



EQUALITY BULLETIN

INEQUALITY EXPOSED: NGEC DIGS DEEP INTO MARGINALISED SCHOOLS

The Commission studies enrolment, retention, and learning gaps for girls, aiming to guide transformative policy.

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A Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to the **22nd edition** of the **Equality Bulletin**. This issue takes you across 19 counties where the National Gender and Equality Commission has launched a landmark study on the state of girls' education in minority and marginalized communities. Over 260 schools are part of this exercise, which seeks to generate reliable, disaggregated evidence on the barriers and enablers shaping enrolment, retention, transition, and learning outcomes for girls.

As you will see in these pages, our Commissioners and teams engaged directly with learners, teachers, parents, administrators, and county leaders. The voices and experiences captured here reflect the diversity and complexity of Kenya's education landscape. While we will not pre-empt the study's findings, it is clear that the evidence we gather will be critical in guiding policy, shaping resource allocation, and driving interventions that bring us closer to equal opportunities for all children.

We thank our partners, stakeholders, and communities for opening their doors and sharing their realities with us. Together, we are laying the groundwork for practical solutions that uphold the right to education and advance equality across Kenya.



Purity Ngina, PhD, MBS

Chief Executive Officer

National Gender and Equality Commission

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Vice Chairperson



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Michael Nzomo
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Dr. Margaret Karungaru, **MBS**
Commissioner

Mathare Youth Lead the Charge Against GBV and Femicide

NGEC's bold campaign, "Lead the Change," places young voices at the centre of the fight against violence, harmful practices, and inequality in Kenya's most vulnerable communities.

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) has taken its campaign against gender-based violence (GBV) and femicide to the heart of Nairobi's informal settlements, convening young people in Mathare under the bold theme "Lead the Change: Youth Voices Against GBV & Femicide." What unfolded was not just another community dialogue, but a powerful affirmation that the fight against violence must be shaped by those who live its consequences most directly.



A young mother follows proceedings at the forum

The forum carried a raw honesty rarely heard in official gatherings. It broke GBV prevention down to its bare realities, weaving conversations around harmful cultural practices, sexual and reproductive health education, and the harsh truth that nearly half of Kenyan women—45 per cent—will experience GBV in their lifetime. For many of the young people present, these statistics were not mere numbers. They spoke to lived experiences: sisters who never returned home, classmates who dropped out of school after abuse, mothers trapped in cycles of violence, and friends lost to femicide.

The Commission's deliberate decision to place youth at the centre of the conversation was more than symbolic. Too often, young people are invited to sit in the room, only to listen passively to lectures.



Participants pose for a group photo during the forum

In Mathare, they were asked to lead. They set the agenda, chose the language, and offered solutions. In doing so, NGEC created a space of belonging—a safe, welcoming forum where voices usually silenced by stigma and fear could speak freely.

The choice of Mathare was significant. Informal settlements like this one remain at the frontline of Kenya's GBV crisis. Poverty, overcrowding, unemployment, and fragile social structures provide fertile ground for abuse, while survivors struggle to access justice or support. Police posts are often ill-

equipped, courts are slow, and stigma weighs heavily on those who dare to report. By holding the forum here, NGEC underscored that the fight against GBV cannot remain confined to policy boardrooms or academic conferences—it must take root in the very places where violence is most pervasive.

Partnerships played a vital role in amplifying the Commission's message. With support from the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the Women, Peace, Climate Resilience, and Justice Association, the initiative carried weight beyond words. Their collaboration demonstrated the strength of collective action, a reminder that ending GBV

demands not one institution but an alliance of many.

What emerged from Mathare was a clear and urgent call for change. Youth demanded parental sensitisation programmes to challenge the attitudes that perpetuate violence. They called for gender-responsive leadership in schools and greater access to sexual and reproductive health education. Survivors asked for safe community spaces where they could seek help without fear of judgment. Young men, too, reflected on the pressures of patriarchal expectations and the silence that too often makes them complicit.

The Commission's intervention in Mathare was therefore as much about principle as it was about practice.

KNAP III Charts New Path for Women, Peace and Security in Kenya

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) joined government, security agencies, civil society and partners in Nairobi for the Validation Workshop of Kenya's Third National Action Plan (KNAP III) on UNSCR 1325.

