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TOP STORIES

Kenyan youth demonstrate against the IMF linked finance bill in June 2024. Photo/courtesy

The Disaster of Neoliberalism

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Kenya received its first World Bank loan with neoliberal conditionalities in 1980. This was followed by an IMF loan that further entrenched these policies in 1982. .**>> Pg1**

Kenyans hold demonstrations against high taxation reflecting widespread frustration under IMF austerity. Photo/courtesy

ODM NEWS

We Demand Answers on Ojwang's Death, ODM MPs

The mysterious death of blogger Albert Ojwang while in police custody has ignited political outrage, with lawmakers from the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) calling for an immediate, independent investigation.**>>pg 9**

The Disaster of Neoliberalism

Health workers rally against austerity and SAP-driven pay cuts in 2022. Photo/courtesy

Kenya's post-independence economic trajectory has been fundamentally reshaped by hostile neoliberal policies imposed through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the 1980s and 1990s.

These reforms that were championed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank promised growth through deregulation of the economy, privatization, and trade liberalization.

We are presently in the quagmire of yet another phase of the failing neoliberal world economic order that has been the hallmark of the latter half of "Pax Americana".
"Pax Americana" refers to a period of relative peace and American dominance in the world, primarily after World War II. It describes the United States' position as a global superpower that has been unilaterally shaping international order and influence through its military, economic, and political power since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Whatever benefits neoliberalism may have delivered elsewhere, especially in the developed capitalist countries in the global north, countries such as Kenya have ended up with disastrous results.

Both neoliberalism and the United States of America are unravelling and countries like Kenya must begin to figure out an alternative economic model and vision of society and the world.

The future of Kenya hinges on a search for an alternative vision that seeks to build an independent and prosperous, industrialising national economy and equitable and just society that prioritizes people over profits.

The False Promises of Neoliberalism

Instead of delivering the promised development these policies dismantled Kenya's industrial base, entrenched agricultural dependency, and exacerbated inequality.

The Unfulfilled Promise of Independence

At independence, in 1963, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) on ascending to office outlined several key economic development promises aimed at addressing colonial inequities and fostering national prosperity. These commitments were framed within the broader goals of Africanization, equitable growth, self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Kenya adopted a mixed-economy model combining state intervention, cooperative movements, and private enterprise KANU also adopted economic planning to boost industrialization, agriculture, and infrastructure. The first post-independence plan (1964–1969) prioritized manufacturing (e.g., textiles, cement) and agricultural modernization.

Even though Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya was criticized for being neither African nor socialist it outlined a framework for post-independence economic development, including industrialization strategies that promised a better Kenya. It promised a Kenya without the scourges of illiteracy, disease and poverty.

State-Led Import Substitution Industrialisation

For that reason the government prioritized state intervention to drive industrial growth, focusing on sectors like textiles, cement, and agro-processing to reduce import dependence.

The government established numerous parastatals institutions to promote government intervention in the economy. These included banks such as the Kenya Commercial Bank and National Bank of Kenya. Others included the Kenya Industrial Estates and the Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC) to finance and oversee establishment of local industries, aiming to localise economic control and minimise foreign interests and control.

The government promised that they would welcome foreign investment but under strict regulations to prevent dominance, reflecting Tom Mboya's vision of "mutual social responsibility".

The efforts at reducing foreign dependence also aimed to diversify exports beyond cash crops (tea, coffee) and attract local investment. However, reliance on British markets and multinational corporations persisted
The government also pledged universal access to education, healthcare, and clean water to every household.

KANU's promises reflected the optimism of independence but were constrained by colonial legacies and internal contradictions that hindered the industrial transformation of the economy in Kenya that would have delivered a prosperous and self-reliant national economy. Nevertheless in the first decade of independence the country experienced significant growth in the numerous sectors of the economy.

Neoliberal Asault

Neoliberal policies were formally introduced in Kenya in the early 1980s through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank as conditions for loans.
Kenya received its first World Bank loan with neoliberal conditionalities in 1980. This was followed by an IMF loan that further entrenched these policies in 1982.

Successive periods saw the government fully embracing neoliberal reforms under pressure from international financial institutions. The implementation continued across sectors, including education, healthcare, and public services in the 1990s.

These reforms marked a dramatic shift from Kenya's post-independence mixed economy model that had included significant state, cooperative, and private sector participation.

The SAPs required Kenya to implement austerity measures, privatize state enterprises, reduce public sector employment, and cut social spending - particularly in education and healthcare.

Post-colonial Kenya is therefore a highly contested neocolonial state perpetuating a thoroughly unequal and unevenly developing capitalist economy.

As observed above, the national development blueprint known as Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya was heavily criticised as being neither African nor socialist.
There were many disappointed Kenyans who aspired to a more egalitarian independent national economy and saw it as being merely a Keynesian capitalist model intended to perpetuate the reproduction of capitalist relations established by the colonial state.

Neo-colonialism: A Betrayal of Self-Determination

Neocolonialism was and continues to be an admission that the mission of the colonial state was successful, and the system could reproduce itself.

The trajectory of Kenya's political economy from colonial rule to the present day reveals a continuum of imperialist domination, exploitation, and dependency, where formal colonial capitalism seamlessly transitioned into neocolonial capitalist structures. This was later reinforced by neoliberal policy regimes.

These interconnected systems have perpetuated underdevelopment in Kenya by maintaining asymmetrical power relations, extracting economic surplus, and systematically dismantling prospects for sovereign development.

Kenya's post-independence trajectory was supposed to be one of self-determination and prosperity. Instead, continuing imperialist domination and exploitation and decades of neoliberal economic policies imposed by the World Bank, IMF, and embraced by successive Kenyan governments have entrenched inequality, crippled public services, and shackled the nation to unsustainable debt.

Far from delivering the promised "trickle-down" prosperity, neoliberalism has been a disaster for Kenya. It is exacerbating colonial-era disparities while enriching a tiny elite.

The evidence is stark: from the gutting of public healthcare to the privatization of national assets.

