

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF VIHIGA



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

**STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WILBER
KHASILWA OTTICHILO, EGH - THE GOVERNOR VIHIGA COUNTY HELD
AT THE COUNTY ASSEMBLY OF VIHIGA CHAMBERS.**

ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2023,

Honourable Speaker of the County Assembly of Vihiga
Deputy Governor, Vihiga County
Honourable Members of the County Assembly of Vihiga
Clerk of the County Assembly of Vihiga
County Executive and Staff present
County Assembly Staff present
Invited Guests and Members of the Public present,
Members of the Fourth Estate present,
All the residents of Vihiga County present and those watching and
listening to this Address through digital media and Radio,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good afternoon.

1. **Honourable Speaker**, It gives me great pleasure to be in this special assembly sitting this afternoon to deliver my **Fifth State of the County Address** in line with my statutory obligation as provided for in the County Government Act 2012 section 30(k). This is my first address to this honourable house in my second term as Governor of the Vihiga County. In this address, I will highlight our progress, challenges and development achievements covering 2022/2023 fiscal year as well as highlights of the FY 2023/24 on-going development.
2. When I took office in my second term as governor, on 25th August 2022, I set out to deliver on my re-election campaign promises as was outlined in my manifesto and later incorporated in the 2023-2027 CIDP that was prepared through a public participatory process, approved by cabinet and subsequently approved by this honourable County Assembly. It is worthwhile to note that our CIDP is our development blueprint until 2027/28 fiscal year.
3. The improvement of the socio-economic welfare of the people of Vihiga is anchored on the National aspirations as spelled out in the Bottom-up Economic Transformative Agenda of the National Government. Therefore, its successful implementation will entail cooperation and partnership with the National Government.
4. The implementation of the CIDP commenced during the 2022/2023 fiscal year and it is ongoing. However, it should be noted from the onset that, due to the current high cost of living in our country, the implementation of the same has encountered numerous challenges.
5. At the National level, one of the primary contributors to the high cost of living is inflation. This has greatly impacted on the value of the shilling which in turn has seen the increase in prices of goods and services. Increase in our government operational costs, rising import costs, and fluctuating exchange rates have largely contributed to the increasing inflation. This has been compounded with high levels of unemployment in the country. Coupled with high cost of energy and increased statutory taxes and levies in the country, our county has experienced higher costs in delivery of projects and programmes and services during the year under review.

6. At the County level, we also experience our own challenges that continue to impact on development and service delivery to our people. Key among these challenges are; the burden of pending bills, delayed implementation of Human Resource Audit report towards streamlining staff establishment, high wage bill and delayed exchequer disbursements.
7. **Honourable Speaker**, despite of these challenges, we have made significant progress in the implementation of our projects and programmes as well as service delivery. This has been realized partly through the reorganization of the government by issuance of the Executive order number one of 2022 and appointment of County Executive Committee Members and Chief Officers, as well as implementation of performance management.
8. The achievement we made have led to our county being recognized and awarded at the national level for making great strides in improvement of service delivery and development in various sectors.
9. To highlight a few of these fetes: Vihiga County was recognized to be among 17 Counties that have contributed immensely to the Country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with a metric of 4.5 per capita; we were awarded the prestigious Simba Award as one of the leading counties in the promotion of devolution through the use of technology in planning and decision making at this year's Devolution Conference held in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu; we were also recognized as the best county in Kenya in Maternal Child Healthcare, Skilled Delivery and Full vaccinated children (Basic Antigen) by the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS).
10. We have also been recognized by the Ministry of Health (MoH) for having the best Community Healthcare programme in the Country; with Gimomoi Community Health Unit (CHU) being recognized as the best CHU in the country by Ministry of Health (MoH).
11. During the Africa Climate Summit Conference in Nairobi in September 2023, Vihiga's success in the implementation of climate action at community level was recognized and recommended for adaption by other African Countries as well as globally.
12. **Honourable Speaker**, today as I give this address, His Excellency the President is awarding Vihiga County as one of the Compliant Counties of all regulations and grievance redress mechanism as recommended by the Commission on Administrative Justice (CAJ), Office of the Ombudsman.
13. We were also ranked the third (3rd) best county in Kenya after Makueni and Isiolo, in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the SDGs National Multi-Stakeholder Conference.
14. **Honourable Speaker**, Vihiga Continues to be the leader in the use and promotion of Geospatial Technologies (GIS) in Kenya. To date, thirty-five counties have visited Vihiga for benchmarking. Further, in collaboration with UN – FAO and the European Union, we are championing the use of GIS in Digital land Governance in all the 47 counties.