The draft plan builds on progress under KNAP I and II, which saw women gain ground in politics, security institutions and regional peacebuilding. KNAP III seeks to move beyond



Delegates pose for a group photo during the Validation Workshop

representation to give women greater authority in decision-making, while strengthening community peace structures. It also brings new priorities: integrating climate resilience into peacebuilding, protecting women in digital spaces, ensuring sustainable financing through national and county budgets, donor support and gender-responsive instruments.

Delegates stressed accountability, gender-sensitive data and inclusion of marginalised groups as critical to ensuring the plan delivers on its ambitions.

Kenya's Youth Seize the Peace Agenda

At a landmark forum hosted by NGECE and Hanns Seidel Foundation, 40 young leaders demanded more than dialogue— they mapped out strategies to cement youth at the heart of Kenya's peace and security agenda.

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), in partnership with the Hanns Seidel Foundation Kenya, convened the Quarterly Coordination Meeting on Peace and Security, bringing together youth leaders from across the country. The message was unmistakable: if Kenya is to achieve lasting cohesion, its young people must be at the centre of the conversation.



Participants follow proceedings

The one-day forum was more than talk. Participants drilled into practical skills — conflict resolution, mediation, grassroots advocacy — and pored over Kenya's laws and policies on peace and integration. By day's end, they had sketched actionable strategies: youth-led peace committees in conflict-prone counties, digital campaigns against hate speech, and stronger ties between county governments and youth networks.

The meeting pulsed with determination, with energy sharpened into strategy. The agenda was unapologetically practical: training in conflict resolution, mediation, and grassroots advocacy, and a deep dive into Kenya's policy and legal frameworks guiding peace and security. Discussions crackedled ~

with urgency, moving beyond rhetoric to hammer out concrete strategies — from establishing youth-led peace committees in conflict-prone counties to mounting digital campaigns to counter hate speech, and demanding stronger partnerships with county governments.

For NGECE, the meeting was a call to action grounded in the Constitution itself. Article 55 obliges the state to ensure youth participation in political, social, and economic life. Yet too often, that promise is treated as symbolic. "Peacebuilding cannot be sustainable when half the population is treated as outsiders," an NGECE representative said.

The Hanns Seidel Foundation echoed the sentiment, warning that any peace process without youth at its core is "a house built on sand." The Foundation has long invested in governance and civic education in Kenya, but the Nairobi forum underscored that peace and security are no longer matters for state security organs alone — they are matters of everyday citizenship, and youth are its frontline guardians.



Youth participants pose for a group photo during the Quarterly Coordination Meeting on Peace and Security

Kenya's peace remains fragile, tested time and again — by bitter elections, by competition for land and resources, by misinformation spreading like wildfire online. Each crisis has underscored the same lesson: laws and police presence alone cannot hold the centre. Stability requires trust, and trust grows only when communities feel represented, heard, and invested in the outcome. That is where Kenya's youth come in. They are the majority — nearly 70 percent of the population is under 35. They are the digital generation, fluent in the language of mobilisation, whether in village barazas or on TikTok. They are also the demographic most often manipulated, ignored, or vilified when peace falters. To leave them out of national peacebuilding is not just short-sighted; it is dangerous.

Kenya, South Korea Share Lessons on Gender Equality in the Workplace

NGECE delegation returns from Seoul with insights to strengthen workplace inclusion and women's leadership back home



Mr. Paul Kuria, Director of Programmes and Research, and Dr. Anyango Ochieng, PhD, join delegates for a group photo during the session.

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGECE) participated in a capacity-building programme in South Korea aimed at promoting gender equality in the world of work.

The initiative, supported by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), focused on workplace policies such as inclusion, equal pay, parental leave, and diversity. Kenyan delegates drew lessons from Korea's experience to inform strategies for advancing equality back home.

The delegation was led by Mr. Paul Kuria, Director of Programmes and Research, and Dr. Anyango Ochieng, PhD, Assistant Director — Research, Monitoring and Evaluation, who engaged with experts and policymakers during the exchange.

NGECE noted that the programme strengthened its capacity to advise on workplace reforms and awareness campaigns, particularly in addressing gender pay gaps and underrepresentation of women in leadership in Kenya.

