highly volatile environments. Their contemporary mandate extends significantly beyond traditional administrative functions such as recruitment, payroll, and personnel management. Today, the HR practitioner functions as a strategic leader whose responsibilities integrate human capital development, organizational resilience, innovation, and proactive institutional preparation for future challenges. Consequently, their contributions are critical to national development and organizational performance, serving as both employee advocates and architects of talent.

Historically, Human Resource Management (HRM) was perceived as a personnel administration function, primarily focused on record-keeping, recruitment processes, payroll, and employee welfare. While these functions remain relevant, the modern scope of HR practice has expanded exponentially. The contemporary dimensions of HR practice and the role of its practitioners have been articulated with precision by Dave Ulrich and Wayne Brockbank in *HR Value Proposition*. The authors contend that for HR practitioners to operationalize the HR Value Proposition, they must acknowledge five overarching realities: understanding external business environments (technological, economic, global, and demographic factors), serving internal and external stakeholders (customers, investors, managers, and employees), designing HR practices (people, performance, information, and work), cultivating HR resources (strategy and organization), and ensuring professional excellence (roles, competencies, and development).

In the current era, HR professionals function as strategic leadership partners. They facilitate workforce planning, talent management, succession planning, performance optimization, organizational development, and institutional transformation. Most notably, HR practitioners serve as stewards of corporate culture, fostering systems grounded in ethical conduct, meritocracy, accountability, and inclusivity. Through policy development, employee engagement initiatives, and leadership programs, they fundamentally shape institutional values and behaviors.

Amidst global uncertainty and volatility, HR practitioners have become integral to organizational resilience. They facilitate the prediction, planning, and execution of institutional change, transition, and transformation. The ability to align human capital investments with strategic organizational objectives is now a primary driver of long-term success. Nationally, Kenya's pursuit of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) highlighted the strategic importance of HR in national

development. HR professionals coordinated the redistribution of healthcare personnel across counties to ensure equitable service access. This reform not only enhanced health outcomes but also bolstered the political legitimacy of devolution, despite the turbulence characterized by frequent labor disputes regarding the terms and conditions of service for county healthcare workers.

Furthermore, lifelong learning and reskilling have become paramount priorities. It is essential for personnel to acquire the technical and soft skills—such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving—necessary to meet evolving workplace demands. The development of leadership capacity is equally critical for navigating complex, uncertain environments and mobilizing teams toward change.

HR practitioners are central to identifying leadership potential and establishing pathways for professional growth. Finally, professional development must remain anchored in the ethical implications of strategic decision-making. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement, ethical concerns frequently encompass data privacy, security, automation, and equitable labor practices. Consequently, capacity-building initiatives should facilitate the development of employees' proficiency in making responsible and ethical decisions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is currently transforming industries and redefining vocational roles across all sectors. While AI offers significant opportunities for enhanced efficiency and productivity, it simultaneously introduces challenges pertaining to displacement of labor, skill deficits, and governance. Human Resource (HR) professionals must assume a pivotal role in assisting organizations to navigate this transition by equipping the workforce with innovative methodologies.

Another substantial challenge is the impact of climate change. Enterprises and the stability of their workforces are increasingly susceptible to extreme weather events, resource scarcity, and environmental disruption. Therefore, the cultivation of workforce resilience and the implementation of sustainable practices have emerged as organizational priorities. Furthermore, persistent global conflicts and geopolitical tensions exacerbate challenges related to energy insecurity, inflation, and supply chain disruptions. These factors significantly influence organizational planning, resource allocation, and employee well-being, necessitating that institutions formulate strategies to adapt to increasingly volatile environments.

Access to skilled human capital is also fundamental to the realization of Kenya Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as it drives both implementation and innovation. Accordingly, capacity building serves as both an organizational imperative and a national development strategy.

The outlook for HR practitioners remains optimistic as the workplace evolves and institutions prepare for future demands. In the international sphere, this necessitates professional networking among regulatory bodies to facilitate knowledge exchange regarding organizational change and adaptability within the dynamic landscape of human capital and industrial management.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has played a significant role in knowledge dissemination through webinars, workshops, and seminars, and by partnering with other professional entities, such as the Institute of Human Resource Management (IHRM) in Kenya, to advance capacity building among HR professionals. This collaboration strategically positions HR practitioners and organizations, warranting the following discussion points for HR practitioners.

First, there is an imperative for organizations to invest significantly in future-ready skill development initiatives. Capacity building must address not only immediate operational requirements but also the competencies and capabilities projected for future years. Secondly, enhanced collaboration must be established between employers, universities, professional associations, and training providers.

These partnerships facilitate the alignment of learning programs with evolving worker needs and emerging global trends. Thirdly, organizations must foster an environment conducive to continuous education. Employers should encourage a culture where employees perceive professional development as a continuous responsibility rather than an isolated event. Finally, capacity-building programs should adopt a long-term orientation. Rather than reacting to disruptions, institutions must proactively anticipate and prepare for future challenges in collaboration with their personnel.

HR professionals possess the capacity to contribute to institutional excellence and national prosperity by fostering continuous learning, ethical leadership, innovation, and resilience. Thus, the role of HR practitioners is not merely important but critical to shaping Kenya's future and bridging gaps in workforce management and industrial economic development. HR professionals serve as architects of societal progress; their role in fostering social equity, economic resilience, and political stability is indispensable for industrial growth. For both nations and organizations, investing in HR leadership constitutes a fundamental investment in sustainable development.

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FROM COBBLESTONES TO BALLOTS

Reimagining the Professional's Role in Kenya's Elections



By Charles Kanjama, SC

1. INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, 25 June 2024. Early afternoon. Parliament Road, Nairobi.

The crowd surging toward Parliament that day had no formal leadership. It had been summoned by hashtags and marshalled on TikTok livestreams and X Spaces by young Kenyans whom the political class had, until that week, dismissed as apathetic.

Volunteer medics in high-visibility vests set up triage points along Moi Avenue. Advocates kept vigil at police stations through the night and filed habeas corpus applications for the disappeared, with the Law Society of Kenya, under its then president Faith Odhiambo, publicly confronting the state over the abductions. Within days, software developers had built free online tools that translated the Finance Bill's dense clauses into plain English, Kiswahili and Sheng, so that a nation could read for itself what it was being asked to pay. For a few extraordinary weeks, Kenya glimpsed what happens when expertise leaves the office and enters the public square.

Fifty-six years earlier, a similar awakening occurred on the streets of Paris. In May 1968, protesting students tore up the cobblestones of the Latin Quarter, built barricades (Wegs, 1984), acting as revealers of a general crisis, exposing a system that had drifted away from the people it claimed to serve (Blanchot, 2010).

June 2024 was Kenya's revealing. The crisis it exposed was a style of governance that relies on hollow slogans and public resources deployed as electoral bait. These events, additionally, exposed a crucial truth about Kenya's professionals. As courageous as our engagement was, it remained reactive and episodic, only beginning after the tear gas, rather than before the Finance Bill.

As Kenya approaches the 2027 general election, professionals, both statutory and non-statutory



alike, must shift from episodic reaction to integrated engagement across the whole electoral cycle. This calls for intentional and proactive participation in vetting aspirants, interrogating manifestos, observing polls, and holding the victors to account. Elections are the gateway for social, economic and political transformation. That is why an article about recalibrating professional voices in Kenya's transformation begins at the ballot.

2. WHO IS A PROFESSIONAL?

The word *professional* traces back to the Latin word *professio*, meaning a public declaration or vow. To profess is to openly commit oneself to a discipline and its standards in exchange for society's trust.

Building on this foundation, a professional is a service provider distinguished by specialised knowledge that the general public does not hold, acquired through prolonged training and exercised under ethical obligations that place the public interest above private convenience (Freidson, 2001).

Statutory professionals such as advocates, medical practitioners, accountants, engineers, architects and quantity surveyors, surveyors and human resource practitioners practise under Acts of Parliament that grant them exclusive rights over their respective fields (Advocates Act, Cap 16; Medical Practitioners and Dentists Act, Cap 253; Accountants Act, 2008; Engineers Act, 2011; Architects and Quantity Surveyors Act, Cap 525; Surveyors Act, 2020; Human Resource Management Professionals Act (No. 52 of 2012)). This monopoly is granted in exchange for guaranteed competence and accountability, and it carries a civic price.

A profession holding exclusive authority over the nation's law, health, finances or infrastructure cannot plausibly claim that politics is not its business.

"I may feel insignificant, but I certainly don't want to be like the animals watching the planet go down the drain. I will be a hummingbird. I will do the best I can."

-Wangari Maathai

2004 Nobel Peace Laureate &
Founder of the Green Belt Movement



When political decisions directly impact its domain, silence becomes a breach of duty.

To understand where the duty sits, we must elaborate on the three different institutional actors often conflated. First are the statutory regulators, such as the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council and the Engineers Board of Kenya, which are organs of the state whose mandate is to enforce standards.

Second are the member associations, including the Law Society of Kenya, which uniquely combines both regulatory and advocacy roles, the Kenya Medical Association, the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Kenya and the Institution of Engineers of Kenya, which exist to articulate their members' collective voice.

Third and finally are the trade unions, such as the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union, which defend welfare and terms of service. Political engagement properly belongs to the associations and unions, not statutory regulators.

Beyond the statutory circle lies a vast and rapidly expanding community of information technology specialists, data analysts, management consultants, media and communications professionals, and human-resource practitioners. They design the election technology, analyse the voter data and run the campaign communications. Where statutory professionals provide institutional authority, non-statutory professionals supply operational agility.

3. A HISTORICAL AUDIT: WHY PROFESSIONALS SIT BACK

The reluctance of Kenyan professionals to engage politically is an inheritance from the colonial period. Furedi's (1973) study of colonial Nairobi drew a sharp line between the broader African public and a small African middle class that had, by the mid-1940s, become well integrated into the colonial system. That elite's politics were constitutional and moderate, designed to consolidate its position within the system.

The professional bodies of the era absorbed the same mindset. The Association of Accountants in East Africa, for instance, was dominated by British expatriates, keeping Africans at the margins (Sian, 2011). The Swynnerton Plan of the 1950s deliberately deepened this dynamic by creating an African middle class with enough of a material stake in the system to defend it.

As Fanon (1963) observed across decolonising nations, this produced an intermediary class content to inherit power rather than remake it. Colonial schooling reinforced this divide, estranging educated elites from the very societies they were meant to serve (Nyerere, 1967; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986).

Independence narrowed this space further. The post-colonial state centralised power in the name of unity and development, tolerating civic institutions only so long as they did not challenge authority (Gathiaka & Ngunyi, 1993). By the 1980s, political monolithism took hold as civil organizations were deregistered, co-opted, or absorbed into ruling party networks (Gathiaka & Ngunyi, 1993). Influence shifted from public policy engagement to private patron-client relationships (Bienen, 1974).

Notably, at nearly every democratic opening in Kenya's history, professional fingerprints are on the door handle. During the Second Liberation struggle of the 1980s and 1990s, professionals paid dearly for their convictions. Academics and writers among them Maina wa Kinyatti, Edward Oyugi, Koigi wa Wamwere and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, were detained or exiled for their ideas. Medics like Dr. Odhiambo Olel organized strikes and treated victims of state violence, enduring detention and torture for doing so (Houghton, 2022; Ong'wen, 2022). Lawyers such as Gibson Kamau Kuria and Wanyiri Kihoro challenged state torture in court at immense personal cost. Politicians Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia, whose call for multiparty democracy earned them detention days before Saba Saba in July 1990.

Alongside them, the "Young Turks" of the Law Society, among them Paul Muite, Gitobu Imanyara, James Orengo and Martha Karua, worked with Willy Mutunga's generation at the International Commission of Jurists (Kenya) and clergy such as Timothy Njoya, Henry Okullu, Alexander Muge and David Gitari to build the legal and moral case that broke single-party rule.

Wangari Maathai took her scientific expertise into Uhuru Park and Karura Forest, enduring police brutality to defend public land (Maathai, 2006). In 2017, the Supreme Court under Chief Justice David Maraga annulled a presidential election, demonstrating professionals within state institutions applying their discipline under intense political pressure.

History refutes any claim that Kenyan professionals lack courage. What we lack is continuity. Our bravery has been episodic, ignited by crisis, carried out individually, and followed every time by a quiet retreat to business as usual.

4. THE LESSONS OF TWO UPRISINGS

When we place Paris in 1968 alongside Nairobi in 2024, what lessons emerge for Kenya's professionals?

- **First, solidarity multiplies expertise.** The defining puzzle of Paris 1968, was how a localized campus dispute turned into a nationwide reckoning. It happened only when millions of factory workers recognized the students' struggle as their own (Gobille, 2008). June 2024 achieved a similar alchemy in Kenya. A tax protest transcended class, regional, and ethnic divides with astonishing speed. In both cases, however, professionals participated largely as courageous individuals.

Imagine, instead, what becomes possible through institutional solidarity, when societies, unions, and professional bodies act in deliberate concert across disciplines.

- **Second, minorities move majorities.** May 1968 began with a handful of students at Nanterre, June 2024 began with a few online accounts explaining a bill. The two events demonstrated that professionals are never too few to matter.
- **Third, professional associations can be the infrastructure of transformation.** Look to Sudan, where the umbrella Sudanese Professionals Association, uniting doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and journalists, organized and sustained the uprising that ended three decades of autocratic rule (Berridge et al., 2022).

  For APSEA and its member societies, Sudan provides a clear blueprint for collective civic duty. In the same breath, it also delivers a vital warning, as that revolution was later disrupted by a military coup. Courage that fails to solidify into durable, protective institutions will always remain vulnerable to retreat.
- **Fourth, real transformation is measured in norms.** By most immediate measures, 1968 failed since the protests across Europe were contained. Nonetheless, the democratic baseline was permanently reset, cementing new expectations for accountability and public participation (Fink, Gassert, & Junker, 1998; Mercer, 2021).

  Kenya's 2024 ledger carries a similar nuance as the Finance Bill was withdrawn, but the systemic abuses documented by human rights bodies remain unaddressed (KNCHR, 2024).

The professionals stepping up ahead of 2027 might not see immediate wins, but their presence changes what the public demands from leadership.

Once citizens realise what rigorous, honest governance looks like, no politician can easily talk them into accepting less.

5. PRACTICAL PATHWAYS TO 2027: A CALL TO ACTION

The work has already begun, and we are seeing encouraging green shoots across our professions. The Law Society of Kenya has partnered with the IEBC to fix legal gaps between the Elections Act and the Leadership and Integrity Act, while deploying observers to monitor elections like the Ol Kalou by-election to demand strict enforcement of the law. ICPAK has submitted concrete fiscal proposals to Parliament (People Daily, 2025), KMPDU (KMPDU, 2026) has taken firm stances on healthcare legislation, and regional professional caucuses are demanding skills-based governance (NewsDay Kenya, 2026).

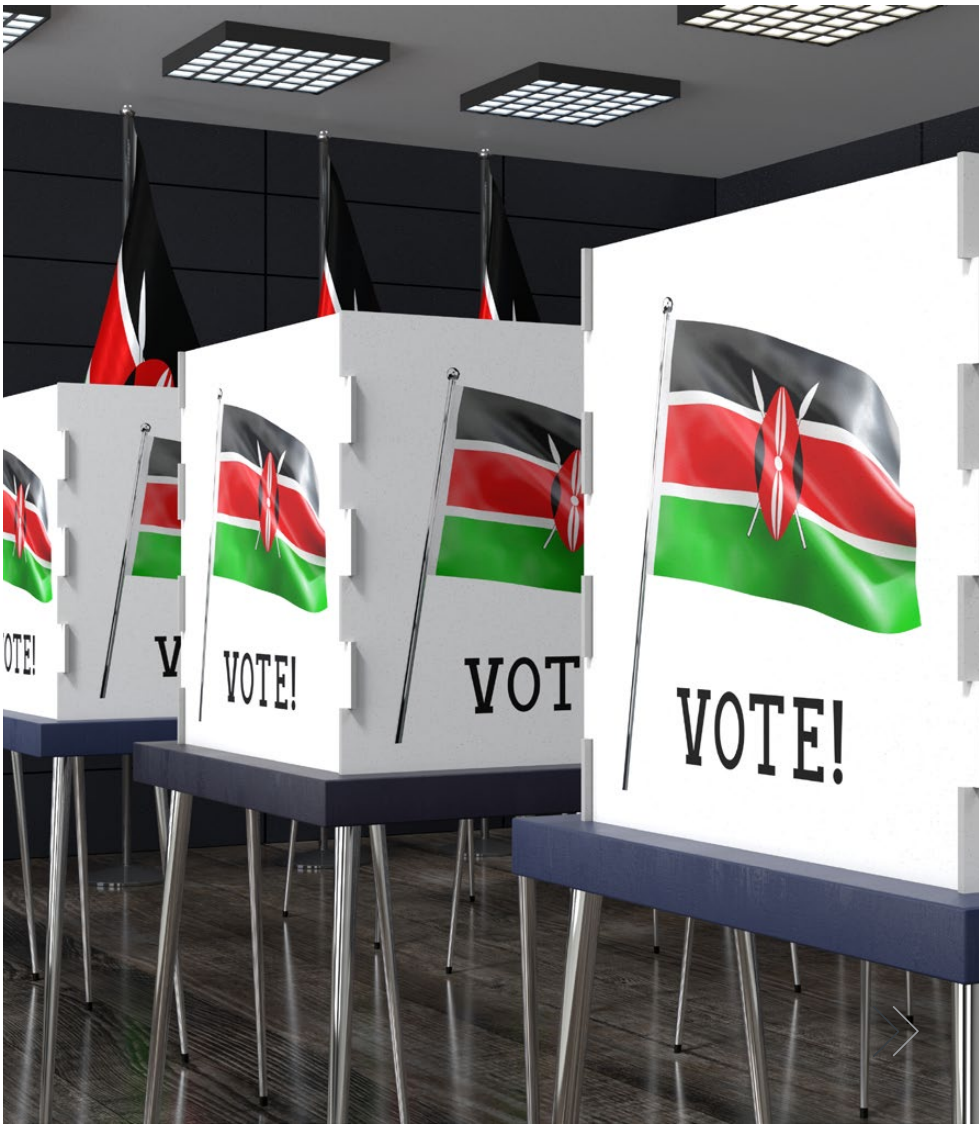
Effective engagement with the 2027 electoral cycle requires us to start now, before the formal machinery of nominations and rallies takes over. What often holds us back is the silo mentality within our professional bodies, where each discipline responds in isolation for its own narrow audience.

