REPUBLIC OF KENYA

COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF LAIKIPIA

THE HANSARD

Wednesday, 2nd April, 2025

The House met at the Assembly Chambers at 2.30 p.m.

[The Speaker (Hon. Lantano Nabaala) in the Chair]

PRAYERS

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CHAIR

WELCOMING THE GOVERNOR, COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THE MEMBERS OF PUBLIC

Speaker: Thank you, Hon. Members. I want to take this opportunity first to apologize for the power hiccup that we had. Electricity is not yet restored but I am glad that we have a backup generator and therefore we are able to proceed and function.

Secondly, I want to take this opportunity to welcome all members of the public. The County Government officers and all citizens of this great Laikipia County who today have authorized and participated to be part of us in the state of County Address by the Governor. Therefore, feel welcomed.

I recognize in the team, H.E the Deputy Governor, the County Secretary, all the CECs and the officers of the County Government. Also, I recognize our religious leaders who are here with us today.

Thirdly, H.E Joshua Irungu, Governor of the County Government of Laikipia, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Section 30 (j) of the County Governments Act states that the Governor shall submit to the County Assembly an annual report on the implementation status of the county policies and plans.

Additionally, Section 30 (k) states that subject to the constitution, the Governor shall deliver annual state of the county address containing such matters as specified in the county legislation. Our Standing Order No. 24 (2) of our County Assembly Standing Orders, states that; *When delivering an address to the Assembly, the Governor shall be heard in silence and the address shall not be followed by any comment or any question.* With those few remarks, I take this opportunity to invite H. E the Governor to address the 4th session of the 3rd County Assembly of Laikipia. Welcome your Excellency.

GOVENOR'S SPEECH

STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS DELIVERED BY H.E THE GOVERNOR, JOSHUA IRUNGU, EGH ON 2ND APRIL 2025, AT THE 3RD ASSEMBLY 4TH SESSION, LAIKIPIA COUNTY.

Mr. Speaker, on the onset, I take this chance to extend a warm welcome to each and every one of the Honourable Members as they reconvene after the Christmas recess. It is always a joy to see the dedication and commitment that our elected representatives bring to this esteemed Assembly, especially as we begin another year of work together. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for your continued commitment and service to the people of Laikipia County.

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As we reflect on the invaluable role you play in this county's development, it is important to recognise that the Honourable Members are true champions of devolution in the modern-day Kenya. Their unwavering commitment to the ideals of devolution has brought us closer to a future where power is truly in the hands of the people. They have worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of our citizens are heard, their needs addressed and aspirations realised.

Together, we have demonstrated that devolution is not just a political concept but a living, breathing force for positive change and for that, I laud all of you.

As we embark on this next phase of our journey together, I urge this August House to continue with the vital work, consulting closely with the executive, to ensure that every budgetary allocation made for the coming fiscal year is spent wisely and transparently.

It is our collective responsibility to make sure that these resources are directed towards initiatives that will significantly improve the livelihoods of the people of Laikipia—resources that will enhance education, health, infrastructure, water, agriculture and the environment among other key areas. The work that lies ahead is not just about building structures or investing in technology—it is about creating tangible, lasting change for our people.

Mr. Speaker, allow me share some of the significant steps we are taking to improve the livelihoods of the people we serve and the economic growth of our county. I am here to provide to the people of Laikipia through this Honourable House, an overview of the countywide projects for the fiscal years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025.

These initiatives, which span a wide range of sectors, are reflective of our vision for Laikipia—a vision of a prosperous, sustainable and inclusive county. However, it is important to note that while the projects I am outlining today are those that are being undertaken across the entire county, there are also many other projects that are ward-specific. These projects are equally important as they address the unique needs and priorities of our diverse communities. A detailed report of these ward-specific projects, including their scope and status, will be made available by the County Department of Economic Planning.

This report will provide you with the information you need to have a comprehensive understanding of the full spectrum of development activities taking place throughout Laikipia.

Mr. Speaker, on the onset, allow me to share with this Honourable House significant strides made in the education sector, aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of education for our people.