Neoliberalism has failed Kenya's majority while serving the interests of global capital and local oligarchs. It has been and continues to be an economic disaster for the country.

De-industrialisation:

Structural Adjustment Programs imposed the privatization and the dismantling of state-run industrial enterprises that led to the collapse of Kenya's manufacturing sector.

Post-independence Kenya initially pursued a mixed-economy model, with state-owned enterprises (SOEs) playing a key role in industrialisation. However, under IMF/World Bank pressure, Kenya began privatizing SOEs in the 1980s, leading to mass layoffs and industrial decline. The privatisation of firms such as Kenya Cooperative Creameries (KCC) resulted in over thousands of job losses by the 1990s, crippling domestic manufacturing.

Under Kenya's structural adjustment programs (SAPs), several industries experienced collapse or privatization due to increased competition from cheaper imports and government policies like privatization.

Notably, local ginneries and textile industries, including KICOMI and Rivatex EA Ltd, were affected. Parastatals and state corporations, such as the National Oil Corporation, the Kenya Literature Bureau, and the Kenya Seed Company Limited, were also slated for privatization.

Erosion of Labour Rights

Neoliberalism has precipitated massive unemployment and the concomitant decline in wages, living standards and conditions of work and existence. It has also given rise to casualisation of labour and the exploitative and oppressive gig economy in which working people are falsely classified as entrepreneurs and denied recognition as employees so that employers can escape obligation due to an employee. Under such circumstances hostile labour policies have weakened unions rendering them unable to robustly represent workers. Real wages have stagnating or declining while executive pay soaring.

Trade Liberalisation

Trade Liberalisation and the elimination of import duties led to the dumping of cheap imports from the more industrialised countries in the global capitalist economies. SAPs forced Kenya to slash tariffs, allowing cheap foreign goods including second hand goods aka: mitumba" to undercut local industries. By 2000, textile and apparel employment fell by 40%.

In the financial sector neoliberal reforms shifted credit away from agriculture and manufacturing toward speculative real estate and imports. Industrial loans fell from 30% to 12% of total lending between 1980–2000.

Capital Flight

Multinationals repatriated profits, with $3.8 billion in illicit financial flows recorded between 2002–2015. These constitutes net outflows of capital to foreign countries. This capital flight forces the country to go outside with a begging bowl for "aid" and debt from the beneficiaries of this inequitable relationship.

Agricultural and Food Sovereignty Crisis

Food Security and Food Sovereignty are related but distinct concepts in the discourse on hunger, agriculture, and food systems.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996).

Food sovereignty on the other hand is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture systems, prioritizing local production, agroecology, and democratic control over food policies (Via Campesina, 1996).

Structural Adjustment Programmes dismantled the thriving state-supported agricultural sector cooperatives in Kenya. This led to the state abandoning agricultural smallholders at the mercy of global commodity price swings. This has undermined Kenya's food security, self-sufficiency and food sovereignty.
Subsidy cuts raised fertilizer costs by 300% between 1980–1995, pushing farmers into debt.
Cash crops have also been prioritised over food crops in pursuit of Export-Oriented Policies at the expense of food security, self-sufficiency and food sovereignty.
These IMF mandates in the relentless pursuit of foreign exchange for payment of foreign trade items and foreign debts prioritized tea, coffee, and horticulture for export, thus reducing food crop production. By 2000, Kenya imported 40% of its maize despite fertile land.

However in spite of the pursuit of foreign earnings, smallholders growing coffee saw incomes plummet after the collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989.

Neoliberalism and the Odious Public Debt and Corruption

Neoliberalism has also stimulated the capture of the state by corrupt and dependent client ruling elites who benefit from conniving with foreigners to dismember the state in the privatisation of state enterprises and public land.

Kenya's entanglement with odious public debt and systemic corruption is also deeply rooted in neoliberal policies imposed by Western financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank. These policies, framed as economic reforms, have entrenched dependency, austerity, and elite graft while stifling sovereignty.

Odious debt, refers to illegitimate debt incurred by dictatorial or repressive regimes that are not used to benefit the people but instead for personal enrichment of rulers or for other actions detrimental to the nation.

In the case of Kenya such debts are seen to have been procured in contravention to the strict dictates of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. In the infamous 2014 Eurobond scandal, for example, an estimated $1 billion from the initial $2.82 billion sale was allegedly unaccounted for, according to the then Auditor General and yet the country has been made to bear the burden of repayment.

Neocolonial Control and Elite Collusion

These debts can be seen as a modern tool to recolonise and subjugate Africa.
The global economy stands on the brink of collapse—again. Decades of neoliberal policies, touted as the path to prosperity, have instead delivered staggering inequality, crippling debt, and systemic instability.

From the ashes of the 2008 financial crash to today's spiraling cost-of-living crises, neoliberalism's promise of "free markets" and "trickle-down growth" has proven to be a catastrophic lie. Nowhere is this failure more glaring than in Africa, where International Monetary Fund (IMF)-imposed austerity, privatization, and deregulation have entrenched poverty while enriching foreign corporations and local elites. The roots of this disaster trace back to the 1970s, when neoliberalism emerged as the dominant economic ideology, dismantling state-led development in favor of

corporate dominance.
Champions like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan sold deregulation and tax cuts as economic panaceas, but the results were predictable: monopolies flourished, wages stagnated, and public services crumbled. By the 2008 financial crisis, even former proponents like Alan Greenspan admitted the ideology was flawed, yet its architects doubled down, imposing brutal austerity measures that deepened inequality.

In Africa, neoliberalism's toll is even more devastating. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) have forced nations like Kenya to privatize healthcare, education, and infrastructure, leaving millions without basic services while debt soared.
Today, Kenya is spending more and more on servicing foreign and domestic loans while cutting back on and defunding education and healthcare. Moreover both the national and county governments are surviving on pending bills from local businesses that are being forced into bankruptcy as those local and international financial institutions that lend government are prioritised in payment.

These measures that are ruining many ordinary Kenyans are undertaken in spite of public protests against austerity like the 2024 uprising against tax hikes. Such protests are only met with lethal force and state violence.