The central challenge before APSEA and its member societies is to deliberately design a coordinated, united civic front before the next crisis forces our hand.

Three forms of pre-cycle engagement demand our immediate priority. First is the rigorous, pre-election analysis of party manifestos. When a party launches its platform, ICPAK should publish a clear fiscal costing, the Institution of Engineers should benchmark its infrastructure pledges, the Kenya Medical Association should evaluate its health commitments against evidence, and the Law Society should scrutinize its rule-of-law and governance provisions.

Second is the objective evaluation of individual track records. While a manifesto is a promise about the future, a track record is hard evidence of the past. Economists must evaluate former public officials on measurable outcomes.

Lawyers should examine candidates' litigation and disciplinary histories, while engineers assess whether infrastructure commissioned under



an aspirant's watch was delivered on time, within budget, and to standard.

Third, professionals must consider running for office themselves. The most direct way to transform governance is to step into it. Our Constitution opens Parliament, county assemblies, governorships, and the presidency to every qualified citizen. A lawyer with a record of public-interest litigation, a doctor who has managed a county health system, an engineer who has delivered public infrastructure, or an economist who has crafted sound fiscal policy brings something to elective office that career politicians rarely possess: proven technical competence and professional accountability. Offering oneself for public service is not about abandoning one's expertise for politics—it is about placing that expertise squarely at the service of the nation.

Translating these broad priorities into action requires clear operational commitments within each sector. As legal professionals, our mandate is immediate. Every Law Society branch should field and train a roster of election observers before the poll, building on the Ol Kalou deployment rather than assembling one in the fortnight before the poll. Furthermore, advocates should staff pro bono desks at police stations through the campaign season, as they did in June 2024, and publish a plain-language audit of aspirants' convictions, pending cases and adverse findings before nominations close.

Financial and economic professionals must supply equivalent clarity. ICPAK and allied economists should commit publicly, and in advance, to publishing a fully costed scorecard of every party manifesto within days of its launch, giving voters practical numbers that they can refer to. Furthermore, publishing quarterly bulletins tracking campaign spending throughout the election year will expose how public resources are routinely front-loaded for electoral gain.

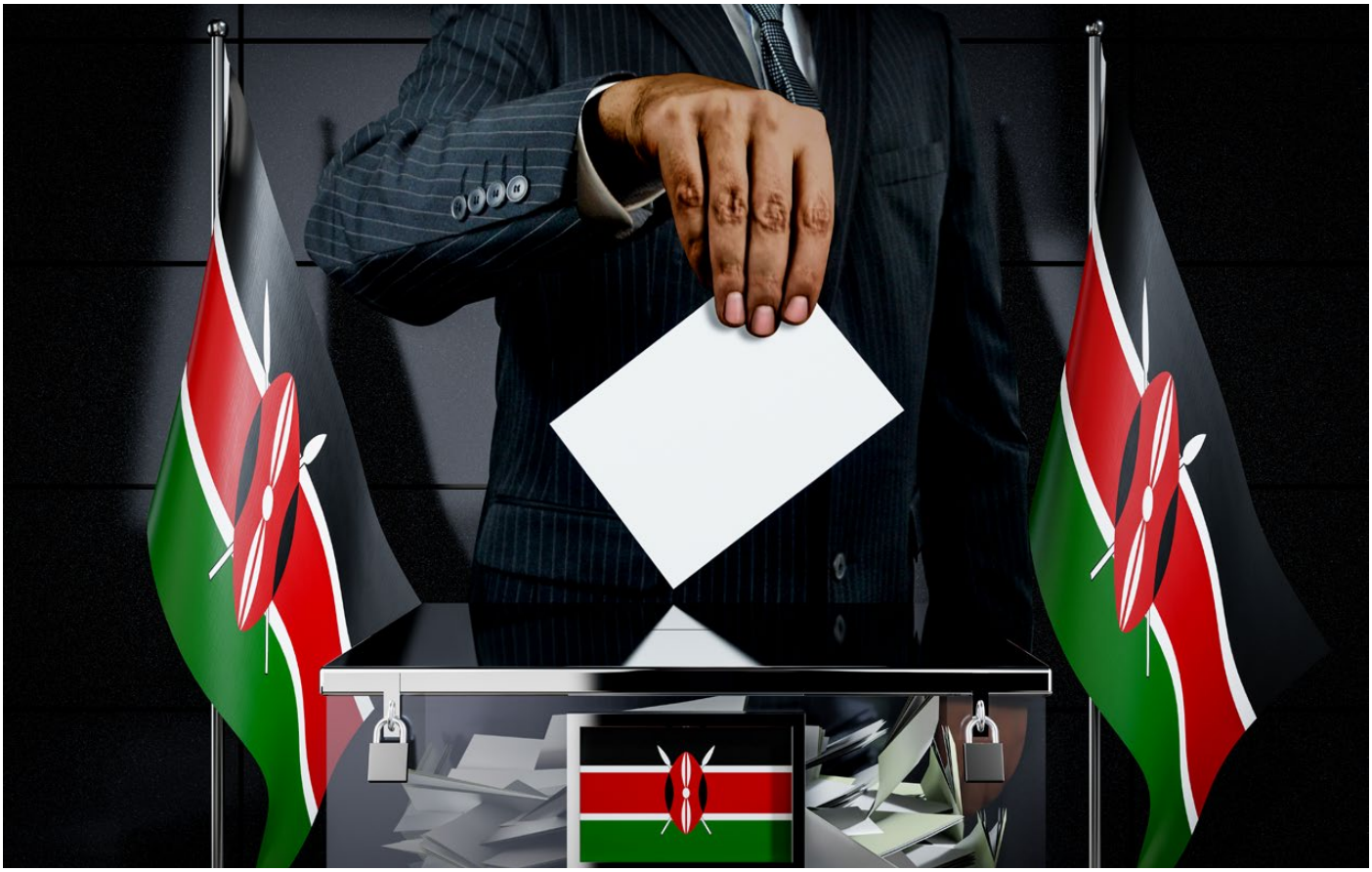
The built environment and healthcare sectors must establish similar empirical baselines. The Institution of Engineers of Kenya should publish independent per-kilometre and per-unit cost benchmarks against major infrastructure pledges before citizens cast their votes, followed by public delivery audits at the hundred-day and one-year marks to verify whether promises match projects actually delivered. In health, the Kenya Medical Association should publish evidence-based evaluations of health policy promises before nominations close, while KMPDU and health unions pre-position emergency response teams for campaign periods so healthcare workers are organized rather than forced to improvise during a crisis.

Our most powerful pathway, however, must be collective through social vetting**.** APSEA should convene a joint secretariat across its member bodies, producing one standardised public integrity brief per aspirant, covering litigation and disciplinary history, financial probity, delivery record and stewardship of any public office or service the aspirant has held, based on verified documentation. To reach beyond our own professional circles, these briefs must be distributed through everyday channels like social media platforms, putting actionable data directly into the hands of voters checking their phones.

6. FROM SITTING BACK TO STEPPING UP: THE CULTURAL SHIFT

None of these practical steps will survive contact with a professional culture that treats citizenship as an extracurricular activity. For too long, our professional training has been exacting about technical competence while remaining silent on moral purpose.

We hone intellects without grounding them in civic duty, then express surprise when a graduate audits a fraudulent tender and stays silent. What must change is



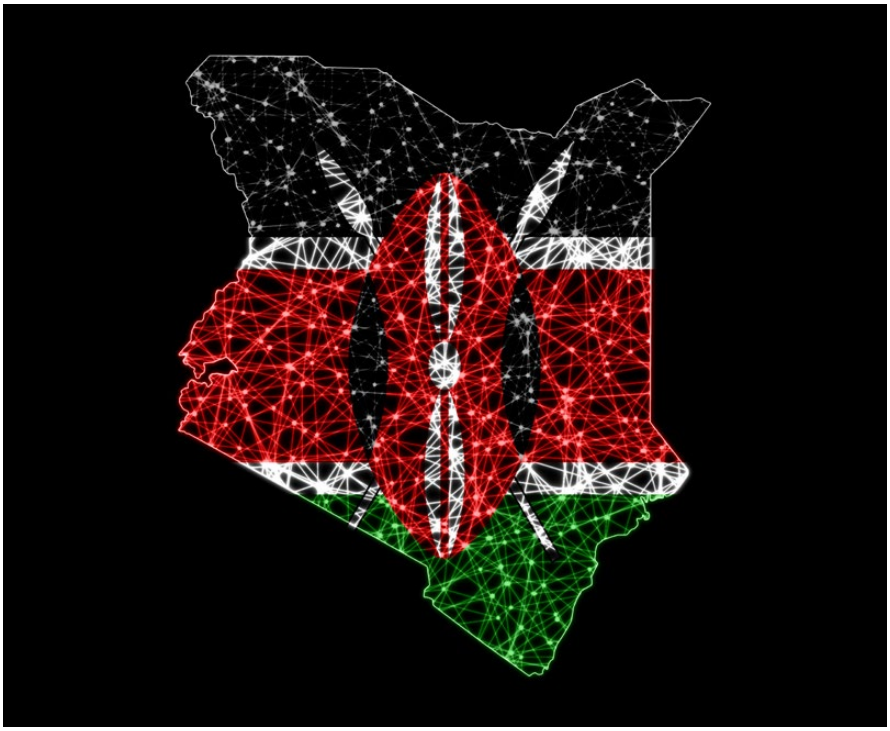
our fundamental understanding of what a credential is for. Professional qualifications should open onto public life. Our associations were founded precisely to bridge expertise and governance (Osore, n.d, APSEA, n.d.).

Bridging that gap requires more than solo heroes. Courage exercised individually does not outlive the person displaying it. When civic action relies solely on prominent figures, it vanishes the moment those individuals step down or face pressure. The real work of transformation is unglamorous and institutional: building advocacy committees whose mandates outlive their chairpersons, establishing vetting secretariats with clear, documented methodologies, and embedding manifesto-costing protocols that every incoming council inherits. Professional culture only changes when an association makes speaking out a standing order.

Finally, Kenya's professionals must stop pleading incapacity. Throughout history, the most effective civic movements were built by ordinary citizens holding far fewer resources. Movements have stopped civil wars and reshaped political landscapes. We, by contrast, possess avenues where binding motions can be passed. As Wangari Maathai warned, the tragedy of Africa's educated elite has been learning to extract from society rather than serve it (Maathai, 2009). The tools for systemic change are already in our hands; we need only resolve to use them.

7. CONCLUSION: YOUR COBBLESTONE

In 1968, the instrument of refusal was a cobblestone. In June 2024, it was a phone camera, a spreadsheet, a habeas corpus application, and a triage kit. The tools change, but the core choice



does not. Chinua Achebe famously observed that the fundamental trouble with Nigeria was simply and squarely a failure of leadership (Achebe, 1983). Substitute Kenya, and the diagnosis holds. A failure of leadership persists only for as long as the led, and particularly the educated, permit it.

As 2027 approaches, Kenya's professionals have their own cobblestones to throw: the legal opinion that exposes electoral fraud, the fiscal analysis that reveals an unsustainable promise, the engineering assessment that unmasks a politically timed project, the healthcare advocacy that refuses to let patients become props, and the public integrity brief that tells voters what glossy campaign posters will not.

So do not close this article and retreat into professional routine. Before this month is out, commit to at least one concrete action. Join your branch's observer roster and prepare to monitor the polls early. Volunteer to cost a single manifesto clause the moment party platforms are published. Table a formal motion to establish a vetting secretariat at your association's next general meeting. Help register ten new voters before the roll closes, or mentor a younger colleague by sharing what was achieved in June 2024 and asking what they intend to build for 2027.

Kenyan professionals proved in 1971, 1990, 2017, and 2024 that there are hummingbirds amongst professionals. The choice is ours. The moment is now.

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ECONOMISTS SOCIETY *Of* KENYA



Championing Evidence-Based Economic Thinking

The Economists Society of Kenya (ESK) is the professional home of economists in the country. It brings together practitioners from government, academia, the private sector, research institutions and development organisations. The Society advances the economics profession by promoting high standards of practice, encouraging rigorous research and providing a platform where members can share ideas on the issues that shape Kenya's economic future. As a member of the Association of Professional Societies in East Africa, ESK adds a strong economic voice to the collective effort of professionals working for national and regional transformation.

At a time when Kenya faces pressing questions on public debt, the wage bill, job creation, climate resilience and the digital economy, the role of economists has never been more important. ESK works to ensure that policy debates are guided by sound analysis rather than speculation. Through public forums, policy dialogues, conferences and continuous professional development, the Society helps its members stay current with new tools and methods. These range from data science and artificial intelligence to modern approaches in economic modelling and forecasting.

Under the leadership of its Chairperson, Dr. Dunstone Wafula Ulwodi, and a dedicated executive committee, the Society continues to grow its membership and strengthen its engagement with policymakers and the public. The 2025 leadership team is committed to deepening collaboration with sister professional bodies, mentoring young economists and making economic knowledge accessible to all Kenyans. ESK remains steadfast in its belief that informed economic choices are the foundation of shared prosperity for Kenya and the wider East African region.

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Amos Mwita

Co-opted Executive Committee Member



ENDING DUPLICATE COUNTY LICENSING

OF REGULATED PROFESSIONALS IS ESSENTIAL TO MOBILITY, PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION



By Hillary Onami
Convener; Public Affairs, Governance and Legislation Committee, APSEA

Kenya's socio-economic and political transformation depends not only on elected leaders, public institutions, and markets, but also on the integrity, mobility, and courage of its professional communities. Engineers, physical planners, architects, doctors, accountants, lawyers, veterinary surgeons, and other regulated professionals translate public policy into roads, hospitals, settlements, audits, justice, health systems, environmental safeguards, and accountable institutions. Their voices shape the quality of development and the strength of democracy.

Yet those professional voices are increasingly constrained by a burden that should not exist in a constitutional democracy: demands by county governments that regulated professionals and their duly registered firms obtain County Single Business Permits before they can practise, operate, or bid for professional work.

The demand may appear administrative, but its effect is transformative in the wrong direction. It narrows professional participation, fragments the national market for expertise, and weakens the role of professionals as independent contributors to Kenya's public life.

When revenue collection mutes professional participation

Regulated professionals do not carry on ordinary commercial trade in the sense of buying and selling merchandise. They render specialized services under statutory supervision. Engineers, physical planners, architects, accountants, doctors, lawyers, veterinary surgeons, and other regulated professionals are admitted to practice only after meeting national standards set by Acts of Parliament and enforced through specialized statutory regulatory bodies.

Thus, when a county government demands a Single Business Permit from such a professional, it is not merely collecting a routine local fee. It is creating a parallel licensing regime that restricts where professional knowledge may be deployed.

The result is duplicate regulation, double payment, administrative harassment, and, in practical terms, a barrier to the constitutional freedom of professionals to contribute to development across the Republic of Kenya.

