



Report on the Commemoration of the International Day of Rural Women in Taveta, Taita Taveta County





REPORT ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN IN TAVETA, TAITA TAVETA COUNTY

Taveta Technical and Vocational College
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The National Gender and Equality Commission
P.O. Box 27512-00506, Nairobi, Kenya
1st Floor, Solution Tech Place, 5 Longonot Rd, Upper Hill,
Nairobi, Kenya

Toll Free : 0800 720 187
HQ Reception : +254 709 375 100

Kisumu Regional Office
Reinsurance Plaza, 3rd Floor, Wing B,
Oginga Odinga Street,
Kisumu Town.

Nakuru Regional Office
Tamoh Plaza, 1st Floor, Kijabe Street,
Nakuru Town.

Garissa Regional Office
KRA Route off Lamu Road, Province,
Garissa Town.

Kilifi Regional Office
Malindi Complex, off Lamu-Malindi Road,
Malindi Town.

Kitui Regional Office
Nzambani Park, off Kitui Referral Hospital Road,
Kitui Town.

Isiolo Regional Office
County Estate, Along Kiwanjani Road
Isiolo Town

1.0.Introduction

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) is a Constitutional Commission established by the National Gender and Equality Commission Act, CAP 7K, pursuant to Article 59 (4) and (5) of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. The Commission's mandate is to promote gender equality and freedom from discrimination for all people in Kenya, with particular focus on Special Interest Groups (SIGs), which include women, children, and youth, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), older members of society, minorities, and marginalized communities. Section 8 (a) and (d) of the Act mandates the Commission to promote gender equality and freedom from discrimination in line with Article 27 of the Constitution, and to coordinate and facilitate the mainstreaming of issues affecting SIGs in national development.

The Commission continues to strengthen coordination with national and county government institutions to promote inclusive development and ensure effective mainstreaming of Special Interest Groups' (SIGs) rights and participation, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, and marginalized communities.

2.0 Background:

The International Day of Rural Women (IDRW) was established by the United Nations General Assembly through Resolution 62/136 of 18 December 2007. The day is celebrated annually on 15th October to recognize the critical role and contributions of rural women in agriculture, food security, and sustainable development. IDRW is commemorated annually in recognition of the important contribution of women in rural areas to agricultural and rural development, food security, as well as poverty reduction. In Africa, rural women contribute approximately 40% of the labor for food production, engaging in farming, food processing, marketing, and natural resource management. Despite their critical role, they face systemic barriers, including limited access to and ownership of land, education, technology, financial resources, and decision-making spaces, which constrain their productivity and economic contributions.

The Kenya Constitution 2010 guarantees the right to equality and freedom from discrimination and the right to food. The Land Registration Act (Cap. 300), Matrimonial Property Act (Cap. 49), and Community Land Act (Cap. 21) safeguard women's rights to own, inherit, and jointly register land. National frameworks such as the National Gender and Development Policy (2019), Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS 2019–2029), National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), and the Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy demonstrate the country's commitment to gender equality and inclusive growth.

At the county level, some governments have introduced initiatives to promote joint land titling, establish women farmers' cooperatives, and improve access to credit. Still, rural women continue to face systemic barriers. Weak enforcement of land and inheritance rights, inadequate gender-responsive budgeting, limited access to credit, technology, and markets, and underrepresentation in agricultural and governance structures continue to marginalize them. Additionally, gender norms and unequal power relations restrict their participation in decision-making, while unpaid care responsibilities and vulnerabilities to climate change, conflict, and gender-based violence deepen their exclusion. This year's event was marked under the theme, ***'Rural Women Empowering Communities Towards Resilient Agri-food Systems'***.

3.0 Justification

The Commission's mandate is to promote gender equality and freedom from discrimination for all people in Kenya, with particular focus on Special Interest Groups (SIGs), which include women. Section 8 (m) mandates NGEK to coordinate and advise on public education programs aimed at cultivating a culture of respect for the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

The Commission, as part of the implementation of its strategic plan 2025-2029, has aligned itself with the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), a blue print of the Government that seeks to transform the Country's economic growth through six key pillars including Agricultural Transformation, Climate Change and Management of the Environment, Micro-small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Universal Health Coverage, Digital Superhighway and Housing and Settlement all of which speak to transforming the lives of rural women. Specifically, the Commission, in implementing the pillar under Agricultural Transformation, Climate Change, and Management of the Environment and Micro-small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), seeks to promote the application of indigenous knowledge in food production and support rural communities to invest in productive, diversified agricultural activities.

Additionally, the Commission seeks to support affirmative actions and programs targeting women and youth in climate-smart agriculture, value chain, marketing, and access to collateral. Further, on climate change, the Commission seeks to participate and contribute to all climate change-related discourse as it relates to the role of the SIGs and their vulnerability, and lastly, the Commission seeks to facilitate public education to promote the uptake of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises initiatives among women, youth, PWDs, and minority and marginalized communities. It is with these objectives in mind that the Commission joined the community in Taveta, led by the Governor and other leaders, to commemorate the International Day of Rural Women.

4.0 Objectives

The main objective of the event was to celebrate and highlight the key milestones and contributions made by rural women while highlighting the barriers that hinder their effective participation in agricultural value chains and rural development. Specifically, the event sought to;

- Create awareness on the role of rural women in agriculture as an economic activity and in decision-making at all levels
- Advocate for policies and programs that address unique challenges faced by rural women in agriculture
- Strengthen partnerships and advocacy for inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems in the Country.