15. The last I will mention is our continued dominance and exemplary performance in the sporting arena. We are the only County that boasts of 6 teams playing in the National Premier league. Vihiga Queens, Bunyore Starlets and Soccer Assassins are playing in the women premier league, while Vihiga Bullets, Mulembe United formerly Vihiga United and Luanda Villa are in the National Super League.
16. Vihiga Queens have been national champions for four consecutive seasons and also champions of the 2021 CAF Women Champions League Qualifiers-CECAFA Region, thus representing the East Africa region in CAF Womens Champions League tournament in Egypt. This year, they played in the CECAFA tournament in Uganda where they emerged 4th.
17. Vihiga Under 19 Talanta Hela boys soccer team, emerged as the western Kenya region champions, and they will represent the region at the National Championships this December 2023.
18. Based on this stated national achievements and awards, it is apparent that as a county, we are nationally competitive and therefore we should be proud and celebrate our county.

SECTORAL ACHIEVEMENTS

19. **Honourable Speaker**, let me now outline our sectoral achievement during the period under review.

Our Resource Envelope, Finance and Economic Planning

20. **Honourable Speaker**, the delivery of our socio-economic transformation began with the preparation of our Third Generation 2023-2027 County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP); a document that defines the development aspirations of the people of Vihiga County out of which our annual development plans are formulated.
21. In the financial year 2022/2023, we prepared a Total Budget of **KES 6,572,688,220.00** for the County Government of Vihiga – comprising of KES 2.1 billion Development Budget (32%) and KES 4.4 billion Recurrent Budget (68%). The Overall absorption rate for the financial year 2022/2023 was as follows: Recurrent Budget 93% and development budget 79%.
22. Our own source revenue collected during the 2022/2023 fiscal year stood at **KES 229,848,535** against set target of KES 284,073,208.
23. It is worth noting here today that we have made great strides towards increasing our own source revenue collection against set targets; by transitioning from manual collection systems to automated revenue collection systems. As I make this Statement here today, the County Government of Vihiga has a unified USSD code ***604#** and MPESA Paybill number **003838** for ease of payment of county fees and levies without visiting a physical county office.
24. The outstanding historical pending bills realised as at 30th June 2022 was KES 450 million. At the end of the 2022/2023 Fiscal year, our total

pending bills stood at KES 1.4 billion broken down as follows: KES 279 million Recurrent Pending Bills, 625 million Current Development Pending Bills, KES 300 million historical pending bills and KES 262 million litigation pending bills. In the 2023/2024 fiscal year, KES 332 million was budgeted for payment of pending bills and the 1st supplementary budget has allocated KES 562 million for the same.

25. As at 31st October 2023, KES 271 million had been paid leaving a pending balance of KES 1.2 billion. We expect to pay further KES 562 million in the current fiscal year.
26. A deliberate commitment has been made in my administration towards clearing existing pending bills and managing generation of new pending bills by; committing to Strict adherence to the budgetary allocation in terms of current projects and budgeted pending bills; adoption of a payment plan to clear the bills as they fall due, ensure pending bills not paid at the end of the financial year are re-budgeted and paid as first charge; appointment of an ad-hoc committee to review pending bills from time to time; and complete elimination of manual LSOs and LPOs in procurement.
27. During the period under review, the sector prepared the Annual Development Plan, County Budget Review Outlook Paper (CBROP) 2022, the County Fiscal Strategy Paper, Supplementary budgets, Vihiga Finance Bill 2022 and Appropriation Bill 2022, that were approved by cabinet and by this honourable County Assembly for implementation.

County Public Service Reforms

28. **Honourable Speaker**, the Vihiga County Public service is mandated to formulate and implement Public Administration, Human Resource and Information Communication Technology policies and institutional frameworks in collaboration with other departments and relevant institutions.
29. In order to achieve a lean and efficient government and staff, while also managing the County Government wage bill; the reorganization of the structure of the County Government of Vihiga was implemented through the issuance of the Executive Order Number One (1) of 2022.
30. Further, a human resource staff audit of the County Government of Vihiga Executive was conducted and a report with recommendations issued by the County Public Service Board. Implementation of this report led to rooting out of 28 ghost workers from the County Government payroll. Nine (9) staff have also been removed from the County payroll pending investigation. The human resource audit exercise is planned to be completed at the end of January 2024.
31. Our reforms in the County Government of Vihiga Human Resource Management have realized issuance of Integrated Payroll and Personnel Database (IPPD) payroll numbers to all staff – 3,305, realising 100% transition from the manual payroll. This is intended to manage the County Payroll and wage bill through institutionalized sharing of monthly payroll with Chief Officers for verification & sign-off. I am also happy to

report that we have successfully digitized Human Resource Management records through operationalisation of the Human Resource Information Management Systems (HRIMS) and automated reconciliation of statutory returns filing for NHIF, NSSF and KRA.

