



**Association of  
Former International  
Civil Servants of  
the United Nations (Kenya)**

# Kenya Vision 2030: Priorities, Challenges and Prospects

## KEY MESSAGES

- Vision 2030 is the country's long-term blueprint to transform Kenya into a modern, globally competitive, middle-income nation, offering a high quality of life for all citizens by the year 2030.
- The Vision was developed and adopted after broad stakeholder consultations and is therefore a broadly representative and inclusive policy document.
- The Vision was framed with a range of key policy actions, reforms and programmes across political, economic and social pillars as well as critical enablers.
- Implementation of Vision 2030 programmes and projects has produced mixed results due to a number of challenges, notably weaknesses in project management, corruption and declining commitment by political leadership.
- Its implementation requires a recommitment of political leadership at both the national and county government level in order to successfully achieve the Vision's long-term development goals.

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## 1. Introduction

Since Independence and until 2008, Kenya implemented top-down policies and programmes in five-year national development plans. The country experienced its worst economic performance in the period 1997–2002. In response, the government embarked on an economic recovery strategy that yielded popular outcomes (e.g., increased economic growth, universal primary education, better infrastructure and fiscal discipline).

In 2008, following the disruptive setbacks that the country suffered over the 2007 general elections, the government embarked on a new development approach by establishing Vision 2030 as the country's economic blueprint. Vision 2030 is implemented through five-year medium-term rolling plans, the first one covering the period 2008–2012. The medium-term plans incorporate the policy recommendations of the manifestos

of the political party or coalition that is in government at the time.

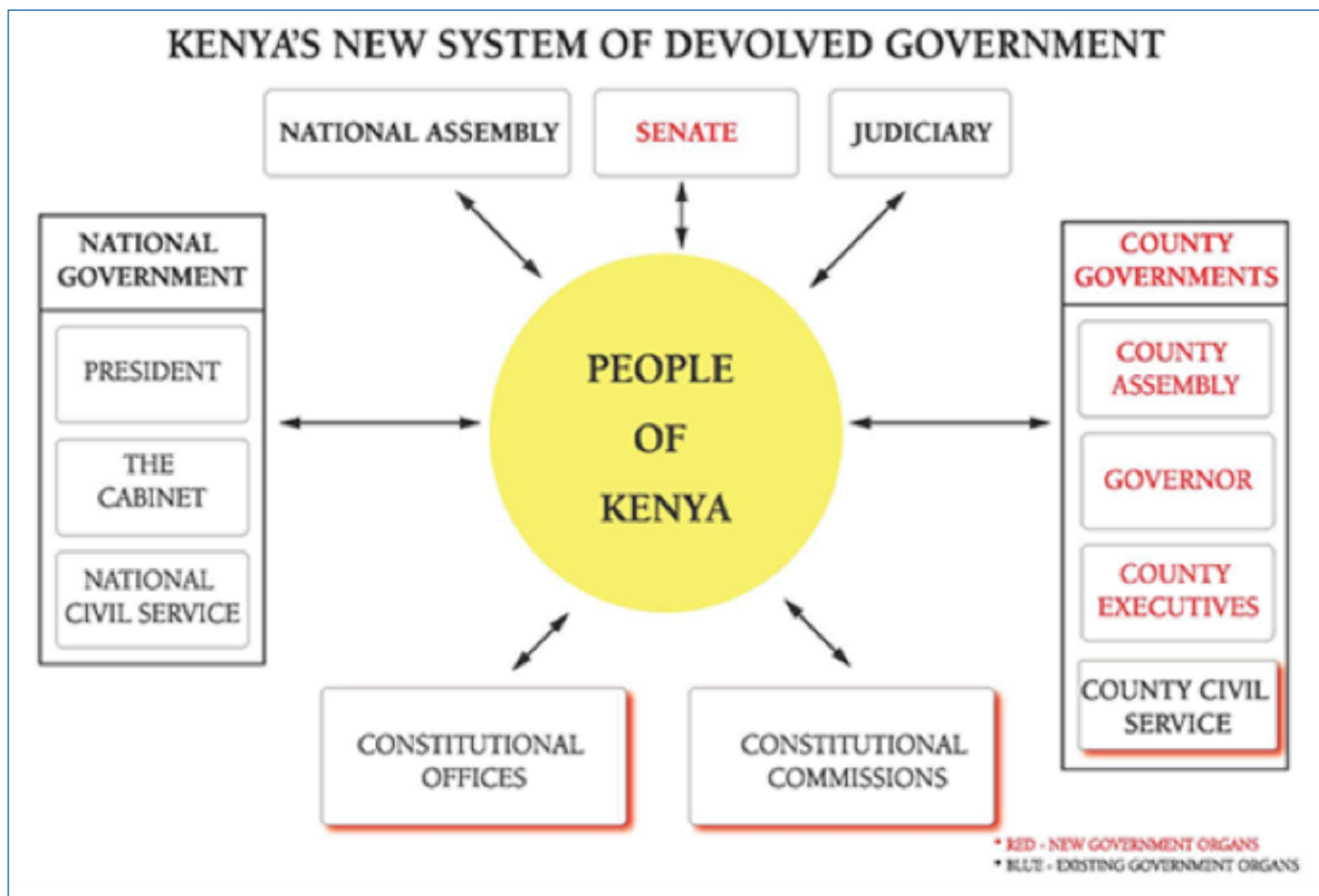
The country appears to have enthusiastically adopted Kenya Vision 2030, whose aim is to transform the country into *a modern, globally competitive, middle-income country, offering a high quality of life for all citizens by the year 2030*. Vision 2030 was developed through wide stakeholder participation involving the government, private sector, non-state actors, civil society, and development partners. It is being implemented through phases using five-year medium-term expenditure frameworks (MTEF).