5.0 Methodology

The commemoration of the event was marked by high-level meetings with the county leadership, field observations, and participation in the International Day of Rural Women commemoration held at Taveta Technical and Vocational College. The Commission team was led by Commissioner Dr. Margaret Karungaru, MBS, the Gender and Women Department, and the Malindi Office.

6.0 Courtesy Calls:

The Commission, led by Commissioner Dr. Margaret Karungaru, MBS, accompanied by Senior Programme Officer, Beatrice Zighe, and Programme Officers, David Juma, and Jerusha Nyaberi, paid courtesy visits to the County Commissioner, Ms. Josephine A. Onunga, and H.E. Governor Dr. Andrew Mwadime, EGH of Taita Taveta County at their offices in Mwatate, respectively. The courtesy calls to the leadership sought to;

- Enhance awareness of the mandate and role of the commission in mainstreaming issues of SIGs.
- Establish the existence of programmes and interventions to support rural women in the county
- Assess the capacity gaps within the Gender docket and recommend areas for improvement;
- Identify emerging gender challenges facing rural women, including Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Strengthen collaboration between NGECC and the County, particularly to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and visibility of the Commission.

Engagement Highlights:

6.1 Courtesy Call to the County Commissioner

The County Commissioner, Ms. Josephine A.A. Onunga, who was joined by the Assistant County Commissioner (ACC), warmly welcomed the NGECC team, where Commissioner, Dr. Karungaru, reiterated the NGECC's mandate.

Dr. Karungaru highlighted key challenges that rural women face, including marginalization and exclusion, particularly from access to and control of resources. She highlighted key development issues, including poverty and unemployment in the county, which had predisposed women and youth alike in the county. The Commissioner shared key growth opportunities, noting that the County has a huge potential and more emphasis should be laid on infrastructure development, agricultural innovation, and tourism development, highlighting the rich natural resources that the county is endowed with, including minerals and wildlife.

Specifically, the Commission called for specific measures to assist rural women, through promotion of climate-resistant agriculture, value addition, and enhanced financial support through government devolved funds, noting that women were still oppressed. The Nyota programme targeting the youth was touted as a game-changer for youth empowerment. Further, emphasizing the utilization of National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) for grassroots sensitization on GBV, FGM, and women's rights.

The County Commissioner raised key concerns facing the County as highlighted below;

- Lack of financial knowledge and literacy leading to exploitation of women by some micro-finance institutions and 'chamas'.
- Women's limited trust and access to formal financial institutions due to predatory lending
- Rising cases of GBV and covert FGM incidents evading detection.
- Understaffing and lack of mobility for the County Gender Office (State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action (SDfGAA)). There is currently only one officer in the whole County.
- Increase in land disputes, particularly affecting widows and single mothers who do not have a say in matters of land.

- Reports of FGM at birth complicating enforcement;
- Lack of witnesses to testify in GBV cases due to fear and cultural silence.
- Widow inheritance and domestic violence
- Insecurity
- Imbalance of power
- Impunity

Ms. Onunga reiterated the need to protect families, including widows and children, through the allocation of letters of administration. The Commission, committed to issuing an advisory to the Ministry of Public Service, Gender, and Affirmative Action, to support the County office through adequate resourcing, including human, financial, and logistical support. Emphasis was placed on continued community sensitization, improved coordination, and enhanced GBV response at grassroots levels.



NGEC team at the County commissioner's office

Courtesy Call to the County Commissioner

6.2 Courtesy Call to the Governor:

The Governor, H.E Dr. Andrew Mwadime, welcomed the NGE team alongside his representatives from the County Government team, which included Mr. Shedrack Mutungi, the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Youth, Sports, Gender, and Social Services, Mr. Katuu Mzenge, CECM for Agriculture, Livestock Development, Irrigation, Cooperative Development, and Blue Economy, and Ms. Esther Mkaiwawi, the Assistant Director for Gender, among other County officials.

The visit provided a platform to discuss pressing gender and equality challenges in the county, including gender-based violence (GBV), specifically, FGM, which is prevalent in the county, early and forced marriages, and land disputes, which disproportionately impact widows. Economic empowerment constraints for women, particularly limited access to financial services, markets, and agricultural infrastructure, were also discussed.

Governor's Remarks:

The Governor acknowledged the NGECE's visit and affirmed his Government's commitment to gender equality. He noted that the County had untapped potential in the agriculture, mining, and tourism sectors, while highlighting women's marginalization due to limited access to credit, training, and ready markets. He called for expanded empowerment initiatives, strengthened interdepartmental coordination, and inclusive participation of women in the County's projects.



Commissioner Dr. Karungaru presenting publications to the Governor, H.E Dr. Andrew Mwadime

The Assistant Director for Gender, Ms. Esther Mkaiwawi, flagged rising GBV cases and called for safe shelters and improved case management, noting that the County did not have a rescue center for GBV survivors. The Governor equally highlighted growing mental health concerns among women, urging integration of psychosocial and economic empowerment programs. Specific challenges were noted as highlighted by the Governor, including;

- Inadequate gender office funding and staffing
- Absence of GBV survivor safe shelters
- Lack of Early Childhood Development (ECD) facilities and teachers, especially near the Tsavo areas
- Women's exclusion from key economic value chains
- Increasing mental health issues linked to poverty and trauma
- Cultural barriers silencing victims.
- Limited water supply

The Governor highlighted various opportunities in the County, including;

- Value addition of various agricultural produce, including minerals, livestock, and horticulture
- Grants and potential donors
- Talents, art, and culture
- Sensitization of women on GBV
- Proposal developed by the county for the establishment of GBV situation rooms in the County.