32. These reforms have been further supported by the recruitment of Human Resource Information Management Systems (HRIMS) IT systems administrator in the Human Resource Department and the implementation of the Staff Biometric system administration is underway.
33. Within this reporting period, we have managed to institute governance and institutional changes that are geared towards streamlining service delivery while ensuring efficiency, prudent rational planning and adherence to set timelines. To this end, using our GIS laboratory, we have updated all county projects on our GIS platform; supported Farmer profiling and mapping on GIS; and hosted total of 36 counties that came to benchmark on GIS in Vihiga County.
34. To achieve our vision of ICT becoming the backbone for County Government operations and service delivery, we have revamped the County website; approved the ICT policy by cabinet; developed draft IT Strategic plan; Created corporate emails for staff; and deployed and customized Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS).
35. To ensure accountability and measured performance of all county government executive and staff, we instituted Performance Contract Management. I have signed performance contracts with our County Executive Committee Members, who have signed with their respective Chief Officers and Directors. We have gone further to develop Performance Management Guidelines and conducted performance appraisals; and M&E supported by the SDU unit.
36. We have greatly improved our disaster emergency management in the County Government of Vihiga through creation of a fully-fledged Directorate of Disaster Management. The department has made great strides in the development of Grievances Redress and Feedback Mechanism in the County. Currently, this department is also playing a lead role in the County El-Nino preparedness by sensitizing the public on all precaution and mitigating measures to avoid casualties during this period of heavy rainfall. This has been achieved in partnership with National Government and support partners like the Kenya Red Cross.
37. To enhance communication and awareness of county programmes and projects, the County initiated a programme on our digital media platforms as well as on Vihiga FM radio called VIHIGA WIKI HII, which shares our sectoral achievement and progress on the implementation our CIDP.
38. During this period, the County Alcoholic Drinks Control Unit registered and inspected 720 outlets within the county; issuing licenses to 420 outlets; and collected KES 1.3 million in Q1 2023 against a target of KES 2 million.
39. To enhance monitoring and evaluation by the County Government, we formed the Service Delivery Unit (SDU) in the office of the Governor that

has supported departmental projects inspection, verification and reporting for effective project delivery.

40. The sector has enhanced public participation through formulation of a draft County Public Participation Policy and supported departments to carry out their public participation exercises across the county.
41. I am pleased to state here today that we have prepared the draft Public Service Management Bill in a consultation with the County Public Service Board and the County Staff. We will soon be forwarding the bill to this County Assembly for consideration.
42. In collaboration with the National Government, the preparation for the construction of the Kenya School of Government (KSG) at Boyani in Vihiga sub-county has been finalized. A tender will soon be announced for the construction of the same. The school is planned to provide governance training courses to all the counties of the Lake Region Economic Bloc. Therefore, the school is destined to have a major socio-economic impact to our county.
43. In collaboration with the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), we have agreed to form anti-corruption committees from the County to Ward level. These committees will undertake corruption risk assessment in their respective areas and report monthly on efforts being undertaken to eradicate the same. EACC has scheduled to tour all the offices that will be involved in this important exercise. The training of County Executive Committee Members will take place on 27th to 29th November 2023 in Eldoret.

From Predominant Subsistence Farming to Agribusiness

44. **Honourable Speaker**, approximately 85% of the population of Vihiga County get their livelihood mainly from subsistence agricultural activities. Our vision for the development of the agricultural sector is steering the County towards an innovative and commercially oriented agriculture and food secure economy.
45. We have promoted growth of African Leafy Vegetables through procurement of 3 tonnes of seeds which were distributed to 3,000 farmers across the County. At the same time 175 species of African Leafy Vegetables were also procured from Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) which were handed to the community Seedbank in Luanda. We have further promoted dairy farming in the county by buying and distributing grade animals to organized groups and supporting dairy cooperatives.
46. We have made great strides in the development and promotion of avocado farming in the county through the supply of avocado seedlings to farmers.
47. Our efforts in the development of agricultural value chains and promotion of the agri-business in Vihiga County, realized the construction of Hamisi and Sabatia Banana aggregation and marketing centres under the NARIGP program. This is a great move towards

realizing the economic input of the Vihiga County Cottage industry, through generation of employment opportunities by the industry and provision of value-added products to the local markets.

48. Under NARIGP II, the department will work in collaboration with the department of Commerce, Cooperatives and Tourism to promote the five agricultural value chains that have been identified to operationalize the County Aggregation and Industrial Park being constructed in the county. The agricultural value chains are African Leafy Vegetables, Poultry, dairy, Banana and hass avocado.
49. We have gone further to establish cottage industry for hygienic chicken processing and packaging; – Upendo Group in Chavakali received an electric deep fryer, fridge, deep freezer, glass display cage & working tables. The group is processing an average of 10 chicken daily up from 3 with plans to set up a chicken meat butchery at Majengo as well.
50. Another cottage industry for hygienic Lye (omunyu musherekha) processing and packaging has also been initiated. Twenty-two (22) members of Kidogo Kidogo Self Help Group in Luanda Township have benefitted directly by receiving a tent solar dryer, combustion drum, hand cart, liquid bottle filling machine including storage drums. They have commenced Lye production this month of November.
51. We have supported production and supply of quality day old chicks benefiting twenty-five (25) members directly that belong to Esibuye Organic Farmers in North East Bunyore. The group received a 1056 watts solar powered incubator, 300-month-old mother flock & feeds. The outcome of this investment is; the group is hatching an average of 600 chicks monthly as well as selling an average of 100 crates of fertilized eggs.
52. Mwitoko Fish farm and aquaculture training centre is a game changer in the Lake Region Economic Bloc's blue economy strategy. It is a strategic facility in our plan for development of fisheries sector in the County. So far, we have managed to produce and supply 52,932 fingerlings for the internal and external markets. To operationalize the training section and ensure proper management of the facility, we have completed construction of Mwitoko Fish Farm administration block and will commence its equipping this fiscal year.
53. Additionally, towards achieving agricultural diversification, enhance food self-sufficiency, increase rural incomes and provide employment opportunities when and where water is a constraint; we completed the Wemilabi – Central Bunyore Irrigation Project that is currently awaiting commissioning. This irrigation project is supplied with water by the force of gravity. Food security is the major output of irrigation development activities. The new thinking currently gaining ground is the integration of irrigation water management within the broader context of integrated water resources management. The scheme, under NARIGP, is already engaged in farming of African Leafy Vegetables through-out the seasons.
54. In partnership with the National Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and supported by our County GIS lab, the sector completed a Countywide

