

# GENOWA ECHO

## ENDLESS POTENTIAL

### NEWSLETTER | VOL. 24 - APRIL 2025

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF HOMA BAY



## News Highligts



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# A WORD FROM THE CECM COMMUNICATIONS



**W**elcome to the latest edition of our monthly newsletter. In March, we experienced the beginning of the long rainy season, which allowed us to focus on planting on our farms. Our efforts have been directed not only towards economic and social welfare revival but also towards enhancing food security in the region.

Preparations for significant events coming up in Homa Bay are well underway. The town has become a bustling construction site, with ongoing projects including the Stadium, the County Headquarters, the State Lodge, and the expansion of both the main highway and feeder roads. Residents and entrepreneurs are actively preparing for the anticipated economic boom these events are expected to bring.

A highlight of the month was the Governor's Mentorship Camp, a key initiative by H.E. Governor Gladys Wangari, which took place at Ratanga Girls in Ndhiwa. Over five thousand girls from schools throughout the county participated, leaving empowered to dream big and work towards achieving their goals.

Additionally, the county government continues to strengthen partnerships to enhance service delivery. Recent efforts included hosting the German Ambassador to Kenya and collaborating with partners to bolster healthcare programs. We have also completed the second intake of the Fundi Mangula Scholarship program.

For these initiatives and many others, we present your comprehensive monthly roundup.

**Ms. Roselyn Omollo, CECM GAC&D**

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## Mentorship:

# Governor Wanga Leads the Governor's Girls Mentorship Camp, Calls for Efforts to Maximize Girls' Potentialities

By Communication Team



A light moment at the plenary session during the camp. Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno

Ratang'a Girls Secondary School in Ndhiwa hosted this year's Governor's Girls Mentorship Camp, uniting over 5,000 students from schools throughout the county.

The mentorship program was designed to empower young girls in schools to dream, believe, and achieve their educational and career goals.

By raising awareness of Triple Threat and other obstacles hindering their academic success, as well as introducing them to emerging career opportunities, the camp aimed to equip them with the necessary life skills to overcome harmful cultural gender norms.

The Girls' Edition of the Governor's Mentorship Camp is a continuation of the successful implementation of the mentorship program that began as "Mama County Says."

This camp came at a time when the Governor has taken the lead as a champion in addressing the Triple Threat of new HIV infections, teenage pregnancies and Gender Based Violence facing adolescent girls and young women in the county.

Adolescents aged 10-19 in the In Homabay County, 23% of girls aged 15-19 years have begun childbearing, considerably higher than the national level of 15% (KDHS 2022). HIV remains a

major public health threat for adolescents and young people in Homa Bay. As of 2021, Kenya had an estimated 5,123 adolescent new HIV infections in Homa bay County contributing to 9% (462).

Suba South sub-county contributed to 18.5% of the total estimated new HIV infections (462) across the respective sub-counties (2021).

“  
Mama County  
Says.”



Governor Gladys Wanga conducting a session during the Girls Mentorship Camp at Ratang'a Girls High School. Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno



*Governor Gladys Wanga sharing a topic with one of the participants.  
Photo Credit Eunice Atieno*

In 2022 Homabay 274 SGBV cases were reported, of these 190 (97%) were provided with Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV infection, out of whom 7 (4%) acquired HIV. Additionally, 274 of these adolescents reported being pregnant 4weeks after exposure to SGBV. The Governor has prioritized the Triple Threat through the Women Leadership Caucus which will be part of the mentorship camp.

This is aimed at providing high-level leadership in ending new HIV infections, unintended pregnancies, and sexual and gender-based violence among adolescent girls and young women by addressing the drivers of risk and vulnerability in this population."

The overall goal of this camp is to empower the girls in school while monitoring its impact on the recipients.

We want to mentor a generation that will succeed us on these spaces," she said in her keynote address.

The girls were equipped with the agency to reduce their vulnerability to harmful cultural, gender norms and practices. It also increased their awareness of the Triple Threat and cross-cutting issues affecting adolescent girls and young adults besides inculcating a value system for them to navigate their growth and development to achieve their full potential. Additionally, they were sensitized to emerging career choices.