Neoliberalism is a Disaster Whose Time is up!

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed neoliberalism's fatal contradictions. As hospitals overflowed and supply chains collapsed, the myth of "efficient markets" evaporated. Even the U.S., the ideology's heartland, resorted to state intervention to save capitalism from itself. Yet, as historian Gary Gerstle argues, the neoliberal order's collapse hasn't birthed a just alternative. It has instead given rise to a festering scramble by elites to preserve their power. Neoliberalism has given rise to a ruinous legacy, from its colonial-era roots to its modern-day crises. It is a story of stolen futures, engineered inequality, and the urgent needfor a new economic paradigm—one that prioritizes people over profits. The disaster of neoliberalism is undeniable. Neoliberalism—characterized by privatization, austerity, deregulation, and corporate dominance—has deepened inequality, debt dependency, and social crises in Kenya. Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) imposed by the IMF/World Bank since the 1980s dismantled public services, fueled corruption, and entrenched neocolonial exploitation

Prioritise People over Profits

Neoliberalism is a failed experiment. Kenya's future hinges on a search for an alternative vision that seeks to build an independent and prosperous, industrialising national economy and equitable and just society that prioritizes people over profits.

Is Kenya on Track to Achieving Vision 2030?

Kenya Vision 2023. Image/courtesy

It is almost 20 years since the Vision 2030 was launched by the Grand Coalition government as national long-term development blueprint to create a globally competitive and prosperous nation that boasts of high quality of life for Kenyans by 2030. The Vision, in a nutshell, aims to transform Kenya into an upper middle-income and industrialising nation with a happier population by the targeted year.
The blueprint was launched in 2008 and is being implemented through successive five-year Medium-Term Plans (MTPs). The first Medium-Term Plan (MTP I) covered the period 2008–2012. It was succeeded by the second Medium-Term Plan (MTP II, 2013–2017). The two MTPs focused on implementation of policies, programmes, and projects aligned with the Vision's agenda. The third MTP (2018-2022) was, however, driven by the Big Four Agenda - implemented on the foundations put in place during the first and second MTPs. The MTP III themed: Transforming Lives - focused on socio-economic development through the "Big Four" priorities - food and nutrition security, manufacturing, universal health coverage and affordable housing.

Currently, the Government is implementing the fourth MTP (MTP IV, 2023–2027), which builds on the successes and lessons of the preceding MTPs while addressing emerging priorities to ensure continued progress towards the Vision's goals.

It is actually on the basis of these outlined medium term benchmarks that the performance of the government is gauged, particularly towards achieving the goals outlined in the Vision.

The performance and achievements in the implementation of MTPs is presented through two key reports: Annual Progress Report, which provides the overall performance across sectors based on outcomes; and Annual Flagship Programmes and Projects Progress Report which presents the performance of flagship programmes and projects.
Flagship programmes and projects are large scale, transformative and sustainable initiatives with high socio-economic impact in terms of poverty reduction, employment creation, income generation, enhanced competitiveness, and promotion of equity, equality, societal cohesiveness, and inclusiveness.

These reports are meant to inform policy and decision makers on the status of implementation for accelerated development and to inform evidence-based decision making.

To date, the Vision 2030 Delivery Secretariat has prepared a consolidated MTPs' I and II Flagship Programmes and Projects Progress Report. Under MTP III, the First, Second, Third and Fourth Annual Flagship Programmes and Projects Progress Reports were prepared in Financial Year (FY) 2018/19, FY 2019/20, FY 2020/21, and FY 2021/22 respectively. The Fifth Annual Flagship Programmes and Projects Progress Report details achievements of flagship programmes and projects during the FY 2022/23.

Overall, Kenya has made considerable progress since 2008 in implementing the flagship programmes and projects across all sectors of the economy and continued to do so during the FY 2022/23. Notably, significant progress has been made in the foundations of macro-economic stability, which is to be sustained in the medium term to raise the living standards of Kenyans.

The Vision 2030 was a product of a highly participatory, consultative and inclusive stakeholders' (international and local experts, ordinary Kenyans and stakeholders from all parts of the country) process carried out between October 2006 and May 2007. Its contents were again subjected to open consultations between July and August 2007 in all the then provinces in Kenya before the document was finalised.

The ambitious vision is anchored on three pillars - economic, social and political - critical in achieving the desired transformation within the set time-frame through implementation of various flagship projects and other priority programmes.
The pillars are themselves anchored on the foundations of - micro-economic stability; continuity in governance reforms; enhanced equity and wealth creation opportunities for the poor; infrastructure; energy; science, technology and innovation (STI); land reform; human resources development; security; and public sector reforms.

But now with less than five years to the targeted year, how far is the country with the ambitious vision? What has it achieved so far and what are the challenges? Is the country on track to achieving Vision 2030 after all?

A section of the Thika Superhighway, one of the notable completed vision 20230 roads projects. Photo/courtesy.

The unveiling of the Vision marked an important milestone in the country's development as it came soon after the successful implementation of the "Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation" (ERS) over the period 2003 to 2006. The Kenya economy by then recovered from the slow growth rate of 0.6 percent in 2002 to a projected growth of over 7 percent in 2007.

> *The notable completed roads' projects include the Thika Super Highway, Isiolo-Marsabit-Moyale Road, Northern Road Corridor and the construction Nairobi Southern, Eastern and Northern bypasses. Others include Northern road corridor, Athi River Namanga road, Narok-Mai Mahiu road and the Voi-Mwatate Taveta/Holili border road.*

Cabinet in May 2007. Thereafter, the findings were subjected to further country-wide deliberations through public consultative forums in July, August and October 2007.

Today, Kenya's Vision 2030 has seen notable achievements.

These include infrastructure projects like roads and airports, facilitating agricultural activities and tourism development, among others.

In the year 2005, the Government accepted a recommendation by the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) to prepare a long-term vision to guide the country's development up to the year 2030. This was done in recognition of the fact that the goal of economic recovery, as outlined in the ERS, had been largely accomplished.