farmer data profiling and mapping. The database will be used in determination of allocation of subsidized agricultural inputs to farmers and in provision of extension services.

The Road to Universal Healthcare (UHC)

55. **Honourable Speaker**, our health services vision and promise is to promote primary healthcare; Improve our health infrastructure; provide uninterrupted health technologies and commodities; provide ambulance services; promote Health care financing and Universal Healthcare (UHC); and Strengthen community health services.
56. A healthy nation is a productive nation and therefore, Nutrition is a very important aspect in the proper health of our County. Through with strategic partners that include Nutrition International, we have in place the Vihiga County Nutrition Policy. We have gone further to develop the draft Nutrition Bill that will be brought to this honourable house soon for consideration.
57. Vihiga County is the first County in Kenya to attain 100% community unit coverage. So far, we have 1,450 Community Health Promoters (CHPs) in the field. We were feted by the National Ministry of Health in Kericho during the Mashujaa Day Celebrations of having the best Community Units in the Country. Out of the 1,450 CHPs, 1,250 have received new enhanced kits and now await refresher training.
58. A great investment was made in Preventive and Promotive Health Services in the county. The outcome of this great effort was, Vihiga County emerging as the top performer at 97% in the country on matters of vaccination according to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) 2022.
59. It worthy to note that, in the entire nation, Vihiga County is the first County to attain and surpass the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation of 5KM radius to the nearest health facility. With 75 public health facilities operational in this great county; residents have access to a health facility in under 5KM from their homes. It is a fete that has been achieved through the great effort of the department of health, this honourable house, stakeholders and development partners and the people of Vihiga County.
60. On 7th March 2023, we launched the nationwide Malaria vaccination in Vihiga County at Kimigoi Health Centre in Hamisi, an event that was graced by the Ministry of Health Director General, Dr. Patrick Amoth. This saw at least 25,000 children being vaccinated in our County.
61. It is our firm position that, with continued consultative partnership of all stakeholders, we will continue to grow our health sector and improve the quality of services offered in all our health facilities. Some of the other notable gains in this sector are but not limited to: Completed construction Non-Communicable Disease Clinic (PEN-PLUS) - the only one in Kenya; development of the Eye Unit at the Referral Hospital supported by Sabatia Eye Hospital and the Christian Blind Mission (CBM); Completed a 90-bed

ward block at Emuhaya Sub-county hospital and Twin Theatre unit at Hamisi Sub-county hospital under Kenya Devolution Support Programme (KDSP) which were launched by His Excellency the President on 29th August 2023; resumed completion of the 160-bed hospital plaza at VCRH; completed construction of the County Funeral Home and completion and commissioning of medical waste incinerator at VCRH.

Growth in Childhood Education and Development of Technical Training

62. **Honourable Speaker**, we set out to provide an enabling environment for the thriving of Pre-Primary Education, Childcare, Vocational Education and Training including Home Craft Centres, by improving access to high quality and equitable pre-primary education and Vocational Education and Training; enhancing strategic partnerships towards development of priority programmes; and strengthening research, innovation as well as monitoring & evaluation in the sector.
63. Consequently, we set out and attained conversion of terms of service for 728 ECDE Teachers from Contract to Permanent and Pensionable terms. We have also appointed and inaugurated VTC Boards of Management. The culmination of all efforts in this sector have seen the enrolment in VTCs rise from 1,800 in 2013/2014 to 5,674 in 2022/2023 fiscal year. We now have 34 fully registered VTCs.
64. It is worth mentioning that there has been some challenges with salaries of the ECDE teachers with their new terms of services. This has been occasioned by our budget constraints that we hope to sort in the next financial year.
65. The current number of registered public ECDE centres in the County stands at 410 with enrolment of about 35,000 pupils. About 18,000 pupils are transitioning to Grade 1 in 2024. To close the gap in access to the nearest ECDE centre, we have gone further this financial year to procure for the construction of 53 additional ECDE classrooms distributed across our great County.
66. My administration has continued to invest in the education of bright students from poor economic backgrounds through the Governor's Scholarship Programme. So far, 610 students have benefited, out of which 97 (1st Cohort) have already completed their KCSE and are proceeding to University and Colleges at an impressive rate of 78%. Of the 97 who sat their KCSE last year 2022, 23 have been awarded Scholarships by African Canadian Continuing Education Society (ACCES) to attend University.
67. During FY 2022/2023, the County Bursary programme benefited over 28,125 students, and each Ward was allocated KES 3.3 million, totaling KES 83.3 million across the 25 wards of Vihiga County. Due to my love and commitment to education, I have agreed to provide bursary allocation of KES 4 million per ward for the last cohort of KCPE who will transit to secondary school next year.
68. However, moving forward starting next financial year, we shall stop providing for bursary in our fiscal budgets and instead focus on ECDE