Key emerging issues:

- Escalating cases of GBV, FGM, and early/forced marriages;
- Insufficient human, financial, and logistical capacity in the County
- Increasing land and inheritance disputes impacting widows
- Rising mental health challenges among women and girls experiencing GBV
- Weak coordination and limited community-level awareness
- Cultural norms perpetuating silence and underreporting of GBV
- High wage bill affecting development in the County
- Poor road network and infrastructure
- Human-wildlife conflict



NGEC team with the Governor at the Governor's office, together with County Officials

6.3 Recommendations from the Courtesy Engagements at the County

Policy and Advisory:

- NGE to issue an advisory to the Ministry of Public Service, Gender, and Affirmative Action to increase staffing, mobility, and resources for Gender Officers across the Country
- Advocate for the establishment of gender desks in NGAO offices to strengthen grassroots GBV and FGM response.

Institutional Strengthening:

- Support creation of GBV situation rooms and safe shelters in collaboration with the county government and civil societies;
- Facilitate regular joint NGE-county leadership review meetings on gender and inclusion progress.

Economic Empowerment:

- Promote women's financial literacy and inclusion programs
- Link women farmers to agricultural markets and value chains
- Encourage women's participation in county development projects through affirmative action and business support.

Awareness and Sensitization:

- Intensify GBV, FGM, and early marriage campaigns using chiefs, faith leaders, and local media;
- Engage men and boys as allies in advocacy and community dialogues.
- Enhance public education and awareness sessions, particularly in the grassroots

Mental Health and Social Protection:

- Integrate psychosocial support into GBV programs
- Enhance counseling and mental health services for survivors.

NGEC Visibility and Monitoring:

- Strengthen NGECE's presence at the county level through regular technical engagements and joint outreach
- Conduct periodic monitoring, documentation, and dissemination of gender equality progress reports.

6.4 Courtesy call to The Principal, Taveta Technical and Vocational College, Mr. Martin Makhoha

The Commission, led by Commissioner Dr. Karungaru, who was also the Chief Guest of the main event representing the Chairperson of the NGECE, also called on the Principal of Taveta Technical and Vocational College, Mr. Makhoha, at his office. The Commission was joined by several leaders who had graced the event, including the Country Director, Christian Aid, the Chairman of Taveta Municipality, Mr. Costa Malai, the CECM Agriculture, Mr. Katuu Mzenge, Members of Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF), who were also the organizers of the event, led by the Deputy National Director, Luke Kisei, representing the CEO, the CECM Gender, and the Assistant Director Gender. The Commission reiterated its role in enhancing women's empowerment.

The Principal thanked the organizers for choosing the institution to host this year's commemoration, noting that female and male students compete equally in the technical courses at the institution. Mr. Makhokha highlighted that the institution has been working closely with GIZ and had been trained on equality and inclusion. He cited key courses offered by the institution, ranging from Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and artisan courses. The institution has a total of 525 trainees, out of which 102 were female, with 2 girls in Engineering 40% of the female trainers were spread around STEM. The Principal highlighted key challenges, including;

- Lack of boarding facilities, denying students from far an opportunity to join the institution.
- Gender stereotypes surrounding girls taking up STEM courses
- Lack of modern washrooms (for girls)
- Lack of a reliable water supply

He also shared some of the opportunities available at the institution, including;

- Flexible mode of training to support women, including recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Partnership with industry players to support the institution, especially girls, through practicum
- Accreditation of Agriculture-based courses (intake to commence in January)

He called on both national and county governments to assist them in the installation of solarized water for irrigation purposes.

7.0 The celebration

The event featured a variety of activities, including a tree planting exercise, exhibitions, and entertainment sessions. The Chief Guest, along with other guests, had the opportunity to plant trees and also learn from the exhibitors showcasing their items.

7.1. Tree Planting

The tree planting session sought to promote environmental conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihoods in line with the Government Agenda of promoting tree cover in the Country.



Dr. Margaret Karungaru planting a tree during the event

The exercise underscored the vital role that rural women and youth play in climate action and environmental stewardship, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions.

The speakers emphasized that tree planting was not just about greening but a long-term investment in community resilience, soil fertility, and water conservation.

7.2 Women Exhibition Desks

As part of the celebrations, various groups held exhibitions to showcase the innovations, skills, and products developed by rural women's groups and entrepreneurs across the county.

The exhibition provided a platform for women to demonstrate their contributions to local economic development, agriculture, and community resilience, while also facilitating market linkages and networking opportunities.

The exhibition brought together a diverse range of participants, including rural women's self-help groups dealing in beekeeping, women artisans producing beadwork, textiles, entrepreneurs in food processing, herbal products, eco-friendly goods, and handmade crafts. The youth-led enterprises from Taveta Technical and Vocational College also had the opportunity to showcase low-cost value-added technologies suitable for rural women and youth groups, as well as electrical and renewable energy innovations that support rural productivity and energy access.



7.3 Key Speeches and Remarks

7.3.1 Mr. Luke Kisei- The Deputy Director, Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF)

The KENAFF, which was the main organizer of the event, includes smallholder farmers organized into Producer Business Groups (PBGs), County Farmers Associations (CFAs), apex Commodity Associations (CAs), Cooperative Societies, Farmers' Unions, Farmer-owned business entities, and large-scale producers. Mr. Kisei, in his address while representing the CEO, reaffirmed KENAFF's commitment to supporting rural women across Kenya, who are vital to our food systems.

The Deputy Director shared that KENAFF had a mission to seek opportunities for collaboration with farmers and Agri-Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in digitizing their operations through Sauti Ya Mkulima, a platform designed to improve farmers' access to finance, markets, and essential services.