A broad cross-section of the Kenyan population was hence incorporated in the formulation of the Vision 2030 in order to ensure its national ownership. A team comprising local and international experts was thus commissioned to work closely with both the public service and the private sectors in preparing the Vision document.

The consultative process was launched in October 2006, and was followed by a number of open forums held in all the then eight provinces, attracting keen interest and enthusiastic participation.

The preliminary findings were later submitted to the Grand Coalition Cabinet in May 2007. Thereafter, the findings were subjected to further country-wide deliberations through public consultative forums in July, August and October 2007.
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Another key infrastructural project is the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR). The construction of Phase 1 of the SGR from Mombasa to Nairobi was completed at a cost of Sh327 billion. Phase 2A from Nairobi to Naivasha followed at a cost of Sh150 billion.

The Lamu Port Project which boasts of 32 deep berths was estimated to cost US$5 billion has also been actualised. The construction of the first three berths has been ongoing and being financed by the government while the remaining 29 berths are to be financed by private sector investors.

Another flagship project is the Airport Expansion Project – which has seen the expansion and modernisation of aviation facilities at Jomo Kenyatta, Moi, Kisumu and Isiolo International airports, and various other selected airstrips countrywide.

As part of the Vision goals, the Government has equally established Huduma Centres – one-stop service delivery points that offer 66 government services in all 47 counties of the country. In the Agricultural sector, significant progress has been made in developing irrigation systems in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) to boost agricultural production; while in regard to fisheries - efforts have been made to expand fish farming and to develop and improvise related infrastructure.
In terms of Peace and Security, the government has established conflict management structures and implemented youth empowerment programmes, and equally established modern security infrastructure. And in regard to Poverty Reduction, poverty levels have been reduced, although more work remains to be done in this regard, especially on the cost of living. In the Business Environment, improvements have been made to the business with a focus on mainly on promoting SMEs. On Devolution, this has been implemented to promote equitable resource distribution in the 47 counties. The ICT Sector has also seen tremendous investment which is still ongoing. Toursim sector has equally experienced development with a number of infrastructural development including the aforementioned Thika Super Highway and Narok-Mai Mahiu road which have facilitated tourism development particularly in the Maasai Mara region.

It is also encouraging to note that the country has stayed on course on a number of other goals especially in the education and health sectors, although there is need to accelerate the pace in meeting the remaining ones.
All the same, the Vision has faced significant challenges, including - insufficient resources, lack of public-private partnerships, and inadequate implementation of flagship projects. This has been compounded by political instability, corruption, and a weak currency, among others.
It is, however, worth noting that the goals envisioned in this national blueprint are expected to create a country that is progressive and cohesive and that creates opportunities for self-advancement for all citizens if implemented as per the MTPs.

To this end, there is need for greater synergy between the national and county governments to collaborate in creating infrastructure and implementing policies that will spur investments and open up the country for growth.

And given that the Vision's flagship programmes and projects are capital intensive, there is need to strengthen collaboration networks and partnerships not only with the county governments, but also the private sector, development partners and other non-state actors as a way of creating the requisite synergy for optimum output to ensure realisation of the Vision 2030 goals.

Cdf/Ngaf/Ward Development Funds Not Only Undermine Devolution, But Have Weakened The Roles Of Elected Representatives Especially Oversight

Kenyan youth need free education and NG-CDF is anobstacle to the realization of this dream. The lives of millions of Kenyan youth and children is dependent on access to education at various levels up to university.

Financing has been a challenge particularly but not exclusively to children and youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. A plethora of bursaries and funding models initiated over the years to address access through cost sharing regimes have been implemented with notable deficiencies. Across Africa, several countries have taken the bold move to provide universal free education up to University level.

These include, Egypt, Tunisia,Mauritius, Algeria and Botswana. In view of the challenges of access under various cost-sharing interventions and existing frameworks, Kenyans would better be served by a comprehensive approach that provides universal free education up to University level instead of continuing to rely on piecemeal approaches that are not only disenfranchising millions of youth from accessing education but also transgressing on our constitution.

One-third of Kenyas' GDP is being gobbled by corruption due to lack of political will and weak governance oversight institutions while NG-CDF has grown from Kshs.1.26 billion annually in 2003/04 to 57.7 billion in 2024/25. All the bursary funds including NG-CDF collapsed, can with proper planning, provide access to universal free education and unleash the country's human resource capital that will impact positively on our economy and development. It is the only pathway to sustainable, corruption-free access to education in Kenya devoid of political patronage.

The country is currently being held hostage by self-seeking MPs spreading fear among Kenyans that without CDF, Kenyan children from poor families will not get access to education, when even access is still a challenge to many, nor does CDF exist in African counties providing free education up to University level.

Our 2010 constitutional structure recognizes three arms of government, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary with clearly spelt out functions to ensure checks and balances.The legislature's role under this constitution is to represent, legislate, and oversight the executive. These are universal functions of any functioning democratic state.

Further, the Kenyan constitution 2010 was crafted to address regional inequalities that emanated from the previous centralized system of governance. The rationale for creating devolved units was to ensure equity in resource distribution and development across the 47 devolved units. Today, we have additional levels of devolved units down to the village meant to deal with previous forms of marginalization.

Given the above constitutionally defined roles for elected representatives at national and county levels, and establishment of devolved units, CDF/NGAF and ward development funds are negations of the spirit of devolution and deformations to our constitution. MPs and MCAs are better placed to perform their functions when free from the tentacles of executive functions that compromise their ability to oversight. Year in, year out, the Auditor General's report on CDF/NGAF provide numerous cases of abuse in the management of the funds running into millions if not billions of shillings even though some MPs have tried to manage their kitties with some success.

Those abuses traverse staff recruitment, funds management and procurement of goods and services and involve conflict of interest. Attempts by MPs to distance themselves from these ills under the guise of having no direct control and management of CDF is pretentious and spurious. The patron status they have accorded themselves is merely meant to disguise their real control over the funds.