facility development and feeding programmes and VTC facility development and capitation.

Development of Commerce, Tourism and Resuscitation of the Cooperative Movement

69. **Honourable Speaker**, in the course of promoting trade and investments in the County, we have made strides towards promotion of industrialization and entrepreneurship, tourism development and cooperative growth and development. I am happy to report that in the last one year, we have recorded significant increase in the number of plan approvals for construction. Most of the construction is in business premises and hospitality industry.
70. We have completed installation of 30M high mast flood lights at Kabinjari Market and Banja Market in Banja ward, and 20M high mast flood lights at Khusikulu market in Wemilabi ward. This has drastically improved business and security in these markets.
71. In partnership with the Ministry of Trade and Industrialization, we broke ground for the construction of the Vihiga County Aggregation and Industrial Park at the Luanda Railways Grounds. Development of the Vihiga CAIP is an opportunity to explore the economic development of Vihiga County with available resources and investment opportunities through; Value addition on agricultural products, facilitate manufacturing and processing industries, economic hub for the region and support to the local SMEs. I am indeed grateful to His Excellency the President for his support in the acquisition of Railway land in Luanda. I am further equally grateful to Kenya Railways for agreeing to lease the land to the County Government.
72. In our effort to promote business development, we have signed Memorandum of Understanding between the County Government of Vihiga and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce – Vihiga Chapter. The MoU will facilitate us to access national business opportunities.
73. The Vihiga County Co-operative Development Fund Regulations 2023 have been presented and approved by the cabinet. We have since commenced registration of cooperatives societies within our wards working with the department of agriculture and the NARIGP/NAVCPD program.
74. The sector is in the process of developing Vihiga Cooperatives Bill 2023 and the Vihiga County Cooperatives Development Fund Regulations 2023 which have already been approved by the Cabinet.

Championing Environmental and Climate Change Initiatives

75. **Honourable Speaker**, Vihiga County has been a champion in the formulation and implementation of sustainable environmental and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. As espoused in my manifesto, and documented in our 2023-2027 CIDP, we have made promotion of access to clean and safe water and sanitation services for the residents of Vihiga a priority in this sector.

76. So far, with the completion of the Vihiga Cluster water Project, we have began last mile connectivity of households to the main supply lines. Our county water storage capacity currently stands at 5,579m³ with 11,666 established connections serving 82,140 people. The Vihiga Cluster water project was officially commissioned by His Excellency the President on 22nd July 2023 with the capacity to pump 12,500m³ per day serving over 310,000 people. I wish to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency the President for commissioning the project and committing the National Government to give a grant of KES 200 million for last mile connectivity.
77. In order to turn around the management and efficiency of Amatsi Water Company, we put together a taskforce that assessed the structure and performance of the board out of which a recommendation report was tabled. So far, following the recommendations, we are restructuring Amatsi Water Company and have hired a new Managing Director. Amatsi will be responsible for all our water schemes. Once restructuring is over, the company will be responsible for management of water schemes in the County.
78. Our current major challenge is supply of water to majority of our households. We have budgeted KES 50 million towards this goal, in addition to the pledge by the National Government support to a tune of KES 200 million.
79. We have also made investments in renewable energy with 50% of our water schemes being solarized. The schemes that have been solarized are: Emanyinya, Emusire, Ebukhaya, Ipali, Maseno, South West Bunyore, Mwibona, Ebussamba, Chango, Evojo, Chekombero, Nadiradi, Kaptech, Muhudu, Kimogoi, Jepkoyai, and Gimarakwa water projects; Maseno, Mbale and Kaimosi Water supplies; and Muchula and Vagina boreholes.
80. Emmabwi-Ebukanga, Muhanda, Mbihi, Mugogo, Gisambai-Majengo and Gaga water supplies solarization is currently going on.
81. We continue to promote climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, by promoting the use of clean energy, ecosystems restoration, implementation of green growth and circular economy strategies, promotion of sustainable natural resources utilization and management. This has been sustained through implementation of our county Climate Change Policy and informed by the County Risk Assessment Report 2022/2023.
82. Vihiga attained forest cover of 14% and tree cover of 35.9% against the national 8.83% and 12.13% respectively. This was attributed to various afforestation and conservation programmes mounted by the county government. Other significant achievements were; reforestation of 12.8 ha of Maragoli Hills, 4ha of Kibiri Forest and 2ha of Ebusiekwe Hills. In addition, the sector undertook protection of intellectual property and indigenous knowledge of biodiversity and genetic resources by rehabilitating and fencing several community forests namely; Senende, Serem, Kapsasur, Munzatti and Kapchemgung including promotion of agroforestry.