I am pleased to announce that 427 ECDE teachers have been converted to permanent and pensionable terms. These teachers, who were previously engaged on monthly stipends due to lack of the requisite qualifications, have been given until the end of April 2025 to have their papers in order. Once they meet the required standards, they will be absorbed into the system on permanent terms, just like their counterparts, ensuring a more stable and committed workforce in our early childhood education sector.

Over the past two fiscal years, we have seen a tremendous increase in the number of beneficiaries of our county bursary fund. To ensure we meet these needs, Kshs.75 million has already been dispatched to various learning institutions for the current fiscal year. Notably, from 9,000 beneficiaries, we now stand at 14,000 for the FY 2023/2024.

As part of our commitment to supporting the brightest and most deserving students, we have introduced a programme that awards one full scholarship per ward to bright and needy

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children. To date, 60 students have benefited from this initiative and we intend to expand this further as we move ahead.

Looking to the future, we are committed to increasing our investments in recreational facilities to promote a well-rounded education for our students. Additionally, we will be increasing the number of bursaries available to support needy students.

This is just the beginning, Mr. Speaker and I assure the people of Laikipia through this Assembly that we will continue to prioritize the welfare of our students and the growth of our education sector.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, we have made significant strides in investing in the future of our youth, understanding that they are the bedrock of a prosperous and successful society. By focusing on vocational training and sports development, we have empowered our young people, equipping them with the skills and opportunities necessary to succeed in an ever-evolving world.

Our vision is clear — we aim to establish at least one vocational training centre in every ward. It is with great pride that I announce the completion of the Salt Lick Vocational Training Centre in Mukogodo West ward, which is now awaiting its final equipping. This is a significant milestone, but we are far from finished.

In the coming fiscal years, we plan to construct new workshops for each of our existing VTCs, further expanding opportunities for our youth. I kindly urge this Honourable House to approve the budget for these critical undertakings when it is presented.

Additionally, we have allocated Kshs.5 million in training equipment to our Vocational Training Centres in Nyahururu, Nanyuki, Marmanet and other areas across the county. This investment will ensure that our youth receive high-quality training in fields that will enhance their employability and allow them to make meaningful contributions to the economic development of our county. Together, let us continue working towards a brighter future for the youth of this county, empowering them to become the leaders, innovators, and skilled workers of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that, as part of efforts to promote the acquisition of vocational skills, all learners in the VTCs who applied for bursary funding received nearly full scholarships from the fund. This will ensure that all our children have access to quality education, regardless of their financial background.

But still Mr. Speaker, I can confidently allude that so far, we have made tremendous strides in empowering the young people of Laikipia County. This is in full understanding that the youth are an integral part of the community. As a government, we remain dedicated to fostering an enabling environment where they can thrive and contribute to our development and transformation.

One of our flagship initiatives has been the establishment of the Laikipia Professionals Database. Thanks to this platform, many young people have secured employment within the county government on permanent and pensionable terms, while others have gained internship opportunities. Many more have been linked to opportunities across various sectors.

We are in the process of operationalising the internship programme, which aims at providing our youth with hands-on experience, thus enhancing their employability and skills in their respective fields. Consequently, we have initiated the development of the Youth Policy

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and the Youth Strategic Plan which will serve as a blueprint for all youth-related programmes, ensuring efficiency in addressing the needs of the young people across our county.

Furthermore, we are working to operationalize the Laikipia County Youth Services Act, which will institutionalize youth services and ensure that we engage young people actively and meaningfully. Additionally, through our partnership with the Laikipia County Tertiary Institutions Students Association (LACTISA), we are in the final stages of establishing a Youth Desk within the Executive Office of the Governor. This desk will serve as a liaison point for any assistance young people may require, reducing government bureaucracy and obstacles they face when seeking support or services.

Notably, in our efforts to promote talent development in the county, we have procured a county bus dedicated to supporting young people, especially in the creative and sports industries by providing accessible transport for events, competitions and training sessions. We plan to acquire two more buses to ensure that each sub-county is well-served and seek the Assembly's approval for funds to purchase these additional buses.

To bridge the unemployment gap, we are committed to ensuring that young people are actively involved in agribusiness by rolling out programmes that equip them with modern farming techniques, access to markets and financial support.