He emphasized the main areas where KENAFF works to enhance farmers' welfare, including;

- Digitization of agricultural value chains
- Access to finance to boost productivity
- Access to healthcare through the Farmers Health Insurance
- Climate insurance to build resilience among smallholder farmers
- Lobbying, advocacy, and policy action for farmer empowerment
- Agri-business and value chain commercialization

He also acknowledged the County Government for its enthusiasm and commitment to fostering collaboration in advancing agricultural development and farmers' wellbeing across the county, adding that the federation deploys a wide range of member services which include;

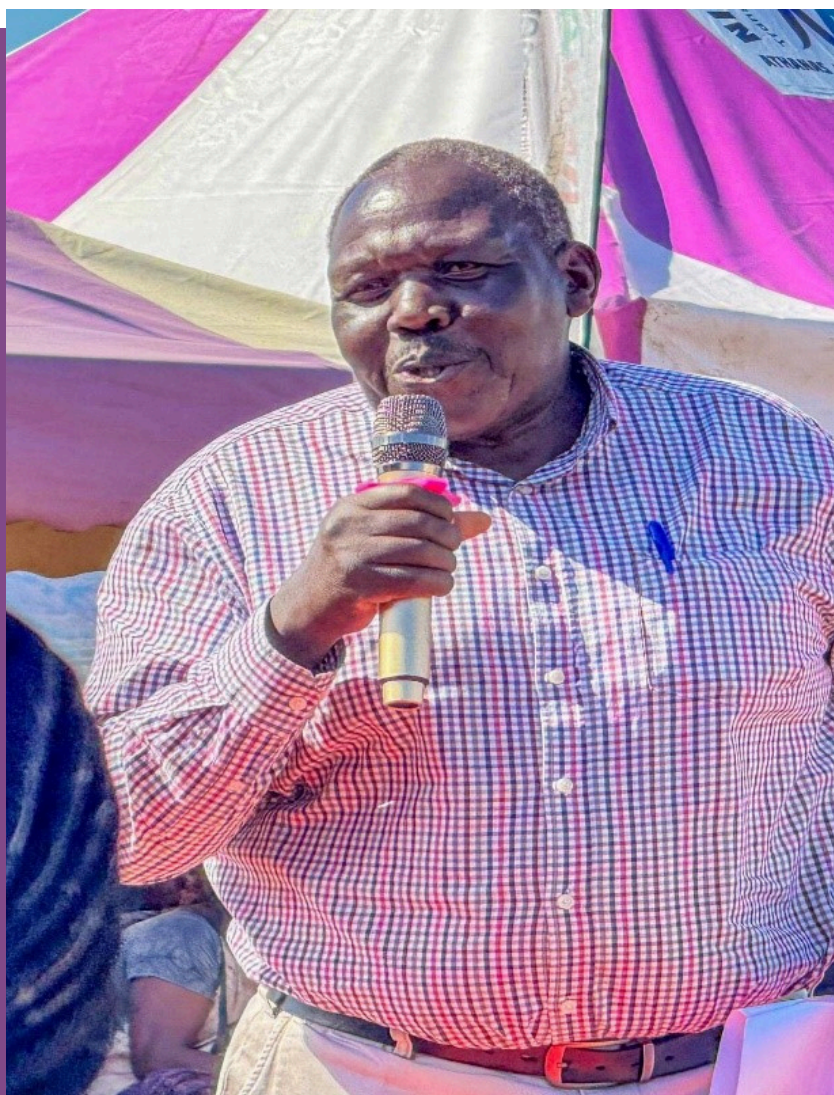
- Capacity building on organizational development for farmer groups, associations, and enterprises
- Technical advisory and market facilitation
- Facilitation of linkages between farmers, credit and finance institutions.

7.3.2 H.E. Eng. John Mruttu-Board Chairman - Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC)

In his remarks, Engineer Mruttu described women as being the backbone of the economy, despite shouldering heavy burdens due to lack of land, financial access, and technology. Mr. Mruttu highlighted rural women's influence in shaping political spaces and elections, noting that empowering women secures future generations.

He further emphasized that empowering rural women is not only a moral imperative but also a pathway to food security, climate resilience, and national prosperity.

The AFC, he emphasized, had created tailored financing windows for women, youth, and smallholder cooperatives, enabling them to purchase farm inputs, irrigation systems, and machinery, to invest in processing and value addition.



Mr. Luke Kisei, the Deputy Director KENAFF, during his address at the event

The Board Chairman added that through partnerships with county governments, cooperatives, and development agencies, AFC had demonstrated that inclusive finance was possible. The AFC, he noted, offers a national model for inclusive transformation for women and youth, which shows how public finance can be a tool for social justice.

Mr. Mruttu reiterated that financial capacity alone was not enough and there was need to enhance access to technology, training, and markets, to ensure that women move from subsistence to agribusiness, and from production to processing and marketing. The AFC, together with other partners, was working to build linkages combining credit with training, insurance, and mentorship to enhance rural women's capacity not only as farmers, but as investors and innovators.

In his remarks, the Chairperson, envisioned a Kenya and an Africa where every rural woman had secure land, access to affordable credit, and the tools to adapt to a changing climate, where young women view agriculture not as a struggle for survival but as a space for innovation, entrepreneurship, and dignity.

He called for inclusive agri-food systems where women are part of value chains from soil to shelf, producing, processing, branding, and profiting.