83. Additionally, we signed an MoU with Kaimosi Friends University (KAFU) for the Establishment of a Climate Change Research and Innovation Centre at KAFU. We are also collaborating with the County Government of Kakamega and Kenya Forestry Service (KFS) in fencing of Kakamega Forest that spreads into Vihiga County.

Land Management and Urban Development

84. **Honourable Speaker,** to enhance sustainable land use and management, smart urban infrastructure and affordable quality housing in the County; we have directed our commitments towards promotion of efficient, effective and sustainable land use, decent and adequate housing for all in a clean and secure environment.

85. We have completed the preparation of local physical development plan for Luanda and Kaimosi/Cheptulu. We have further advertised for the inspection of the plans as required by law. What remains is to declare them municipalities.

86. We are at the tail end of compiling the County Valuation Roll. The Cabinet has approved the Valuation Roll and will now forward for tabling to this Honorable House. Once approved, it will enhance in collection of our own-resources from land rates.

87. The ongoing completion of the Governor's and Deputy Governor's residences current overall works stand at 90%. The remaining phase covers fencing the two residences, connecting water, solid waste management and construction of staff houses.

88. Towards achieving sustainable waste management within Vihiga Municipality, we have completed the bio-digester located behind Mbale Prisons. It will serve the County Referral Hospital and its staff quarters. On top of the bio-digester, we shall grow bamboos and clean water shall be released to the wetland downstream.

89. Towards delivery of affordable housing in Vihiga, we hosted His Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya when he officially broke ground for the development of 200 affordable housing units in Vihiga County. To contribute towards achievement of this programme, the County Government of Vihiga waived all approval fees on development, prepared and approved local part development plan, carried out public participation and stakeholder engagements and negotiated for Vihiga youth in skilled labour and provision of materials to the contractor.

90. We have also identified seven (7) acres of County land at Lunyerere for development of affordable houses by the National Social Security Fund (NSSF). Further, we have also identified 3 acres of land in Mbale town for construction of affordable housing by the National Housing Corporation (NHC). I wish to request the people of Vihiga to prepare to apply and buy these affordable houses when completed.

91. In order to streamline services and maximize efficiency in the management of Vihiga Municipality, the Cabinet approved the transfer of functions from county departments to the Vihiga Municipality, a great

milestone and right step in securing much needed support from World Bank (KUSP II).

92. Beautification of Majengo, Chavakali and Mudete was undertaken by the department in conjunction with Vihiga Municipality. This has improved the face of these towns and ease of doing business.
93. It is worthy to note that, the department of lands was integral in the negotiation for the lease of the land for development of the Vihiga County Aggregation and Industrial Park in Luanda from the Kenya Railways.

The Youth, Sports Development and Social Services

94. **Honourable Speaker**, our plan for this sector is to promote, nurture and develop sports, talents and the Arts in the County; establish and promote youth empowerment programs; promote and conserve cultural heritage and diversity; and to empower vulnerable individuals, groups and communities.
95. To that end, through the implementation of the Vihiga County Sports Fund Act 2019, we have supported 17 teams to a budgeted amount of KES 15 million during the 2022/23 financial year.
96. Talent identification, nurturing and promotion for arts was successfully organized during the 4th edition of the Vihiga County Youth extravaganza. We completed creation of Ivona Youth empowerment centre which is ready for youth programs. Our Talanta Hela - Boys team is set to represent the County as Western Regional champions in Nairobi during the December 2023 finals. We have also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Ajira Digital that will see youth, women and People with Disability acquire digital skills to conduct business online.
97. We successfully organized Film production workshop in partnership with Kenya Film Commission that trained and certified 67 youth. We are preparing an MoU that will allow the Commission to establish a film studio in Vihiga County.
98. We also successfully completed rerouting of Gisambai-Hamisi Road to allow for the expansion of Hamisi Stadium. Plans are underway to acquire more land to expand and construct Kidundu stadium.
99. Youth are a key constituency in the governance affairs of Vihiga County. The people living with disability in Vihiga have longed for institutionalized inclusion in the administration and management activities of Vihiga County. To this end, we have commenced operationalization of the Vihiga Youth Service Act 2022 and the People with Disability (PWD) Act 2022 by advertising for expression of interest towards formation of Vihiga County Youth Service Board and the PWD board in Vihiga County.
100. Towards preservation of our culture and heritage, we have developed a draft of our Culture and Heritage Policy. We have gone further to develop cultural Centres at Shiru (Tiriki), Mungoma (Maragoli), Esibila West Bunyore (Bunyore) whose works are underway. Procurement to secure land in Jepkoyai for Terik Cultural Centre is also in progress.