In 2010, the country adopted a new Constitution that, among other things, resulted in the establishment of a devolved system of national government and 47 county governments, as well as a bicameral presidential parliamentary system (senate and national assembly). This policy brief highlights the priorities and challenges in the implementation of Vision 2030.

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## 2. Background

The overall development objective of Vision 2030 is to realise higher and sustainable economic growth in a more equitable environment, accompanied by increased employment opportunities. Vision 2030 identified key policy actions, reforms and programmes that are framed within political, economic and social pillars as well as critical enablers in their implementation.

The **political pillar** identified key priorities to include improving governance, entrenching the rule of law and human rights, facilitating political processes to promote democracy and making devolution work. The **economic pillar** identified priorities as being (a) tourism, (b) agriculture, livestock and fisheries; (c) wholesale, retail and international trade; (d) manufacturing; (e) business process outsourcing; (f) financial services; (g) oil and other minerals. The **social pillar** focuses on (a) education and training; (b) health; (c) environment, water and sanitation; (d) population, urbanization and housing; (e) gender, vulnerable groups and youth; and (f) sports, culture and arts.

The **key enablers** include (a) infrastructure; (b) information and communications technology; (c) science, technology and innovation; (d) land reforms; (e) public sector reforms; (f) human resource development, labour and employment; (g)

national values and ethics; (h) ending drought emergencies; and (i) security, peace-building and conflict resolution.

A number of implementation and institutional mechanisms were established to monitor and provide feedback on the progress of implementation of Vision 2030 initiatives. These included: (a) the National Economic and Social Council (NESC); (b) the Vision Delivery Board, (c) the Vision 2030 Secretariat; and (d) the annual State of the Nation Address by the President. However, a number of risks and challenges have been encountered in the implementation of the various transformative policy actions, legislative reforms and priority programmes embedded in Vision 2030.

## 3. Challenges in Implementing Vision 2030

With a decade remaining, Kenya is struggling to achieve Vision 2030. A number of studies have been carried out on the challenges in the implementation of Vision 2030 (e.g., Kilonzi and Ndung'u, 2014; GoK, 2013; Moyare, 2012; Nkirote, 2011; GoK, 2008; Lofgren and Kumar, 2007) as well as media reports. Some of the findings are summarized below.

