



# 2025 KENYA CSO'S SDGs IMPLEMENTATION POSITION PAPER

ABRIDGED VERSION



**SDGs KENYA FORUM**  
Coalition for Sustainable Development



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## SUMMARY

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Kenya continues to make notable progress in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), despite facing multiple external shocks, including climate change, global conflicts, pandemics, and economic instability. These challenges have had a pronounced impact on supply chains, food security, and health systems, especially in marginalized and arid regions. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) have played a critical complementary role by promoting resilience, advancing inclusion, and ensuring the SDG agenda remains grounded in community realities.

The 2024 CSOs Voluntary National Review (VNR) made several important recommendations that are now influencing both national and county-level policies. These include strengthening coordination mechanisms, improving access to disaggregated data, enhancing domestic resource mobilization, and advancing gender and social inclusion. Nonetheless, critical gaps persist in areas such as enforcement of laws, financing, and equitable implementation of development initiatives.

CSOs have been instrumental in driving progress across SDG 3 (Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Through community-centered programming, policy advocacy, and data generation, CSOs have addressed service delivery challenges, gender-based violence, economic exclusion, marine degradation, and weak governance structures. However, constraints such as limited financial resources, weak institutional frameworks, and digital inequalities continue to hinder full realization of the SDGs. The paper calls for stronger partnerships, sustainable financing models, better data ecosystems, and community-driven localization efforts to ensure equitable SDG outcomes.



## 1.0 Introduction

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The 2025 CSO Position Paper offers a comprehensive civil society-led review of Kenya's progress in implementing the SDGs. It presents an assessment of the government's development strategies in the face of global disruptions, while highlighting CSO contributions in health, gender equality, economic empowerment, marine conservation, and partnerships. Despite commendable institutional alignment of development plans with the SDGs, significant gaps remain in enforcement, data accessibility, inclusivity, and financing. The report emphasizes the need for bottom-up, rights-based, and inclusive approaches to accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

## 2.0 Impact of External Factors on SDGs Implementation in Kenya

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Kenya's development trajectory has been significantly influenced by external factors such as geopolitical conflicts, climate crises, and pandemics. The war in Ukraine disrupted global grain and fertilizer supply chains, increasing food insecurity. Regional instability in the Horn of Africa and rising global interest rates have compounded Kenya's economic challenges. Climate change has caused severe droughts and floods, especially in ASAL regions, exacerbating displacement and health risks. CSOs have responded by delivering early warning systems, climate education, and adaptation measures for marginalized groups.

Additionally, shifts in international relations and global trade dynamics have affected foreign investment and digital policy frameworks. CSOs have advocated for digital rights, fair trade, and debt transparency to safeguard public interests. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in Kenya's healthcare systems and disrupted education and income generation. In response, CSOs mobilized emergency relief, raised awareness, and ensured inclusive recovery strategies. These global pressures underscore the importance of adopting a whole-of-society approach in safeguarding Kenya's SDG progress.



### 3.0 Implementation of Recommendations from 2024 CSOs VNR

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Following the 2024 CSOs VNR, multiple government and stakeholder actions have been taken to advance SDG implementation. Multi-stakeholder forums have been institutionalized at national and county levels, enhancing civil society engagement in policy and planning. Community-generated data has gained traction through partnerships with KNBS, although integration into official statistics remains inconsistent due to infrastructural limitations.

The National Treasury, in collaboration with CSOs, has initiated SDG-aligned public budget tagging, while the Kenya SDG Financing Strategy incorporates principles of tax justice and equity. Despite this, donor dependence and unpredictable funding flows remain obstacles. At the county level, CSOs have supported the alignment of CIDPs with SDG priorities and documented scalable innovations such as youth agribusiness models. Still, gaps in technical capacity and political commitment at subnational levels are evident.

Efforts to promote equity and human rights in SDG implementation have resulted in more inclusive reporting and expanded CSO programming on disability and gender. Knowledge sharing platforms have been created, though grassroots accessibility remains limited by technological and language barriers.