Constitutional foundations for a national professional voice

Kenya's constitutional architecture deliberately separates ordinary county trade regulation from the statutory regulation of professions. The Fourth Schedule assigns key national functions—including national economic policy, education policy, health policy, veterinary policy, and professional standards-related functions—to the National Government. It then gives counties trade development and regulation, but with an express limitation: county trade regulation excludes the regulation of professions.

That exclusion is decisive. Counties may regulate conventional local trade, premises, markets, and business activity within their constitutional mandate. They cannot, however, convert professional practice into a county-licensed trade or impose local permits as though national professional licences were incomplete at county borders.

Article 209 of the Constitution also limits county revenue powers. Counties may impose property rates, entertainment taxes, and other taxes authorized by legislation, but those powers cannot be exercised in a way that prejudices national economic policies, economic activities across county boundaries, or the national mobility of goods, services, capital or labour. A requirement that a professional firm purchase separate county permits before offering the same nationally regulated service undermines that protection. In substance, it turns devolution into fragmentation and makes professional mobility dependent on local revenue systems rather than national law.

A recalibrated professional voice must therefore insist that devolution be read as a framework for responsive governance, not as a permission to localize national expertise into county-by-county silos. Kenya's transformation agenda requires professionals to move, advise, bid, inspect, design, audit, litigate, treat, and plan across territorial boundaries without being treated as unauthorized traders whenever they cross into another county.

What the courts have said about professional autonomy

Kenyan courts have repeatedly treated duplicate local licensing of regulated professional activity with caution.

The clearest recent authority is Kenya Medical Association v Nairobi City County Government & 2 others, where the High Court declared the relevant Nairobi trade-licensing provision unconstitutional and prohibited the county from levying, demanding, collecting, or enforcing trade licence or Single Business Permit fees against doctors within Nairobi County.

Earlier decisions involving municipal and county demands against professionals and professional facilities point in the same direction: where a profession is governed by a national statutory regime, local authorities should not use trade-permit systems to create a second licensing layer for the same professional activity.

The one-government principle and national transformation

A professional licence issued by a national statutory regulator is not a partial permission. It is authorization by the Government of Kenya.

Once a professional or facility has undergone statutory inspection, registration, certification, and annual licensing by the relevant national body, a county cannot treat that authorization as invalid, incomplete, or in need of local commercial confirmation.

This is the practical meaning of the one-government principle. Devolution created two levels of government, not forty-eight separate licensing sovereignties. A county may exercise its constitutionally assigned functions, but it may not re-license what Parliament has assigned to specialized national bodies.

For professionals, this principle matters because their contribution to transformation depends on the ability to serve the nation as one integrated constitutional space.

Why SBP demands distort procurement and silence expertise

The problem becomes even more serious when counties require a county-specific SBP as a pre-qualification document in tenders for professional services.



A firm capable of providing engineering, planning, architectural, accounting, medical, or other professional services nationally may be forced to buy separate permits in every county where it wishes to compete. In a country of 47 counties, that requirement can turn tendering into a pay-to-qualify system.

This requirement is not a neutral administrative formality. It raises the cost of tendering, excludes otherwise qualified professionals, entrenches local barriers, and undermines the competitive objectives of the public procurement framework.

It also deprives counties of the best available expertise at the very moment when professional judgment is needed to guide development choices, safeguard public resources, and strengthen accountability.

What must change if professional voices are to be recalibrated

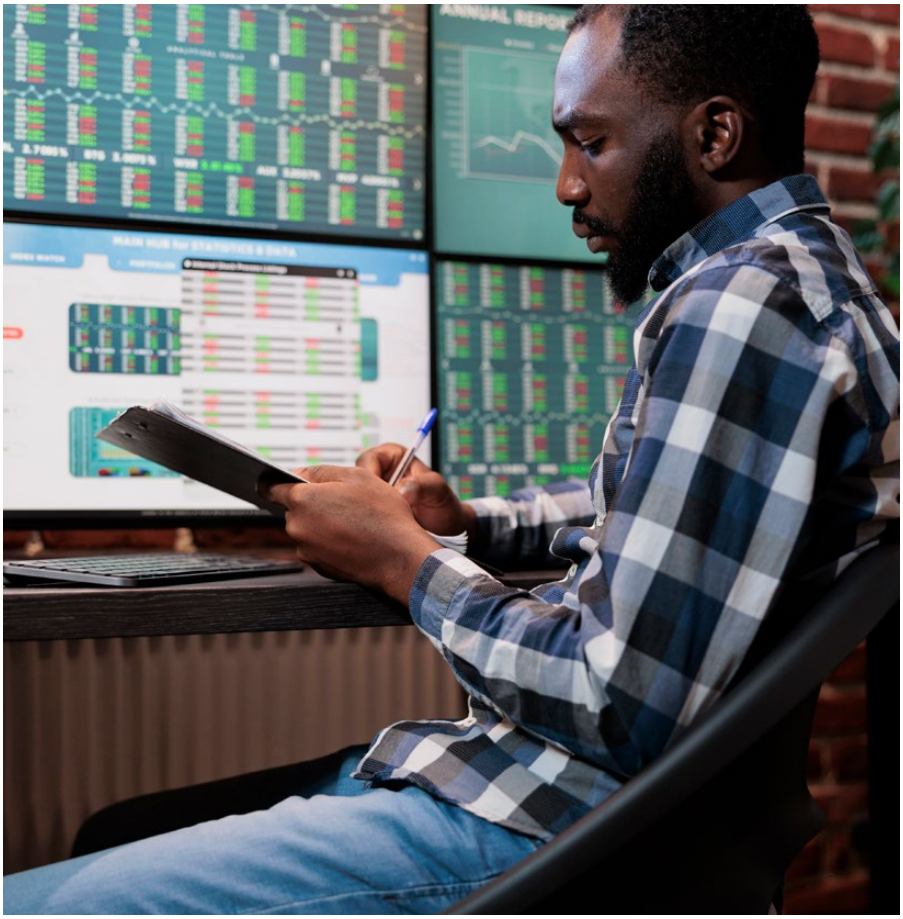
First, counties should stop demanding SBPs from regulated professionals and registered professional firms. This should apply to trade licences, operational permits, and any equivalent local fee whose purpose is to authorize a professional service already licensed under national law. Removing this burden would free professionals to contribute more effectively to county and national development.

Second, SBP requirements should be removed from professional-service tenders. Procuring entities should accept valid annual practising licences and registration certificates as sufficient evidence that a professional or firm is legally authorized to practise and bid.

Third, county laws should contain a clear exemption for regulated professionals. County Finance Acts and trade licensing laws should expressly provide that SBP or trade licence requirements do not apply to professional practice or facilities duly registered, certified, and licensed by national statutory regulatory bodies.

Fourth, compliance verification should be digital and cooperative. Where counties need to verify whether a professional or facility is duly licensed, they should do so through inter-governmental data sharing with national regulators rather than through coercive inspections, threats of closure, or demands for duplicative permits.

Finally, the national legal position should be clarified authoritatively. The Attorney-General, relevant ministries, professional regulators, the Council of Governors, and the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority should align guidance so that county revenue collection does not become a backdoor system for re-licensing regulated professions. Such clarity would allow professional bodies to speak with one voice on mobility, standards, accountability, and public interest.



Recalibrating professional voices for Kenya's transformation

Recalibrating professional voices in Kenya's socio-economic and political transformation requires more than inviting professionals to conferences, boards, and policy forums.

It requires removing the legal and administrative barriers that prevent them from serving freely, independently, and accountably across the country. The issue is not whether counties should raise revenue. They should.

The issue is whether county revenue systems may override the constitutional distribution of functions, duplicate national professional regulation, and deny qualified professionals the ability to practise across Kenya unless they buy multiple local permits. The answer must be no.

Kenya's professionals are not asking to be placed above the law. They are asking that the law be applied as written so that their knowledge, independence, and ethical obligations can serve the public interest. A national practising licence should mean what it says: lawful authority to practise a regulated profession across the Republic of Kenya. Ending duplicate SBP demands would reduce administrative conflict, strengthen public procurement, protect professional mobility, and reaffirm that Kenya's transformation must be built through institutions, laws, and professional voices that operate as one constitutional order.

Author's note:
This article is a collated policy and legal commentary from the Public Affairs, Governance and Legislation Committee of APSEA intended to contribute to public debate on professional regulation, devolution, and national transformation in Kenya.



REWARDING PRODUCTIVITY

RECALIBRATING KENYA'S PUBLIC WAGE BILL FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION



By Leonid Ashindu
Commissioner, Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC)

> "GHANA'S EXPERIENCE IS THE MOST DIRECTLY COMPARABLE, BOTH IN THE SCALE OF ITS WAGE BILL CHALLENGE AND IN THE DESIGN OF ITS REFORM."

INTRODUCTION

Kenya's public wage bill has become the single most contested line item in the national budget. It sits at the intersection of three competing imperatives: the constitutional duty to pay public officers fairly, the fiscal duty to keep government spending within the country's means, and the developmental duty to leave enough resources for roads, hospitals, and classrooms.

As a Commissioner at the Salaries and Remuneration Commission (SRC), I have watched this debate shift from a narrow argument about how much government workers should earn to a much larger debate about what they should be earning it for. That shift in framing is, I will argue, the real meaning of 'recalibration' in this journal's theme.

Kenya does not need another round of salary freeze followed by another round of salary catch-up, a cycle the country has repeated since the 1990s without ever settling the underlying issue. The country needs a wage-setting philosophy that ties compensation growth to measurable productivity growth, so that pay increases are financed by the value the public service creates rather than by a widening deficit. This is not an abstract proposition.

As at December 2025, Kenya's public wage bill had climbed to approximately Ksh.25 trillion, up from Ksh1.17 trillion the year before (*Eastleigh Voice, 2026*). The wage-bill-to-revenue ratio, while it improved from the 55 per cent recorded in 2020, still stood at roughly 41 per cent in 2025 against a statutory ceiling of 35 per cent (*Capital News, 2026*). This is unsustainable, and everyone who handles public payroll knows it.

This article makes the case that productivity, not austerity, is a more durable route to a sustainable wage bill. This is because, I believe that, Kenya already has the institutional building blocks, such as the Kaizen productivity philosophy, performance contracting, results-oriented budgeting, and SRC's own constitutional mandate, to make that change.

I draw on Kenya's own recent experience, the theoretical literature on performance-related pay, and comparative lessons from Ghana, Rwanda, and South Africa, three countries that have each -in different ways - tried to link public pay to output.

THE SUM OF AN UNSUSTAINABLE BILL

Kenya's wage bill problem is not new. What has changed is the country's tolerance for it. In Kenya, the public sector wage bill refers to personal emoluments paid to the civil service, teachers' service, disciplined services, judiciary service, state law office, parliamentary service, state corporations, armed forces, public universities, constitutional commissions, and independent offices.

A 2014 KIPPRA discussion paper, using cointegration analysis on three decades of government revenue and wage data, concluded that Kenya's public sector wage bill had no long-run equilibrium relationship with government revenue and was therefore, on the strict definition of fiscal sustainability, unsustainable (*Yagan, 2014*).

At the time, the wage bill stood at 10.3 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), already above both the internationally recommended benchmark of seven (7) per cent and Kenya's own Vision 2030 target of six (6) per cent by 2030.

Further, the same study showed that a 25 per cent increase in government remuneration would widen the fiscal deficit, worsen the current account balance, and push domestic debt upward for years afterward, while doing almost nothing for long-run GDP growth (*Yagan, 2014*).

More than a decade later, the same structural pressure persists, only that, it is now compounded by a public debt stock exceeding Ksh11 trillion (Nation, 2025). In an attempt to address this, there is a Parliamentary Budget Office and IMF push for a medium-term wage bill strategy that would bring the aggregate down to 30 per cent of ordinary revenue by 2030 (*Huduma Global Blog, 2026*).

It would be a mistake, however, to read this simply as a story of extravagance. Comparative data complicates the picture.

As of 2020, Kenya's wage bill as a share of GDP was in fact lower than that of several comparable countries, including Ghana, Uganda, and Rwanda (UNDP Kenya, 2023).





Similarly, a 2014 comparison of African wage bills placed Ghana's central government wage bill at 12.0 per cent of GDP against Kenya's 7.8 per cent, then the highest in East Africa (*Yagan, 2014*).

The problem, therefore, is not simply that Kenya pays too much relative to its peers. It is that pay has grown disconnected from output, from revenue growth, and from any credible measure of what the public service actually delivers.

County governments exemplify this bluntly as in the first nine months of 2025, only six of Kenya's forty-seven counties kept their wage-bill-to-revenue ratios within the statutory 35 per cent ceiling, with the rest exceeding it (*Eastleigh Voice, 2026*).

This was, therefore, the core of the birth of Kenya's inaugural National Productivity and Performance Conference (NPPC), held in June 2026 under the theme 'Productivity for Fiscal Sustainability and Efficient Service Delivery'.

In the words of SRC Chairman, Sammy Chepkwony, the country needed to move 'from measuring effort to measuring results, from managing processes to managing outcomes, and from rewarding tenure to rewarding productivity'.

The Conference also drew on sobering comparative data: The International Labour Organization's 2025 Productivity Data Report ranked at Kenya 142 out of 182 countries globally. A wage bill of this scale, attached to output of that rank, is the definition of a system in need of recalibration. The structural drivers of this gap are worth naming plainly.

Kenya's public sector workforce grew from roughly 76,000 employees at independence to well over 688,000 by the early 2010s, a rate of growth that, for decades at a time, outpaced population growth (*Yagan, 2014*).

Average public sector earnings per employee rose by close to 49 per cent between 2008 and 2013 alone, nearly four times the growth recorded in average private sector wages over the same period (Yagan, 2014).

Devolution added a further, largely unavoidable, layer of cost: Forty-seven new county governments, each constitutionally required to deliver fourteen functions, expanded the wage bill by design even as it brought services closer to citizens (*UNDP Kenya, 2023*).

None of these drivers is illegitimate on its own terms. Together, however, they explain

why successive Medium-Term Plans set wage-bill-to-GDP targets of 7.5 per cent, then six (6) per cent, were missed each time (*Yagan, 2014*). The country kept managing the symptom, headcount and pay scales, without addressing the underlying question of what that headcount and pay were producing.

WHY PAY WITHOUT PRODUCTIVITY FAILS: THE THEORETICAL CASE

Economists have long debated whether raising public pay improves performance on its own. Efficiency wage theory, associated with Yellen (1984), and Akerlof and Yellen (1990), holds that higher wages can lift output per worker by improving morale, reducing turnover, and attracting more capable staff, an analysis grounded as much in sociology and psychology as in conventional economics (*Valeyre et al., 2016*). The theory is intuitively appealing to any wage-setting body: Pay well, and you will get more.

However, empirical record is more cautious than the theory suggests. This is where the productivity conversation becomes unavoidable. The most comprehensive review of the evidence, a World Bank study covering 110 empirical studies of performance-related pay in public sector and comparable private sector roles, found that overall, a majority, 65 of 110, had a positive effect of performance-related pay.

This proved that explicit performance standards linked to some form of bonus pay can improve, at times dramatically, desired service outcomes (*Hasnain & Pierskalla, 2012*). This finding matters greatly for a public service as large and functionally diverse as Kenya's.

This is because it means productivity-linked pay cannot be a one-size-fits-all formula. It has to be built job by job, cadre by cadre, on the foundation of credible job evaluation, which is exactly the exercise SRC has devoted its recent review cycles to address.

A parallel body of research, on public-sector pay-setting, more broadly reaches a similar conclusion from a different angle.

Studies of South Africa's wage bill, for instance, show that public sector wages there have grown almost 2 percentage points faster per year than consumer prices between 2010 and 2021, even as average labour productivity growth in the public sector stayed below 0.4 per cent annually, a pattern, researchers describe as a decoupling of wages from productivity (*Codera Analytics, 2023*).

The lesson for Kenya is clear, affirming that pay increases - that are not anchored to productivity gains - do not merely strain the budget once; they compound, year after year, into a widening and self-reinforcing gap between cost and output.

KAIZEN: FROM FACTORY FLOOR TO PUBLIC OFFICE

If the theoretical case for productivity-linked reform is clear, the practical question is how a government translates productivity from a slogan into daily practice across hundreds of ministries, departments, agencies, and county offices.

This is where the Kaizen philosophy becomes relevant to Kenya's recalibration.



Kaizen, from the Japanese words for 'change' and 'good', is a management philosophy built on continuous, participatory, incremental, low-cost improvement in quality, productivity, cost, delivery, safety, morale, and environment (*Sonobe, 2018*).

Unlike large capital-intensive reform programs, its power lies in its accessibility. This means that it does not require new infrastructure, only a disciplined habit of identifying waste, standardizing good practice, and empowering frontline workers to suggest improvements.

Since the early 2000s, Japan's development agency, JICA, has supported Kaizen-based productivity programs in eight African countries, including Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Egypt, on the premise that African economies could raise competitiveness through better organization of existing labour and capital rather than through commodity price cycles alone (*Jin, 2018*).