7.3.3 Mr. Shedrack Mutungi- County Executive Committee Member (CECM), Youth, Sports, Gender, and Social Services

Mr. Mutungi commended rural women as the key to development, nurturing, and food security, noting that women spend half of their energy on production and livelihood, demonstrating their perseverance and resilience in the face of climate change.

The CECM noted that Agriculture was a catalyst for development, highlighting key interventions by the County, including;

- Strengthening of agroforest and climate-resistant agriculture
- Assistance of women groups and self-help groups for financial support
- Training for youth and women in empowerment.

Mr. Mutungi emphasized the need to reduce challenges facing rural women by enhancing participation in agriculture decision-making and the Government Agenda of the Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) through agriculture.



Photo 8: H.E. Eng. John Mruttu, Board Chairperson, AFC



7.3.4 Mr. Dawson Katuu Mzenge, -County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Agriculture, Livestock, Irrigation, and Blue Economy

The CECM acknowledged that 75% of farmers are rural women, urging them to join cooperatives, noting that most government projects are implemented through such cooperatives. He warned that women risk being left out of development programs if they do not register as members of groups and encouraged them to enroll in Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) to access funding through the World Bank-supported National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP). He cited key challenges facing rural women in the County, including lack of assessment rains hampering projects and lack of drought-resistant crops, reiterating the need to enhance environmental conservation.



Mr. Katuu Mzenge-CECM for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries

7.3.5 Dr Mwanasiti Bendera, Ag. Managing Director-Coast Development Authority (CDA)

Dr. Mwanasiti commended the women for their resilience and efforts and echoed the need to strengthen collective commitment to a more equitable and sustainable world. She cited the fact that for productivity to thrive, women must benefit equally, while highlighting the efforts that CDA had made through food production, water, and livelihoods to empower women. She singled out the Lake Challa Integrated Development Project in Taveta, which continued to enhance empowerment of rural women through various initiatives, including commercial farming noting that the programs not only enhance agricultural output but also promote financial independence among women in rural communities.



7.3.6. Mr. Chaka Nyamawi, Deputy County Commissioner (DCC), Taveta

The DCC urged the women to act on the leaders' commitments by seeking loans and exploring income-generating opportunities, noting that implementation was key.

He welcomed the county officials, national representatives, and community leaders who were united in highlighting women's influence on food security, community welfare, and sustainable development, cautioning against the theft of the food produce in the area. Mr. Nyamawi emphasized the need for men to be engaged in such future forums to champion equality and the rights of women.

7.3.7 H.E. Dr. Andrew Mwadime, EGH, Governor of Taita Taveta County

During the 2025 IDRW celebrations, Governor Mwadime called for stronger rights and economic support for rural women. The Governor reiterated the need for enhanced support, legal protection, and economic empowerment for rural women, citing their critical role in agriculture and national development. He recognized that women form the backbone of the Kenyan economy through their involvement in crop farming, livestock keeping, agribusiness, and value addition.

The Governor further noted that despite driving food production and family welfare, many rural women still face barriers such as limited access to land, credit, training, and technology, emphasizing that genuine economic empowerment depended on women's ability to own and control property. He called for the protection of land and inheritance rights, emphasizing legal enforcement, cultural reforms, and inclusive programs that enable women to invest and make independent economic decisions.

The Governor highlighted key achievements, including the establishment of a sunflower plant producing three tones per day, a banana plant, and the establishment of a steel industry, all in a bid to stimulate trade and economic growth in the area. Additionally, highlighting that through the support of the Italian Corporation and the African Development Bank (ADB), the County Government would establish a regular water supply system in Taveta, which had a perennial water shortage.



H.E the Governor, Dr. Andrew Mwadime, EGH

7.3.8. Dr. Margaret Karungaru, MBS Commissioner, National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC)

Dr. Margaret Karungaru, who was also the Chief Guest representing the Chairperson of the Commission, noted the significance of empowering rural women to participate actively in agri-food systems, promoting gender equality, and strengthening sustainable food production as a pathway to food security.

The Commissioner encouraged women to pursue leadership roles at the national level, calling on leaders to actively support women and recognize their contributions to development. She highlighted that the commission had drafted a policy together with Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO) and other actors, which seeks to enhance the protection of the rights of widows, some of whom are rural women. The policy calls for urgent legal and institutional reforms to safeguard the rights of widows, including those in polygamous unions who are often denied inheritance and legal recognition due to the lack of a specific law to address their rights. Further, the policy will uphold the dignity of widows and address legal gaps, ensuring justice in complex family structures.

Dr. Karungaru also reaffirmed that rural women form the backbone of agricultural production and the informal rural economy, highlighting the fact that women constitute 76% of Kenya's agricultural labour force as per the Kenya Housing and Population Census (KHPC), 2019. Furthermore, women provide the majority of labour in crop and livestock production, post-harvest processing, and marketing. The agriculture sector contributes about 33% to Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supports nearly 70% of rural livelihoods.

However, the Commissioner noted that, despite their substantial contribution to Kenya's agricultural and rural economy, women remain disproportionately excluded from access to and control over productive resources, where data indicates that only 27% of Kenyan women own land, and only 13% of those who own agricultural land have their names on the title deeds. 73.6% of women in Kenya are engaged in vulnerable or informal employment, compared to 56.4% of men who largely have access to and control over land and other natural and financial and productive resources.