## 4.0 Progress in Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals



### 4.3.1 SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)

CSOs have made substantial contributions to improving health outcomes. VSO Kenya has worked to ensure youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs) access sexual and reproductive health services by addressing provider attitudes and infrastructure gaps. Through community scorecards, capacity building, and digital tools, VSO has improved RMNCAH and SGBV service delivery across counties. Organizations like the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK) have implemented integrated health, protection, and empowerment programs targeting refugee and vulnerable women and girls. RCK has also provided access to medical, legal, and psychosocial services, and promoted economic empowerment to support health outcomes.

Cheshire Disability Services Kenya (CDSK) has focused on intersectional SRHR advocacy, targeting young people with disabilities. Their scorecards and budget advocacy initiatives have led to improvements in maternal and youth-friendly health infrastructure in Kisumu and beyond. Despite progress, systemic challenges persist. These include chronic health worker shortages, inadequate infrastructure, underfunded health budgets, unreliable supply chains, and inequitable access. Donor dependency, governance weaknesses, and emerging disease burdens further complicate the landscape.



### 4.3.2 SDG 5 (Gender Equality)

Kenya has developed a progressive legal framework to address gender inequality and gender-based violence. However, enforcement remains inconsistent, and cultural norms continue to normalize violence against women. CSOs such as GROOTS Kenya, CDSK, RCK, and Polycom Girls have led targeted interventions, including the establishment of shelters, legal aid, education, and entrepreneurship programs for GBV and FGM survivors.

The SDGs Kenya Forum has implemented interventions that have significantly influenced and supported the development, approval, adoption, and implementation of gender policies, and WEE initiatives, at both levels of government (the national government and the targeted counties). The interventions have increased participation and involvement of Women Rights Organizations (WROs), CSOs and grass roots women in the WEE activities. These have enhanced women and girls' participation in decision making – including advocating for inclusivity in policies and plans.

GROOTS Kenya's JASIRI and Grassroots Public Budget mechanisms empower survivors with skills, economic opportunities, and participation in governance. CDSK creates safe spaces for adolescent girls with disabilities and trains them in SRHR and menstrual health.

Polycom Girls has addressed sexual exploitation in informal settlements by providing sanitary products and sensitizing water vendors, while RCK promotes economic self-reliance for survivors through skills training.

Key challenges include high GBV prevalence, weak institutional enforcement, limited economic opportunities, underrepresentation of women in politics, poor access to SRHR, and harmful cultural practices. These are compounded by a digital gender divide and lack of inclusive data.



### 4.3.3 SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

CSOs are actively promoting youth employment, especially for young women and PWDs. CDSK supports skills training and job placements for youth with disabilities, while GROOTS Kenya's Jiinue Growth Program equips youth entrepreneurs with financial literacy and business development tools.

Through the Jasiri Program, adolescent girls and GBV survivors receive technical training, startup grants, and coaching. GROOTS also supports grassroots SACCOs, market access, and sustainable agriculture among women farmers.

Challenges in realizing SDG 8 include youth unemployment, informality, inadequate infrastructure, limited credit access, low productivity, gendered norms, and weak skilling ecosystems. Kenya's slow industrial growth and fiscal stress further constrain job creation and inclusive growth.



### 4.3.4 SDG 14 (Life Below Water)

Kenya's blue economy is a vital resource, with CSOs working to protect marine ecosystems and support coastal livelihoods. GROOTS Kenya leads the ReSea Project in Kilifi, empowering women in marine conservation, recycling, and seascape governance. Women-led groups are transforming marine waste into marketable products while advocating for sustainable fishing and pollution control.

Key barriers include overfishing, marine pollution, weak governance, climate impacts, exclusion of women in marine institutions, and limited investment in marine data systems. CSOs call for gender-inclusive governance, marine infrastructure, and expanded aquaculture to enhance livelihoods and resilience.