The African Union Commission adopted Kaizen in 2009 to reform its own internal administration, a case documented as a model for removing organizational waste from public bureaucracies (*Jin, 2018, Imai, 2012*).

Kenya's engagement with Kaizen has deepened over time. The National Productivity and Competitiveness Centre (NPCC), housed within the Ministry of Labour, now offers Kaizen consultancy and training to public and private organizations as part of a wider Productivity Management Framework (*Ministry of Labour and Skills Development, n.d.*).



In January 2026, SRC Commissioners took part directly in a two-week Kaizen Productivity Mainstreaming Training of Trainers program, run by the Office of the Chief of Staff and Head of Public Service. This was building on an earlier Productivity Enhancement Learning Mission to Ethiopia which aimed at producing a cohort of certified Kaizen trainers to roll the methodology out nationally across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (*SRC, 2026*). The Commission's own framing of that training is instructive: Productivity enhancement, embedding a culture of efficiency, process optimization, collaboration, and measurable results, was described as central to building a modern, responsive, citizen-centred public service (*SRC, 2026*). This matters for the wage bill argument in a specific way.

Kaizen offers a low-cost, homegrown entry point for productivity reform that does not require Kenya to wait for a perfect national performance-measurement system before it starts.

It gives supervisors and frontline officers, in a registry office, a county revenue desk, a hospital records unit, solid tools to reduce waiting times, cut duplication, and standardize service delivery.

This, in turn, then generates visible efficiency gains that can, over time, be documented, aggregated, and eventually linked to the performance and productivity contracting framework that Kenya's 2026 Productivity Conference resolved to strengthen (*The Kenya Times, 2026*).

LEARNING FROM THE CONTINENT

Kenya is not alone in trying to link public pay to productivity. The region offers both encouraging and cautionary lessons.

Ghana: The Single Spine Salary Structure

Ghana's experience is the most directly comparable, both in the scale of its wage bill challenge and in the design of its reform. In 2010, Ghana introduced the Single Spine Pay Policy (SSPP), later formalized as the Single Spine Salary Structure (SSSS). This was in an attempt to place all public sector jobs on a common, comparable grading structure of twenty-five grades. This replaced the fragmented, negotiation-driven pay system that had produced large horizontal and vertical disparities across the civil service (*World Bank, 2009*).

Ghana's wage bill history before the reform is itself a warning: The Civil Service Reform Program was launched to reduce overstaffing while increasing civil service wages to more competitive levels and decompressing the wage structure. The public sector wage bill was to

be limited to about 4.5 per cent of GDP, an objective achieved in 1989 but undone in 1992, and it has not been reached again since. This is as a result of new salary agreements accumulated over the years that followed (*IMF, 2003*).

More than a decade on, the assessment of the Single Spine reform is instructive precisely because it is mixed. On the positive side, it succeeded in creating a single, comparable pay architecture where none had existed before, and it remains the reference framework for public pay in Ghana today (*World Bank, 2009*).

On the less positive side, more recent Ghanaian commentary argues that the country still lacks a credible mechanism for linking pay increases under the Single Spine framework to measurable improvements in output or efficiency.

This means pay has continued to rise through periodic negotiation even as the productivity question, that motivated the reform in the first place, remains largely unresolved (*Gariba, 2026*).

Ghana's Fair Wages and Salaries Commission has since convened a National Productivity Roundtable explicitly to confront this gap, a sequencing lesson that Kenya can take at face value: a unified pay structure is necessary but not sufficient: It must be paired, with a working productivity-measurement system, not one added years later as an afterthought (Gariba, 2026).

Rwanda: Imihigo Performance Contracts

Rwanda offers a different and, in some respects, more encouraging model. Since 2006, Rwanda has used *Imihigo*, a traditional Rwandan practice that has strengthened service delivery and contributed significantly to improvements in the socio-economic well-being of her citizens. It was then reinterpreted as a formal performance-contracting system, to bind government institutions, from Cabinet Ministers to District Mayors up to the household-level, with 'isibo' units, to annually negotiated, publicly evaluated targets (*Imihigo/Performance Contract, 2022*). Under this system, public sector employees can receive financial rewards of up to five (5) per cent of their salary based on performance evaluation (*Innovations for Poverty Action, n.d.*).



A rigorous randomized evaluation of a related pay-for-percentile scheme for Rwandan Primary School Teachers, which tied a bonus worth roughly three (3) per cent of salary to measured teaching performance, found that it improved teacher effort and outcomes without dampening employee satisfaction, in a labour market unusual among low and middle-income countries for having no significant public-sector wage premium to begin with (*Leaver et al., 2021*). What stands out in Rwanda's case is not the size of the bonus, which is deliberately modest, but the seriousness of the evaluation infrastructure behind it: Clear indicators, regular assessment cycles, and public accountability for results. This echoes the same lesson from the theoretical literature that productivity pay depends on measurement capacity as much as on the incentive itself (*Hasnain & Pierskalla, 2012*).

South Africa: A Cautionary Tale

South Africa illustrates what happens when the sequencing runs the other way, that is, when wage growth outpaces the introduction of credible productivity measurement. South Africa's public sector wage bill, at around 10 to 12 per cent of GDP, is among the largest in the world as a share of national output (*Codera Analytics, 2023*).

Researchers have documented a persistent wage premium of over 50 per cent for public relative to private sector workers, even after controlling for education, age, gender, and location (*Codera Analytics, 2023*). Commentary on the South African case is clear about the underlying problem: government worker productivity has simply not kept pace with rising pay. In effect, therefore, the country now pays more for the same, and in some documented cases, for less (*Daily Maverick, 2024*).

South Africa's own researchers now argue that new fiscal rules are needed to constrain wage bill growth to a rate demonstrably below national labour productivity growth, precisely the recalibration principle at the centre of this article (*MDPI, 2025*). For Kenya, the South African experience is a reminder that once a wage-productivity gap opens and becomes entrenched through collective bargaining and political expectation, it becomes exponentially harder to close.

Kenya's Own Recalibration in Motion

Kenya is not starting this conversation from zero. Several strands of reform, some already underway, converged visibly at the National Productivity and Performance Conference held at the Kenya School of Government in June 2026, presided over by President William Ruto. The Conference resolved that all public sector compensation systems shall progressively transition from automatic salary and career progression to productivity and performance-based remuneration.

This is the case for Ministries, Departments, and Agencies at both National and County government levels. This means that automatic salary progression would cease by mid-2027 (*Nation, 2026*). The Conference, further resolved to transform the existing Performance Contracting framework into a Performance and Productivity Contracting framework. This gives productivity indicators significantly greater weight in evaluation, with SRC named among the lead institutions responsible for implementation alongside the Public Service Commission, the Head of Public



Service, and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (*The Kenya Times, 2026*).

The Government was, further, directed to fully digitize public services and internal operations, on the reasoning that automation and business process re-engineering are themselves productivity levers, not separate from the pay question (*Nation, 2026*).

On the regulatory side, Parliament's approval in April 2026 of the Salaries and Remuneration Commission Regulations, 2025 gave SRC clearer legal authority to enforce harmonized pay structures across public institutions, regulate allowances, align salary reviews with the national budget cycle, and ensure that compensation remains fiscally sustainable, closing gaps that had caused earlier attempts at similar regulation to collapse (*Obura, 2026*).

SRC's fourth remuneration and benefits review cycle, opened in 2025 and rolling out through 2027, is the practical vehicle through which a more disciplined, evidence-based approach to pay-setting is now being implemented, alongside a rejection of a basket of additional pay demands valued at roughly Sh3.7 billion that could not be justified against the fiscal envelope (*Huduma Global Blog, 2026*).

Results-oriented budgeting is the fiscal counterpart to this productivity agenda. Kenya has pursued performance-based budgeting reforms since the early 2000s as part of a wider results-based management push, with performance contracting intended to connect planning, budgeting, implementation, and the delivery of results that benefit citizens directly. Under this framework, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies are assessed against



indicators such as full absorption of allocated funds and local content in procurement, tying financial discipline directly to service delivery outcomes rather than treating budget execution as a purely administrative exercise (*Standard, 2024*).

Recent academic assessment of this framework is instructive in the same way Ghana's is: performance-based budgeting has been found to improve budget performance and expenditure efficiency in the short run, but its long-run impact remains limited by institutional capacity, political interference, and rising debt burdens that constrain implementation (*Kambi, Ombok, & Obange, 2025*).

It is worth situating this reform within Kenya's broader constitutional architecture. SRC does not operate this mandate alone; it sits alongside other Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices (CCIOs) established under Chapter Fifteen of the 2010 Constitution, each carrying an independent oversight function that, together, is meant to insulate technical decision-making, including wage-setting, from short-term political pressure.

A recalibrated wage bill is, in this sense, as much a test of institutional integrity, as it is a fiscal exercise: It asks whether Kenya's independent commissions can hold a consistent, evidence-based line on productivity-linked pay through election cycles, union negotiations, and competing demands from line ministries, or whether the pressure to award pay outside that discipline will, as it has in the past, prove stronger than the framework designed to contain it.

Guarding Against the Pitfalls

None in the presented debate argues for a naïve embrace of productivity-linked pay. The comparative and theoretical evidence surveyed above points to at least three risks that Kenya's recalibration must guard against.

1) Measurement before money

The World Bank's review of performance-related pay evidence is explicit that such schemes work best where

output is genuinely observable and simple to assess, and can misfire where it is not (*Hasnain & Pierskalla, 2012*).

Much of Kenya's public service, from policy advisory roles to complex regulatory functions, does not lend itself to simple output counts. Job evaluation, sector by sector, must therefore precede any wholesale shift to productivity-linked pay, exactly the sequencing failure that weakened Ghana's Single Spine reform (*Gariba, 2026*).

2) Equity must not be sacrificed for efficiency

SRC's constitutional mandate under Article 230 requires that remuneration be set with regard, not only to fiscal sustainability, but also to the recognized principle of the ratio between the highest and lowest paid public officers.

This is historically a point of concern in Kenya, where the wage compression ratio has, at times stood as high as 98 to 1 against a recommended benchmark closer to 20 to 1 (*Yagan, 2014*).

A productivity agenda that widens this gap further, by rewarding already well-resourced cadres while leaving lower cadres behind on the promise of future gains, would recalibrate the wage bill in the wrong direction.

3) Reform fatigue is real

Kenya has launched Productivity and Performance Management initiatives before, from the Civil Service Reform Program of the 1990s to earlier iterations of performance contracting, with documented achievements alongside documented resistance, including sabotage of the evaluation process by some stakeholders (*Lubale, n.d.*).

Sustained political will, transparent reporting, and consistent application across the political cycle, not just at the point of a high-profile national conference, will determine whether the 2026 resolutions become durable practice or another entry in the long list of reforms that were resolved but not sustained.

CONCLUSION

Recalibrating Kenya's public wage bill for sustainable national transformation is not a call to pay public servants less. It is a call to make sure that what they are paid is earned, measured, and sustainable.

The evidence from Kenya's own fiscal data, from the theoretical literature on performance-related pay, and from the comparative experience of Ghana, Rwanda, and South Africa all converge on the same conclusion: Wage bills that grow faster than productivity are not merely expensive; they are unsustainable by definition, regardless of how justified any single pay award may feel in isolation.

Kaizen offers Kenya an accessible, homegrown starting point. Performance and Productivity Contracting offers the institutional architecture.

SRC's fourth review cycle and its new regulatory powers offer the enforcement mechanism.

As a Commissioner, I believe the professional voices gathered around this journal's theme have a particular responsibility here: to keep asking, cycle after cycle, not only what the public service is paid, but what it has produced, so that the next conversation about the wage bill is no longer a conversation about crisis, but a conversation about the dividends of a public service that has learned, deliberately and measurably, to reward what it produces.

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The Strategic Role of Professional Institutions

in Advancing Regional Integration, Responsible Leadership & Sustainable Development

> "Protecting households from financial shocks; supporting universal health financing; strengthening disaster preparedness; promoting agricultural resilience; and enhancing financial inclusion."



By Peter Kagia
Strategic Advisor

Introduction

The twenty-first century has introduced unprecedented shifts in societal governance, corporate operations, and economic competition. Across the East African Community (EAC), digital transformation, regional integration, demographic shifts, climate change, and evolving geopolitical dynamics are redefining the expectations placed upon professionals and professional institutions. Technical proficiency, while remaining fundamental, is no longer sufficient. Contemporary professionals are expected to provide ethical leadership, influence public policy, guide institutional reform, and champion innovation that serves the broader public interest.

The theme of the **APSEA 8th Edition Magazine—"Recalibrating Professional Voices in Kenya's Social, Economic, and Political Transformation"—**invites reflection on the role of professional expertise in shaping national development. However, Kenya's transformation cannot be viewed in isolation. As the largest economy in the EAC and a regional hub for finance, education, technology, and professional services, Kenya's professional institutions increasingly influence regional standards and integration. Consequently, recalibrating professional voices is not merely a national imperative; it constitutes a broader East African agenda.

This article contends that professional bodies must evolve from regulators of competence into architects of transformation. By fostering ethical leadership, evidence-based policymaking, digital capability, and regional collaboration, these institutions can drive sustainable development and enhance public trust across East Africa.

The Changing Context of Professional Practice in East Africa

The East African region is undergoing a profound transformation. The implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the ongoing strengthening of the East African Community, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and national development blueprints—such as Kenya Vision 2030, Uganda Vision 2040, Tanzania Development Vision 2050, and Rwanda Vision 2050—collectively demand a new generation of professionals.

Several trends are redefining professional practice: digital transformation and artificial intelligence; climate change and sustainability; increasing public demand for accountability; cross-border trade and labour mobility; cybersecurity and digital trust; and financial inclusion alongside inclusive economic growth. These trends necessitate professionals who are technically proficient, ethically grounded, digitally literate, and regionally oriented.

From Professional Qualification to Professional Influence

Historically, professional bodies focused primarily on certification, examinations, and disciplinary oversight. While these functions remain essential, they are no longer sufficient to meet contemporary societal expectations.

- Professional institutions must now: generate evidence through research; shape national and regional policy; promote ethical leadership; champion innovation; build public confidence; develop future-ready professionals; and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Professional voices should, therefore, influence not only organisational performance but also national development priorities.

Research as the Foundation of Professional Leadership

Research provides professionals with the evidence required to address complex societal challenges. Decisions regarding healthcare, infrastructure, insurance, education, taxation, and governance should increasingly be informed by rigorous research rather than intuition or precedent.

Professional organizations should establish research centers, disseminate policy briefs, and collaborate with academic institutions to ensure that professional practices evolve in alignment with shifting societal demands. A research-driven profession possesses a superior capacity to anticipate emerging risks, evaluate nascent technologies, and contribute to sustainable public policy.

Artificial Intelligence: Recalibrating Professional Practice

Artificial Intelligence is fundamentally transforming every profession represented within APSEA.

Legal practitioners employ AI-assisted research; accountants utilize intelligent auditing systems; engineers leverage predictive maintenance; educators implement adaptive learning platforms; healthcare professionals adopt AI-assisted diagnostics; and insurers increasingly utilize predictive analytics and digital underwriting.





The prevailing inquiry is no longer whether AI will influence professional practice, but rather how professionals will direct its responsible adoption.

Consequently, professional institutions should: develop ethical AI guidelines; establish standards for responsible AI usage; promote digital literacy; encourage innovation while maintaining public trust; and advocate for human-centric AI, ensuring that technology enhances rather than replaces professional judgment.

Insurance as a Case Study in Professional Transformation

The insurance profession demonstrates how professional leadership can drive economic and social transformation. Insurance contributes to national development through:

Economic Transformation:

- Mobilizing long-term savings; supporting infrastructure investment; facilitating entrepreneurship; enhancing business resilience; and financing innovation.

Social Transformation:

- Protecting households from financial shocks; supporting universal health financing; strengthening disaster preparedness; promoting agricultural resilience; and enhancing financial inclusion.

Political and Institutional Transformation:

- Promoting governance; strengthening accountability; encouraging transparency; supporting regulatory compliance; and building public confidence in institutions.

Professional insurance institutions, therefore, serve not only their members but society as a whole.

Regional Professional Collaboration

- East Africa's competitiveness is contingent upon robust collaboration among professional institutions. Regional cooperation should focus on: mutual recognition of professional qualifications; harmonized professional standards; joint research initiatives; cross-border continuing professional development; regional centers of excellence; and collaborative responses to emerging risks. Institutions such as the Insurance Institute of Kenya, the Insurance Training College Uganda, professional accounting bodies, engineering associations, legal societies, and healthcare councils play a critical role in shaping a unified regional professional identity.