Mr. Speaker, let me now highlight some of the key developments in our education sector as we seek the support of this August House in shaping a brighter future for our children and the community. Over the past two years, we have made significant strides in expanding access to quality education.

Thirty Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) classrooms have been constructed at a total cost of Kshs.48 million. In addition, twelve more classrooms have been built through the collaborative efforts of our partners in the education sector. While we celebrate these achievements, it is important to note that the creation of these classrooms is just one part of the equation. I urge this Honourable House to allocate additional funds for equipping these facilities, as without proper equipment, the spaces will not fulfil their full potential in supporting our children's learning.

Furthermore, in a bid to improve both enrolment and retention rates in the ECDE centres, I strongly appeal to the Assembly to consider approving the budget for the School Feeding Programme once it is presented to this August House. The importance of this initiative cannot be overstated as it directly contributes to enhancing the health and well-being of our children, ensuring they remain in school and have the best possible start in life.

On another important note, the Library Services have now been fully devolved with two fully operational libraries in Rumuruti and Nanyuki. However, we face a crucial challenge; there is currently no allocation for library services in our budget. I urge this Assembly to consider allocating funds to modernise these services and to extend library access further, particularly to the ward level, so that all our residents, regardless of their location, may benefit from this vital service.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the agriculture sector, it is with great honour and a deep sense of responsibility that I am before you today to share the state of agriculture in our county, the backbone of our economy, as well as our plans for enhancing agricultural productivity while ensuring the well-being of our people.

As we all know, the agricultural sector in Kenya contributes approximately 51% to our nation’s GDP, with 26% of this contribution being direct and 25% indirect. More importantly,

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the sector is a major employer, providing livelihoods for over 40% of the entire population, with 70% of our rural population depending on it for their sustenance.

Laikipia County is no exception to the importance of agriculture and livestock farming. Our county's economy is anchored in these sectors, supporting food security and the livelihoods of countless families. Many of our farmers practice mixed farming, integrating crop production with livestock to optimise resource use and enhance food security.

However, in recent years, agricultural productivity has stagnated and we must take immediate and decisive action to address this challenge. There is a clear need for investments in infrastructure, sustainable farming practices and enhanced market access. It is only through these interventions that we will build the resilience of our farmers and boost productivity.

Mr. Speaker, my administration is working closely with over 100 agricultural stakeholders, including agribusinesses, cooperatives, government bodies, research institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), financial institutions and technology providers. Each of these stakeholders plays a critical role in ensuring the agricultural sector functions effectively. Through continuous partnerships, we can leverage the strengths of each partner to overcome challenges, create opportunities thus driving forward the sector.

We are in the process of developing various policies, bills and strategy papers that will shape and improve the agricultural sector in the county. The following papers will be fast-tracked in this House to achieve our desired outcomes.

First, the Laikipia Agriculture & Livestock Extension Services Policy which aims to ensure that agricultural extension services are adequately funded and establish effective linkages between extension service providers and other stakeholders involved in technology development and provision of facilitating factors.

Second, the Agro ecology Strategy, which will accelerate the adoption of appropriate agro ecological approaches and practices, leading to improved biodiversity, restoration of environmental health and better land management practices.

We are working on the Laikipia Coffee Policy to implement Section 40 of the Crops Act, 2013. This will facilitate the licensing of coffee producers and protect and regulate their interests along the value chain. The Laikipia Warehouse Receipt System (WRS) will be introduced to improve commodity storage, reduce postharvest losses, curb value chain inefficiencies, and increase farmers' financial earnings.

The County Rangeland Management Policy has been approved by the Cabinet, with the accompanying Bill now in its second draft stage. We are also finalising the County Dairy Policy to promote the growth and sustainability of the dairy sector through enhanced milk production, quality assurance and value addition.

In our efforts to improve agricultural productivity and ensure food security, my administration prioritizes continuous agricultural extension services for farmers. These services are crucial for transforming farming practices, improving farm management while adapting to changing market and environmental conditions. Through Farm Field Days and Agricultural Shows, held every May, we aim to provide farmers with direct access to practical knowledge, new technologies and valuable networks.

We are developing Agricultural Training Centres (ATCs) in Laikipia North, West and East, which will serve as hubs of knowledge, innovation as well as capacity building to equip

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farmers with the skills and technologies needed to succeed in a competitive agricultural environment.