## **Reproductive Health:**

# **UK Parliamentarians Visit Homa Bay to Discuss Sexual and Reproductive Health**

*By Communication Team*



*The UK Parliamentarians and County Government of Homa Bay Executive Committee pose after discussions on SRH.  
Photo Credit Eunice Atieno*



Governor Gladys Wanga and her administration recently welcomed a delegation from the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Sexual and Reproductive Health Issues to Homa Bay County. This significant visit aimed to deepen understanding of the current state of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the region, alongside the county's comprehensive vision for health and healthcare services.

During her address at the county headquarters, Governor Wanga remarked, "We have had to nearly reinvent the wheel and develop innovative interventions to meet the pressing health challenges we face. While we are pleased with the progress we've made, we recognize that there is still a long journey ahead. Your visit serves as a vital recognition of our ongoing efforts."

The APPG delegation's visit was particularly focused on assessing Homa Bay County's proactive strategies in responding to the interconnected issues of new HIV infections, escalating gender-based violence, and rising rates of teenage pregnancies. Additionally, the delegation sought to identify potential collaborative opportunities that could effectively tackle these urgent sexual and reproductive health issues.

Guided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which serves as the primary UN agency for sexual and reproductive health, the delegation engaged with local health officials and learned about Homa Bay's innovative initiatives. Noteworthy projects include educational campaigns, access to contraceptive methods, and support services for victims of gender-based violence—all designed to tackle the Triple Threat and empower the community.

The delegation also toured the Ngengu Health Center, where they observed firsthand the healthcare services being offered. They engaged with remarkable youth-led initiatives that are making a significant impact at the grassroots level, providing critical education and resources to their peers. These efforts are essential in fostering informed decision-making regarding sexual health and promoting positive reproductive health outcomes.

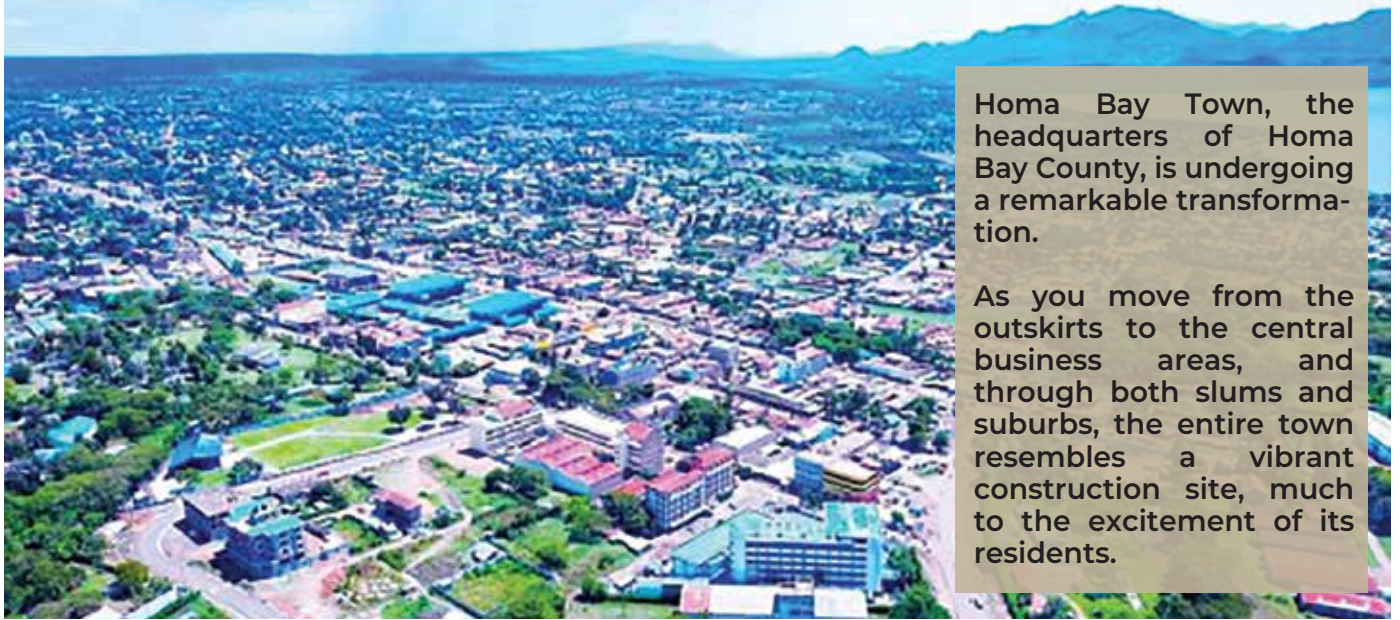
Overall, this visit underscores Homa Bay County's proactive leadership in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), highlighting the need to establish collaborative pathways to enhance the effectiveness of interventions and improve health outcomes for all residents.