A Framework for Recalibrating Professional Voices

Professional transformation requires an integrated approach that synthesizes competence, ethics, innovation, and societal impact.

This framework acknowledges that technical excellence alone is insufficient.

Sustainable transformation depends on professionals who integrate expertise with integrity, innovation, and public purpose.

Strategic Recommendations

To realize this vision, several strategic actions are required:

Governments:

- Strengthen partnerships with professional bodies in policy formulation; support research and innovation; invest in digital infrastructure; and promote regional regulatory harmonization.

Professional Bodies should expand their mandate beyond mere certification to spearhead the ethical adoption of AI



and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. They should develop regional professional standards while investing in applied research and thought leadership. **Universities** ought to integrate digital transformation, AI, and ethics into professional curricula, while simultaneously fortifying university-industry partnerships and incentivizing multidisciplinary research.

The private sector should facilitate professional development initiatives and invest in innovation ecosystems, collaborating with professional institutions to enhance workforce readiness. **Development partners are** encouraged to support regional professional mobility and finance research initiatives addressing African development challenges, thereby promoting knowledge exchange across East Africa.

In conclusion**,** the future trajectory of East Africa will be determined not only by governmental policies and market dynamics but also by the caliber of its professional leadership. Consequently, professional institutions must recalibrate their discourse to align with the exigencies of an increasingly interconnected, digital, and knowledge-driven society.

The forthcoming generation of professional leadership must be characterized by evidence-based decision-making, ethical governance, technological proficiency, and regional synergy. By adhering to these principles, professionals will transcend mere adaptation to change and instead function as catalysts for transformation.

Kenya has historically played a pivotal role in advancing professional excellence within the region. The current opportunity lies in leveraging that leadership to cultivate a more robust East African professional ecosystem that fosters innovation, trust, economic competitiveness, and inclusive development. Ultimately, the recalibration of professional voices extends beyond the enhancement of professions; it is fundamental to strengthening societal structures, bolstering public confidence, and forging a prosperous, resilient, and integrated East Africa.



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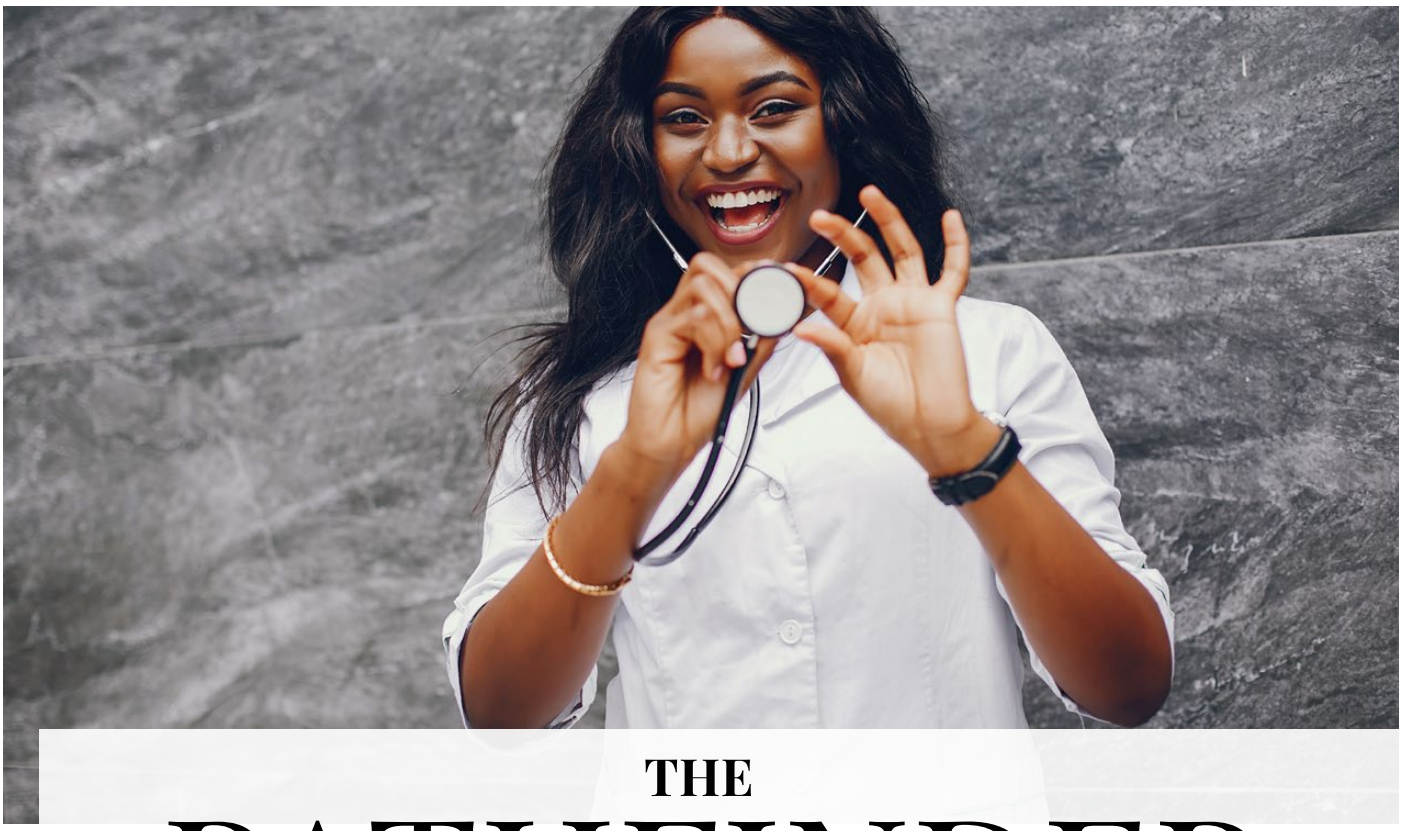
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THE PATHFINDER

Why Every Healthcare Worker Must Think Beyond Today's Shift



By Samwel Otieno Ondiek
Health Systems Perspective

> **"Public health professionals identify preventive strategies that reduce disease burden before patients reach hospitals."**

Healthcare systems across the world face unprecedented challenges. Rising patient expectations, demographic transitions, workforce shortages, emerging diseases, constrained financing, digital transformation, and increasing demands for quality and patient safety require more than operational excellence—they demand strategic thinking at every level of the health system.

In this environment, healthcare workers must become more than skilled practitioners; they must become **pathfinders**.

A pathfinder is not simply someone who walks a path. A pathfinder is someone who finds the path.

The distinction is important. Walking the path represents the essential daily work of healthcare—treating patients, managing emergencies, coordinating services, maintaining equipment, administering systems, documenting care, and ensuring continuity of operations. Every day, millions of healthcare professionals perform these responsibilities with remarkable dedication, often under significant resource constraints.

Yet health systems cannot rely solely on the ability to respond to today's demands. Sustainable improvement depends on the capacity to anticipate tomorrow's challenges.

The greatest risk to any health system is not a lack of commitment among its workforce. Rather, it is becoming so consumed by immediate operational pressures that

there is little opportunity to reflect, innovate, and redesign the systems that delivers healthcare. The urgent inevitably competes with—and often overwhelms—the important.

For this reason, every healthcare worker has two complementary responsibilities. The first is to deliver today's work safely, efficiently, ethically, and compassionately. The second is to contribute to shaping the future of the health system.

This responsibility extends far beyond executive leadership.

Clinicians improve care by critiquing established practice and identifying better clinical pathways. Nurses strengthen patient outcomes through innovations in care delivery and patient safety. Health administrators enhance efficiency by redesigning processes, improving governance, and reducing waste. Public health professionals identify preventive strategies that reduce disease burden before patients reach hospitals. Biomedical engineers, pharmacists, laboratory scientists, health information professionals, finance officers, and support staff each possess unique perspectives capable of improving system performance.

Innovation is therefore not the responsibility of a select few. It is the collective responsibility of the entire healthcare workforce.

The world's strongest health systems share a common characteristic: they are learning systems. They routinely evaluate performance, encourage innovation, embrace evidence, learn from failure, and continuously adapt to changing circumstances. Such organizations recognize that maintaining the status quo is rarely sufficient in a rapidly evolving healthcare environment.

This requires what may be described as a **strategic pause**—a deliberate moment to step back from daily operations and ask fundamental questions:

- Where is our health system heading?
- Which processes no longer serve patients effectively?
- What risks are emerging on the horizon?
- Which innovations should we adopt?
- What capabilities must our workforce develop?
- How can we improve quality, equity, efficiency, and patient experience simultaneously?

- These questions invite us to look beyond day-to-day operations and reflect on the future of healthcare. They challenge us to consider the direction in which our health system is evolving, identify processes that no longer serve patients effectively, and anticipate emerging risks that could shape health outcomes in the years ahead. They also encourage us to explore the innovations that should be embraced, the new skills and capabilities our workforce must develop, and the actions required to improve quality, equity, efficiency, and patient experience simultaneously. Ultimately, they prompt a broader conversation about





how we can build a more resilient, responsive, and people-centered health system that is fit for the future.

However these questions should not be reserved for boards of management or senior executives. Health systems are transformed when frontline professionals are empowered to think strategically and contribute solutions informed by everyday experience.

Importantly, direction matters more than speed. A health system may become increasingly efficient at performing processes that no longer meet the needs of the populations it serves. Sustainable progress requires clarity of purpose, alignment of strategy, and a culture of continuous improvement.

The future of healthcare will not be determined solely by technological advances, increased funding, or new infrastructure. It will be shaped by healthcare workers who combine clinical excellence with systems thinking; who not only respond to problems but anticipate them; who not only maintain services but continually improve them.

In every hospital, clinic, community programme, and public health institution, we need professionals who periodically lift their eyes from the demands of the present to consider the possibilities of the future. Healthcare needs pathfinders. Professionals who do more than walk the path. Professionals who help find it.

Author's Reflection

Every healthcare worker helps keep the health system running. Equally important, every healthcare worker has the potential to influence where that system is going. The challenge before us is to balance operational excellence with strategic foresight, ensuring that while we continue to serve today's patients with compassion, we also build stronger, more resilient, and more patient-centred health systems for generations to come.

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THE FLYING DOCTORS' SOCIETY OF AFRICA

Five decades of life-saving medical outreach and fistula treatment across East Africa

The Flying Doctors Society of Africa (FDSA), established in 1971, is a leading fundraising organization committed to expanding medical outreach services across East Africa. Our mission is to positively impact communities in Africa by providing access to medical outreach services, with a vision of spreading medical outreach across the continent. Guided by the core values of Integrity, Dedication, and Trust, FDSA has grown into a reputable and impactful organization, recognized for its role in supporting underserved communities through access to healthcare.

Our core mandate involves raising funds to support medical outreach and provide emergency medical services, including emergency evacuations to our members.

FDSA raises funds through the sale of membership subscriptions, donations, the sale of branded merchandise, and other fundraising activities and events. These efforts enable us to carry out life-saving missions in remote and medically underserved areas.

FDSA's services also include offering air and ground medical evacuation services across East Africa. Our membership options — ranging from daily, two-week, and two-month cover to annual subscriptions — allow individuals access to unlimited air evacuations within Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. Each member is also entitled to two ground ambulance evacuations within Kenya for life-threatening emergencies.

The Society coordinates the transportation of patients to accredited medical facilities in Nairobi or Tanzania. Importantly, any unutilized funds from memberships directly support our Female Genital Fistula (FGF) program, ensuring a sustainable impact.

One of our flagship programs is the Female Genital Fistula (FGF) programme, which aims to restore dignity to women suffering from fistula. This program provides free surgeries to women who cannot otherwise access care and equips local health teams in rural regions with the skills necessary to carry out such procedures independently in the future. We work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, County Departments of Health, UNFPA and other like-minded organizations to mobilize support and expand the reach of this initiative.

FDSA is governed by a competent and regularly elected Council composed of professionals from diverse fields. The Council provides free strategic oversight, while day-to-day operations are managed by a professional team with extensive experience in healthcare, non-profit governance, and community development.





The FISTULA PROGRAMME

Obstetric Fistula (or Female Genital Fistula – FGF) is a devastating condition that manifests itself as an abnormal communication between the urinary bladder and vagina, which leads to uncontrolled, continuous leakage of urine and/or fecal matter.

Reliable data on the prevalence and incidence of fistula is unavailable. In Kenya, it is estimated that fistula occurrence stands at 3 to 4 women for every 1,000 deliveries, an estimated 3,000 new cases each year (KDHS 2014).

A more recent report, the National Strategic Framework on Female Genital Fistula, Kenya, doubles that estimate to 3–4 fistula cases for every 1,000 deliveries. Fistula accounts for at least 6% of all maternal deaths and prenatal loss if left untreated, with an estimated 100,000 new cases annually.

Our desire to see a fistula-free country and all women contributing to economic growth has given FDSA the impetus to provide free fistula correction surgery to women throughout the country.

Over 20 years ago, we took a keen interest in providing access to fistula treatment as part of our surgical outreach intervention with the hope of seeing a fistula-free Kenya. This intervention strives to reduce the effects of an untreated fistula on women such as stigma, discrimination, isolation, poverty, psychological disorder, and family breakdown, enabling the women to contribute to the community's growth.

We raise awareness about fistula treatment through regularly scheduled medical camps across Kenya, where we offer free surgeries and build local medical capacity. This is achieved by training specialist gynaecologists, nurses, anaesthesiologists, and community health workers in collaboration with various partners.

Over the years, we have established strategic partnerships that have strengthened our impact. Currently, we are implementing an integrated fistula programme based on five key pillars:

1. ***Community awareness on fistula***
2. ***Fistula prevention***
3. ***Fistula treatment & post-surgical care***
4. ***Coordination of fistula initiatives***
5. ***Monitoring and evaluation.***

This comprehensive approach ensures sustained progress in addressing fistula and improving the quality of life for affected women.

The programme is being implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Health, M-PESA Foundation, UNFPA, Safaricom Foundation, Amref Health Africa, Royal Media Services, Kenyatta National Hospital, and several County Government hospitals.

Over the last 10 years, we have provided fistula treatment to over 14,000 women, offered physiotherapy to over 2,244 women with urine incontinence, and trained over 3,291 healthcare workers across 12 counties: Nairobi, Nyeri, Makueni, Kitui, Tharaka Nithi, Kiambu, Embu, Bungoma, Migori, Kisii, Kajiado and Kilifi — a number that is a drop in the ocean given the number of women living with fistula.

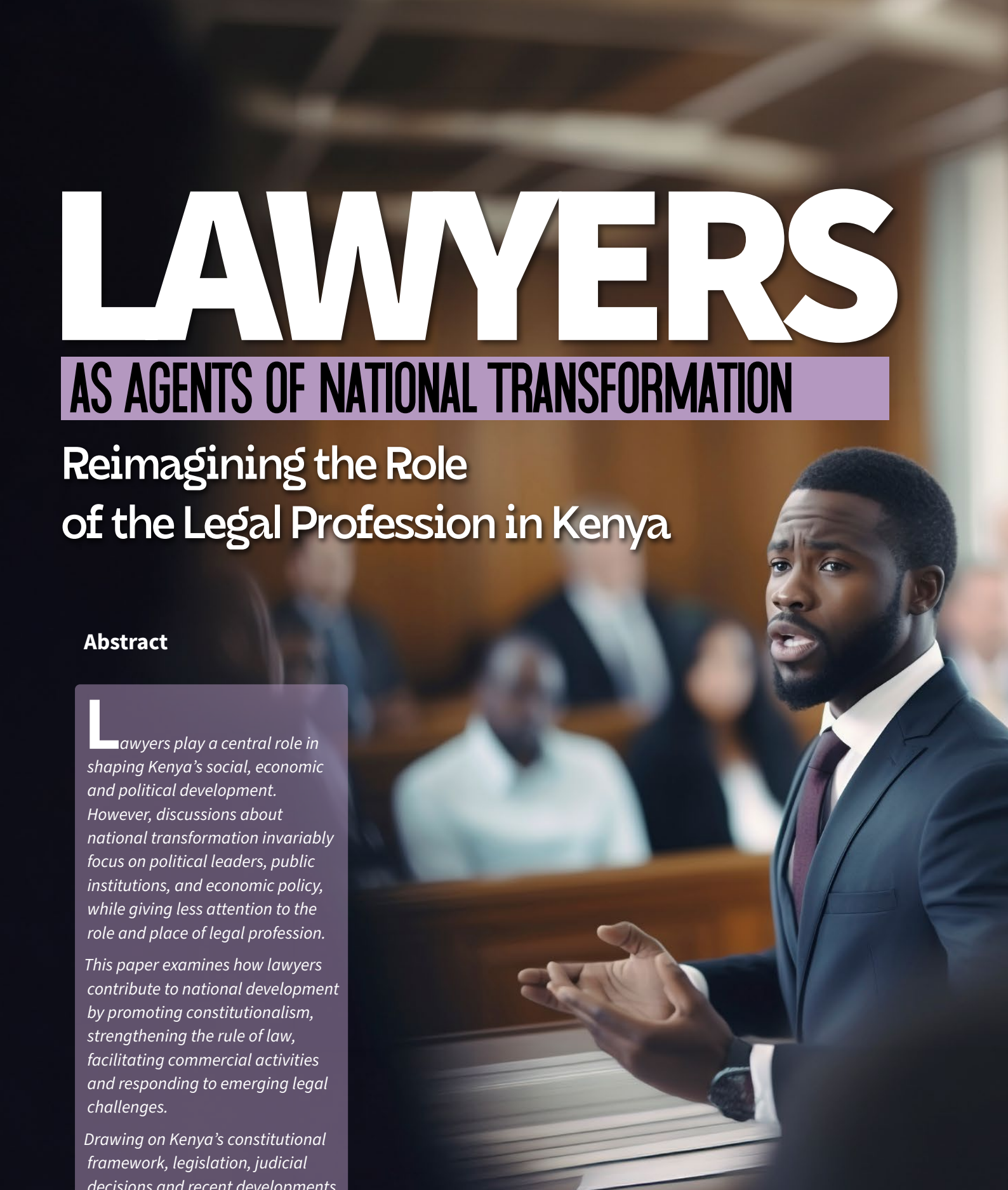
The nature of our programmes demands intensive coordination in the field, especially during medical camps. Our staff are required to spend several days on-site to ensure the seamless implementation of activities and the welfare of our beneficiaries.

