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## Kilifi County and ActionAid Kenya Strengthen Partnership to Uplift Vulnerable Communities



ActionAid Executive Director Susan Otieno, Kilifi County Governor Mung'aro, and ActionAid Board Member Abraham Kisang

ActionAid International Kenya and the Kilifi County Government have committed to improving the livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations in the region. The partnership, which focuses on empowering poor rural women, youth, and persons with disabilities, was solidified during a recent courtesy visit to the Kilifi County Governor by ActionAid's leadership team, led by Executive Director Susan Otieno.

The meeting highlighted the shared vision to address the challenges faced by communities living in poverty and exclusion and to explore further opportunities for collaboration in the county.

ActionAid Kenya has been actively working in the region for over a decade through its Local Rights Program (LRP), which has focused on areas like Marafa in Magarini SubCounty in the past 10 years. The programme has now been expanded to Mwanamwinga in Kaloleni Subcounty, where it will continue its work for another 10 years.

## DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER KALOLENI SUB-COUNTY



ActionAid Kenya Board and Senior Management during their visit to Mwanamwinda, Kaloleni Subcounty, engaging in productive discussions with the Deputy County Commissioner.

The Local Rights Program (LRP) is a key approach that enables ActionAid Kenya through its partners to fund and implement community-driven projects aimed at improving the quality of life for communities living in poverty and exclusion. Its core strategy is to ensure that these communities have access to basic rights, services, and opportunities for sustainable development.

The program also emphasizes community participation, bringing together local community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, women's groups, traditional leadership, government agencies, parastatals, the private sector, and other development actors to collaborate for lasting change.

Speaking during the courtesy visit, Susan Otieno, Executive Director of ActionAid International Kenya, emphasized the organization's unwavering commitment to social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication. She noted,

"ActionAid Kenya is committed to addressing the plight of the most vulnerable in the community. We believe that by working together with the County Government of Kilifi, we will improve livelihoods and create meaningful change."

ActionAid Kenya's work in the region has already made significant strides, with improved access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for women, youth, and people with disabilities. However, the organization recognizes that much more needs to be done to tackle the systemic challenges of poverty, inequality, and exclusion.

The renewed partnership with Kilifi County is seen as a vital step towards scaling up these efforts. Local stakeholders, including community leaders, government officials, and development partners, have expressed strong support for the initiative, and there is a shared commitment to mobilizing resources and expertise for the continued success of the LRP.

ActionAid International Kenya's broader mission remains focused on creating a more just and equal society. Through programs like the Local Rights Program, the organization continues to work toward the long-term goal of transforming the lives of the most vulnerable, ensuring that all people, regardless of their background or circumstances, can enjoy their fundamental rights and opportunities for a better future.

With the continued support of the Kilifi County Government and other partners, ActionAid International Kenya is optimistic about the positive impact of their work in the region.

## Young People Convene to Amplify Their Voices on the Present and Future They Want in Kenya



Engaged youth participants at the Kenya School of Government

Over 200 young people from all 47 counties of Kenya gathered at the Kenya School of Government in Kabete for a three-day National Youth Convention organized by ActionAid International Kenya. The event, themed "Amplifying Our Voices: The Present and Future We Want!" brought together youth from diverse backgrounds to deliberate on pressing issues affecting young people in Kenya today.

The convention focused on areas such as the right to publicly funded education, access to economic opportunities, youth-led action on climate change, and accountable leadership in the country. The gathering comes at a crucial time when young people in Kenya are increasingly vocal about their frustrations with the country's governance and public service delivery.

Despite the nation's youth bulge, with over 60% of the population aged between 14 and 35, young Kenyans face systemic barriers to realizing their potential, from unemployment to inadequate access to quality education. With the working-age population expected to grow to 73% by 2050, many see this as a key moment for Kenya to harness the demographic dividend, yet few are hopeful that the government is taking full advantage of this opportunity.



Samson Orai, Programme & Strategy Lead ActionAid Kenya

During the convention, Samson Orai, Programme and Strategy Lead at ActionAid Kenya, spoke on the importance of turning conversations into action. “We have gathered young people for a conversation and to look at a space where beyond the conversation we can have appropriate actions we can implement and have an opportunity to engage duty bearers and government to address the critical issues emanating from this discussion, from runaway corruption, gender-based violence, challenges in education, high cost of living, and unemployment,” he said. His words highlighted the need for continued dialogue and tangible steps to address the pressing issues facing young people.

Participants were also encouraged to empower themselves with relevant skills and leverage government resources and funding opportunities to launch and grow their businesses. This call for self-reliance and entrepreneurship was echoed by Professor Nura Mohamed, the Director General of the Kenya School of Government, who emphasized the importance of young people using such platforms to address their concerns and seek practical solutions.

One of the major concerns raised by participants is youth unemployment, which remains higher than the Sub-Saharan African average and continues to worsen. Despite steady economic growth in the country, the benefits have not been equitably distributed, leaving many young people marginalized and disillusioned. Coupled with rising inflation and the high cost of living, this discontent has led to growing dissatisfaction with both the political and economic systems.

The youth-led protests of June 2024, which were sparked by opposition to the controversial Finance Bill, underscored the deep-seated frustrations among young people. The protests highlighted widespread grievances over issues such as unemployment, the rising cost of living, corruption, and the misuse of public resources. These events have further eroded trust in public institutions, particularly among young Kenyans, who feel that the government has failed to deliver on promises made during the 2022 election campaigns.

Key sectors, especially education, continue to grapple with crises that directly affect the youth. The opposition to new funding models for universities, ongoing lecturers' strikes, and the increasing financial burden on students have left many disheartened. Education, once seen as a fundamental right, is increasingly becoming a privilege reserved for the wealthy. The recent changes to the university funding model, which has led to higher fees and additional financial burdens, have worsened inequalities.



Sicily Kariuki, former cabinet secretary for Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs.

Former Cabinet Secretary for Public Service, Youth, and Gender Affairs, Sicily Kariuki, the chief guest at the convention, also urged the youth to focus on leadership. "It all starts to go right or wrong from leadership. The youth should seek and focus on solution-oriented conversations on leadership," she said. "Power is taken, not given. You must equip yourself with relevant education and skills and position yourself strategically to take leadership spaces. At the same time, you must demand better public services. Education is the equalizer!"

The convention provided young people a platform to voice their concerns, collaborate on solutions, and take ownership of the future they want to see in Kenya. While the challenges are immense, the energy and passion displayed by the youth throughout the event reflect a growing determination to advocate for meaningful change and to hold those in power accountable.



Faith Odhiambo, President of the Law Society of Kenya, delivers her remarks at the Youth Convention.

Faith Odhiambo, President of the Law Society of Kenya, emphasized the importance of empowering young people to raise their voices, amplify their concerns, and propose solutions that drive positive change: "When you stand up for justice, you unite to ensure effective resource utilization, contribute to good governance and build a country that reflects the aspirations of its citizens."

With Kenya's youth bulge poised to shape the country's future, the convention underscored that the time for action is now. If the current leadership can address the issues facing young Kenyans today, they could pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future for all. It is in line with the Competence-Based Curriculum.

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