A visit to Ngengu Health Center in Rangwe. *Photo Credit: Abnery Pajero*

## Urban Development: Homa Bay Town Embracing Its Newfound Status

By Lawrence Magware



Homa Bay Town, the headquarters of Homa Bay County, is undergoing a remarkable transformation.

As you move from the outskirts to the central business areas, and through both slums and suburbs, the entire town resembles a vibrant construction site, much to the excitement of its residents.

*An aerial view of Homa Bay Town in an undated photo. The town is undergoing a complete makeover. Photo Credit: Agencies*

The ongoing expansion of the Raila Odinga Stadium into a 12,000-seat sports and ceremonial arena is a focal point for everyone entering or leaving the town via the Homa Bay-Rongo Highway. This work, being carried out 18 hours a day, is expected to be completed by May 20th, just in time for the 62nd Madaraka Day celebrations. Once finished, the stadium will join the ranks of the country's leading sports facilities, employing over 100 local youths.

A short walk from the stadium reveals the ongoing construction of the State Lodge, which will make Homa Bay one of the few towns alongside Kisumu and Kisii to have a presidential residence in the former Nyanza Province. Locals, who were previously unfamiliar with such developments, are now flocking to the site to catch a glimpse.

To enhance the town's identity as a lakeside destination, major works at the Homa Bay Lakefront are in full swing. This complex is expected to feature one of Kenya's largest lakeside recreational parks, a modern port with a 500-meter-long steamer jetty, and the country's largest fresh fish market. The economic significance of these projects cannot be overstated.

The feeder roads within the central business district (CBD) and nearby estates are also being improved, with some already in use, making the flow of traffic smoother and more efficient than ever. Perhaps the most significant change will be the completion of the dualling of the town's main highway, a 14-kilometre stretch from Rang'wena Bridge to Junction K'Odooyo. This development will boost the town's economic growth and create space within the central area.

Historically seen as underdeveloped and inferior, Homa Bay is evolving into a major tourism and logistics hub. It is now attracting investments and unprecedented infrastructure development.

Through strategic partnerships, economic-focused policies, and the stable leadership of Governor Gladys Wanga, Homa Bay is experiencing significant growth. The town is increasingly hosting major conferences and events that were once held in Kisumu and elsewhere. With Tom Mboya University, world-class hotels, and improved tourism marketing alongside a welcoming community, Homa Bay is poised for continued advancement.



## Budget and Planning:

# Government Concludes Public Participation on FY 2025/2026 Estimates

By Lawrence Magware



*Chief Officer Finance Mr. Alphonse Wera leads a session during the public participation exercise in Rachuonyo West subcounty.*

*Photo Credit: Geoffrey Khoore*

**T**he Homa Bay County government has successfully concluded an extensive public participation initiative focused on the County Budget Estimates for the financial year 2025/2026. This weeklong engagement kicked off in the vibrant regions of Rachuonyo South and East, spearheaded by the County Department of Finance Planning, with Chief Officers Alphonse Wera and Dr. Lawrence Gworo, representing Finance and Planning, respectively, playing pivotal roles in the process.