"Over the last 10 years, we have provided fistula treatment to over 14,000 women and trained over 3,291 healthcare workers across 12 counties."

LAWYERS

AS AGENTS OF NATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Reimagining the Role of the Legal Profession in Kenya



Abstract

Lawyers play a central role in shaping Kenya's social, economic and political development. However, discussions about national transformation invariably focus on political leaders, public institutions, and economic policy, while giving less attention to the role and place of legal profession.

This paper examines how lawyers contribute to national development by promoting constitutionalism, strengthening the rule of law, facilitating commercial activities and responding to emerging legal challenges.

Drawing on Kenya's constitutional framework, legislation, judicial decisions and recent developments in legal practice, the paper argues that advocates occupy a unique position at the intersection of government, business and society.

Their work influences the exercise of public power, protects

"THEIR WORK SUPPORTS THE HARMONISATION OF LAWS GOVERNING TRADE, INVESTMENT, LABOUR AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES."



By Prof. Wyne Kenneth Mutuma
Legal Scholar

rights, creates legal certainty for investment and supports regional economic integration. The paper also considers the impact of artificial intelligence, data protection, cybersecurity and climate governance on the future of legal practice and argues that these developments require continuous professional renewal if the profession is to remain effective in the rapidly transformative world.

It concludes that Kenya's long-term social, economic and political progress depends not only on sound laws and effective institutions but also on a legal profession that is competent, ethical and committed to serving the public interest.

Keywords: *Lawyers, Legal profession, National development, Rule of law, Constitutionalism, Economic development, Commercial law, Arbitration, Artificial intelligence, Data protection.*

1. Introduction

The legal profession occupies a different place in Kenya today than it did before the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. The Constitution reorganised the State around devolution, pronounced a comprehensive Bill of Rights and provided for a judiciary charged with protecting rights and fundamental freedoms of the people. In doing so, it expanded both the opportunities and the responsibilities of lawyers across public and private practice.

Lawyers occupy a position in Kenya's development that few other professions share. They perform many functions including advising the organs of government on the legality of their own conduct, representing citizens against the State in matters appertaining to their rights, structuring the commercial transactions that move capital into and around the country and sitting in the legislature and on public boards where policy is made, among other key responsibilities. The combination of private practice and public duty uniquely positions lawyers in a critical position in advancing national transformation.

The scale of the profession has grown alongside its reach. The Law Society of Kenya, established under the Law Society of Kenya Act 2014, now counts more than seventeen thousand practising advocates among its membership, a number that has multiplied several times over the years. The Law Society of Kenya Act requires the members to uphold the Constitution, advance the rule of law and the administration of justice, and protect the public interest in the delivery of legal services, obligations that sit above the private interests of any individual advocate or client. This statutory provision serves as the anchor to the case for the role of lawyers in advancing national transformation.

The paper, at the outset, examines how lawyers strengthen constitutionalism and the rule of law through litigation that has tested the limits of executive and legislative power since the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. It then turns to the profession's contribution to economic growth, through commercial practice and the legal certainty that supports investment. It further looks at the emerging issues reshaping the profession, among them artificial intelligence, data protection, cybersecurity and the environmental, social and governance agenda, and sets out what the profession must do to remain useful to the country it serves. The conclusion draws these threads together and explains why lawyers will remain central to Kenya's development long after the present generation has retired from practice.

2. Lawyers and the Rule of Law in National Development

Kenya's Constitution places the rule of law among the national values and principles of governance that bind every state organ, state officer, public officer and person whenever any of them applies or interprets the Constitution, enacts, applies or interprets any law, or makes or implements public policy decisions. Given their primary training in the law, lawyers give life to this value through their day-to-day practice. The rule of law has been defined in the following terms:



[The rule of law] refers to a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.

The rule of law is the principle that all persons and institutions, including the State, are equally accountable under publicly known, fairly enforced and independently applied laws. Over the years, lawyers have been at the forefront of leading cases in which they publicly defended and advanced the rule of law, based on the Oath they took. The litigation record since 2010 illustrates the point, beginning with *Trusted Society of Human Rights Alliance v Attorney General,* where the High Court set aside the appointment of a chairperson of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission on the ground that serious and credible questions about his integrity had not been resolved before the appointment, holding that Chapter Six of the Constitution requires more of a state officer than the absence of a criminal conviction. The case, brought and argued by advocates acting for a non-governmental organisation, pushed public bodies across the country to take the integrity requirements in Chapter Six intently according to the requirements of the Constitution.

A decade later, lawyers were again at the centre of the country's most consequential constitutional dispute, the challenge to the Building Bridges Initiative, in which the High Court held that an implied basic structure exists within the Constitution and that some of its provisions cannot be altered through the ordinary amendment procedure in Chapter Sixteen, a position the Court of Appeal largely upheld before the Supreme Court, on further appeal, held that the basic structure doctrine as formulated by the lower courts had no place in a Constitution that already provides its own tiered and detailed amendment procedure. Whichever side of that disagreement one finds persuasive, the case shows lawyers doing what the profession exists to do at its most demanding, testing the outer limits of public power through constitutional safeguards.

The Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) litigation demonstrated that lawyers play a central role in advancing national transformation by safeguarding the Constitution and ensuring that political reform is carried out within the law. At a time when the country was debating far-reaching constitutional changes, lawyers brought public interest litigation seeking to compel the courts to determine whether the amendment process complied with the Constitution. Their advocacy affirmed that constitutional change must follow the procedures laid down in the Constitution and that no individual or office is above the law. In doing so, lawyers reinforced the rule of law, protected constitutional democracy and ensured that national transformation remained anchored in legality rather than political expediency.

The BBI litigation also showed that lawyers contribute to national transformation by strengthening public understanding of constitutional governance. Through court proceedings, legal scholarship, public commentary and civic engagement, they explained the constitutional issues before the courts in language that ordinary citizens could

understand. This encouraged meaningful public participation and deepened appreciation of constitutional values such as accountability, public participation and constitutional supremacy. The case therefore demonstrated that lawyers do more than represent clients in court. They help shape public debate, preserve constitutional order and guide the country's development through fidelity to the Constitution and the rule of law.

Lawyers contribute to national transformation both by preventing unlawful government action and by challenging it where prevention fails. Within government, advocates serving in the Office of the Attorney General and the legal departments of ministries, county governments and state corporations advise public bodies on whether proposed policies, legislation and administrative decisions comply with the Constitution and the law. This advisory role helps ensure that public power is exercised within legal limits before decisions are implemented and public resources committed. By identifying legal risks at an early stage, government lawyers promote constitutional governance, strengthen accountability and reduce the likelihood of unlawful state action.

The contribution of lawyers extends beyond government. Advocates in private practice, civil society and public interest organisations hold public authorities accountable by invoking Articles 22 and 258 of the Constitution to challenge unconstitutional conduct before the courts. The Building Bridges Initiative litigation illustrates this role. Through sustained legal advocacy, lawyers, although representing both sides of the argument, questioned the constitutionality of the amendment process and secured judicial clarification on the limits of presidential power, the scope of the popular initiative process and the centrality of public participation in constitutional amendment. The resulting decisions reinforced constitutional supremacy and the rule of law while enriching Kenya's constitutional jurisprudence. They also demonstrated that lawyers shape the legal standards that guide public decision-making and safeguard the constitutional values upon which national transformation depends.

The reform of the Judiciary after 2010 was also substantially a lawyers' project. Sitting judges and magistrates were vetted for suitability to continue in office under the Vetting of Judges and Magistrates Act 2011, enacted to give effect to section 23 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, and several judicial officers were found unfit to continue in office as a result. The Judiciary has advanced national transformation by giving practical effect to Article 159(2)(c) of the Constitution, which requires courts to promote alternative forms of dispute resolution, including reconciliation, mediation, arbitration and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. Guided by this constitutional provision, the Judiciary introduced court annexed mediation to improve access to justice, reduce case backlogs and encourage the timely resolution of disputes. Since its introduction, the programme has expanded from its initial pilot phase to courts across the country, providing litigants with an efficient and less adversarial means of resolving disputes while allowing the courts to focus their resources on matters that require judicial determination.

The contribution of lawyers to national transformation extends far beyond the traditional role of representing clients in court. Lawyers influence how public power is exercised, how constitutional values are protected and how legal institutions respond to the needs of society. Whether advising government on the



legality of proposed action, challenging unconstitutional conduct through public interest litigation, promoting alternative dispute resolution or developing legal rules that respond to emerging social and economic realities, lawyers shape the legal environment within which the State, businesses and citizens operate. Their work strengthens constitutional governance, promotes accountability and builds public confidence in the administration of justice. In this way, the legal profession does not merely respond to national transformation. It actively guides and sustains it through the continued development and faithful application of the law.

3. Lawyers as Drivers of Economic Development

Commercial legal practice provides the legal foundation for investment, finance and trade in Kenya. Advocates structure commercial transactions, advise investors and businesses, and support the movement of capital across the economy. Lawyers participate in the preparation and implementation of loan facilities, bond issuances, mergers, joint ventures and infrastructure projects. Their work includes drafting agreements, conducting due diligence, registering security interests and ensuring compliance with the applicable legal framework, all of which contribute to certainty in commercial transactions. Legal certainty is created through the consistent application of legal rules, the protection of property rights and the effective enforcement of contractual obligations. Lawyers contribute directly to these objectives through legal advice, transactional work and dispute resolution.

Kenya's commercial law has undergone significant reform over the past two decades to support economic growth, improve corporate governance and respond to the changing needs of commerce. Legal practitioners have contributed to the development and implementation of many of these reforms. The Companies Act 2015 replaced legislation modelled on a British statute from the 1940s with a framework closer to current international practice, and the Insolvency Act 2015, enacted alongside it, moved corporate insolvency away from automatic winding up toward administration procedures designed to rescue viable businesses before their assets are liquidated. Public procurement, which channels a substantial share of Kenya's annual budget into contracts with private firms, is governed by the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act 2015,





enacted to give effect to Article 227 of the Constitution, which requires procurement systems to be fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost effective. Lawyers advise both procuring entities and private participants on compliance with procurement law, the preparation of procurement documentation and the resolution of procurement disputes. Their work promotes transparency, accountability and confidence in the public procurement system.

The development of modern dispute resolution has strengthened Kenya's commercial environment by providing effective mechanisms for resolving domestic and international business disputes. Parliament established the Nairobi Centre for International Arbitration to provide a professionally administered forum for domestic and international arbitration and to strengthen Nairobi's position as a regional centre for commercial dispute resolution. Kenyan courts have supported that ambition by developing a body of jurisprudence that respects the finality of arbitral awards while preserving a narrow route of appeal. In *Nyutu Agrovet Limited v Airtel Networks Kenya Limited*, the Supreme Court held that a party may appeal to the Court of Appeal against a High Court decision setting aside an arbitral award, but only where the High Court has stepped outside the specific grounds set out in section 35 of the Arbitration Act 1995. The decision confirms the principle of finality in arbitration while recognising limited judicial supervision where the statutory grounds for intervention have not been properly applied. Arbitrators, most whom are composed of lawyers, contribute to the credibility and predictability of Kenya's dispute resolution system by promoting professionally administered arbitration and consistent application of arbitration law.

International financial institutions continue to identify legal and regulatory reform as an important element of Kenya's economic development strategy. The World Bank's most recent Kenya Economic Update found that the country's growth continues to be constrained less by a shortage of capital than by barriers to competition and to the entry of new firms into markets dominated by a small number of incumbents, and it identified procompetitive regulatory reform, much of which has to be designed and implemented as law, as central to converting Kenya's growth into more formal jobs. The African Development Bank's country analysis points in the same direction, noting that Kenya's shallow capital markets and fragile banking sector constrain the flow of long term financing the country needs for infrastructure and industry. Many of the reforms identified by the World Bank and the African Development Bank require legislation, regulatory measures and commercial implementation. Lawyers contribute to these reforms through legislative drafting, regulatory advice, transactional practice and dispute resolution, thereby supporting competition, investment and the development of capital markets.

Kenya's position in the East African Community adds a further layer to this work. The Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market, signed by the Heads of State on 20 November 2009 and in force from 1 July 2010, commits partner states to the free movement of goods, persons, services, capital and labour across the region, and Kenyan lawyers advise both government and private clients

on how domestic law must be brought into line with those commitments, from work permits and professional recognition to cross border banking and trade in services. The implementation of regional integration depends upon lawyers with expertise in both East African Community law and domestic legal systems. Their work supports the harmonisation of laws governing trade, investment, labour and professional services. Kenyan lawyers continue to make a significant contribution to the implementation and development of East African Community law through advisory work, dispute resolution and cross-border commercial practice.

The contribution of lawyers to national transformation extends beyond constitutional governance and the administration of justice. Sustainable economic growth depends upon a legal system that protects property rights, facilitates trade and investment, promotes fair competition and provides effective mechanisms for resolving commercial disputes. Lawyers support these objectives by advising businesses and public institutions, drafting commercial agreements, facilitating investment, promoting regulatory compliance and contributing to the development of laws that respond to changing economic and social needs. Through these functions, the legal profession provides the legal certainty and predictability that are essential to economic development.

The lawyer's contribution to economic transformation, however, extends beyond the practice of commercial law. It also includes reforming the law so that it addresses contemporary economic and social challenges and supports inclusive development. This broader understanding of the profession recognises that lawyers should participate in shaping legal and public policy, rather than simply applying existing rules. As one scholar aptly observes:



Against this background, what then should be the role of the lawyers in Africa? I believe that the lawyers in Africa have two major challenges.

These are the reform and modernization of the law, and the use of law to aid the development process. The present state of the law itself creates a need for imaginative lawyers. The legal system, as currently structured, was developed to serve communities divided on ethnic and racial grounds (Purdy 1984). The African lawyer must not only be competent to administer and operate the law as it now is, but must be equipped and willing to reform it.

There is need to adapt the law to meet present day needs and to unify its substantive provisions and its machinery to ensure that it serves the interests of all the people. There is further need to develop legal, administrative and political institutions to serve all the people. There is need to simplify systems of land law and its administration to ensure equitable access to land by all groups in society and provide security of tenure.

The second responsibility of a lawyer in Africa is, in my view, to help and participate in the development effort. To do this effectively he or she must understand the relationship between law, development and society.

He or she should have a view on the strategy for economic development and not regard himself or herself as a mere trespasser in other peoples' domains. Issues of development are not only the domain of the politicians, economists, public administration experts, industrialists, agriculturalists but are fields in which lawyers must

work.

4. Preparing the Legal Profession for the Future

Artificial intelligence is transforming legal practice in Kenya by influencing legal research, document review, case management and online dispute resolution. These developments are changing how legal services are delivered across the profession.

These developments require law firms and advocates to strengthen professional standards governing competence, supervision and the responsible use of technology. Professional competence requires advocates to verify the accuracy of all legal authorities and submissions, including material generated through artificial intelligence. The profession should continue to develop ethical and professional standards governing the appropriate use of these technologies.

Law firms should adopt clear internal policies governing the use of artificial intelligence, provide continuous professional training and establish verification procedures for AI-assisted work. These measures promote professional competence, protect client interests and strengthen confidence in legal services.