Dangerous Speech Under Spotlight at NCIC Validation Forum

Nairobi, Kenya — The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), in partnership with UNDP-KOICA, today hosted a validation forum on dangerous speech, gender, and social cohesion at Ngong Hills

Hotel. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGECE) joined state agencies and civil society to refine policies addressing harmful rhetoric.

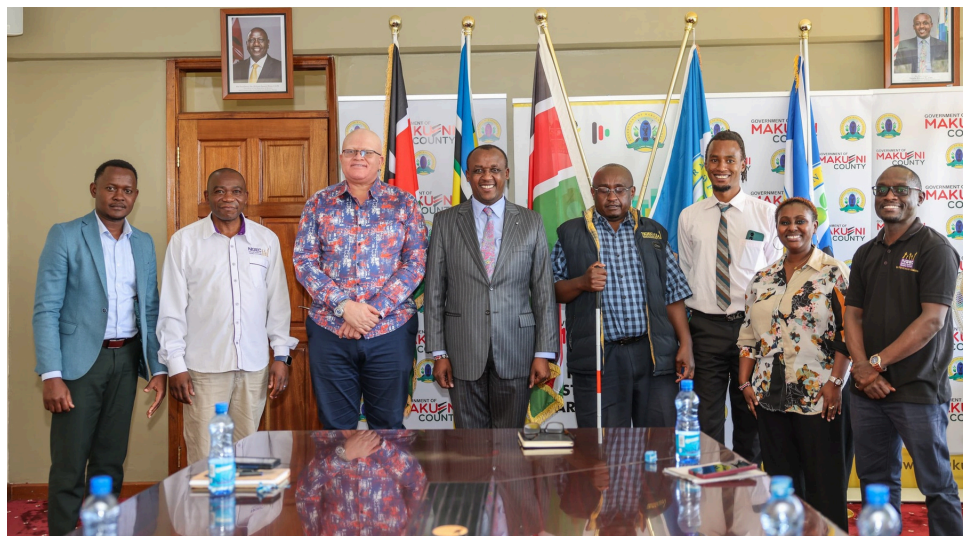
The forum examined politically instigated, ethnic-based, gendered, and religious speech,

warning of the growing role of digital platforms and AI in spreading divisive messages.

Delegates highlighted the gendered impact, with women facing systemic online abuse and men constrained by rigid masculinity norms.

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Nation on Edge as NGEN Digs Into Classroom Inequalities



Governor Mutula Kilonzo Jr. with Commissioner Mbituka Nzomo and NGEN team during a courtesy call in Makueni.

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) has embarked on a nationwide study that has gripped the country's attention. For the first time, a systematic probe is underway into the invisible and often unspoken inequalities shaping the education of girls in Kenya's minority and marginalized communities.

The study spans 19 counties, covering more than 260 primary schools, with Nairobi serving as a control. It aims to generate disaggregated evidence on what drives or hinders enrolment, retention, transition, and learning outcomes for girls in underserved areas. The stakes could not be higher. Schools are entering the third term, a decisive period for candidates preparing for national examinations, and the Commission has sounded the alarm on the urgent need for full and timely resourcing of education.



Hon. Rehema Jaldesa with NGEN team during a courtesy call on the Isiolo County Commissioner

NGEC Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa led the team in Isiolo County, where she called for actionable government interventions to address systemic barriers holding back girls from completing their education.

Fellow commissioners spread out across the country, each taking the message to the ground: Vice Chairperson Thomas Koyier in Meru, Commissioner Naikena Lentupuru in Baringo, Commissioner Margaret Karungaru in Laikipia, and Commissioner Mbituka Nzomo in Makueni.



Commissioner Margaret Karungaru in Laikipia during a courtesy call.

The Commission's CEO, Dr. Purity Ngina, articulated the research objectives with clarity in Tharaka Nithi, underscoring the importance of data that can drive transformative action.

At the core of this effort is a simple but urgent truth: when schools are underfunded, it is girls who pay the highest price. Absenteeism, early dropouts, and poor preparation for examinations are the lived realities of many. The Commission stresses that education funding is not only about keeping schools open, but about protecting the promise of equality enshrined in the Constitution.

County administrations, education officers, teachers, parents, and local communities are now working with NGEN to provide insights.

The research will dig deep into cultural practices, poverty, child marriage, insecurity, and structural challenges that have for decades kept girls out of classrooms. The findings are expected to shape policy, guide resource allocation, and inspire interventions tailored to the lived realities of girls in marginalized areas.