Mr. Speaker, the adoption of mechanisation and modern agricultural technologies is vital for transforming our farming sector into a more efficient, productive and sustainable industry. We are committed to promoting the use of tractors, planters, harvesters, irrigation systems and precision farming tools to improve on yields, reduce wastage and optimise resource use. Digital technologies such as mobile apps for farm management, weather forecasting and market linkages will also enable farmers to make informed decisions, increase market access and adapt to changing climatic conditions.

To enhance agricultural productivity, we have prioritised the promotion of high-value crops such as beans, potatoes and sunflowers. We are also working to increase potato production through an MOU with the Kenya Potato Council and ensuring subsidised fertiliser distribution. To address logistical challenges, the County Government has opened satellite depots to make fertilisers more accessible to farmers.

We are also promoting high-value fruit tree crops such as avocados, macadamias and coffee. Avocado farming, particularly, has significant potential, with growing demand both domestically and internationally. We are introducing improved Hass avocado varieties and providing training on best farming practices to help farmers meet international standards.

Mr. Speaker, coffee, one of Kenya's most valuable cash crops, is another key focus. We are enhancing coffee farming through high-quality seedlings, technical support and plans to build coffee pulping centres within the county.

Macadamia farming offers great potential for increasing farmers' incomes. We are supporting this farming by providing quality seedlings and technical advice on orchard management, pest control as well as harvesting techniques.

To tackle the challenges posed by erratic rainfall, we are focusing on irrigation development, including acquiring more an excavator to desilt three dams per ward. We will be seeking additional funds to purchase more irrigation machinery to meet our targets.

In livestock production, we remain committed to enhancing the red meat, dairy, and pig production value chains. For red meat, we are introducing high-yielding, disease-resistant breeds, establishing modern abattoirs and promoting best livestock management practices.

The dairy industry, which significantly contributes to our economy, will benefit from improved dairy breeds and technology for better pasture production. Additionally, we are expanding the pig production sector, which offers potential due to its low entry cost and high market demand.

Fodder production is a priority, as it supports livestock farming. We are already promoting the cultivation of nutritious, drought resistant fodder crops and explore innovative solutions like Azolla feeds and Black Soldier Flies farming, which provide eco-friendly, income-generating opportunities for rural communities.

Through these strategies, we are dedicated to transforming agriculture in Laikipia County into a more productive, resilient and sustainable sector. Our efforts will create jobs, improve food security, and increase farmers' incomes, contributing to the overall prosperity of our county.

Mr. Speaker, on matters of national importance, the partnership between the county and national government was evident in Segera Ward, where the National Livestock

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Vaccination Program was launched to combat Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR). The event, attended by Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, Cabinet Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development and Livestock Principal Secretary Jonathan Mueke, marked a significant step toward ensuring healthier livestock, stronger livelihoods and a more food-secure community.

I urge the entire nation to support this vaccination drive, which was initiated in Laikipia for the benefit of the livestock sector. Additionally, livestock vaccination should not be politicized, especially in a county like Laikipia, where the livestock economy plays a crucial role in contributing to national wealth.

Still on partnerships Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that I recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the

National Potato Council of Kenya (NPCK) for the Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI). This partnership, supported by AGRA, Egerton University and KARLO, aims to tackle challenges facing our potato farmers, including low productivity, poor agronomic practices and limited market access. Together, we will work towards sustainable solutions that will improve the potato value chain and foster a more prosperous future for our farmers.

In a nutshell, these initiatives represent the vision we have for Laikipia—a thriving county where agriculture, innovation, and community collaboration lead the way to sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to bring to the attention of this Assembly critical issues of water scarcity and environmental sustainability in Laikipia County. Water scarcity continues to be a significant challenge, particularly in areas not served by NAWASCO and NYAHUWASCO. To tackle this, we have undertaken hydrogeological surveys in 135 sites across the county. From these, we have successfully rehabilitated 36 boreholes, drilled and capped 28 new boreholes and, in partnership with development partners such as Bethel Network, drilled and equipped 21 additional boreholes.