### a. Leadership and Politics:

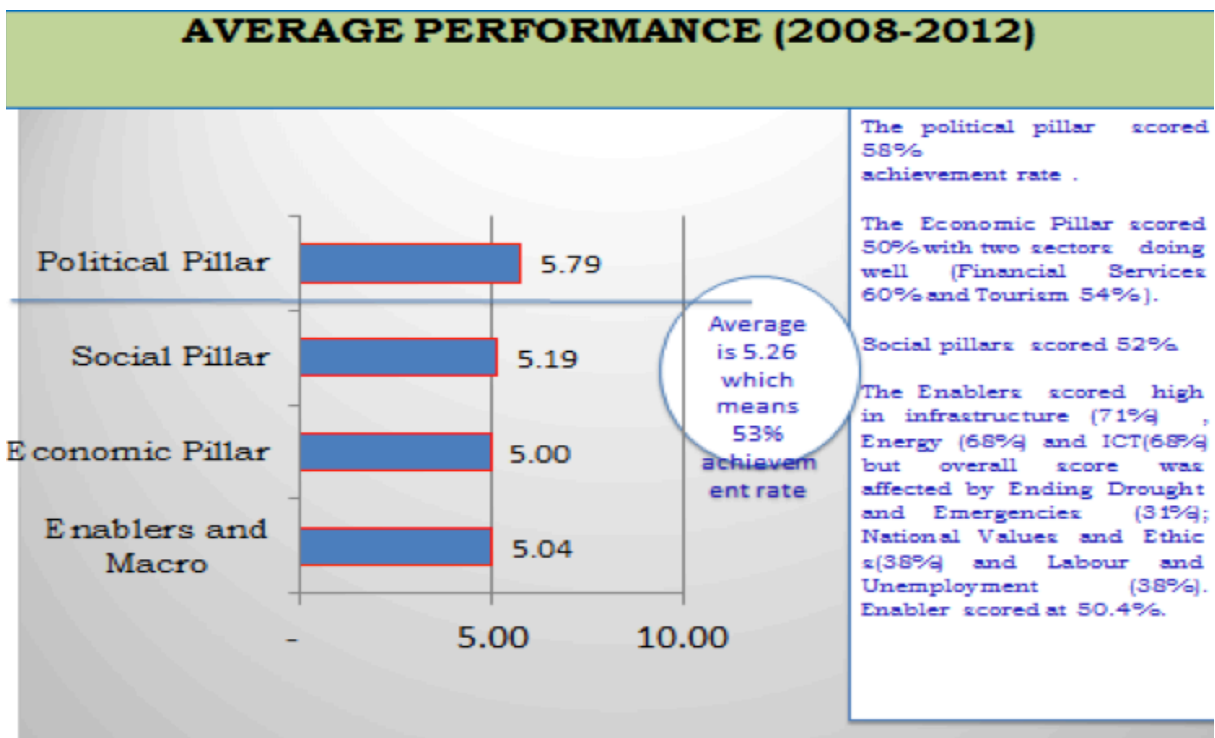
Following devolution, there appears to have been diminishing political commitment to Vision 2030

priorities and targets. Due to the nature of competitive politics, different election promises have been pursued by politicians to endear themselves to voters at both the national and county levels. It is time for the country to engage in political dialogue and consensus-building on Vision 2030 priorities and make the necessary and inclusive amendments for the sake of the country's long-term prosperity. Kenyans can learn from other countries (e.g., India, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Republic of Korea and Singapore) that have successfully pursued inclusive political and socio-economic development goals.

**b. Disappointment with implementation results:**

Vision 2030 targeted quite ambitious development objectives. However, the results have been less than

satisfactory in many priority sectors. For example, Vision 2030 sought to accelerate GDP growth to an annual rate of 10 per cent within five years. This was quite ambitious considering that annual **real** GDP growth has been around 3 per cent during the last 25 years. It is noteworthy that current estimates have been revised downwards to about 5–6 per cent per year. Another ambitious target was reducing the number of Kenyans living below the poverty line from 46 per cent in 2008 to 28 per cent in 2012. This has not been achieved. The poverty line estimates the proportion of population that is living on less than the international poverty line (US\$1.90 per day (Ksh. 200) in 2011 purchasing power parity - PPP).



**c. Unstructured and inadequate co-ordination:**

The institutional mechanisms for implementation co-ordination were weakly structured and poorly resourced in such focal operations as finances, personnel, reporting mechanisms, coordination of cross-cutting programmes and projects, and dispute settlement particularly in procurement. Due to divisive politics and competing and vested interests, key personnel have had divergent loyalties resulting in ineffective coordination and implementation.

**d. Many capital-intensive development projects:**

Many of the priority projects were capital-intensive (e.g., roads, transport, energy). For example, the first medium-term plan (2008–2012) was budgeted at KSh1.6 trillion, with KSh500 billion from government while KSh1.1

trillion was expected from private investments. The private sector has not been forthcoming in taking up the expected public-private partnerships. The country has been grappling with resource mobilization due to the high cost of borrowing (worsening debt burden) and limited domestic savings. In a nutshell, inadequate and limited resources have seriously slowed the pace of realization of Vision 2030 aspirations.