Vice Chair Thomas Koyier in Meru with the County Commissioner.

The nation waits in anticipation. What the Commission uncovers could redefine how Kenya confronts inequality in education and whether every child, no matter her background, can claim her right to learn and thrive.

Isiolo: Chairperson Leads Call for Action in Arid Lands

In Isiolo County, NGEN Chairperson Hon. Rehema Jaldesa set the tone for the nationwide study. Leading the Commission team to Waso Primary and Gambela Primary, she underscored the urgency of addressing structural barriers to education in arid and semi-arid areas. Vast distances between schools, fragile infrastructure, and the reality of insecurity all shape how girls experience education in this region.



Hon. Rehema Jaldesa briefs the press in Isiolo.

Her message was unequivocal: government must match policy promises with action. Isiolo, home to diverse communities spread across a challenging landscape, represents the stark difficulties of ensuring that girls not only enrol but also complete school with dignity.

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A 19-County Study



Meru: Vice Chairperson Highlights Education Beyond Enrolment

In Meru County, Vice Chairperson Thomas Koyier emphasized the need to look beyond enrolment numbers. At Angaine CCM and Bishop Lawi Immathew Primary Schools, he noted how the quality of the learning environment, the availability of teachers, and the transition of girls into upper grades remain central questions. Meru's mix of urban and rural settings offers a revealing lens into how education systems adapt, or fail to adapt, to local realities. The Commission team's meetings with county officials reinforced the importance of aligning national reforms with county-level implementation.

Laikipia: Talent Emerges Amid Inequality

In Laikipia, Commissioner Margaret Karungaru led the team through a series of school visits and official consultations. What stood out was the discovery of extraordinary talent at Sweetwaters School, where three pupils recently won a national robotics competition and are preparing to represent Kenya in Singapore. This moment of brilliance, uncovered in the midst of the study, was a reminder that talent exists everywhere, even in counties often classified as marginalized. Yet, the Commission noted that structural inequalities still limit the reach of quality education. For every celebrated success, countless girls continue to face barriers that remain unseen without detailed evidence.

Baringo: Commissioner Lentupuru Crosses Lake to Reach Learners

Commissioner Naikena Lentupuru and his team crossed the waters of Lake Baringo to reach Poi Primary School, a tiny school with just 24 pupils. Here, the resilience of learners and teachers was on full display. In a county where insecurity and displacement have disrupted schooling, the Commissioner emphasized the importance of documenting not only barriers but also the sheer determination that keeps children learning against all odds. The team's immersion in the community, including a boat ride across the lake, reflected the lengths to which this study is prepared to go to uncover the realities of education on the margins.



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Makueni: Commissioner Nzomo Intervenes as Rural Struggles Come to Light

In Makueni County, Commissioner Mbithuka Nzomo led the NGEK team to Kyangela, Kyau, and AIC Mutulani Primary Schools as part of the ongoing nationwide research into barriers facing girls' education. What emerged was a picture of the quiet but grinding inequalities of rural schooling. Teachers stretch themselves thin, classrooms remain under-resourced, and parents often go to great lengths to keep their daughters in school. Poverty and subtle social pressures continue to place girls at risk of dropping out, even in a county that is otherwise considered stable.

Commissioner Nzomo used the visits to underline a core principle of the study: equal education cannot depend on geography or circumstance. Marginalization is not only found in regions affected by insecurity but also in rural schools where the struggles are less visible yet equally damaging.

During the tour, an incident in Kilome brought these challenges into sharp focus. At Kiungwani Girls Secondary School, a Form Four candidate had been sent home last term after being found with three pieces of chewing gum in her pockets. The punishment went beyond discipline, as the principal demanded that the parent pay KSh 16,000 before the student could return. Commissioner Nzomo personally intervened, framing the case as a stark example of how disproportionate measures can derail a girl's education at a critical moment.

Her action underscored the wider purpose of NGEK's research: to expose the hidden barriers—whether systemic, cultural, or administrative—that prevent girls from realizing their right to education. By engaging directly with school leadership and county officials, Commissioner Nzomo called for accountability and fairness, urging schools to exercise discipline in ways that do not compromise the educational future of learners.