The fund provides many MPs the opportunity to politically reproduce themselves as it provides a significant source of campaign financing and local patronage. Buttressing this, is the controversial and often compromised ranking of Mps on prudent use of funds, a

Kenyan Students during a session in 2020. Photo/courtesy

non-core function merely to raise their profiles.
Meanwhile, many students from disadvantaged backgrounds fail to access CDF bursary across the country, in addition to the usual allocation abuses such as some fund recipients being non-existent, not being merited, inadequate information and logistical challenges disenfranchise students from poor backgrounds who eventually fail to apply.

The abuse of NG/CDF has provided the executive through its investigative agencies, juicy opportunities to blackmail and compromise MPs, thus limiting their oversight capacities. Secondly, being conflicted and deeply immersed in expanding the resource envelop for CDF, Mps have been unable to explore possibilities for universal free education as a right and prefer the cost-sharing route so as to remain relevant and continue to exercise patronage funds dispensation. But that is beside the point.

CDF is an affront to devolution and undermines devolved units. CDF competes with devolved units for funds such as capitation funds meant for educational institutions.Moreover, apart from competing with capitation funds to educational institutions, they prioritize release of CDF funds over other education funds, and even blackmail and threaten the executive and judiciary whenever release of NG/CDF appear under threat and their legality questioned. Instead of fighting to raise the percentage of national revenue going to counties and providing adequate over-sighting, MPs have concentrated their energies on how to create legal avenues for maintaining NG/CDF after courts declared the CDF Act unconstitutional, and increasing CDF allocation. It is not surprising that there is never a push by the same MPs to have their parties when in power, to actualize the promise they make every election cycle to increase counties' revenue allocation to strengthen devolution.

CDF has been declared unconstitutional by the courts but Mps have continued to hang on to it using all kinds of legal avenues and other unorthodox means precisely because it is a political life blood to many of them. Taking advantage of vulnerabilities of many Kenyans, MPs have resorted to ringing false alarm bells that the death of CDF will deny disadvantaged children and youth access to education.

NGAF/CDF/Ward Development Funds should go, because their demise will have a positive bearing on the quality of representation we have in parliament and county assemblies. Only individuals with the capacity to address policy issues will seek positions of representation. Aspirants at both levels will know a priori that their role is restricted to the three core mandates and not management of some money funds. It will also lead to special focus on legislation and more importantly oversight as there will be no shackles holding them back from over sighting the executive. Moreover, Senators and MCAs will re-direct their energies on over-sighting counties and ensure devolved funds are appropriately used and governance issues addressed. In conclusion, universal free education will unleash the full potential of Kenyan youth and positively impact our development.

Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o: Voice of The Lowly That Refused to be Silenced

Kenyan Students during a session in 2020. Photo/courtesy

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Kenya's literary icon, revolutionary thinker, and indefatigable champion of African languages and liberation, has joined our ancestors. With his departure, Africa mourns the loss as it simultaneously celebrates of one of its most consistent and courageous intellectual warriors—an artist whose life and work were inseparable from the continent's long and unfinished struggle for genuine freedom, dignity, justice, and self-definition.

Born in 1938 in Limuru, Kiambu County, Ngũgĩ came of age during the turbulence of the Mau Mau-inspired war of national liberation marked by the brutal State of Emergency (1952–1960). These were years defined by colonial violence, mass detentions, concentration camps, land alienation, and the cruel suppression of African aspirations. These searing experiences would later provide the bedrock of his searing anti-colonial and anti-imperialist novels and essays.

Ngũgĩ's confrontation with colonialism began not only in the villages and concentration camps but also in the colonial classroom. At Alliance High School and later at Makerere University in Uganda, he bristled at the Eurocentric curriculum that glorified European writers while reducing African writers and thinkers to footnotes.

> *This unease eventually compelled him to renounce the English name "James" and reclaim his indigenous Gikuyu name, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. For him, the shedding of the slave tag was not symbolic but revolutionary...*

Even as he excelled academically, he questioned the worldview being imposed on African students. This early resistance deepened during his university years, where he was active in student politics and creative writing, publishing his debut novel, Weep Not, Child, in 1964—the first major novel in English by an East African.

A rebel with a cause, Ngũgĩ abandoned his post-graduate studies at Leeds to concentrate on writing. Yet it was never enough for Ngũgĩ to simply write back to the empire in its own tongue. From early on, he harboured a profound discomfort with the alienation of African identity that colonialism had wrought. This unease eventually compelled him to renounce the English name "James" and reclaim his indigenous Gikuyu name, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. For him, the shedding of the slave tag was not symbolic but revolutionary—a personal act of decolonization in defiance of a world order that demanded African self-effacement.

Perhaps his most visible institutional battle came at the University of Nairobi, where he was instrumental in transforming then Department of English Literature into the Department of Literature in English. To Ngũgĩ, this was not semantics but substance: a challenge to the ideological supremacy of the colonial canon, and an affirmation of African narratives, worldviews, and epistemologies. He insisted that African universities must teach their students to look at the world through African lenses, and not through eyes borrowed from the capitals of former colonial powers.

Ngũgĩ's fiction, from The River Between and A Grain of Wheat to Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross, not only captured the psychological and material legacies of colonialism but also gave voice to the oppressed and the marginalised. In Matigari he affirms and celebrates political renaissance through struggle. His style fused Marxist analysis,
Gikuyu oral traditions, and a deep empathy for the peasantry and working class.

But he was not content with merely writing for the elite. In 1977, together with community members, he co-authored and staged Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want), a powerful play performed in Gikuyu at the Kamiriithu Community Education and Cultural Centre. The play mobilized ordinary peasants against class exploitation and political betrayal—too potent a combination for the imperialist client regime of Jomo Kenyatta's.

He was arrested and detained without trial in December. It was during this incarceration that he wrote Caitaani Mũtharaba-Inĩ (Devil on the Cross) on toilet paper — an act of defiance that has since become emblematic of intellectual resistance across the world. Upon release, continuous surveillance and harassment forced him into exile in the early 1982, first to Britain, then to the United States of America.