Kenya's data protection framework, established by the Data Protection Act 2019 to give effect to the constitutional right to privacy, requires organisations that collect and process personal data, including law firms, to register with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner and to handle client and case data lawfully, fairly and securely. The Data Protection Act applies to the handling of client information across legal practice, including electronic discovery, cloud storage and digital legal



services. Compliance therefore forms part of the ordinary professional responsibilities of every law firm and advocate. Data protection compliance should form part of routine legal practice across all areas of the profession. Every advocate should understand and apply the obligations governing the lawful collection, processing and protection of personal data.

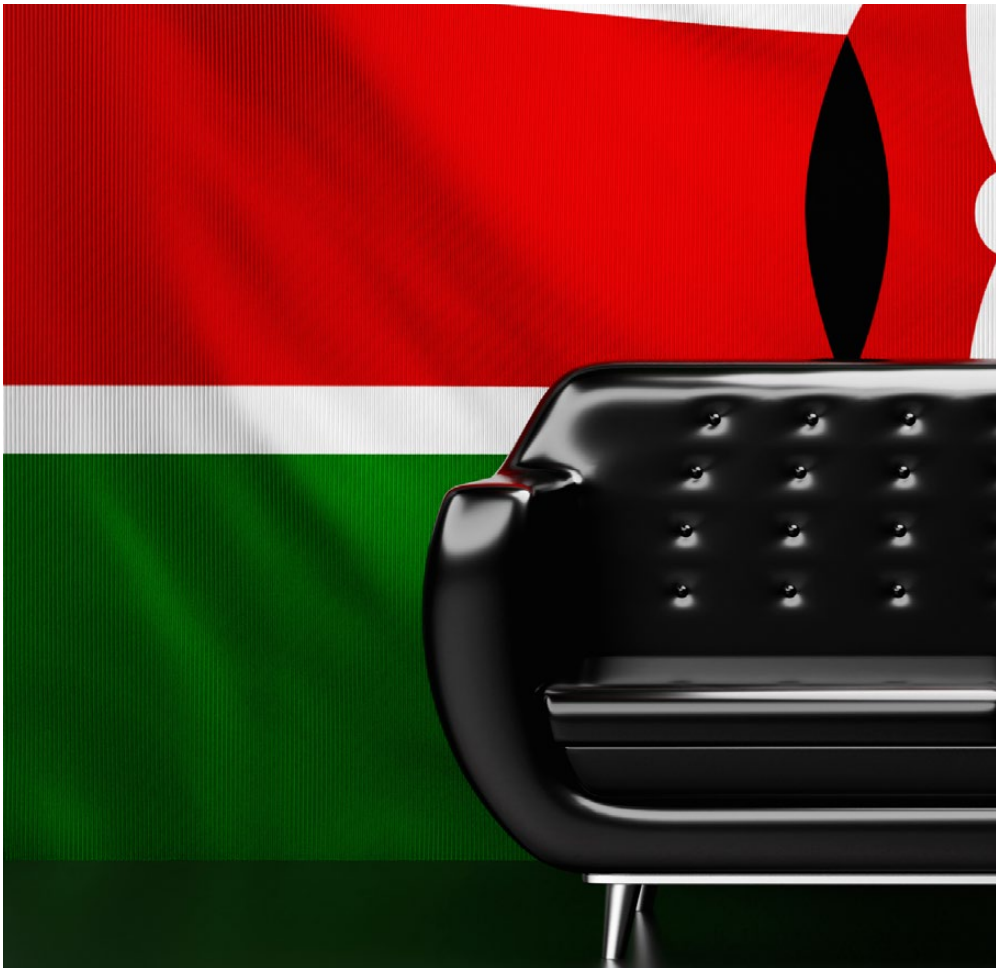
Cybersecurity regulation has developed alongside data protection, and the courts have recently narrowed its reach in ways lawyers need to track closely. The Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act 2018 was challenged from the moment it was enacted, and after the High Court upheld the impugned provisions in 2020, the Court of Appeal partially reversed that decision in March 2026, striking down the sections criminalising false publications and the publication of information likely to cause panic on the ground that they were drafted too broadly to survive scrutiny under the Constitution's limitation clause. The decision has significant implications for legal practice in areas involving digital communication, media, technology and public administration. Advocates advising clients on cybercrime law should interpret the legislation alongside the developing constitutional jurisprudence of the courts.

Climate change and the environmental, social and governance agenda are opening a further area of practice. The Climate Change Act 2016 created the National Climate Change Council and requires the national and county governments to mainstream climate considerations into planning, budgeting and implementation, and a 2023 amendment to the Act added a legal framework for carbon markets, requiring project proponents

to record the environmental, economic and social benefits of carbon trading projects through community development agreements. Lawyers contribute to the development of carbon markets by advising communities, project developers, investors and financial institutions on the legal, regulatory and contractual aspects of climate-related transactions. Environmental, social and governance obligations are becoming an increasingly important aspect of corporate legal practice as investors, lenders and regulators incorporate sustainability and governance considerations into commercial decision making.

None of this work can be done well without an education system that keeps pace with it. The Council of Legal Education, established under the Legal Education Act 2012, regulates and licenses every university and law school that trains lawyers in Kenya and administers the professional examinations that precede admission to the Roll of Advocates, giving it the authority to require that curricula address subjects such as data protection, technology and sustainability rather than leaving them as electives. Continuing professional development enables advocates to maintain professional competence and respond to developments in law, technology and legal practice throughout their careers. Legal education should provide continuous professional development from legal training through senior practice in order to maintain the knowledge, skills and ethical standards required of the profession.

The legal profession should adopt practical measures that strengthen professional competence and improve access to legal services. The

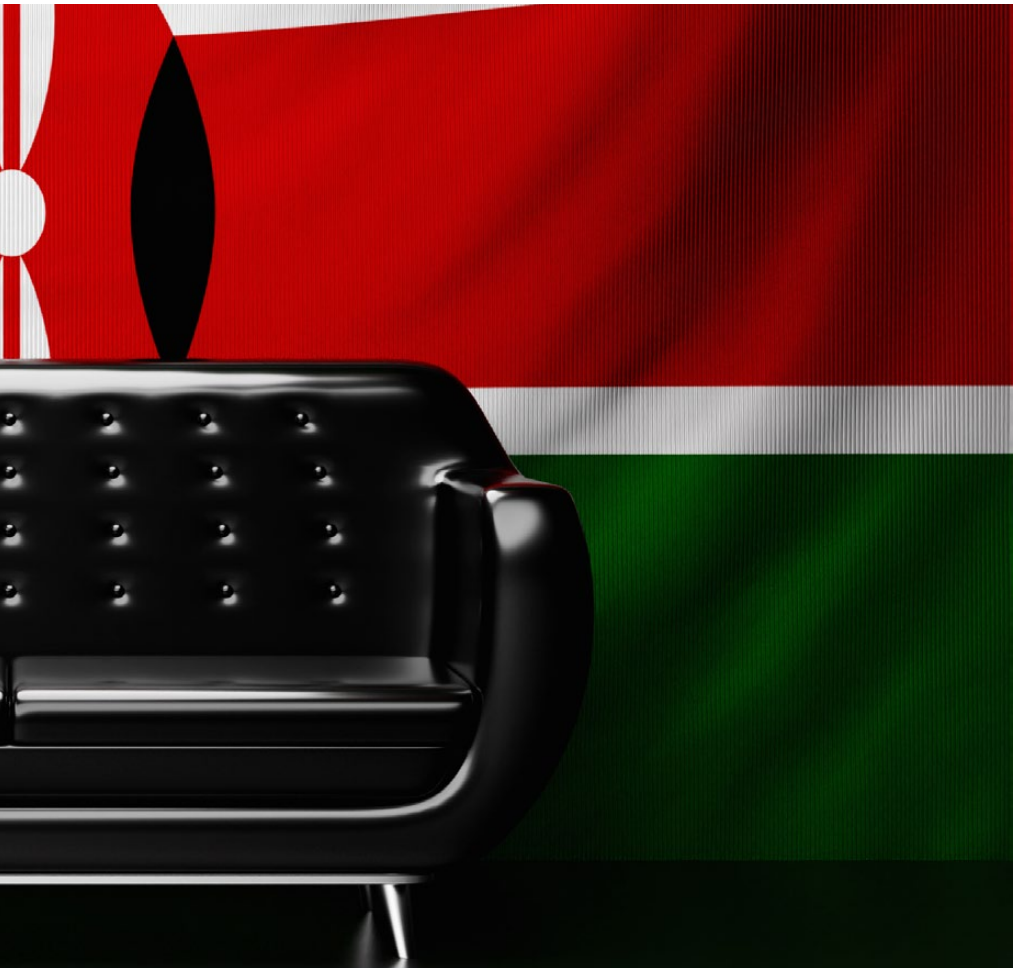


Council of Legal Education and the Law Society of Kenya should require structured practical training in legal technology and data protection as part of admission requirements and annual continuing professional development programmes. The National Legal Aid Service should receive adequate resources to expand technology-assisted legal services throughout the country. Greater use of digital platforms and online dispute resolution can improve access to legal assistance for individuals and communities that currently face barriers to legal representation. The adoption of technology within the legal profession should advance the constitutional commitment to access to justice by expanding the availability, affordability and quality of legal services throughout Kenya.

The developments discussed in this section demonstrate that the practice of law is expanding beyond its traditional boundaries. Competence in emerging areas such as artificial intelligence, data protection, cybersecurity and environmental, social and governance regulation is becoming an ordinary requirement of legal practice rather than a specialised area of interest. The ability of lawyers to understand these developments and advise clients effectively will increasingly influence the quality of legal services, access to justice and the continued relevance of the profession in a rapidly changing society.

5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that the legal profession occupies a central position in Kenya's constitutional order, public administration and economic development. Lawyers contribute to national transformation through constitutional governance, commercial practice, public service and the administration of justice. They strengthen constitutional governance through litigation and legal advice, support economic



development through commercial practice and dispute resolution, and continue to assume new responsibilities in areas such as artificial intelligence, data protection, cybersecurity and climate law. These developments require continuous professional learning and adaptation throughout legal practice. Since the adoption of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010, constitutional reform, economic growth and technological innovation have significantly expanded the responsibilities of the legal profession. Contemporary legal practice requires broader expertise, stronger professional competence and greater engagement with emerging areas of law.

Achieving these professional standards requires sustained commitment from legal institutions and individual advocates. The Council of Legal Education should continue to review legal education to reflect developments in legal practice, while the Law Society of Kenya should strengthen continuing professional development as an important mechanism for maintaining professional competence. Individual advocates should equally uphold the public interest obligations established by law and professional standards. The continued development of constitutional jurisprudence will depend upon effective legal representation, principled judicial decision-making and sustained commitment to the rule of law by all participants in the justice system.

Kenya's social, economic and political development will continue to be influenced by the quality of legal advice, commercial practice, constitutional advocacy and professional leadership provided by the legal profession. The contribution of the legal profession extends across every sector that depends upon lawful governance, effective regulation and legal certainty. Its work supports public administration, commerce, investment and the protection of constitutional rights, making it an essential component of national development. The continued development of Kenya's constitutional democracy and economy will depend in part on a legal profession that remains competent, ethical, innovative and committed to the public interest.

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+ 18 more (see online edition)

Kenya's Professionals Must Lead the Country Beyond VISION 2030



By Prof. Nicholas Letting'
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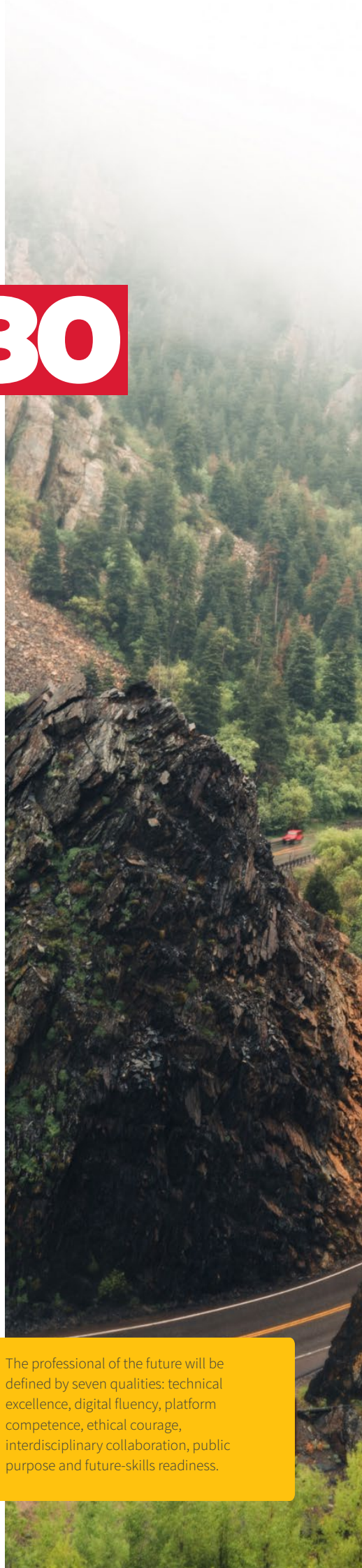
The next national transformation will demand competence, conscience, digital courage and public purpose.

Kenya's Vision 2030 gave the country a bold development compass. It challenged the nation to think long term, invest in infrastructure, strengthen institutions, deepen human development and pursue a better quality of life for all. But as the country approaches that milestone, the question is shifting: are Kenya's professionals ready not only to support national plans, but to shape the next national imagination?

The Constitution and Vision 2030 established a national promise of economic dynamism, social inclusion and accountable governance. These called on professionals to help build a country that is globally competitive, prosperous and anchored in dignity. Beyond 2030, the challenge is not whether Kenya can imagine transformation. It is whether its professionals are prepared to lead it with integrity, innovation and public purpose.

Professionals at the Centre of Kenya's Journey

Professionals have stood at the centre of Kenya's vision and blueprint, constitutional and development journey. Lawyers and judges have interpreted and defended the Constitution. Accountants, auditors,



The professional of the future will be defined by seven qualities: technical excellence, digital fluency, platform competence, ethical courage, interdisciplinary collaboration, public purpose and future-skills readiness.

Professional Voices Beyond 2030: The next national transformation will demand competence, conscience, digital courage and public purpose



finance officers and economists have supported public finance management, county budgeting and fiscal accountability. Engineers, planners, architects and surveyors have turned devolution into roads, water systems, housing and local infrastructure.

Doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers and public administrators have carried the promise of rights and services into communities. Journalists, communicators and civil society professionals have amplified public participation and kept citizens informed.

That legacy now imposes a deeper responsibility. The unfinished work of the constitutional journey must guide every profession. Professional standards must advance the national values in Article 10. Institutions must strengthen devolution and public participation. Decisions must protect rights, dignity and equity. Above all, professionals must help rebuild trust in public institutions.

Kenya will not be transformed by expertise alone. It will be transformed by expertise that is answerable, power that is restrained, institutions that are transparent and professionals who understand that competence without accountability is not excellence; it is a risk to the republic.

The Forces Redefining Professional Work

No profession will remain untouched by technology, climate change, demographic pressure, global competition or the public demand for accountability. Accountants, lawyers, engineers, doctors, economists, teachers, planners, journalists, public servants, technologists and entrepreneurs are all facing the same disruption.

First, digital transformation is changing how professional value is created. Artificial intelligence, data analytics, blockchain, automation, cloud platforms and digital public infrastructure are already reshaping audit, legal research, medical diagnosis, engineering design, education delivery, tax administration, public finance, procurement and

citizen services.

Second, regulation is entering a new era. As Kenya builds policy and legal frameworks for artificial intelligence, data protection, cybersecurity and digital markets, professionals must combine innovation with ethics. The future professional will not only ask, "Can this be done?" but also, "Should it be done, and who is protected when it is done?"

Third, the economy is shifting towards value chains, MSMEs, housing, healthcare, agriculture, the creative economy and the digital superhighway. These priorities demand professionals who can work across disciplines, counties and borders. The accountant must understand technology and sustainability; the lawyer, innovation; the engineer, community impact; the educator, lifelong learning; and the public officer, digital service delivery.

The Rise of the Platform Professional

Beyond Vision 2030, professionals will not serve only from offices, hospitals, courtrooms, classrooms or boardrooms. They will increasingly serve through platforms. In healthcare, telemedicine, electronic health records, digital diagnostics, remote monitoring and health data platforms will expand access to care. In education and training, learning management systems, virtual classrooms, simulations and micro-credentials will reshape delivery. In finance, audit and public accountability, cloud systems, digital identity, e-procurement, data analytics and blockchain-enabled assurance will become central tools.

The same shift will reshape law, engineering, architecture, agriculture, media and public administration. Legal services will rely more on digital dispute resolution, legal technology and online registries. Engineers and architects will use digital twins, building information modelling, geospatial platforms and smart infrastructure systems. Agricultural experts will advise farmers through mobile platforms, satellite data and climate-smart decision tools. Journalists and communicators will work through multimedia, data journalism and trusted digital channels. Public servants will deliver services through citizen portals, interoperable databases and real-time dashboards.