The primary objective of this initiative was to promote active citizen involvement in prioritising development projects while also raising awareness about anticipated county revenues. By elucidating how public funds are to be allocated, the exercise aimed to strengthen support for a range of development plans and programs across various county entities. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on project costs and assess their overall value for money, ensuring transparency and accountability.

In accordance with the Public Finance and Management Act, this initiative underscored the importance of meaningful public engagement regarding public expenditures. It was also guided by the Homa Bay County Civic Education and Public Participation (Repeal) Act of 2024, which codifies and institutionalizes consultative processes, designating the village as the primary unit for stakeholder consultation and participatory decision-making in county development matters. The exercise was effectively conducted at the ward level, involving a diverse array of stakeholders from local village clusters and the broader public to discuss pressing issues affecting their communities.

In the Ndhiwa wards, residents voiced their urgent priorities, emphasizing the need for enhancement of the road network, the implementation of additional water supply initiatives, and improvements to health infrastructure.





*A County Budget Officer making submission at an exercise in Ndhiwa. Photo Credit: Geoffrey Khoore*

They highlighted that the rapid population growth in the sub-county has exerted considerable pressure on existing projects. Furthermore, residents called for increased agricultural mechanization and extension services, recognizing these as crucial steps towards bolstering food security in this agriculturally rich region.

Meanwhile, stakeholders in the Suba region advocated for more equitable resource allocation, pointing out that the islands and remote areas face significant disadvantages. The topography and logistical challenges complicate the distribution of goods and services, necessitating a more thoughtful approach to ward-based allocations. In the Karachuonyo constituency, there is optimism that the revival and commercialization of cotton and nut farming could yield substantial benefits. Similarly, in Rangwe sub-county, there are calls for the revitalization of the Kimira Oluch Smallholder Farming Irrigation Scheme, which is seen as vital for enhancing livelihoods and fostering economic resilience in the area.



*A member of the public from Kabuoch North giving his input during the exercise. Photo Credit: Geoffrey Khoore*



*Members of the public following the proceedings at a public participation forum. Photo Credit: Geoffrey Khoore*



## Health:

# Government Increases Focus on Primary Care Network, Universal Healthcare

**Homa Bay County Intensifies Efforts to Reduce Maternal and Neonatal Deaths**

*By Abnery Pajero*



*Governor Gladys Wanga conferring with a Community Health Promoter at a past event. Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno*

**H**oma Bay County is enhancing its Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) system to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates. With maternal and newborn deaths remaining a significant concern in Kenya, the county is dedicated to identifying the causes and implementing targeted interventions to save lives.

National data highlights the urgency of this issue, revealing that 60-70% of maternal deaths occur in referral hospitals. The leading causes of these deaths include haemorrhage (50%), pre-eclampsia (20%), and sepsis (11%), with seven out of ten deaths happening at

night, on weekends, or during public holidays.

Neonatal mortality remains high, with 98.1% of deaths occurring within the first seven days of life, primarily due to prematurity (33%), birth asphyxia (30%), and sepsis (8%).

Homa Bay has launched several key initiatives to improve maternal healthcare. The Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) program ensures that HIV-positive mothers receive antiretroviral treatment to minimize transmission risks. The county has also expanded antenatal care (ANC) services to provide essential medical support to expectant mothers.



County CHPs at a function to mark the launch of community health surveillance. *Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno*

Additionally, the county has adopted GIS mapping technology to track pregnant women and ensure they receive timely care. Community Health Promoters (CHPs) play a vital role in reaching out to expectant mothers, encouraging skilled deliveries, and providing follow-up care for newborns.

Moving forward, the county plans to collaborate with the Council of Governors (COG) to advocate for policy reforms that will enhance maternal and neonatal healthcare. Key focus areas will include establishing regular forums for data sharing on maternal and newborn mortality, promoting effective health technologies like Carbetocin to manage a postpartum haemorrhage, addressing human resource shortages through improved workforce planning,

fostering public-private partnerships to integrate private facilities into MPDSR efforts, and ensuring that maternal and newborn health remains a priority in Universal Health Coverage (UHC) policies.