101. In partnership with the National Museums of Kenya, we have commenced the documentation and digitization of our culture that will form a foundation for cultural tourism and education.
102. We supported People with Disability (PWDs) with wheelchairs during this reporting period. In partnership with Her Excellency Mama Tessie Mudavadi and Ahadi Kenya we facilitated Persons Living with Disabilities with Hass avocado seedlings and relief food. Through the Mudavadi Memorial Foundation Trust Fund and in collaboration with Ushirika Wema Initiative, Mama Tessy also donated incubators and newborn warmers to Vihiga County Referral Hospital and Itando Mission Hospital.
103. KICOSCA 2023 August edition was well organized and held in Meru County and was attended by 246 staff members who participated in 21 disciplines. We managed to be position 15 overall. Select 23 Vihiga County KIKOSCA players were nominated for trials in Siaya County last week to participate in the East Africa Local Authorities Sports and Cultural Association (EALASCA).
104. Youth unemployment in our county is an issue of major concern to my administration. Therefore, we have embarked on various initiatives that aim to build capacity and skills of our youth to be able to create their own employment through innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship. In this regard we have signed an MoU with international NGO called Capital Action who have embarked on training our youth on entrepreneurship. They target to train 10,000 youth. We have also signed MoU with Ajira Digital Kenya who will train the youth on digital skills to enable them access to online job opportunities. Also, we have partnered with who Huawei company from China, who trained 170 youth on digital skills. Last and not least, we have established the Youth Directorate to coordinate youth activities in the county.

County Transport and Infrastructure

105. **Honourable Speaker**, the County Government has a mandate to provide an efficient transport system and well-maintained infrastructure in a safe and secure environment to the people of Vihiga County.
106. To that end, 154.6KM of county roads have been maintained with 3.2KM paved under the County labour-based road maintenance programme. 1,037.9KM of county roads are currently under maintenance with 2,129KM graveled under the County Government 2014-2023 CRF programme.
107. We completed maintenance of 937KM county roads under RMLF (KRB) and completed 90 river structures (bridges, box culverts, foot bridges and river crossings) under the County Government 2014-2023 CRF programme.
108. Through our 2023-2027 CIDP, we have envisioned upgrading of some of our main link roads to bitumen standard across the county. In collaboration with the National Government, Recarpeting of Standkisa-Emusustwi Road section is complete with the rehabilitation of

Emusustwi-Khumusalaba road currently ongoing. We have also escalated the importance of upgrading to bitumen standard the Chavakali-Lusiola-Eregi with the support of the Office of the Prime Cabinet Secretary to KERRA.

109. We are further engaging the National Government for partnership in the upgrade of the following roads to bitumen standard: Ebuyangu-Ebukanga-Hobuyaya road, Jebrok-Hamisi road, Majengo-Magayi-Kidundu road, Kaimosi-Muhudu-Kaptech-Muhombe road, Cheptulu-Shaviringa-Ikamulembe-Muhudu road, Chavakali-Solongo-Kegondi Road, Mbale-Kisangula (Mpaka Road), C39 Kaimosi-Shamakhokho road, Vihiga-Masana-Ideleri-Tigoi Road, Sabatia-Mudungu-Jemovo-Hamisi Centre road, Mbale-Muzulyu-Viyalo, Mbale Prison-NHC-Shell Road, Kegoye ring road-Kegoye Primary-Endeli road, Vihiga Police-Mbihi road, Mbale Equity-Mukuli-Kasee road, Manyatta-Chambitu ring road-Stage Maziwa road and Mudete market-Vohovole Primary road.
110. To mitigate on the costly budget of maintenance of county vehicles and machinery to private garages, we completed construction and operationalized the use of the County Mechanical Unit. With this facility, we have been able to maintain, service and repair 5 heavy plant and machinery and 70 county vehicles in this period under review. We have also trained 32 attachee students from our county TVET institutions in the mechanical unit as a referral practical training centre.
111. To mitigate against fire emergency and rescue services, the County Government of Vihiga acquired a fire engine and rapid response vehicle. We also went further to recruit fire marshals who have to date received 300 emergency reported occurrences out of which 183 incidences were responded to.
112. Development of the County Call Centre is complete and will soon be launched together with the new 24/7 County Toll Free Number. This will fastrack the reporting of emergencies and grievances including corruption cases and poor implementation of projects.
113. 25 county markets have been installed with 30M and 20M high mast flood lights in our efforts to enhance security and economic activities beyond the dawn hours.
114. The Roads Maintenance Levy Funds (RMLF) are no longer being budgeted by Parliament for counties since the 2021/2022 Fiscal Year. Instead, the money is being channeled to Kenya Rural Roads Authority (KERRA) for maintenance of constituency roads. It is therefore important for the public to be aware of the same, since as a county we have no funds to maintain those roads although they are classified as county roads. We have given authority to KERRA to maintain them.