From exile, Ngũgĩ remained an uncompromising critic of dictatorship, neocolonialism, and cultural imperialism. He made a conscious and radical decision to stop writing in English and instead publish in Gikuyu, a language he associated with the vibrancy, wisdom, and creativity of his people. Works such as Caitaani Mũtharaba-Inĩ and Mũrogi wa Kagogo (Wizard of the Crow) demonstrated that African languages could carry more potent messages in modern literature and theory.

His political involvement was not restricted to fiction and commentaries. Ngũgĩ was a key member of the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) and worked closely with underground liberation movements such as the December Twelve Movement (DTM) and later Mwakenya. These affiliations placed him squarely in the crosshairs of successive authoritarian regimes in Kenya, which saw in him not just a writer but a dangerous political force.

Throughout his life, Ngũgĩ remained deeply Pan-Africanist. He believed that African liberation was cultural, economic, and political—and that no true freedom could be achieved without reclaiming African languages and values. He was a prolific essayist and public intellectual whose influence stretched far beyond Kenya, inspiring movements and thinkers from Africa to the Caribbean.
Ngũgĩ died as he lived: a rebel with a cause, a believer in the power of the word, and an unrepentant warrior for African dignity. His words will outlive his body.

May he rest in power!

Opinion: A Victory for Devolution, a Win for the People

The High Court of Kenya has spoken—and it has spoken with clarity and courage. In a landmark decision delivered in Nairobi, the Court declared as unconstitutional the exclusion of County Governments from receiving funds under the Road Maintenance Levy Fund (RMLF). It also found that several provisions of the Kenya Roads Act and the Kenya Roads Board Act violate the Constitution for undermining the devolved governance system enshrined in our 2010 Constitution. This ruling is not just a legal triumph; it is a reaffirmation of the principles of devolution and equitable resource allocation that the people of Kenya overwhelmingly voted for.

As Governor of Mombasa and Deputy Party Leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), I wholeheartedly welcome this judgement. It upholds the spirit and letter of our Constitution and aligns squarely with the public pronouncements and long-standing position of our Party Leader, the Rt. Hon. Raila Amolo Odinga, who has consistently championed meaningful devolution-not in word, but in deed.

The Governor of Mombasa County Mr. Abdulswamad Sherrif Nassir with his Homabay counterpart Ms. Gladys Wanga and a host of MPs and other leaders at a past event in Mombasa. Photo/courtesy

What the Judgment Means

At its core, the ruling establishes that:

1. Counties Have a Constitutional Mandate Over County Roads: Article 186 of the Constitution and Part II of the Fourth Schedule clearly assign the construction and maintenance of county roads to county governments. Therefore, the national government cannot monopolize funding for these roads or redirect monies meant for this function without violating the Constitution.

2. Section 47 of the Kenya Roads Act and Section 6 of the Kenya Roads Board Act are Unconstitutional: These provisions created a national-centric classification of roads that effectively denied counties their rightful share of road maintenance funds. The Court found that this undermined the purpose and structure of devolution.

3. The Decision of the National Assembly to Exclude Counties from RMLF was Illegal: The attempt to remove counties as beneficiaries of KES 10.5 billion in conditional grants—previously agreed upon—was not only unilateral but done without public participation or consultation with the Senate. This, the Court ruled, violated Articles 10, 118, and 189 of the Constitution.

4. Mandates a Constitutional Realignment: The Court directed that road classification and the relevant statutes be aligned with the Constitution within 12 months. In doing so, it recognized that the current legal framework is incompatible with the devolved structure of governance.

Why This Ruling Is Important

This judgment affirms that devolution is not a favour granted by the national government—it is a constitutional right. Counties cannot continue to shoulder key functions such as road maintenance while being denied access to the funds necessary to discharge those duties. The logic is simple: you cannot assign responsibility without the means to fulfill it.

For years, counties have operated under an unjust system where funds collected from fuel levies—paid by Kenyans across the country—are disproportionately allocated to agencies such as KURA and KeRRA, even for roads falling under county jurisdiction. The result has been a dualism in road management that fosters inefficiency, blame-shifting, and ultimately, poor service delivery to the mwananchi.

In Line with ODM's Vision

The ODM Party, under the leadership of the Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga, has always stood for equitable development and true devolution. In public forums and high-level summits, the Party Leader has repeatedly decried the over-centralization of funds and the deliberate suffocation of county governments. This judgment vindicates his position.

Let us be clear: this is not about politics. It is about delivering services to Kenyans, ensuring that a child in Likoni can go to school on a safe road just as a child in Eldoret or Marsabit can. It is about making sure the people who voted for devolution see its promises fulfilled in their daily lives.

The Way Forward

This ruling provides all of us—county and national governments alike—with an opportunity to do the right thing. I call upon Parliament to act expeditiously in amending the Kenya Roads Act and Kenya Roads Board Act, and to reclassify roads in accordancewith the Constitution. Equally, I urge the National Treasury to honour the Court's orders and disburse the KES 10.5 billion due to counties without further delay.

To my fellow Governors: let us stand united in protecting and advancing the gains of devolution. To the people of Mombasa and Kenya at large: this victory is yours. It is a reminder that when we speak through our Constitution, justice can and will prevail.

Let this be the beginning of a new chapter—where equity is not aspirational but actualized, and where county governments are not beggars, but partners in the shared mission of nation-building.
Devolution has spoken. And this time, the gavel has ruled in its favour.

By H.E. Abdullswamad Sherrif Nassir, Governor of Mombasa and Deputy Party Leader, ODM

Kajiado: Ole Lenku's Political Arc in a Devolved Kenya

Governor Joseph Jama Ole Lenku is well known for his high stakes on national security as Interior cabinet secretary, before his return home to steer Kajiado as governor. Following the 2013 Westgate attack, Ole Lenku introduced Nyumba kumi, a grassroots policing strategy enabling community security involvement.

A leader who does not seem to shy away from controversy, in July 2013, Ole Lenku oversaw deportations of suspected foreign drug traffickers triggering diplomatic tensions. He was criticized over security failures following the Westgate, Mpeketoni and Mandera attacks therefore facing impeachment motions. In 2014, he was removed from the Cabinet and succeeded by Joseph Ole Nkaiserry.