Makueni's experience demonstrates that marginalization takes many forms, from chronic underfunding to punitive practices that hit vulnerable learners the hardest. The evidence gathered here will form part of the Commission's broader push to ensure that Kenya builds an education system where every child, regardless of background, has the chance to learn and thrive.



» CONTINUATION



Tharaka Nithi: CEO Purity Ngina Anchors Research in Inclusive Education

NGEC CEO Dr. Purity Ngina took the lead in Tharaka Nithi, visiting Chuka University's Ndagani Model School, which houses a special unit for children with disabilities. Her focus was clear: education must be inclusive, leaving no learner behind, including those with disabilities. In a county where marginalization often takes the form of invisibility, Dr. Ngina emphasized that the study must shine a light on children who are too often excluded from mainstream narratives. Her articulation of the research objectives reminded stakeholders that girls with disabilities face double discrimination, and their experiences must be fully captured in the evidence being gathered.

Kwale: Community Voices Add Weight to Study

In Kwale County, the NGEK team began by engaging key education officers, including the County Director of Education and the Teachers Service Commission County Director. Parents, teachers, and school boards also shared insights at Mbuwani primary school and Pungu Primary School in Kinango. Their involvement underscored that girls' education is a community responsibility, not only a policy debate. The Commission emphasized that data drawn from such diverse perspectives will help shape solutions that are both practical and rooted in local realities.

Tana River: Dust, Distance, and Determination

The Tana River team braved long distances and rough terrain to reach Chifiri Primary and Hola School for the Mentally Handicapped. Accompanied by county officials, they witnessed firsthand how education is challenged by poor infrastructure and harsh environmental conditions. Yet, even in these circumstances, teachers and learners continue to push forward. The Commission noted that gathering evidence from schools in such remote areas is crucial, as they often fall outside the spotlight of national attention but remain central to the promise of equality in education.

Turkana: Survival Meets Schooling in Harsh Terrain

In Turkana, the study team encountered the realities of schooling in one of Kenya's most arid and insecure regions. Access to water, food, and basic infrastructure often takes precedence over learning. For girls, the pressures are even greater, with early marriage and long household responsibilities frequently cutting short their education. The Commission emphasized that Turkana's situation illustrates the intersection of environmental, cultural, and economic factors that make the pursuit of education an uphill battle.

West Pokot: When Research Turns to Immersion

The West Pokot team's visit to Kaibos Comprehensive School and Sla primary school took an unusual turn when tough terrain and food scarcity forced the team into ethnographic immersion, sampling wild fruits and herbs alongside the community. This moment reflected how research is not simply about data collection, but about understanding the lived experiences of marginalized learners. The Commission noted that the resilience of teachers and pupils in such environments is a vital part of the story that Kenya needs to confront.

Samburu: Leaders Speak Against Cultural Barriers

In Samburu County, NGEK worked closely with local leaders to gather insights at Lorosit and Lpartuk primary schools. The County Commissioner called for urgent action against female genital mutilation and teenage pregnancies, both identified as critical impediments to girls' education. The Deputy Governor pledged county government support for inclusive, safe schooling. Samburu highlighted the need to confront deeply rooted cultural practices while strengthening formal education systems to give girls a fair chance.

Kitui: Rural Schools at the Edge of Opportunity

In Kitui, the NGEK team visited Mukundi and Nthilani primary schools engaging with teachers, and local officials. The school's modest infrastructure mirrored the quiet struggles of rural education, where girls often drop out due to poverty or domestic responsibilities.



»» CONTINUATION

The Commission highlighted Kitui's case as a reminder that marginalization is not always dramatic but can be deeply entrenched in everyday realities that require focused interventions.

Kilifi: Coastal Counties Share the Burden of Inequality

In Kilifi County, the Commission visited Watamu and Mashamba Primary Schools. Here, the interplay between poverty and early marriage emerged strongly as factors shaping girls' education. Teachers and parents pointed to the risks of child labor in coastal economies, where tourism and informal industries compete with schooling. The Commission noted that Kilifi demonstrates how economic structures directly affect educational access and outcomes, particularly for girls.