Commissioner Dr. Margaret Karungaru, MBS, addressing the participants

7.9 Emerging/Salient issues as raised by various stakeholders

- a)** Limited access to land and property ownership- Many rural women lack ownership or control over land, despite being primary users for farming and household sustenance. Customary and inheritance practices continue to disadvantage women, particularly widows and single mothers.
- b)** Inadequate access to finance and credit facilities- Women's groups and small-scale entrepreneurs reported difficulty accessing loans due to lack of collateral and stringent lending conditions. Limited awareness of available government devolved funds (e.g., Women Enterprise Fund, Uwezo Fund) further restricts access.
- c)** Climate change and environmental challenges- increasing droughts, erratic rainfall, and crop failures, which threaten food security and livelihoods.
- d)** Market access and value addition- Women producers of farm and handmade products face limited market linkages, poor road infrastructure, and low prices for their goods. Lack of storage facilities and market information contributes to post-harvest losses.
- e)** Limited access to education and skills development- Young women, especially school dropouts and young mothers, face barriers to vocational training and employment opportunities.

7.10 Specific Recommendations to Key Actors

7.10.1 National and County Government

- Enforce land and property rights to guarantee women's ownership and control of productive resources; Women must have equal and enforceable rights to land, water, and natural resources.
- Allocate dedicated resources for rural women's empowerment and agricultural participation.
- Enhance women's inclusion in governance, agricultural value chains, and climate action initiatives; Economic empowerment begins with financial inclusion.
- Invest in rural infrastructure: water, energy, digital connectivity, and childcare facilities to reduce unpaid care work and increase rural women's productivity.
- Facilitate access to affordable credit, agricultural technologies, digital innovations, and market information.
- Eliminate cultural and harmful practices that undermine women's roles in sustainable food systems and rural development.
- Promote leadership, education, and representation; reparatory justice also means a seat at the table. Rural women must be represented in agricultural boards, cooperatives, water user associations, and development planning forums.
- Both governments must invest in education and leadership development, particularly for young women in rural areas, so that they can take charge of cooperatives, agribusiness enterprises, and policy dialogue
- Governments and policy-makers must reform laws, allocate adequate budgets, and embed gender-responsive planning in every agricultural and climate-smart initiative;

7.10.2 Private Sector, Development Partners, and Community Leaders

- Design programs that start with women's voices not as beneficiaries, but as co-creators
- Ensure fair markets and equitable value chains that reward women producers
- Traditional and community leaders must challenge outdated norms that deny women land or leadership

7.10.3 Rural Women

- Rural women themselves must continue to organize, mentor, and advocate collectively, for their unity, which is their strength.
- Continue leveraging empowerment initiatives, financial inclusion programs, and affirmative action opportunities offered by both state and non-state actors.

8.0 Conclusion

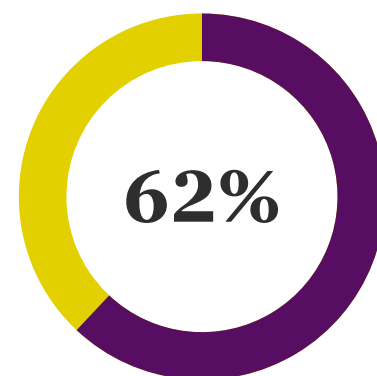
The Commemoration of the 2025 International Day of Rural Women in Taveta County presents a valuable opportunity to spotlight and strengthen the role of rural women in sustainable development, food security, and rural livelihoods. While the event itself is important for awareness-raising and recognition, the enduring impact lies in translating the event into action and data-backed programmes, resource commitments, and institutional follow-through.



Taita Taveta County Profile

1. County Overview

Taita Taveta County, located in the Coastal region of Kenya, spans approximately 17,084.1 square kilometers, with 62% of its landmass comprising the Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks. The county borders Kwale, Makueni, Kitui, and Kajiado counties, as well as the neighboring country of Tanzania to the southwest. It is subdivided into four administrative sub-counties: Voi, Taveta, Mwatate, and Wundanyi, with Mwatate serving as the county headquarters.



The county covers roughly 17,084.8 km² and has about 340,000 residents, based on the 2019 census. Its economy mainly depends on agriculture, tourism, and mining, with key resources including wildlife, gemstones, and agricultural products such as maize, beans, and livestock.

2. Demographics

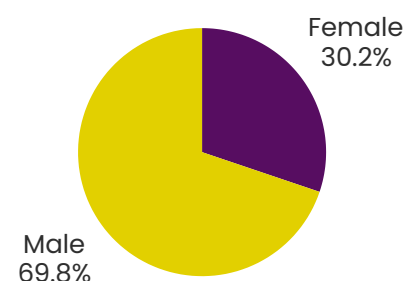
Taita Taveta County has a diverse population comprising several ethnic groups, including the Taita, Taveta, and Waata. Below are the specific demographic features of the County.

- Population: Approximately 340,000, male 51%, female 49% (2019 Census)
- Sub-Counties: Voi, Mwatate, Taveta, Wundanyi
- Key Ethnic Groups: Taita, Taveta, Waata
- Youth Population: Approximately 35% of the total population
- Population Density: Varies across the county, with higher concentrations in urban centers like Voi.

Government and Administration

Table 1: County Government Composition (Gender Balance):

County Positions	Sex				Total
	Female No.	(%)	No.	Male (%)	
Governor	0	0%	1	100%	1
Deputy Governor	1	100%	0	0%	1
County Secretary	0	0%	1	100%	1
Speaker	0	0%	1	100%	1
Clerk	0	0%	1	100%	1
CECs	3	37.5%	7	62.5%	10
Chief Of Staff	0	0%	1	100%	1
County Public Service Board	3	43%	4	57%	7
Elected Members of County Assembly (MCAs)	1	5%	19	95%	20
Nominated MCAs	8	80%	2	20%	10
Total	16	30.2%	37	69.8%	53



9.0 Annexes

While there have been some positive steps towards gender balance, such as the appointment of a female Deputy Governor, County Executive Committee Members (CECs) and County Public Service Board, the county still faces a significant gender imbalance, particularly in elected positions like Governor and MCAs. Addressing this imbalance remains a key challenge for the county's leadership.