As governor, Ole has Lenku digitalized the land registry using GIS, cleaned up the Ngong registry and installed the land dispute Alternative Justice system. Ole Lenku is a ground-level reformer who expanded health services, increasing facilities to 227 and establishing a dialysis level 5 unit. Through the Mbuzi MOJA Afya Bora model, he connected over 24000 households to NHIF. In addition to investments in education and transport infrastructure, as governor, he introduced mentorship programmes, microenterprise support for farmers and municipal infrastructure upgrades.

Kajiado remains one of the best-performing counties in the former rift valley province with a GDP per Capita of 1387. The County also has one of the highest growth rates in terms of Gross County Product with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics estimating a 6.3% growth in 2024. These figures are an indication of Kajiado's success within the devolved governance structure.

In addition to good economic performance, the county digitalized land management, established Kenya's first GIS-enabled land tab cleaned the Ngong registry and rolled out the issuance of land documents to residents. Led by Governor Ole Lenku, the county piloted an Alternative Justice System for land disputes acknowledged by Kenya's Judiciary.

The county recruited and deployed 1932 community health volunteers and expanded health coverage units from 40 to 97.

Under Ole Lenku's tenure, Kajado

Pictured: Kajiado Governor Joseph Ole Lenku. Photo/courtesy

County hasundergone a significant infrastructural transformation. For instance, the county expanded its gravel roads from 500km to 1419km. Model urban roads have been developed in Ngong, Rongai, Kitengela and Isinya.

Ole Lenku has also spearheaded education and youth development through mentorship for secondary school students and a force for affirmative action in education. Today, the county is a reflection of devolution principles including public service provision, infrastructure, health and education delivered at the county level through local institutional mechanisms and partnerships.

Governor Ole Lenku first entered the political arena in 2003, running for Kajiado south MP ON NARC ticket. He however lost the nomination to Katoo Ole Metito. He thus returned to the hospitality sector where he became the General Manager at Kenya Utalii College in 2005. 8 years later, Ole Lenku was appointed Cabinet Secretary for Interior and Coordination of NATIONAL Government under President Uhuru Kenyatta's tenure.

During his time as Interior CS, he oversaw a 34% police budget increase and introduced vetting and accountability measures across security agencies. By launching the Nyumba Kumi initiative after the Westgate Attack in 2013.

In the same year, he directed the deportation of foreign drug traffickers including Nigerians. Despite these, he was criticized over security lapses including the Westgate attack where 69 were left dead. In 2014 he was ousted as Interior CS but made a comeback in 2017 when he was elected as the second governor of Kajiado County a seat he has maintained till now.

As governor, he continues to address grassroots needs by merging national security expertise with county service delivery under the devolved framework. Ole Lenku has continually advocated for the interests of the Maa nation in national forums and spoke for pastoralists while building cross-country collaborations. He remains committed to integrity in governance, cross-sector partnerships and public accountability.

Ole Lenku started his career with a Diploma in Hotel Management from Kenya Utalii College in 1995. Between 1996 and 1998, he was the assistant lodge manager at Tanzania's Lake Manyara and Serengeti and Serena Lodges.

In the years following he became manager and later General Manager at Kilaguni Seena Lodge in Kenya, overseeing operations and guest services, a position he held until 2003. Between 2004 and 2005 he was the general manager at David Livingstone Safari Resort in Maasai Mara. He went on to become the General Manager at Kenya Utalii College where he led partnerships with KCB Leadership Centre and Kenya School of Monetary Studies. As a manager, he built strategic planning, stakeholder coordination and project management, training systems and corporate governance capabilities. These management roles sharpened his leadership in multicultural settings, institutional administration and public service design skills that have come in handy in county governance.

Born in October 1970 in Lenkisim in Loitokitok division in Kajiado, Ole Lenku is the son of senior chief Lenku Ole Mpaa Kapei and Sentema Lenku. He attended Lenkisim, Ilbisel, Nkama and DEB Loitokitok where he excelled in the certificate of primary education exams. He later proceeded to Nakuru High School where he completed his KCSE in 1990.

He then proceeded to Kenya Utalii College in 1995 for a diploma in Hotel Management and later to The University of Nairobi for a bachelor's Degree in Marketing followed by an MBA in strategic management. He continues to blend his pastoral upbringing and Indigenous leadership values with formal education.

Ole Lenku's tenure as interior Cabinet Secretary and Governor embodies constitutional devolution. He integrates security credentials with grassroots service delivery aligning ODM; 's agenda with decentralized governance and institutional resilience. Ole Lenku's leadership illustrates Kenya's shift towards inclusive devolved governance. His blend of cultural rootedness with managerial competence is an embodiment of the evolving Kenyan political and administrative landscape.

We Demand Answers on Ojwang's Death, ODM MPs

Minority Whip in the National Assembly Ms. Millie Mabona and Seme MP Dr. James Nyikal during a press conference at Parliament's media centre on Monday 9th June, 2025. Photo/courtesy

The mysterious death of blogger Albert Ojwang while in police custody has ignited political outrage, with lawmakers from the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) calling for an immediate, independent investigation.

The legislators have dismissed the police's preliminary findings—suggesting Ojwang took his own life in a cell at Central Police Station—as "unconvincing" and "deeply troubling."

Led by Minority Whip Millie Odhiambo, the MPs warned of

what they see as a worrying return of police brutality, particularly targeting young people critical of the government.

"We cannot have this," said Odhiambo. "We have buried too many young people. We cannot bury another one. This cannot continue."

The lawmakers accused the government of reneging on its promises to end extrajudicial killings. Their anger was directed squarely at President William Ruto, who, they said, had pledged to

personally rein in rogue state officers.

"The president himself said he would take it upon himself to bring rogue government officials to order," Odhiambo added. "Please, Mr. President, strike the whip."