In collaboration with our partners, we have also rehabilitated six water dams and pans, completed the survey and design of six major water projects, with several others currently underway. Additionally, through the Equalization Fund, we have implemented 11 projects aimed at improving water access in underserved areas.

To this end, we are conducting capacity-building programs, focusing on governance, operations and maintenance training for project management committees and beneficiaries. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, empowering our communities to maintain these vital water sources.

Further strengthening our commitment to rural water provision, we are fast-tracking the operationalization of the Laikipia Rural Water and Sanitation Company in partnership with WASREB and other stakeholders. This initiative will address the historical governance challenges of rural water schemes and boreholes, while simultaneously increasing funding opportunities to develop water infrastructure in rural Laikipia.

In addition, we have commenced the review of the Laikipia County Water Bill, which will be presented to this Assembly in May 2025 for your consideration and endorsement.

In our urban areas, while our water companies have continued to perform well, the rapid population growth in towns like Nanyuki and Nyahururu has led to water deficits. Aging pipelines and high levels of non-revenue water aggravate these challenges. To address these

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issues, my government is implementing several key projects. In Nanyuki Town, we are upgrading 70 kilometres of water pipelines, replacing over 1,400 meters of pipeline, and solarizing the Baraka and Taji boreholes.

This project is funded by the World Bank through the Water Sector Trust Fund. Additionally, we are implementing the Nanyuki River Water Common Intake Project, which will provide an additional 6 million litres of water per day. In Nyahururu Town, we are upgrading 41 kilometres of the water pipeline network and enhancing our ERP system with technical modules and GIS mapping, also supported by the World Bank.

On the environmental front, we have developed the Laikipia County Environment Action Plan, which will guide our county's environmental initiatives, ensuring sustainable management of our resources. We have also successfully implemented various environmental projects under the FLLoCA program.

We are committed to addressing the water and environmental challenges that face Laikipia County. Through these initiatives, we aim to improve water security, enhance governance, and ensure sustainable environmental management for the wellbeing of our people.

Mr. Speaker, over the past two and a half years, my administration has made considerable progress in enhancing our county's infrastructure, particularly in road development and urban planning.

Through a strategic mix of contracted works and the leasing of modern equipment, the Department of Infrastructure, Roads, Land, and Urban Planning has successfully opened 203 kilometres of new roads, graded 911 kilometres, and gravelled a further 359 kilometres. These improvements have significantly boosted the accessibility of various regions.

Additionally, we have installed 783 metres of culverts to improve drainage systems, ensuring better road quality and safer travel.

To further consolidate these achievements, the department is in the process of acquiring advanced road maintenance equipment, which will play a crucial role in the sustainable upkeep and expansion of our road network. These efforts are vital for enhancing connectivity, stimulating trade, and ultimately improving the lives of our residents by providing better access to essential services and opportunities.

On the front of urban development, Laikipia has reached a major milestone with the official recognition of three municipalities: Nanyuki, Nyahururu, and Rumuruti. This recognition not only acknowledges the growth of these towns but also presents a new phase in their development.

In particular, Nanyuki and Rumuruti have both met the qualifications for the Kenya Urban Support Programme (KUSP), a World Bank-funded initiative aimed at implementing transformative urban infrastructure projects that will further modernise and enhance these towns.

The Rumuruti Development Plan has been completed and is currently undergoing surveying at the Survey of Kenya. This marks an important step towards structured land allocation and the orderly development of the town. Additionally, in partnership with the National Land Commission, we have facilitated the issuance of allotment letters to 800 residents of Likii Estate.

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This milestone allows these residents to process their lease documents, effectively securing their land tenure and providing them with greater stability. Through the Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Programme (KISIP), another World Bank initiative, we are in the final stages of regularising land tenure.

This will soon culminate in the issuance of title deeds, offering residents the security of formal land ownership. In our continued efforts to encourage growth and development in emerging towns, we have submitted comprehensive development plans for Naibor, Kona Mbaya A and B, Ihiga-ini, Mithuri, Veterinary, and Nakwang to this Assembly for approval. These plans are integral to our vision of ensuring that urban expansion is both structured and inclusive, with equitable land ownership for all the residents of Laikipia.