Table 2: County Administrative wards:

Sub- County	Ward	No. of Sub- Locations
Wundanyi	Wundanyi /Mbale	8
	Werugha	4
	Wumingu/Kishushe	6
	Mwanda/Mghange	6
	Total	24
Mwatate	Ronge	7
	Mwatate	3
	Bura	8
	Chawia	4
	Wusi/Kishamba	5
	Total	27
Voi	Mbololo	3
	Saghala	4
	Kaloleni	1
	Marungu	2
	Kasigau	3
Taveta	Ngolia	3
	Total	16
Taveta	Challa	5
	Mahoo	6
	Bomani	2
	Mboghoni	5
	Mata	5
	Total	23
Total Sub-locations		90

5. Key Development Challenges & Opportunities

Development Challenges

- **Poverty:** A significant portion of the population in Taita Taveta lives below the poverty line, with limited access to economic opportunities and resources. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), poverty rates in rural areas are notably higher than in urban regions, making poverty reduction a priority for the county (KNBS, 2019 Census Report).

9.0 Annexes

- **Unemployment:** Youth unemployment is high, with limited vocational training opportunities and a lack of industries to employ the growing population of young people. The county's labor market remains underdeveloped, and there is a need for more investment in sectors like tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing (Taita Taveta County Integrated Development Plan, 2018-2022).

Opportunities for Growth and Development

- **Infrastructure Development:** Improving transport networks and health infrastructure can unlock economic opportunities and improve living standards. The county has the potential to increase its tourism footprint through infrastructure upgrades (The World Bank's Kenya Economic Update "Navigating the Pandemic," published in 2020).
- **Agricultural Innovation:** The County is known for its agricultural potential, with crops like maize, beans, and horticultural products (FAO, 2020 report "Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture in Coastal Kenya").
- **Tourism:** Taita Taveta is home to several wildlife conservancies and game reserves, which could attract more tourists and improve the county's economy (The Kenya Tourism Board, Annual Report June 30, 2021).

6. Existing Programs and Policies

Taita Taveta County has enacted several policies and laws aimed at promoting equality and inclusion for special interest groups. These policies demonstrate the county's commitment to addressing equality and inclusion for special interest groups. These key legislations developed by the County government include:

- Taita Taveta County SGBV Policy, 2020: A framework for preventing and responding to gender-based violence.
- Taita Taveta County Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Act, 2023: Aims to improve health outcomes for mothers and children.
- Taita Taveta County Persons with Disabilities Act, 2023: Promotes the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities.
- Taita Taveta County Education Fund Bill, 2023: Provides financial support for education, particularly for marginalized Youth in the County.
- Taita Taveta County Youth Welfare and Empowerment Bill, 2022: Focuses on youth empowerment and welfare.
- Taita Taveta County Older Persons Bill, 2020: Addresses the needs and rights of older persons.
- Taita Taveta County Equitable Development Bill, 2020-21: Promotes equitable development across the county, ensuring the marginalized areas are also part of the County development agenda.

7. Emerging Opportunities for Taita Taveta Women

- Climate-resilient agriculture: drought-resistant crops, agroforestry, mixed cropping; transform indigenous crops and local knowledge;
- Value addition of agricultural produce: processing fruits, vegetables (drying, preserving), jam, sauces; packaging for local or regional markets;
- Renewable energy / clean technologies: solar drying, solar lamps, biogas; these will reduce costs and enable processing or storage.
- Artisanal mining/gemstones: Taita Taveta has mining activity; with proper training, regulation, and fair access, women could be more involved in downstream parts (sorting, cutting, selling) rather than just manual labor;
- Small transport/logistics/trade: women can be involved in collecting produce, moving to markets; perhaps through cooperatives, they can own transport.
- ICT / digital skills and platforms: digital marketing of crafts, access to market information, mobile money, e-commerce;
- Tourism services: homestays, tour guiding, culture like storytelling, local cuisine, handicrafts for tourists; nature conservancy for wildlife;
- Savings and micro-finance services: linking with micro-finance institutions; facilitating access to small grants or loans for women;
- Education & training: literacy, financial enterprise management, technical skills (e.g., sewing, tailoring, food processing);
- Health and social services linked enterprise: perhaps production of health and hygiene products (soap making, sanitary pads, etc.) for local markets.

8. NGECC's Role in Taita Taveta

The NGECC, through its Malindi Regional office, has been actively involved in promoting gender equality and addressing GBV in Taita Taveta County. The office has engaged in several initiatives to support SIGs and enhance gender responsiveness in the County.

- The office reviewed the Taita Taveta Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Policy 2020, provided a written input to ensure comprehensive strategies for prevention and response;
- Receiving and processing of Complaints from SIGs, particularly concerning SGBV and land issues, facilitating access to justice and support services in the region.
- Engaged with the County during the multi-stakeholder virtual consultative meeting held on July 24th, 2020, focused on child pregnancies in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic;
- The Malindi Office is a member of the Wundanyi and Mwatate Court Users Committees (CUCs) at their Sub-county level;
- Held a dialogue Forum on Prevention and Response to Gender Based Violence (GBV) - 22nd January, 2025; Reflections of the 16 days of activism against GBV/Strengthening GBV Prevention and Response;
- Held Dialogue Forum on Male Engagement - 23rd January, 2025, highlighting the critical role men play in challenging harmful gender norms, promoting respect, and fostering a culture of accountability.