Garissa: Schools Persevere Amid Fragile Stability

In Garissa County, the NGE team toured Kazuko Girls Comprehensive, Bulla Nur, and Jambale Primary Schools, as well as Maalim Comprehensive in Modogashe. Data collection was observed in full swing, with research assistants embedded in classrooms and communities. In a region often affected by insecurity, these schools stand as pillars of resilience. The Commission stressed that Garissa's experience reveals the fragility of education systems in areas where conflict and displacement remain ongoing concerns.

Mandera: Borderlands and the Education Divide

In Mandera, NGE engaged county leadership and visited schools that sit at the crossroads of Kenya's border with Somalia and Ethiopia. The county's challenges are unique: long distances, entrenched poverty, and the constant shadow of insecurity. These conditions weigh heavily on girls, whose education is often sacrificed first. The Commission underlined that Mandera's data will be critical in shaping policies for border counties, where marginalization takes multiple forms.

Wajir: Timely Study for a County in Transition

In Wajir, the NGE team paid a courtesy call to the Deputy County Commissioner and the County Director of Education before visiting schools in Wajir East. Leaders welcomed the research as timely, noting that it will inform local efforts already underway to keep girls in school. Wajir's story highlights how evidence can strengthen ongoing initiatives by giving policymakers reliable data to back their decisions.

Kajiado: Balancing Tradition and Education

The Commission's visits to Oloserian and MCK Naika primary schools illustrated the delicate balance between tradition and modern education. Here, pastoralist culture often intersects with the classroom, creating barriers to regular attendance, especially for girls. Yet, there is growing recognition among parents and leaders that education is indispensable. The Commission stressed that understanding this cultural-educational tension is central to shaping interventions that are both respectful and effective.

Narok: Schools in the Shadow of Tradition

At Nkitintini Comprehensive Primary in Narok, the NGE team met pupils whose schooling is frequently interrupted by pastoralist migration patterns and cultural practices. Early marriage remains a looming threat for girls. The Commission emphasized that Narok's experience reflects the pressing need to align cultural shifts with educational progress, ensuring that no girl's future is curtailed before it begins.

Nairobi: Control County Anchors the Study

Nairobi was included as a control county to help benchmark the data collected in marginalized regions. Schools here, while not free of challenges, generally benefit from better infrastructure, resources, and access to teachers. The Commission noted that using Nairobi as a comparative measure will highlight the stark differences in opportunity across the country. The contrast will strengthen the study's credibility by grounding its findings in both extremes of Kenya's education landscape.



Women with Disabilities Break Chains of Exclusion, Battle Violence, and Demand a Seat at Kenya's Decision-Making Table

A national dialogue convened by NGECE exposes painful truths, celebrates resilience, and insists that democracy without inclusion is no democracy at all.

The hall was filled with determination and quiet courage as women and girls with disabilities shared their stories. Some spoke of being overlooked at polling stations, others of battling stigma in their own communities.

Many recounted painful experiences of violence and exclusion. Yet through the testimonies ran a thread of resilience — a demand that Kenya's democracy must make room for all its citizens.

The national dialogue, convened by the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) in partnership with the Kenya Network of Women and Girls with Disabilities, gathered voices from across the country. It offered a platform for participants to speak directly about their lived realities — realities that expose the gap between the promises of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the daily experiences of marginalised women.



Participants at the national dialogue on women and girls with disabilities.

For many women with disabilities, discrimination comes twice over. Gender bias intersects with physical or sensory disability, creating obstacles to education, employment, political representation, and even access to justice.

At the heart of the dialogue were accounts of how these obstacles play out during elections. Polling stations often remain physically inaccessible. Campaign meetings rarely cater for persons using sign language or Braille. Social perceptions dismiss the political ambitions of women with disabilities as unrealistic.

The result is systematic exclusion, with women with disabilities underrepresented in national and county decision-making despite Article 54 of the Constitution, which guarantees them equal rights, and a requirement that at least five percent of public appointments include persons with disabilities.

The conversation also turned to the shadow of violence. Several participants described harrowing encounters with gender-based violence, and ~

the difficulty of seeking redress.

“Violence does not just break bones,” one survivor explained. “It breaks confidence. It silences voices. And for women with disabilities, the silence is deeper because the systems are not built for us.”

Although laws such as the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act (2015) exist, weak enforcement and inaccessible reporting mechanisms mean that many cases remain unreported or unresolved. For women with disabilities, the lack of interpreters, safe spaces, or tailored services only compounds the problem.