Homa Bay's commitment aligns with the words of obstetrician Mahmoud Fathalla: "Women are not dying in pregnancy and childbirth from diseases we cannot treat. They are dying because societies have yet to make the decision that their lives are worth saving."

Through strategic investments, strengthened healthcare systems, and community engagement, Homa Bay County is making that decision—ensuring that no mother or newborn dies from preventable causes.

## Leveraging Partnerships for Better Healthcare in Homa Bay

*By Abnery Pajero*

**T**he County Government of Homa Bay has taken a significant step toward strengthening healthcare services by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with key implementing partners.

This agreement, signed on March 21, 2025, underscores the county's commitment to enhancing healthcare through innovation, research, and community-driven solutions.



Group photo of the CHMT and development partners after the signing of the MoUs. *Photo Credit: Abnery Pajero*





*Photo Credit: Abnery Pajero*

Recognizing the evolving challenges in the healthcare sector, the county government has embraced partnerships as a means of improving service delivery. The collaboration brings together organizations with expertise in different areas of healthcare, including the Centre for the Study of Adolescence (CSA), Ampath, JKUAT Enterprises Limited, ADS Nyanza, Global Health Connections, and AIC Cure Children's Hospital of Kenya. Each of these partners brings specialized knowledge and resources that will contribute to a more effective and sustainable healthcare system in Homa Bay.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Hon. Grace Osewe, the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Public Health and Medical Services, emphasized the importance of adapting to changing healthcare needs, particularly in light of shifting funding dynamics. "With reduced external funding, we must optimize resources, integrate services, and implement sustainable solutions. This partnership will ensure that critical healthcare services remain accessible and effective for the people of Homa Bay," she stated.

“  
With reduced external funding, we must optimize resources, integrate services, and implement sustainable solutions. This partnership will ensure that critical healthcare services remain accessible and effective for the people of Homa Bay,”

The MoU outlines several key areas of collaboration. One of the priorities is strengthening healthcare logistics and supply chains, ensuring that essential medicines and medical supplies reach health facilities and communities efficiently.

Additionally, the county is set to embrace technological innovations, such as drone technology for medical deliveries, digital health solutions, and data-driven decision-making.

Another focus area is research and specialized care, particularly in addressing health challenges such as sickle cell disease and adolescent health issues. By leveraging research and data, the county and its partners aim to develop targeted interventions that improve health outcomes. Community engagement is also a central theme, with efforts directed at empowering young people and ensuring healthcare services are more accessible to all.

## Human Capital:

# Selection of Fundi Mang'ula Beneficiaries for the Second Cohort Concludes

By Collins Ogutu



*Fundi Mang'ula Scholarship applicant undergoing the verification process. Photo Credit: Collins Ogutu*

In collaboration with KCB, the County's Department of Education, Human Capital Development and Vocational Training, concluded the selection process for prospective applicants. The week-long initiative was spread across 19 Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) that offer the program.

Genowa Fundi Mangula VTC Scholarship Program was initiated last year with a first cohort of 600 student beneficiaries. This initial group are already through with their studies and internships are due to be commissioned later this month to join the job market.

By offering scholarships, the program seeks to empower young individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in various trades and professions.



Through these interviews, the initiative not only evaluates potential candidates but also emphasizes the benefits of vocational education, such as enhanced employability, entrepreneurship opportunities, and the development of practical skills that meet market demands.

This program represents the County Government's commitment to nurturing the next generation of skilled workers, ultimately contributing to economic growth and the reduction of unemployment rates within the society.

As the selection unfolded, candidates were encouraged to actively participate and appreciate the transformative potential of vocational training in securing their future careers. Embracing this opportunity can pave the way for greater success and contribution to society.