Platforms will also redefine professional mobility. A Kenyan professional will increasingly serve clients, institutions and communities beyond one town, one county or even one country. Regional recognition of qualifications, digital credentials and mutual trust frameworks will make it easier to collaborate and compete across East Africa, Africa and the wider world. The future belongs to professionals who are locally grounded, regionally mobile and globally credible.

The Professional of the Future

The professional of the future in Kenya will be defined by seven qualities.

The first is technical excellence. Credentials will still matter, but they will not be enough. Kenya will reward professionals who keep learning, adapting and applying knowledge to real problems.

The second is digital fluency. Every profession must become comfortable with data, platforms, automation and the responsible use of AI. Digital tools will not replace all professionals, but professionals who use them wisely will outpace those who refuse to evolve.

The third is platform competence. Future professionals must deliver trusted services through digital platforms while protecting privacy, cybersecurity, quality, confidentiality and human dignity. Telemedicine without ethics can become unsafe medicine. Digital finance without assurance can become digital fraud. Online learning without quality can become shallow certification.



"Kenya's next chapter will not be written by technology alone. It will be written by people of competence and conscience who use technology, policy, capital and knowledge to serve society."

The fourth is ethical courage. In an era of complex technology and public mistrust, integrity will be the most valuable professional currency. Kenya's future will depend on professionals who can say no to manipulation, shortcuts, corruption, unsafe systems and poor governance.

The fifth is interdisciplinary collaboration. The hardest problems of the future—climate resilience, public debt, health access, food security, urbanisation, youth employment and regional competitiveness—will not be solved from professional silos. They will require teams that combine law, finance, science, technology, policy, design and community knowledge.

The sixth is public purpose. A profession is not merely a way to earn income. It is a public trust. Beyond Vision 2030, Kenya will need professionals who measure success not only by fees, titles and promotions, but by the lives improved, institutions strengthened and opportunities created.

The seventh is future-skills readiness. The professional of the future will need artificial intelligence literacy, data interpretation, cybersecurity awareness, sustainability reporting, climate-risk thinking, communication across cultures, emotional intelligence, design thinking, innovation management, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. These skills will sit alongside the traditional foundations of law, medicine, accounting, engineering, education, planning, public administration and other disciplines.

What Must Change

Preparing for this future requires deliberate reform. Professional bodies must modernise curricula, licensing, continuing professional development and disciplinary systems. Universities and training institutions must move closer to industry, technology and society. Employers must invest in reskilling rather than wait for disruption. Government must create predictable rules that protect the public while enabling innovation. Young professionals must be invited into leadership earlier, because the future cannot be designed without those who will live in it longest.

We must also rethink professional success in Kenya. A successful profession is not one that only protects its members. It is one that expands access, builds trust, lowers barriers, mentors the next generation and contributes to national competitiveness. In that sense, every professional body must become a development institution.

A Beyond-2030 Agenda for the Professions

Every profession in Kenya should adopt a beyond-2030 agenda: digital competence, platform readiness, ethical leadership, sustainability, evidence-based practice, regional mobility, global credibility and service to the citizen. Professional bodies should develop future-skills roadmaps, digital practice standards and pathways for cross-border recognition. Institutions should reward innovation and integrity. Senior professionals should mentor deliberately. Young professionals should prepare boldly.

Kenya's next chapter will not be written by technology alone. It will be written by people of competence and conscience who use technology, policy, capital and knowledge to serve society. If professionals embrace that duty, they will do more than respond to the future. They will help design it.





BEYOND THE BLACKTOP

An eye-ball to eye-ball conversation with KeNHA Board Chairman

The development of Kenya's highway network entails building infrastructure that can unlock economic opportunity, connect communities, facilitate trade, improve road safety and withstand the growing pressures of urbanisation and climate change.

As the institution responsible for the management, development, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the national trunk-road network, the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) sits at the centre of this transformation. Guiding the Authority at Board level is Ms. Winfrida Ngumi, an accomplished business leader whose professional experience spans architecture, construction, manufacturing, corporate governance and industry leadership. She brings to the Board more than two decades of experience in the building, construction and manufacturing sectors, alongside a strong interest in standards, quality, innovation and institutional governance.

In a candid conversation with By Mary Njenga, a writer stationed at the KeNHA Corporate Communication Department, Ms. Ngumi reflects on KeNHA's evolving mandate, the future of highway development, road safety, infrastructure financing, climate resilience, accountability and the challenges facing Kenya's road sector.

Question: How has your professional journey shaped your leadership as Chairman of the KeNHA Board, and what perspective do you bring to the Authority's mandate?

Response: My professional journey has given me a strong appreciation of the importance of infrastructure to economic development and the role that sound governance, quality standards, innovation and accountability play in delivering sustainable results.

My background in architecture, construction and manufacturing has also given me an appreciation of the entire infrastructure value chain from conceptualisation and design to construction, quality assurance, maintenance and eventual use by the public. As the KeNHA Board Chairman, my responsibility is to provide strategic oversight that ensures the Authority remains firmly focused on its mandate, and support a culture of accountability, efficiency and excellence.

The Authority is conscious that the roads we develop are not simply physical assets but enablers of trade, mobility, access to essential services and national development. Our responsibility, therefore, is to ensure that the we deliver infrastructure that is safe, resilient, sustainable and offers value to the Kenyan taxpayer.

Question: Many Kenyans associate KeNHA with an extensive pipeline of road projects. What does it take for a major highway to be considered complete?

Response: A year or so ago, concerns about incomplete highway projects would have been understandable because a number of projects had stalled, largely due to delayed payments to contractors. The road sector had accumulated substantial pending bills, which affected implementation.

However, securitisation has significantly eased these financial pressures. The Authority has made considerable progress in settling outstanding obligations, with payments relating to more recent works undergoing the necessary verification processes. This has helped restore momentum across projects and reduced the risk of prolonged delays.

Importantly, a road is only considered complete when it achieves the approved technical specifications and has functional drainage, appropriate road furniture, safety features and all necessary ancillary works. It must also undergo the required quality inspections, with proper signage and road markings in place, before it is formally certified and handed over.

Question: Road safety remains a major national concern, with crashes continuing to claim lives on our highways. What is KeNHA doing differently to make the road network safer?

Response: Road safety is a shared responsibility. It involves the road user, the condition of vehicles, enforcement, and the infrastructure itself. Analysis of highway crashes indicates that human error and vehicle condition account for a significant proportion of accidents, while a smaller proportion is directly attributable to the physical characteristics of the road.

This understanding has informed KeNHA's approach. We have placed greater emphasis on road safety at the design stage and are undertaking corrective interventions in locations that have recorded higher incidences of crashes.

The redesign and reconstruction of Nithi Bridge is one example. We are also implementing a range of safety interventions across the highway network, including the standardisation of speed humps, improvement of pedestrian and non-motorised transport facilities, and enhancement of signage and road markings.

Our objective is to ensure that safety is embedded in road infrastructure from the outset rather than treated as an afterthought.

Question: With public resources under pressure, how is KeNHA prioritising road projects, and what happens to projects that have previously stalled?

Response: The financial pressures that previously contributed to stalled projects have been significantly eased through securitisation, while Public-Private Partnerships have also opened up additional avenues for financing major infrastructure.

For instance, projects such as the Rironi–Mau Summit corridor are being pursued through a PPP model rather than relying entirely on Exchequer funding.

This creates an opportunity for public resources to be directed towards other areas where infrastructure needs are equally pressing.

In determining priorities, we look at the economic and social impact of projects. KeNHA is not simply in the business of building roads; we develop strategic economic and trade corridors that support national development and regional connectivity.

We also give priority to projects that are already substantially complete to ensure that investments already made are protected and brought to fruition. Other projects are assessed individually depending on the availability of resources, with options such as restructuring financing arrangements or identifying alternative funding sources considered where appropriate.

Question: There are frequent public complaints about poor workmanship, potholes and inadequate drainage, sometimes soon after roads have been completed. How does KeNHA ensure that contractors deliver value for taxpayers' money?





Response: We take such concerns seriously. However, it is important to distinguish between newly completed roads and roads that have deteriorated over time and are currently under maintenance.

In some cases, roads have reached a stage where they are beyond routine maintenance and require reconstruction. Where resources for reconstruction have not yet been secured, we undertake maintenance interventions to ensure continued and safe passage. However, where the underlying foundation has deteriorated, defects such as potholes may recur despite maintenance efforts.

The Kisumu–Busia Road is an example of this challenge. The road has been proposed for financing under the Lake Victoria Ring Road programme, subject to availability of resources.

KeNHA has robust quality-assurance mechanisms that require strict adherence to technical specifications, supervision and testing of works, certification before payment, and performance controls through audits.

Our projects are also subjected to scrutiny by various oversight and auditing institutions, including the Office of the Auditor-General, Kenya Roads Board, Internal Audit, the Government Delivery Unit, financiers' audit departments and independent experts.

Ultimately, our projects are highly visible public investments. Kenyans are able to see, use and assess the roads we deliver. Public scrutiny is therefore an important part of accountability.

Question: Nairobi continues to experience significant traffic congestion. Beyond adding more lanes, what long-term interventions is KeNHA pursuing to improve mobility in the capital?

Response: Addressing Nairobi's congestion requires us to look beyond simply adding lanes. We are pursuing bypasses, interchanges, grade-separated junctions, and strategic corridors designed to divert through-traffic away from the city.

The objective is to improve connectivity while integrating road planning with broader urban transport solutions. Proposed mass-transit systems, including Bus Rapid Transit and underground rail solutions, are also part of the wider response to Nairobi's mobility challenges.

This requires close coordination among the various agencies responsible for transport and urban development. KeNHA is therefore working alongside institutions such as the Nairobi Metropolitan Area Transport Authority, the Kenya Urban Roads Authority and the Nairobi City County Government to support a more integrated approach to decongesting the city.

Question: Climate change is increasingly exposing infrastructure to flooding and other extreme weather events. How is KeNHA adapting its approach to ensure that highways are resilient to these changing conditions?

Response: Climate change has provided the road sector with some expensive lessons. We have seen the consequences of inadequate drainage and infrastructure that is not sufficiently designed to withstand extreme weather events.

In the immediate term, the Authority has directed its regional offices to ensure that drainage systems are upgraded and cleared of encumbrances that could obstruct the movement of stormwater.

More importantly, climate resilience is now an integral part of our infrastructure planning and strategy. This includes strengthening drainage systems, adopting climate-resilient designs and construction materials, improving flood-risk assessments and exploring opportunities for climate financing.

In areas where geological and environmental conditions present particular risks, we have commissioned geological studies to inform appropriate engineering designs. The lesson is clear: resilience must be incorporated into infrastructure planning from the design stage rather than addressed after damage occurs.

Question: Public-Private Partnerships are increasingly being used to finance major infrastructure. Do you see PPPs and tolling as an important part of the future of Kenya's highway development, and how will motorists be protected?

Response: Public-Private Partnerships are an important component of financing capital-intensive infrastructure. The reality is that public resources alone cannot bridge Kenya's infrastructure financing gap. This is not unique to Kenya; many countries globally have adopted PPPs and tolling as part of their infrastructure financing strategies.

KeNHA is therefore pursuing PPPs and tolling selectively on appropriate strategic roads. However, financing

models must always be accompanied by strong safeguards to protect the public interest.

For motorists, this means ensuring that tolling arrangements are transparent, contracts are appropriately disclosed, charges are justified, and service standards are clearly defined. These principles are being incorporated into the Nairobi–Mau Summit PPP project, which follows the Nairobi Expressway as another major pilot in the use of PPPs and tolling for highway development.

The fundamental question is not simply how infrastructure is financed, but whether the financing model delivers sustainable infrastructure and value to the public.

Question: Corruption allegations occasionally arise around major infrastructure projects. What measures has the Board put in place to strengthen transparency, integrity and accountability at KeNHA?

Response: Transparency and accountability are fundamental to the Board's oversight responsibility. KeNHA projects are subject to extensive auditing and oversight, and the Board has continued to strengthen internal audit, financial controls, procurement compliance and project reporting.

The Authority also has institutional mechanisms dedicated to corruption prevention and integrity assurance. The Corruption Prevention Committee, chaired by the Director General, addresses corruption-related reports and shares relevant information with the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission on a quarterly basis.

In addition, the Integrity Assurance Officers Committee monitors integrity indicators across the Authority's departments and reports to the relevant governance structures, including management, the Board and the EACC.

KeNHA has also developed a Bribery and Corruption Risk Assessment and Mitigation Plan in collaboration with the EACC. The framework identifies areas of potential corruption risk, establishes mitigation measures and monitors implementation.

Technology is another important tool in reducing opportunities for human interference. For example, automation in axle-load enforcement has significantly reduced human intervention in the processing of overloaded vehicles. The system processes offenders, and compliance with the prescribed weight and dimension requirements, including payment of applicable charges, is required before release.

For the Board, integrity is not simply a compliance requirement. It is fundamental to maintaining public confidence in the Authority and ensuring that every investment delivers value.



Question: Looking at KeNHA's journey, what would you consider the Authority's most significant achievements?

Response: I would highlight three broad areas.

First is the expansion and modernisation of Kenya's national trunk-road network. Second is the delivery of major strategic corridors that have strengthened trade and connectivity across the country. Third is the Authority's growing emphasis on road safety, climate resilience, accountability and innovative approaches to infrastructure financing.

These achievements demonstrate that highway development must continually evolve in response to the country's changing economic, social and environmental needs.

Question: Finally, what are the biggest challenges confronting KeNHA and the Board, and what will it take to overcome them?

Response: The challenges are multifaceted. They include inadequate and unpredictable funding, rising construction and maintenance costs, pending bills, ageing infrastructure, road safety concerns, climate-related damage, land acquisition challenges, and the need to ensure that contractors and projects remain within schedule.

These challenges require a strategic and disciplined response. We need stronger prioritisation of projects, enhanced oversight, greater efficiency in resource utilisation and continued innovation in infrastructure financing.

At the same time, we must remain focused on the long term. Kenya needs a highway network that is not only extensive but also safe, resilient, economically productive and sustainable.

The road sector is fundamental to the country's development agenda. Our responsibility at KeNHA is to ensure that the infrastructure we develop today continues to serve generations to come. That requires strong governance, sound engineering, innovative financing, accountability and, above all, an unwavering commitment to the public interest.

* * *


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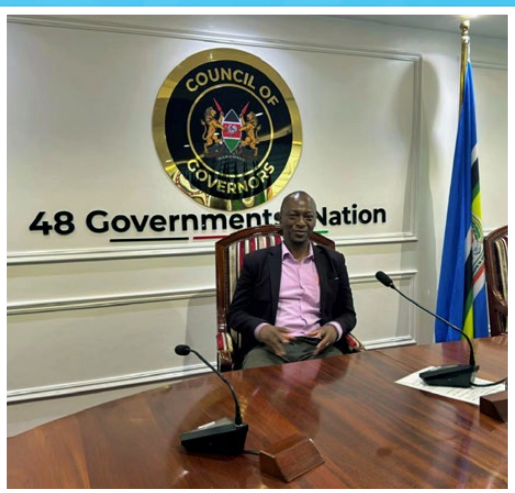

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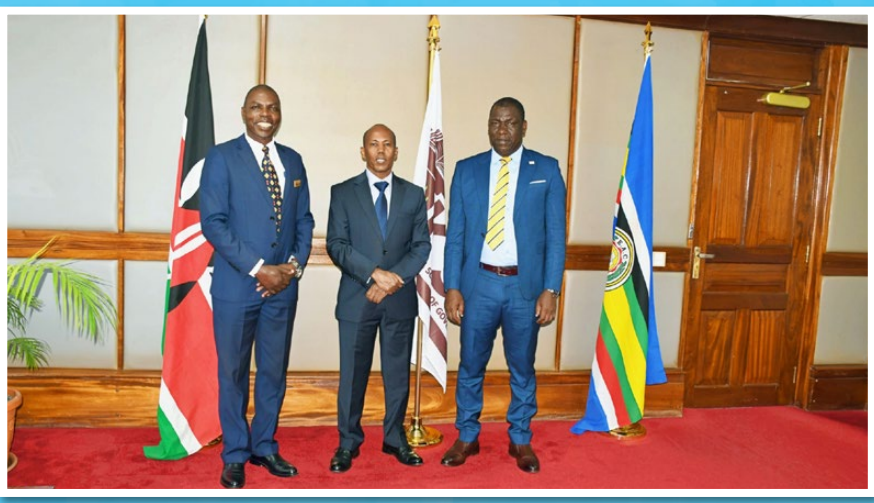

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