At the forum, NGECE Head of the Gender and Women Division John Nzioka pledged the Commission's commitment to turn testimony into action.

The Commission will continue working with partners to promote accessible political participation, strengthen survivor support systems, and build public education programmes that challenge stigma.

Health SDGs Face Gender Test in Nairobi Policy Forum

Commissioner Nzomo Mbithuka urges gender-responsive, inclusive policies as CHOICE partners map evidence into action.

Nairobi, Kenya — The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) has thrown its weight behind evidence-driven reforms to accelerate Kenya's progress on health and health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the CHOICE Project Dissemination Workshop held at the Mövenpick Hotel in Nairobi, Commissioner Nzomo Mbithuka delivered the keynote address and officially launched a set of policy briefs designed to translate research into action.

The workshop, convened under the theme “Accelerating Progress ~



Commissioner Mbithuka Nzomo launches policy briefs

Towards Health and Health-Related SDGs in Kenya through Evidence-Informed Policy Engagement” brought together senior officials from government, academia, civil society, and international partners.

Discussions explored how evidence can inform stronger policy frameworks to close gaps in climate resilience, mental health, and health data systems — areas seen as critical bottlenecks in meeting national and global targets.

Commissioner Mbithuka stressed that Kenya cannot achieve the SDGs without mainstreaming gender equality and inclusivity across all health interventions. He pointed out that women, persons with disabilities, and marginalised groups remain disproportionately excluded from access to quality healthcare, and that deliberate policy action is needed to change this.

The newly launched policy briefs outline actionable options for policymakers, including integrating gender-sensitive data systems, strengthening mental health services, and tailoring health investments to marginalised communities.

Turning Culture from Chains to Change: Lessons from NGEK's Wake-Up Call in Embu

At the 6th Biennial Education Evidence for Action and Education Deans Forum, Dr Purity Ngina urged Kenya to rethink traditions that stifle learners' futures and instead make culture a driver of equality.

Embu, Kenya — The National Gender and Equality Commission has warned that entrenched cultural and institutional practices — not simply gaps in law — continue to lock many Kenyan children out of meaningful schooling, as delegates closed the 6th Biennial Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) conference held in Embu in late August 2025.

In a keynote address that drew academics, county education officials and civil society representatives, NGEK Chief Executive Officer Dr Purity Ngina said the drivers of gendered practices in schools were layered: religion, cultural norms, policy shortfalls and the attitudes of teachers combined to produce exclusionary outcomes for girls, learners with disabilities and other marginalised groups.



Dr. Purity Ngina at 6th Education Forum.

The conference, which ran alongside the inaugural Education Deans Forum, was formally opened by the Cabinet Secretary for Education, underscoring the government's interest in bridging research and policy for teacher~

education and foundational learning. The event showcased evidence from researchers and practitioners and sought practical options for reforming teacher training and school leadership.

Dr Ngina stressed that legal guarantees of equality—enshrined in the Constitution and supported by NGEK's statutory mandate—must be accompanied by deliberate, measurable practice at school and community levels. The Commission, created under the National Gender and Equality Commission Act 2011, is charged with monitoring compliance, advising on policy, investigating violations and coordinating public education on equality and non-discrimination. In Embu, the CEO said these institutional responsibilities must translate into routine school-level actions.

Several speakers used evidence presented at the conference to illustrate the human cost of inaction. Delegates described recurring patterns: girls who drop out after the onset of menstruation because of stigma and lack of sanitary provision, learners with disabilities who face inaccessible school environments, and children withdrawn from school to undergo cultural rites. Those accounts reinforced NGEK's argument that statistics alone are a blunt instrument unless accompanied by community engagement and systemic reforms.

The forum also highlighted the Commission's role in converting research into programmes. Dr Ngina challenged stakeholders to pilot context-specific interventions across rural, pastoral and urban-marginalised counties to test what works before scaling interventions nationally.

Narok Showcases Indigenous Wisdom as Key to Climate Resilience



Commissioner Lentupuru with Indigenous leader

Narok, Kenya — The rolling hills of Narok became a hub of dialogue, learning, and cultural pride as the International Conference on Indigenous-Led Research and Education convened, bringing together Indigenous leaders, youth, researchers, policymakers, and global partners. The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEK), represented by Commissioner Caroline Lentupuru, joined participants on community visits that revealed how Indigenous knowledge is shaping responses to some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Delegates travelled into local communities to witness first-hand the depth of Indigenous practices that continue to sustain livelihoods and ecosystems. From water-harvesting methods passed down through generations to rotational grazing systems that restore degraded rangelands, the initiatives showcased how cultural heritage offers both identity and practical solutions to modern challenges.