**e. Uncertain political environment:**

For the last three decades, the country has experienced an uncertain political environment characterized by ethnic antagonism, divisive elections, token inclusivity, lack of national values and a poor investment environment. This has diverted attention away from Vision 2030 goals.

f. **Corruption and procurement fraud:**

Procurement fraud and corruption have been major impediments to the realization of Vision 2030 dreams. It has been reported in some quarters that 30 per cent of the national budget is stolen, squandered or misappropriated. Institutions to fight corruption and procurement fraud (e.g., the Public Procurement Administrative Review Board, Public Procurement Oversight Authority, Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS)) have not been effective and efficient in curbing these pervasive malpractices. The country must eradicate these nebulous challenges in order to realize its long-term development agenda.

g. **Limited public participation:**

Despite being a constitutional requirement, there has been limited, structured, purposive and inclusive public participation in setting national and county priorities, their implementation framework, monitoring and evaluation, and management of peoples' expectations. This is crucial for popular ownership, appreciation of the inherent challenges and gradual realization of Vision 2030 aspirations and goals.

h. **Resistance to Performance Contracting:**

Tracking project implementation requires regular monitoring and mechanisms that ensure transparency and accountability. Performance contracts are central to improving implementation of Vision 2030 priorities. Performance contracts pressure organizations to remain focused because of the potential risk of negative publicity associated with poor performance. However, there has been considerable resistance from many quarters, particularly those that stand to lose from improved accountability and oversight of any corrupt practices. Finally, performance contracting has disappeared from the public service occasioning huge losses to the ordinary citizen in the area of service delivery, amongst others.

#### 4. Way Forward

Some strategies that may revive the focus on national development priorities are highlighted below:

a. **Political leadership and national consensus:**

Across the world and throughout history, political leadership has been crucial in sharpening and realizing socio-economic development. It is therefore imperative that political leaders, **at both the national and county levels**, seek political consensus and ownership in implementing the right policies, reforms and programmes to secure the country's long-term prosperity. The handshake between President Uhuru Kenyatta and Hon. Raila Odinga is a golden opportunity towards building a responsive, issue-based, political culture and shared national vision.

b. **Reframing the "Big Four Agenda" within the Vision 2030 framework:**

The President's second term in office has prioritized the Big Four Agenda on food security, healthcare, housing, and manufacturing. Indeed, these four priorities are embedded in Vision 2030 to guarantee citizens nutritious and affordable food, improved and accessible healthcare, decent housing, and productive employment (through manufacturing). Reframing the Big Four Agenda through public campaigns could revive the long-term aspirations of Vision 2030, for both the current and future cohorts of political leaders. It is high time that leaders embraced measures that would put the country back on the path of socio-economic development rather than concentrating too much on short-term political gains. Even so, leaders must be held accountable for their election promises.

c. **Resource mobilization for priority development initiatives:**

Experience elsewhere tells us that it is possible to realize the country's development objectives, particularly in the medium-term framework. It will require mobilization of resources to finance the much-desired socio-economic priorities. This will, of necessity, involve significant improvement in governance (e.g., fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law) and infrastructure that will boost the investment climate for both domestic and foreign investors.

d. **Capacity-building:**

Kenya is a beautiful and blessed country. Despite challenges from time to time, its people have demonstrated considerable resilience in overcoming negative setbacks such as the 2007/08 post-election violence and the August 2017 elections. Kenya's leadership needs to build on this momentum to build capacity, at different national and county levels, to foster and facilitate inclusive development. Capacity building is required to link policy, planning and budgeting; enhance inclusiveness; and strengthen empowerment of marginalized and disadvantaged segments of the population, amongst other priorities.

e. **Fighting ethnic discrimination and corruption:**

It is well known that ethnic exclusion and prevalent corruption have seriously hindered the country from achieving its desired long-term socio-economic progress. However, in recent times, the President has drawn the country's attention to the profound consequences of these vices. All institutions of government have been urged to strategically focus on fighting corruption and the evils of ethnic division. However, it will require commitment and resources to, among other things, (i) change the national mindset; (ii) improve transparency, accountability and rule of law in all spheres of national life; (iii) accelerate the implementation of checks and balances in government; and (iv) re-engineer core national values and foundations of integrity so that the country can stand tall in the family of nations.

f. **Monitoring and evaluation systems:**

While significant improvements were achieved under the previous performance contract-ing system, new and viable means of entrenching monitor-ing and evaluation of development programmes must be sought and instituted. This will improve decision-making processes such as in resource allocation or evaluation of out-comes (strategic management). With public participation, this will also promote accountability, transparency and empowerment.

## 5. Conclusions

Kenya's Vision 2030 and subsequent economic priorities have been focused around President Uhuru Kenyatta's Big Four Agenda: improving food security, healthcare, housing and creating employ-ment opportunities. However, a number of important challenges have been encountered during the implemen-tation of Vision 2030. Short-term political decision-making, limited citizen ownership, and procurement fraud, corruption and financial difficulties have been high on the list of significant obstacles. However, these impediments are not insurmountable. Political leader-ship and consensus-building will be critical in sharpening and implementing the country's development agenda in the foreseeable future.

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