600  
STUDENT BENEFICIARIES





*German Ambassador to Kenya Sebastian Groth (centre) is guided into the Homa Bay Modern Fish Market by DG Oyugi Magwanga and CECM Martin Opere.  
Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno*

## Partnerships:

# County, German Embassy Strengthen Partnership, Considering More Joint Projects

*By Communication Team*

The County government of Homa Bay and the German Embassy in Kenya are exploring more collaborative areas as both seek to strengthen their partnership. While visiting the county to assess the projects funded by the German government through the German Development Corporation (GIZ), the German Ambassador to Kenya H.E. Sebastian Groth, reiterated that Germany would be willing to support Homa Bay County beyond the climate change, energy sustainability, education, technical training, and youth empowerment initiatives it's already doing.

The focus of the visit was on the impact of GIZ-funded projects, including energy-efficient fish deep fryers and the Sikri TVET. We emphasized the importance of strengthening our partnership and exploring new opportunities for collaboration in climate change mitigation and economic empowerment initiatives.

The bilateral talks between the envoy and the county government led by Deputy Governor Hon Joseph Magwanga leaned on the acknowledgement of the Partnership between the County Government and the German Government recognizing the support of the German Embassy and other stakeholders in implementing the energy-efficient fish fryers projects at the Homa Bay municipal market and the new Modern Fish Market and an emphasis on the County Government's commitment to promoting sustainable energy solutions.



*Ambassador Sebastian Groth having a firsthand experience on the working of the energy saving jikos at the Homa Bay Municipal Market.  
Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno*



Ambassador Sebastian Groth with students and staff at the Sikri TVET Center. *Photo Credit: Agency*

This project has led to a significant reduction in fuel-related operational costs for women as well as the positive environmental impacts of reducing wood fuel and charcoal consumption.

Overall, there is an exploration for a joint venture for a similar energy-saving and clean cooking project through a small project grant of Kshs. 1.5 million for the Kitchen at the County Referral Hospital which is in bad shape.

## **Legislations:**

# **Governor Signs Critical Bills to Law to Enhance Inclusive and Participatory Service Deliver**

*By Communication Team*

**H**.E Governor Gladys Wanga signed into law three significant bills: The County Enterprise Development and Affirmative Action Fund Bill, 2024, The Homa Bay County Civic Education and Public Participation (Repeal) Bill, 2024, and The Homa Bay County Supplementary Appropriation Bill, 2025.

The County Enterprise Development and Affirmative Action Fund Act, 2024 establishes a comprehensive statutory framework for the implementation of affirmative action policies designed to promote the economic empowerment of youth, women, and other

marginalized groups within Homa Bay County. It provides a structured legal mechanism for the mobilization of financial resources, sourced both internally and through development partnerships, to facilitate equitable economic inclusion.

The statute further provides for the formation of strategic partnerships with donors and development agencies, enabling structured co-funding arrangements, including matching funds and county-administered public sector funds.



Once operationalized, eligible beneficiaries shall have administrative control over the allocated funds, subject to oversight and regulatory supervision by the county executive. It shall further give effect to Article 56 of the Constitution, 2010, which requires affirmative action measures to ensure equitable participation of marginalized groups in economic development.

The Homa Bay County Civic Education and Public Participation (repeal) Act, 2024 constitutes a fundamental statutory framework that reaffirms the county government's obligation to foster meaningful public participation and civic engagement.

A cornerstone of this Act is the legal entrenchment of the village as the primary unit for stakeholder consultation and participatory decision-making in county development affairs. The statute mandates a structured process for project identification, the democratic election of Project Management Committees, and the establishment of oversight mechanisms for county projects. Furthermore, it fortifies the Ward Development Project framework, thereby advancing a community-driven, participatory development model.

The Homa Bay County Supplementary Appropriation, Act 2024 grants the county government the legal authority to appropriate and expend public funds for the delivery of essential public services and the implementation of county development programs.



*Photo Credit: Geoffrey Khoore*

The supplementary budget, amounting to KES 12,982,558,762 has been necessitated by budgetary reductions imposed by the National Treasury, which have affected the equitable share of revenue allocated to counties.