Commissioner Lentupuru underscored the importance of Indigenous leadership in these spaces, stressing that inclusion must go beyond token representation. "When communities define their priorities and drive their own solutions, the path to sustainability becomes clearer, fairer, and more inclusive," she said.

The conference highlighted that Indigenous knowledge does not stand~

in opposition to science but complements it in ways that create more holistic solutions.

Researchers pointed to Indigenous grazing patterns as critical in the fight against desertification, while policymakers noted that community-based conservation models are proving more effective in safeguarding biodiversity than top-down interventions. For many participants, these examples confirmed what Indigenous communities have long argued—that sustainability must be built from the ground up.

Youth voices were also prominent, bringing urgency and fresh perspectives to the conversation. Young Indigenous leaders spoke of balancing modern education with the responsibility of carrying forward ancestral knowledge. Their contributions reflected a growing determination to ensure that cultural heritage remains relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, from climate change to social inequality.

The community visits affirmed that when Indigenous peoples lead, development takes on a character that is both inclusive and enduring, rooted in dignity and respect for the land and its people.

Draft Policy on Minorities and Marginalised Communities Unveiled in Nairobi

Nairobi, Kenya — The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) has joined hands with state agencies and civil society partners in a milestone move to advance the rights of minorities and marginalised groups in Kenya. The gathering in Nairobi saw the presentation of a draft Policy on Ethnic Minorities and Marginalised Communities, developed in collaboration with the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), the Office of the Attorney General, the Minorities and Marginalised Unit, Kenya Law Reform, and the Mainyoto Pastoralist Integrated Development Organisation (MPIDO).



NGEC Chair Hon. Rehema Jaldesa at draft policy forum

The policy seeks to give practical expression to Article 56 of the Constitution, which guarantees special opportunities in education, economic activity, employment, health, and cultural life for minorities and marginalised groups. Stakeholders noted that more than a decade after the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, translating these provisions into tangible benefits remains uneven, particularly in remote and underserved regions.

The Commission emphasised that the draft policy represents not just a legal instrument but a vehicle for social justice. By addressing long-standing structural exclusions, the policy aims to strengthen access to public services, safeguard cultural identity, and expand representation in decision-making spaces. The discussions underscored that communities historically excluded from mainstream development—including pastoralists, hunter-gatherer groups, and ethnic minorities—continue to face disproportionate challenges in education, health, and political participation.

Representatives from the Kenya Law Reform Commission and the Attorney General's Office emphasised the importance of integrating the policy within Kenya's broader legal and governance framework. They stressed that the draft will undergo a consultative process to ensure that voices from affected communities are captured and reflected in its final form. This approach, they said, is critical to building legitimacy and ensuring effective implementation.

KIPPRA analysts presented data showing that marginalised communities consistently rank below national averages in literacy, life expectancy, access to water, and household incomes. These disparities, they noted, are not merely statistical but point to systemic gaps that require policy attention at both county and national levels. The policy is expected to outline specific interventions designed to bridge these gaps, including targeted investments in infrastructure, affirmative action in recruitment, and tailored education programmes.

Civil society voices, led by MPIDO, emphasised the importance of preserving Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices within the policy framework. They argued that development must not come at the cost of identity and autonomy, but instead recognise diversity as a national strength. Participants also drew attention to the vulnerability of marginalised groups to climate shocks, noting that policies must incorporate resilience-building strategies in line with Kenya's climate commitments.

For NGEC, the draft policy represents continuity in its mandate to promote equality and non-discrimination across all spheres of life. Officials reiterated the Commission's commitment to ensuring that marginalised voices are amplified in policymaking and that constitutional promises move from paper to practice.

The Nairobi forum brought together policymakers, legal experts, researchers, and community representatives in a rare convergence of perspectives on the future of inclusivity in Kenya. The presentation of the draft policy was widely acknowledged as an important step in addressing historic inequities and in giving effect to constitutional guarantees for minorities and marginalised groups.

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