Suba North MP Dr. James Nyikal underscored the gravity of the situation, saying, "A country where a person arrested dies in the hands of the police is a dead country."
Other opposition voices joined in, demanding not just accountability but a formal inquest into the circumstances surrounding Ojwang's death.

"Investigative authorities must give us full accountability," said nominated Senator Catherine Mumma. "We demand a thorough inquest into this death."
Embakasi East MP Babu Owino rejected the narrative that Ojwang fatally injured himself inside the cell.

"The stories we are being given—that he hit his head several times on the wall—do not add up," Owino stated. "We need truthful, factual answers."

The Council of Governors also condemned the incident, saying the state must deliver justice to Ojwang's family. Speaking on behalf of the council, Mandera Governor Mohamed Khalif Abdullahi said, "The family of Albert must get justice. All those involved must be brought to book and face justice."

Orengo Attends State House Meeting, Appeals for Development

Siaya Governor James Orengo on Thursday last week led a delegation of county leaders to State House, Nairobi, for talks with President William Ruto on development priorities—just days after publicly criticizing the broad-based government pact with ODM leader Raila Odinga.
Orengo has previously dismissed such engagements as unnecessary lobbying, insisting that national government projects are a constitutional right for all regions—not favours to be granted in exchange for political loyalty or praise-singing.
And following a political agreement between his party ODM and President Ruto, Orengo and the party's Secretary General Edwin Sifuna have been vocal against it sparking political tensions.

Their critical stance placed them at odds with several MPs from Siaya County as well as with Energy Cabinet Secretary and ODM Secretary-General Opiyo Wandayi, further highlighting divisions within the party over how to engage with the Kenya Kwanza administration.

Ahead of Thursday's meeting with President Ruto, Orengo held consultations with National Treasury Cabinet Secretary John Mbadi to align on Siaya's development priorities.

"Held discussions with CS John Mbadi on development priorities in Siaya ahead of tomorrow's meeting with President Ruto together with a delegation of Siaya leaders," he posted on X handle.

Siaya Governor James Orengo with President Ruto during the development meeting focused on projects and county partnerships at Statehouse Nairobi on June 5th. Photo/X

Ruto Hosts Siaya County Leaders at State House, Nairobi

Pictured: *President Ruto with Siaya county leaders at Statehouse Nairobi. Photo/courtesy*

Pictured: President Ruto with Siaya governor James Orengo during the eventi. Photo/X

President William Ruto met with leaders and businesspeople from Siaya County at State House, Nairobi, on Thursday last week.

The President assured the delegation, led by Governor James Orengo, of the government's commitment to development projects in both the county and the nation.

He announced that the government will invest KSh1 billion to develop blue economy infrastructure, which includes KSh600 million for Usenge Pier and its associated port facilities, as well as KSh400 million for a fish market.

Additionally, the President stated that the government will construct 16 markets in the county at a cost of KSh2.5 billion, while KSh1.6 billion has been allocated for the last-mile electricity programme to connect 16,000 households.

"We are looking for another KSh500 million ti enable us to connect another 5,000 households to electricity," President Ruto said.

In terms of agriculture, the President explained that Siaya, along with other counties, would benefit from the government's cotton farming revival programme, which has the potential to create thousands of jobs and generate income for farmers.

"We export $500 million (KSh65 billion) worth of textile products to the United States annually, but we import most of the textiles used to make the garments. This must change," he emphasized.

The President announced that the African Export-Import Bank (Afrexim) would inject an initial KSh 20 billion to revitalize the cotton industry.

He added that a strategic private investor has been identified to restore operations at the Eldoret-based Rivatex East Africa Ltd.

Regarding the expansion of Odera Akang'o University, President Ruto stated that the government would finalize plans to acquire more land for the institution while simultaneously completing stalled infrastructure projects at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology.

He expressed his gratitude to former Prime Minister Raila Odinga for agreeing to collaborate with him in the formation of a broad-based government.

"Whenever we have found ourselves at a crossroads as a country, Baba, being the great statesman that he is, has always taken bold decisions in the best interest of this nation," President Ruto noted.

"Our transformative programs, including the leasing of public sugar factories to make them profitable, would not have been possible without the broad-based government," he added.

Also present were Energy Cabinet Secretary Opiyo Wandayi, Siaya Senator Oburu Oginga, MPs, MCAs, clergy, and other leaders.

Thank You, Mr. President, Nyong'o

President Ruto and Raila Odinga tour an affordable housing site, inspecting progress on the government project. Photo/courtesy

Kisumu Governor Prof. Anyang Nyong'o has thrown his weight behind President William Ruto's leadership and inclusive administration, citing visible development gains and growing national cohesion.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Governor Nyong'o praised the President's commitment to transformative development, noting that Kisumu County—alongside other regions—has benefited significantly from ongoing national government projects.

"Our appreciation extends further to President Ruto for the broad portfolio of development projects his administration has initiated in Kisumu County, many of which are progressing steadily toward completion," he said.

The county chief also commended the president for his efforts to unite the country, specifically his decision to reach out to opposition leader Raila Odinga. Nyong'o stated that the broad-based government formed after the two leaders joined forces is beneficial for national development and cohesion.

"We wholeheartedly support the decision by President Ruto and Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga to work together n the interest of national unity and development. As a country, we stand firmly behind the vision outlined in the recently signed MoU that underpins the Broad-Based Government," he stated.

Nyong'o stressed that national progress can only be achieved through collaborative governance, urging leaders, regardless of their political affiliations, to seek opportunities for cooperation.

"We celebrate the peace, unity, and renewed sense of hope that this partnership has inspired across the country. We call upon all Kenyans to rally behind this vision for a stronger, more inclusive Kenya," he stated.

"We encourage both him and the former Prime Minister to continue their joint tours across the country. Together, their leadership can usher in a new era of meaningful progress and national cohesion," added Nyong'o.

The governor also welcomed the former Prime Minister's decision to donate five hectares of land for the affordable housing project in Kirembe.

"This gesture is a profound testament to the former Prime Minister's unwavering commitment to the progress of Kisumu and his enduring belief that every Kenyan deserves access to decent, affordable shelter," he said.