Furthermore, delays in the disbursement of conditional grants for programs such as the Financing Locally-Led Climate Action (FLOCCA) and the National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP) as of June 30, 2024, have necessitated reappropriation to ensure the utilization of these funds in the current financial year.

The county has made critical and substantial provisions for key sector projects, including ward-based initiatives, water projects, county road and infrastructure development, and affirmative action programs.

These projects are strategically designed to enhance the quality of life for county residents. Their successful implementation will enable the governor to fulfil his commitments as outlined in the transformative Genowa Manifesto.



*Photo Credit: Geoffrey Khoore*

## Agriculture:

# County, State Join Hands in Agricultural Productivity and Securing Food Safety, in the County

## Governor Wanga, PS Ronoh Kickstart Planting Season with a Farm Demo

By Oketch Bernard



Governor Gladys Wanga and PS Paul Ronoh, assisted by local farmers, demonstrate sowing, with fertilizer and pesticide application, to officially kickstart the new planting season. **Photo Credit: Livone Molo**

**H**oma Bay County took a significant step towards enhancing agricultural productivity and food security as Governor Gladys Wanga, together with the Principal Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock Development, Dr Paul Ronoh, led a planting demonstration exercise at Magare in Homa Bay West to kickstart the new long rains planting season. The event emphasized the adoption of modern and sustainable agricultural practices to boost yields, strengthen the agricultural sector, and empower local farmers.

Speaking at the event, H.E. Governor Gladys Wanga underscored the importance of collaboration between the county and national government in supporting farmers.



*We are pleased to host Principal Secretary Dr Paul Ronoh as part of his tour during this planting season. His visit aims to assess farmers' preparedness and evaluate the distribution of seeds. As Homa Bay County, we have successfully concluded the distribution of high-quality seeds purchased from the Kenya Seed Company.*

*Additionally, we are grateful for the delivery of fertilizers to the Homa Bay National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB). The PS has announced plans to establish depots in the six remaining sub-counties to ensure farmers can access fertilizers closer to their homes.*







*Agriculture PS Paul Ronoh paid a courtesy visit on the Governor. Photo Credit: Livone Molo*

Dr. Paul Ronoh reiterated the government's commitment to supporting Homa Bay's agricultural sector. "Today, we are in Homa Bay County to demonstrate proper planting techniques and fertilizer application. Homa Bay is a model county that other regions should emulate. Currently, the county has only two fertilizer depots, but we have agreed with the governor to establish six more across the county. We have engaged NCPB to ensure these additional depots are stocked within the next two weeks, making it easier for farmers to access fertilizers without travelling long distances.

The PS further highlighted Homa Bay's success in maize, sunflower, groundnuts, cotton, and edible oil production. "Given the favourable climatic conditions, we have agreed to prioritize edible oil production in this region. Additionally, we are exploring the establishment of a Kenya School of Agriculture in Homa Bay to equip students with modern farming techniques."

The exercise marks a crucial milestone in advancing agricultural development in Homa Bay County, reinforcing the commitment of both levels of government to ensuring food security and economic empowerment for local farmers.

## County Government of Homa Bay Roll Out Cotton Farming with BT Cotton Distribution

*By Oketch Bernard*

In a significant step towards revitalizing the cotton industry, the Homa Bay County Government, in collaboration with the State Department for Industry under the Ministry of Investment, Trade, and Industry (MITI), today successfully launched the distribution of *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) cotton seeds to 29 Cotton Cooperative Society groups across the county.

The event, held in Kibiri Ward, Rachuonyo North Sub-County, saw the distribution of 1,510 bales of BT cotton seeds worth Ksh 5,337,850, bringing renewed hope to cotton farmers. The initiative is expected to boost cotton production, enhance farmers' livelihoods, and contribute to the county's economic growth.

While presiding over the launch, Deputy Governor and CECM for Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation, H.E. Joseph Oyugi Magwanga, expressed gratitude for the partnership with MITI. "We appreciate the Ministry for consistently standing with us. Since the inception of the Nyar Wang'aya Administration, we made a firm commitment to revive the cotton industry, and today marks a major milestone in that journey," he remarked. He further called on the youth to embrace cotton farming as a viable economic activity, underscoring its potential to position Homa Bay as a leading cotton producer in the country.