Priorities for the 2023/2024 Fiscal Year

115. **Honourable Speaker**, for prudent and accountable finance and economic planning in the County Government of Vihiga, we are

strengthening the county M&E reporting institutional framework and operationalization of E-CIMES set to be rolled out in November/December 2023.

116. We plan to undertake full automation of the remaining own source revenue streams; upgrade the IFMIS server; automation of audit and budgeting process; Strengthening of the county procurement processes including digitization of the project file records; and continuous human resource development including regular training programmes for our County Staff.
117. We have also earmarked completion of the 160-bed Hospital Plaza; construction of a new maternity unit at Sabatia sub-county hospital; completion of Emusire sub-County Hospital Mortuary; as well as completion of Givigoi Hospital.
118. Plans are underway for completion and equipping of Ebukoolo, Givole, Mulele and Emurembe Dispensaries; renovation of Givudimbuli Health Centre; purchase of land for construction of dispensary at Emukunzi; Construction of Ekamanji dispensary, Mulele Health centre, Siekuti Dispensary; and completion of a Maternity unit at Kaptis and completion of drugstore at VCRH.
119. Towards promotion of commerce, tourism and cooperatives in the County, we have planned for construction of ESP markets in partnership with State Department of Housing and Urban Development in Banja, Esibuye, Chavakali and Khusikulu; establishment of a Granite Processing Plant in Vihiga County in partnership with State department of Mining; and construction of County Aggregation and Industrial Park (CAIP) in partnership with the Ministry of Trade, Investments and Industry.
120. The sector has also planned to install High Mast Flood Lights at Magada, Jebrok, Essongolo and Chamakanga Markets; including Ebwali, Stand-Matope and Kima Stages; we will also Construct bodaboda shades at Mbale junction, Lunyerere, Munoywa, Nadanya, Kisatiru junction, Wangulu market, Chavakali junction, Kegondi, Chandumba stage, Chavakali high school stage, Muhaya stage, Esibila stage, Esikhuyu stage as well as Esiamatate stage.
121. Towards sustainable land management and urban development, we have planned to establish the County Land Information Management System (LIMS); complete Governors and Deputy Governons residence; complete the bio-digester plant behind Mbale Prisons; and finalize the establishment of Kaimosi and Luanda as new Municipalities and embark on the preparation of County Spatial Plan.
122. To implement last mile supply of the Vihiga Cluster water project focusing on pumping, storage, reticulation, Smart metering, treatment, water quality and renewable energy. Promotion of sustainable use of water resources will also be a priority focusing on hydrological surveys and protection of water catchment sources. Ensure Amatsi Water Company is fully restructured and made effective and efficient in service delivery and become self-sustaining.

Conclusion

123. **Honourable Speaker**, there has been increased incidences of insecurity around the county with reports of petty theft and sexual assault. This has been brought about mainly by the increased cases of unemployment especially among the youth, alcohol and drug abuse, gambling and neglect of the boy child in the community. However, I applaud the County Commissioner Mr. Felix Watakila for his efforts together with his county security team towards managing this matter. We shall work with the National Government to fight these vices in our county. Further, during this festive season, we shall step up our security patrols to ensure that we have peaceful Christmas and New Year holidays.
124. Vihiga County enjoys good consultative relationship within its leadership ranks, conditions that have enabled and supported inclusive development planning and implementation. We have managed to sustain good working partnership with members of this Honourable County Assembly led by the Speaker.
125. A similar working partnership has also been established with all the Honourable Members of Parliament from Vihiga County. We have scheduled quarterly meetings with the MPs to agree on our collective development agenda and work towards eliminating duplication of projects. We have agreed to focus on development of our County and not on our political persuasion and affiliation.
126. Despite of the defined constitutional oversight role of the County Assembly and the Senate, I note with a lot of concern the alarmingly high rate of summons to me as the Governor to make appearance before the Senate on many county oversight issues. This year alone, I have been summoned to appear before the Senate four (4) times to respond to queries regarding status of implementation of projects and programmes as well as financial issues including pending bills.
127. I wish to request this Honourable County Assembly through your Honourable Speaker for a consultative clarification from the County Assemblies Forum (CAF) on the roles of County Assembly and Senate when it comes to efficient and coordinated oversight of the County Government executive. We have increasingly been spending a lot of resources in attending these summonses at the Senate in Nairobi.
128. In conclusion, Honourable Speaker, despite of the current economic hardships affecting the country; the people of Vihiga continue to live in harmony and are hopeful for a better future. There is calm in the county except for a few politicians who have embarked on early campaigns.
129. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the people of Vihiga and their leadership for the support they are according to my administration. I wish to assure you all of my commitment to transformative development of Vihiga County to higher level during my legacy period of leadership.
130. Finally, **Honourable Speaker**, I take this opportunity to wish the members of this Honourable House, elected and nominated leaders of

Vihiga County together with the people of Vihiga County, a Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year 2024.

I Thank you.

God Bless You.

God Bless Vihiga County

God Bless Kenya.