9.0 Annexes

9. Emerging issues:

- Early marriages and FGM;
- Economic dependence on men traps some women in abusive relationships, as they lack financial stability to leave abusive relationships;
- Alcoholism and substance abuse, which significantly contribute to domestic violence and family neglect;
- Lack of awareness among community members regarding the rights of women and girls and the legal consequences of GBV;
- Limited access to capital/credit: Many rural women lack collateral or documentation; microfinance, group lending, and grants could help.
- Training and capacity building: Technical skills, bookkeeping, market linkages, quality control for women;
- Infrastructure: poor transportation (roads), storage, processing facilities;
- Gender norms & land rights: cultural barriers, land ownership constraints, decision-making power often limit women; legal / social awareness needs boosting;

Annexes 2



2025 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN CELEBRATION VENUE: TAITA TAVETA TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL COLLEGE DATE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2025 THEME: Rural Women Empowering Communities Towards Resilient Agri-food Systems		
Time	Activity	Responsible
8:30- 9:30 a.m	Arrival and Registration of Participants Presentations	Organizing Team Agriculture Health Gender
10:00- 10:20 a.m	Welcoming of Guests & Entertainment by Local Women's Group	MC- Mr. Evans Msafiri
10:20 –10:40 a.m	Tree Planting; visit to exhibition booths	Protocol Team
10:40 –10:45 a.m	Opening Prayer & National Anthem	Faith Leader
10:45 –10:50 a.m	Welcoming Remarks	Area Chief
10:50- 11:00 a.m	Remarks	KENAFF National Board Chairman
11:00-11:50 a.m	Speeches: 1. Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance- Kenya (SUN-CSA) 2. The National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF) 3. Sub-County Administrator: Mr. Peter Ngoira 4. Ms. Prudence Sage Kai; Coast Region Coordinator for widowed persons 5. Ms. Violet Muthiga; CEO Sauti ya wanawake Pwani 6. Mr. Basil Criticos; Chairperson Kentrade 7. HE Eng. John Mrruttu, Board Chairman. The Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) 8. Dr. Mwanasiti Bendera; Managing Director, Coast Development Authority 9. Ms. Dorcus Gibran 10. KENAFF CEO	MC- Mr. Evans Msafiri



	11. Member of the County Assembly 12. Member of Parliament 13. Senator 14. Deputy County Commissioner	
11:50- 12:00	County Executive Committee Member (CECM) Youth, Sports, Gender, Culture & Social Sciences	Mr. Shedrack Mutungi
12:00 – 12:10	CECM Agriculture, Livestock, Irrigation, and Blue Economy	Mr. Dawson Katuu
12:10- 12:40	Governor Taita Taveta County	H.E Dr. Andrew Mwadime, EGH
12:40 – 1:00 p.m	Keynote Address by the Chief Guest	NGEC Commissioner, Dr. Margaret Karungaru
1:10 p.m.	Lunch and Departure	KENAFF; County Govt; Taita TVC

Annexes 2



PROGRAM FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN CELEBRATIONS

*"Rural Women Cultivating Good Food for All,"
highlighting their role in food systems and the need for food security*
15th October 2025: 8:00 a.m. to 4.00 pm.



TIME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE
7.45 a.m.- 8.00 a.m. (15 Minutes)	NGEC staff to converge <i>Voi Caltex</i>	ALL
08:30-09.00 am (30 Minutes)	Courtesy Visit to the County Commissioner's Office <i>Mwatate</i>	NGEC
09.00 a.m.-10.00 a.m. (30 Minutes)	Courtesy Visit to the Governor's Office <i>Mwatate</i>	NGEC
10.00 a.m.- 11.30 a.m. (1:30 Minutes)	Travel to Venue <i>Taveta Technical and Vocational College</i>	All
Session Three: 11.45 a.m.—3.00 p.m.	Commemoration/ celebrations <i>All NGEC staff</i>	NGEC
3.30 p.m.	Travel back to Voi	All

Challenges facing women in Taita Taveta

One of the major challenge confronting women is high unemployment rate as well as lack of skills. Creation of employment opportunities in the county therefore need not be over-emphasized. This calls for proper planning and well thought out interventions in order to address this challenge. The high level of poverty in the county is attributable to a number of factors including: inadequate rainfall especially in areas dependent on rain-fed agriculture; insufficient water for irrigation in the lowlands; use of inappropriate agricultural practices; wildlife crops destruction especially in areas that border the Tsavo National Parks; population increase characterized by large family sizes, and high rate of unemployment. This is further compounded by economic and social challenges.

Recommendations

- Improve Women's economic opportunities and alleviate extreme poverty in the County;
- Establish and promote sustainable micro-enterprises through training, grants and mentorship to Women;
- Provide financial literacy and business development training to vulnerable populations;
- Facilitate the formation and strengthening of Business Saving targeting Women Groups;
- Enhance market access and create sustainable value chains for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises;
- Foster gender equity and social inclusion in entrepreneurship and organizing for business promotion events for women;
- Monitor and evaluate program impact based on economic and social indicators;
- Integrate environmental sustainability and climate resilience in enterprise development;
- Provide digital and financial inclusion solutions to improve access to banking and credit;
- Offer post-graduation business development support to ensure long-term sustainability;
- Lobbying and advocacy for an enabling environment for the growth of women enterprises across the county;
- Promotion of awareness amongst women on the opportunities and challenges of entrepreneurship and self-employment.