#### 4.3.5 SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals)

Partnerships remain central to Kenya's SDG progress. CSOs have contributed significantly through policy advocacy, awareness creation, shadow reporting, capacity building, and service delivery. Their engagement spans all 17 SDGs and is rooted in rights-based development. Through platforms like the SDGs Kenya Forum, CSOs work in coalitions to advance inclusive policy dialogues, community monitoring, and data support. However, structural challenges such as funding constraints, limited civic space, and capacity gaps among grassroots actors persist.

The forum has continuously been involved in raising citizen's awareness on 2030 agenda for SDGs through Leave No One behind Dialogues so as to foster localization and also working collectively with diverse stakeholders to drive accountability on 2030 agenda. At the global and regional spaces, the Forum has been conducting structured advocacy initiatives in the sustainable development processes.

It has also been promoting the use of data and evidence in the monitoring and implementation of SDGs – working in conjunction with data producers and consumers. It also advocates for policies and legislation to strengthen commitment, financing, planning and implementation for sustainable development and specifically on SDG 5.

Working with its partners, the Forum developed a citizen social accountability tool to guide effective public participation. The tool integrates a framework for citizen participatory monitoring and evaluation. Through the tool, the Forum members (CSOs) have been able to support their constituents participate in the policy making processes through community dialogues, and the feedback submitted to the relevant policy makers through memoranda. Right holders have been sensitized to prepare memorandums, petitions and position papers.



## 5.0 Means of Implementation

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Kenya's SDG implementation is underpinned by strong political will, institutional coordination, and devolution. The SDG Coordination Directorate guides integration across national plans, while inter-agency committee and county governments support localization. Public-private partnerships and digital innovation have also been key enablers. Youth engagement, donor support, and data systems are integral to ongoing progress.

## 6.0 Institutional Frameworks

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Kenya's institutional architecture for SDG implementation includes the National Treasury's SDG Directorate, Inter-Agency Technical Committee, Council of Governors, KNBS, Parliamentary Caucus on SDGs, and SDGs Kenya Forum. These bodies coordinate national and county-level action, data systems, and stakeholder engagement. CSOs remain essential players in planning, monitoring, and accountability.

## 7.0 Policy Alignment and Integration

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The government has integrated SDGs into Vision 2030, MTP IV, and sectoral policies. Coordination structures, program-based budgeting, and legal reforms have supported alignment. At county level, CIDPs reflect SDG targets, and participatory budgeting has enhanced inclusion. Partnerships with UN agencies and CSOs continue to support SDG localization and capacity building.

## 8.0 Awareness Creation, Capacity Building and Knowledge Management

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CSOs drive SDG-related knowledge management through research, training, and documentation of best practices. They produce community scorecards, policy briefs, and learning materials, often in collaboration with government and academia. Digital platforms facilitate dissemination, though access remains limited in rural areas. CSOs play a vital role in co-creating knowledge and building local capacity.

## 9.0 Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships

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CSOs have built strong relationships with government, private sector, academia, and communities to foster inclusive development. Engagements include; policy co-creation, public budgeting forums, and SDG working groups. However, funding volatility, limited civic space, and fragmentation among CSOs hinder sustained collaboration. Strengthening multi-stakeholder platforms and funding mechanisms is essential.

## 10.0 Data for SDGs Tracking and Reporting

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CSOs are actively generating community-level, disaggregated, and inclusive data to support SDG tracking. They complement government data through citizen scorecards, shadow reports, and participatory mapping. KNBS and CSOs collaborate on SDG data platforms, though integration of CSO data into official statistics is still limited. Enhanced validation systems, capacity support, and funding are needed.



## 11.0

### Key Next Steps

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To accelerate SDG achievement, Kenya must strengthen data systems, enhance domestic resource mobilization, localize implementation at county level, and broaden stakeholder inclusion. Legal reforms, climate resilience, public awareness, and knowledge sharing are also critical. Institutionalizing adaptive learning and citizen engagement will ensure sustainable and equitable development outcomes.



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