These accomplishments are a clear reflection of our unwavering commitment to creating a better, more connected, and prosperous Laikipia for both present and future generations. Through these initiatives, we are not only enhancing physical infrastructure but also laying the foundation for sustainable growth and development across our county.

Mr. Speaker, when I assumed governance of Laikipia County in 2022, the healthcare system was, on the brink of collapse. But since then, the sector has made remarkable strides in reversing this unfortunate situation. We have taken deliberate steps to reorganise and strategize in order to ensure that Laikipians have access to the healthcare services they need, in a convenient and affordable manner and closer to home.

Health promotion and disease prevention are the backbone of primary healthcare and universal health coverage. We have made significant advances in improving service delivery across all areas of healthcare.

However, the improvements we have made have led to a surge in demand for services, not only from Laikipians but also from neighbouring counties. This has placed additional strain on our healthcare systems, particularly given the limited human resources and health commodities available.

In our ongoing effort to transform healthcare, we remain committed to maintaining a stable supply of medical products across all our health facilities. We have made significant progress in reducing the outstanding KEMSA bills inherited from the previous administration. We have paid off current bills and continued to ensure the timely delivery of essential medicines.

In the 2023/2024 financial year, the Laikipia Health Service (LHS) achieved a commendable revenue growth of 20% compared to the previous year. This was primarily due to the full implementation of the 100% ring-fencing of hospital revenues, effective from 1st January 2024, following the enactment of the Facility Improvement Financing Act of 2023.

The overall revenue target for hospitals in the 2023/2024 financial year was Kshs. 624,500,000. The department achieved Kshs.584 million, representing a 94% performance rate, the highest in the entire County Government.

The department continues to rely on patient expenditure, SHA reimbursements and capitation payments for revenue generation. Despite the challenges posed by the full rollout of SHA in October 2024, the department has effectively navigated the transition to the new social health insurance model and the registration of new members into the Social Health Insurance Fund (SHIF).

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My administration is on an ambitious journey to equip seven new theatres across the county. Two additional theatres will be provided at each of the two County Referral Hospitals (Nanyuki and Nyahururu) and one theatre table each will be installed at Rumuruti, Ndindika and Lamuria Sub-County Hospitals.

I am pleased to report that the additional theatre at Nyahururu CRH is now fully operational, enhancing the facility's surgical services. We are also equipping and operationalising two new radiology units in Kimanjo and Rumuruti, which will provide digital X-ray and ultrasonography services. The existing radiology units at Nanyuki and Nyahururu hospitals will be expanded to offer MRI and high-resolution CT scans.

Work is ongoing to improve outpatient infrastructure at our three main hospitals. We have acquired modern hospital laundries, installed state-of-the-art oxygen-generating equipment at Nyahururu and Rumuruti Hospitals, and finalised the installation of a new modern incinerator. We have also operationalised a new CCC clinic block and a Blood Transfusion Satellite at NTRH. Additionally, the new Mother and Child Unit at Nyahururu County Referral Hospital is now fully functional, offering modern amenities for mothers and children.

We have successfully expanded the range of services offered to meet the growing healthcare needs of our population. Notably, the expanded renal services at Nyahururu and Nanyuki Referral Hospitals have provided significant relief not only to Laikipians but also to those from neighbouring counties. Oncology services, ENT surgeries, orthopaedic surgeries, and other advanced medical services are now available at our referral hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, in line with my manifesto, my administration remains committed to ensuring a dispensary in every sub-location, upgrading at least one health centre in every ward to a Centre of Excellence and upgrading at least one health facility in each administrative sub-county to a Level-4 hospital.

Furthermore, we are working to elevate Nanyuki, Nyahururu and Rumuruti Hospitals to Level-5 status. I am pleased to note that Rabal and Miteta Dispensaries are now fully operational and we will soon will be opening Wamura and Muhonia Dispensaries in Laikipia East.

To further enhance accessibility, we are currently constructing Sang'a, Kiamariga, and Male Dispensaries, with more planned for the next financial year. We will continue to support Level-1 healthcare services at the community level. Our dedicated Community Health Promoters have been instrumental in providing health education, mobilising communities for disease prevention, and promoting health-seeking behaviours across the county, particularly in underserved and hard-to-reach areas. Unlike previous years, where payments were delayed, Community Health Promoters in Laikipia County are now paid on time, with arrears of no more than two months.