*Launch of cotton seeds distribution in West Karachuonyo. Photo Credit: Oketch Bernard*

Representing the State Department of MITI, Director of Industries Mr Stanley Koske Sawe commended the county government for its collaborative spirit. He noted that the fruits of the partnership were evident in the form of tangible support for farmers. "The county's cooperation with the national government has enabled impactful initiatives like this one. I urge farmers to join cooperative societies to enhance their bargaining power and maximize the benefits of such programs," he emphasized.

The launch of the BT cotton distribution is expected to significantly contribute to the revival of the cotton value chain, create employment opportunities, and drive the county's agricultural sector towards sustainable growth.

Farmers and stakeholders were encouraged to continue supporting the leadership of H.E. Governor Gladys Wanga to ensure the success of ongoing and future development initiatives.

## Feature:

# The Unsung Heroes of Maternal Health in Homa Bay

By Abnery Pajero



The then CS of Health Ms Susan Nakhumicha (in green) and Governor Gladys Wanga admired Master Brandon at the HCTRH when they visited on support supervision to CHPs. **Photo Credit: Eunice Atieno**



Eunice, 27, carefully navigates the narrow, muddy path from her home in Ochol A Village to the nearest health facility, Lambwe Dispensary. The recent rains have turned the road nearly impassable, the clay soil clinging to her feet with each step. Yet, she presses on. This one-kilometre journey is more than just a routine check-up—it is a fight for the life growing inside her.

For years, Eunice had longed to conceive, but every attempt ended in heartbreak. Now, expecting her first child, she is both overjoyed and anxious. She knows that pregnancy is delicate and missing even one antenatal care (ANC) visit could put both her and her unborn baby at risk. She has heard of mothers who never made it through childbirth and of babies who never took their first breath. She refuses to become another statistic.

Living in a remote area presents immense challenges. When the rains come, roads flood and access to healthcare becomes a gamble. Many women in her situation opt to stay home, unable or unwilling to make the difficult journey to a health facility. But for Eunice, that is not an option—not with Maren Owuondo by her side.

Maren, a dedicated Community Health Promoter (CHP), has been Eunice's unwavering support throughout her pregnancy. She visits regularly, ensuring Eunice understands the importance of ANC visits, proper nutrition, and birth preparedness. Through the County Government of Homa Bay's community health strategy, Maren is equipped with the Electronic Community Health Information System (ECHIS), a digital platform that enables her to track expectant mothers and map their health needs using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. No mother, no matter how far, is left behind.

At the facility, Eunice receives comprehensive care. Her ANC profile is completed, including rapid tests and serology screenings. She is educated on the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV, ensuring her baby has the best possible start in life. She learns about proper nutrition, the importance of skilled delivery, and emergency preparedness. At home, a small bag sits packed with essentials for the day she will finally meet her child.

The County Government of Homa Bay recognizes that distance and poor infrastructure are major barriers to maternal health. That is why they have strengthened referral systems, ensuring that facilities can direct patients to centres better equipped to handle their needs. No mother should suffer simply because a clinic lacks resources.

As Eunice nears her due date, she is filled with gratitude. The fear that once shadowed her pregnancy has been replaced with confidence. She is no longer just a woman longing for a child—she is a mother in waiting, empowered, supported, and ready.

For Eunice, this journey is more than a struggle; it is a testament to the power of community-driven healthcare. Because of CHPs like Maren and the County Government's commitment to maternal health, she knows she will not be alone. She will walk into that health facility, give birth safely, and hold her baby in her arms. Because no mother should die while giving life. Because zero maternal deaths is not just a goal—it is a promise.



*"The lake represents one of our county's most valuable assets. We are committed to not only enhancing fish production from our waters but also maximizing the potential of the blue economy to foster sustainable economic growth within our community." ~ Governor Gladys Wanga*