Human Resources for Health (HRH) remain a cornerstone of service delivery and a top priority for my administration. Since I took office, our healthcare workers have remained motivated due to our deliberate efforts to address their needs, such as promotions and re-designations.

We have absorbed 81 health workers into permanent and pensionable employment, promoted over 60 healthcare workers under common-cadre promotions, and more than 300 others through competitive promotions. We are also working on converting more than 290 health workers employed on a professional casual basis into permanent and pensionable staff.

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Furthermore, over 30 healthcare workers are currently being supported to further their studies in various medical fields.

The health department has adopted an inclusive and aligned governance structure, one that addresses emerging health issues such as the Primary Healthcare model. This new structure facilitates collaboration across different units and streamlines reporting lines, ensuring better coordination of services. Management boards have been appointed at all county and subcounty hospitals, and these boards play an essential role in providing oversight, promoting hospital development and approving plans to implement county health strategies.

The department has also partnered with various stakeholders to develop strategic plans for each hospital, ensuring alignment with the CIDP, the county manifesto, and national and county health policies. We have also developed the County Health Sector Strategic Plan 2023-2032, which aligns the department's objectives with global, regional, national, and county health priorities. This plan is supported by sector-specific documents such as the County Nutrition Action Plan and the County Adolescents and Young Persons Plan.

Despite the tremendous achievements, the health sector faces several challenges. These include overcrowding in wards, particularly during peak periods, which is putting immense pressure on our resources. Some critical departments, such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy, continue to use outdated equipment, impacting service delivery. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for advanced diagnostic equipment such as CT-scans, MRIs, and chemotherapy machines.

We occasionally experience delays in funding from the National Hospital Insurance Fund (NHIF), which affects our ability to procure essential medical supplies and settle supplier debts promptly. Additionally, rising costs of medical supplies and pharmaceuticals have strained our operational budget. There remains a shortage of specialised personnel in critical areas such as renal care, oncology, and critical care, limiting our ability to fully utilise specialised units.

To address these challenges, we plan to build modern outpatient blocks at our two referral hospitals, providing space for all specialist clinics, accident and emergency departments, renal units and the much-needed ICU and HDU.

We will work closely with the private sector, the national government, and development partners to secure additional funding for critical infrastructure projects, including the acquisition of advanced diagnostic equipment.

In terms of human resources, we will intensify our recruitment efforts to attract specialists in key areas such as nephrology, oncology, pathology, and critical care. We also plan to enhance staff retention by offering career development opportunities, both locally and internationally, through collaborations and specialised training.

Mr. Speaker, still on health, I wish to inform this House that my administration has assembled a team of highly esteemed health professionals who are working on the idea of establishing a county medical school at the Nanyuki Teaching and Referral Hospital. This initiative is a major step toward strengthening healthcare training and expanding educational opportunities for our youth.

For many years, thousands of bright and ambitious students from Laikipia have aspired to pursue medical-related courses but have been unable to do so due to limited admission slots in existing institutions.

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This medical school will provide them with a local, accessible and high-quality alternative, ensuring that their dreams are no longer out of reach. Furthermore, the institution will be a game changer for the economy of Nanyuki town, which has for many years lacked an institution of higher learning. The influx of students, faculty, and medical professionals will stimulate business growth, create employment opportunities, and position Nanyuki as a centre of academic excellence and medical innovation.

Mr. Speaker, for this noble vision to materialize, the support of this Honourable House will be crucial. I, therefore, urge the Assembly to expedite with precision any legislation that will be brought to the floor in support of this initiative. Let us work together to ensure that no procedural delay stands in the way of this transformative project. The future of our youth, the advancement of our healthcare sector, and the economic growth of our county depend on our collective commitment to this cause.

Mr. Speaker, the burden of hefty hospital bills has weighed heavily on our people for far too long, pushing many families into financial distress. With the Social Health Insurance Fund (SHIF), this challenge will be significantly eased—provided we all come together to support its implementation. Unlike the defunct NHIF, which had a waiting period before benefits could be accessed, this new scheme takes effect immediately upon registration, ensuring that no one is left vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, on this issue, I urge the political class to rise above partisan debates and focus on educating the citizenry on the importance of enrolling in this health scheme. Let us not politicize healthcare but instead work together to ensure that every citizen enjoys the benefits of affordable and accessible medical services.

Despite some hiccups in the implementation of the scheme, the government is committed to addressing these issues and will make the necessary adjustments to ensure its smooth operation and success.

Mr. Speaker, in an effort to build a well-motivated and committed workforce, the County Government has adopted a new employment policy that will see public servants hired on permanent and pensionable terms. This strategic shift is aimed at enhancing job security, improving service delivery and promoting personal and professional growth among our employees. By providing stable employment opportunities, we are fostering a dedicated workforce that can focus on delivering quality services to the people of Laikipia without the uncertainty of contract renewals.

This policy reflects our administration's commitment to strengthening the public service sector and ensuring that our employees have the stability and motivation they need to excel in their respective roles. To uphold the principles of fairness and transparency, the County Public Service Board is currently conducting interviews to fill vacancies that arose following the expiry of various contractual positions.

This recruitment process is being carried out with the highest level of integrity to ensure that only the most qualified and competent individuals are selected. Our objective is to build a skilled and dedicated team that will effectively serve the people of Laikipia. As we implement this policy, we reaffirm our dedication to merit-based hiring and fostering a culture of excellence within our public service.

As I come to a close, Mr. Speaker, the implementation of the various projects contained in our budget and the attainment of our manifesto rest squarely on the availability

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of funds to finance this budget. As we continue engaging the National Government on our share of revenue allocation, we must also ensure that we optimise our Own Source Revenues.

In the current financial year 2024/2025, the Laikipia County Revenue Board has been tasked with an Own Source Revenue target of KES 1.475 billion. By the end of the third quarter, ending on 31st March 2025, our Own Source Revenue stood at KES 880 million, which represents 60% of the annual target. This is a clear indication of significant year-on-year growth, which has remained consistent from the Financial Year 2022/2023 to date.

While this performance is below the expected level as of this date, the Revenue Board has already implemented various revenue enhancement measures to bridge this gap. Furthermore, the County Revenue Board seeks the indulgence of the County Assembly to ensure the swift enactment of the Laikipia County Finance Act 2025 and the Laikipia County Valuation Roll 2022. These critical legislative measures will enable the County to tap into the high potential revenue stream of property taxes, thereby enhancing our financial sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, I am strongly convicted that time is now for our county to break free from the cycle of lamentation and take charge of its own destiny. We can no longer afford to dwell on challenges without taking decisive action.

Instead, we must fully utilize the resources at our disposal and embrace a complete shift in how we operate. This means adopting modern and sustainable farming methods to boost food security, strengthening our revenue streams to enhance financial independence and fostering a business-friendly environment that attracts investment and creates opportunities for our people. However, to realize these ambitions, we need a strong legislative framework that supports innovation, efficiency and accountability in governance.

I call upon this August House to enact appropriate legislation that will facilitate this paradigm shift.

Additionally, legal frameworks should be put in place to encourage private sector participation and investment in key economic sectors. With the right laws and policies, we can create an enabling environment for growth, efficiency, and prosperity. The time for change is now, and I urge this honourable assembly to take the lead in shaping a better future for our county.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter this new year of service, we remain unwavering in our commitment to transforming Laikipia County into a model of progress, prosperity and sustainability. Our shared vision for the future is one where our people are empowered, our environment is preserved and our economy thrives.

I would like to once again express my deepest gratitude to the members of this Assembly for your dedication, your hard work and your partnership in shaping the future of our beloved county. Together, we will continue to build a Laikipia that is stronger, healthier and more prosperous for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

God Bless us all,

God Bless Laikipia and its people.

Speaker: Thank you, H. E the Governor, Joshua Irungu. Hon. Members, I would like to pass it to you that we have prepared a cup of tea that will be served in our cafeteria. So after here, we will all join H.E the Governor as we converge together as a family and talk together.

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ADJOURNMENT

Speaker: The sittings of this House now stand adjourned until next week Tuesday, 8th April, 2025 at 10.00 a.m.

The House rose at 4.00 p.m.

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