

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 5TH DECEMEBR 2024,

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 **Sixth 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 second address to this honourable assembly in my second term as Governor of the Vihiga County. In this address, I will highlight our progress, challenges and development achievements covering 2023/2024 fiscal year as well as highlights of the FY 2024/25 on-going development.

- 2) **Honourable Speaker**, before I proceed further into my address today, I wish to request for a moment of silence to honour our departed County Secretary – the late Ezekiel Ayiego Marley, in remembrance of his service to the people of Vihiga County and the country.

Honourable Speaker,

- 3) This year's State of the County Address underscores the accomplishments achieved during the 2023/24 fiscal year through the implementation of policies and programs outlined in the CIDP 2023-2027. These policies were aligned with Kenya Vision 2030 and its Fourth Medium Term Plan (MTPIV) 2023-2027. Focus was placed on essential foundations or enablers aimed at achieving county transformation and maintaining a stable macroeconomic framework. Key areas of focus included the development of reliable infrastructure, integration of information science and technology (ICT) in service delivery,

affordable housing and urbanization, promotion of good governance and accountability systems.

- 4) Further, emphasis was placed on implementing key strategies to elevate the county's economy with the broad objective of improving the socio-economic status and prosperity of Vihiga residents. The primary areas of focus included improving agricultural production and productivity, strengthening healthcare delivery systems, enhancing access to quality education and technical and vocational training, promotion of small and medium enterprises as well as value addition and industrialisation.
- 5) My administration also focused on social sector initiatives aimed at promoting equitable socio-economic development in a clean and secure environment. These initiatives included water and sanitation services, environmental management and climate change mitigation, social protection, sports, arts, and the creative economy.
- 6) Analysis of the 2023/24 financial year performance indicate that the county made considerable progress across all the sectors. Accordingly, my administration seeks to sustain the momentum in the medium term to ensure the realization of the desired growth and prosperity for the residents of Vihiga.

SECTORAL ACHIEVEMENTS

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

A. Finance and Economic Planning

- 7) **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.
- 8) During the period under review, equitable share allocation from National Treasury decreased from KES 5,483,330,684 in 2022/23 financial year to KES 5,267,026,885 in 2023/24 financial year. The county government, however, recorded an increase in Own Source Revenue from KES 229.8 million in

2022/23 financial year to KES 335.4 million in 2023/24 financial year. The aggregated annual revenue inclusive of grants was KES 6,679,844,805 compared to KES 5,853,542,011 in 2022/23 financial year. However, the actual total receipts were KES 6,215,948,177 comprising of KES 4,845,664,732 (77.96%) as Equitable Share of revenue, KES 270,395,647 (4.35%) as balance brought forward, KES 764,448,013 (12.29%) as total Conditional Grants and KES 335,439,785 (5.40%) being Own Source Revenue.

The significance increase in OSR was attributed to various reforms that were instituted on revenue administration that included automation of revenue collection, enhanced supervision and enforcement, engagement of additional personnel and expansion of existing revenue streams and revival of dormant streams.

9) During the financial year 2023/24, the total expenditure was **KES 5,310,288,998** against total budget of **KES 6,679,844,805**. The department of Finance and Economic Planning recorded the highest absorption rate of 104% attributed to payment of historical pending bills. While the department of Environment, Water, Energy, Natural Resources and Climate Change recording the lowest absorption rate of 57% as result of delays in the procurement and non-transfer of the FLOCCA grants in the financial year. **The overall absorption rate for the entire County Budget was 79.5%.**

10) During the period under review, the Departments achieved development expenditure of KES 1.14 billion against a development budget of KES 2.20 billion which represented an absorption rate of 51.61%. The Departments of Agriculture and Environment had the highest budgetary allocation, mainly composed of grants, while the Department of Culture and Sports had the least. The low absorption rate was mainly attributed to delays in the disbursement of grants.

Honourable Speaker,

11) The following were the achievement of the Finance and Economic Planning sector during the year under review.

The department developed the County Annual Development Plan (ADP) for 2024-25 financial year, County Annual Progress Report for 2022/23 fiscal year

and draft M&E indicator Handbook for the CIDP 2023-27. We also prepared draft M&E policy to provide a framework for effective coordination of M&E activities in the county; supported departments in preparation of various policies and development plans: **Water Department** - County Water and Sanitation Strategy and Investment Plan (CWSSIP) under K-WASH, **Strategic Plans for Education, Gender, Lands Departments**, as well as Hamisi & Emuhaya Sub-County hospitals, County Urban Institutional Development Strategy (CUIDS), Health Annual Work Plan, Annual Progress Reports and Review report of County Nutrition Action plan.

- 12)** The department also coordinated, in consultation with the County Assembly, the preparations and subsequent approval of - CBROP 2023, CFSP 2023, budget estimates 2024/25, and Appropriation and finance bills for 2024/25 financial year.
- 13)** The department also enhanced service delivery through institutionalization and cascading of Performance contracts and appraisals for all staff in the department; enhanced project implementation and contracts execution through timely procurement of goods and services for county entities; instituted reforms in own source revenue collection including roll out of automated revenue system leading to an improvement of revenue from KES 229.8 million in FY 2022/23 to KES 335.4 million in FY 2023/24 against a target of KES 300 million representing a growth of 12 percent; and strengthened internal control systems and accountability in financial management through internal audit reviews and preparation of periodic audit reports

Honourable Speaker,

- 14)** Vihiga County has made great strides in localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through institutionalization of the agenda 2030 in the county governance, plans, policies, budgets and programmes.
- 15)** We are the leading county in accelerating implementation of SDGs at County level by mainstreaming SDGs in the county policies, plans and budgeting farmwork; institutionalised SDGs in the departments by establishing SDG champions in all county departments to coordinate implementation and reporting of SDGs; and We have built collaborations and partnerships with the

private sector, CSOs and development partners in coordination and implementation of SDGs.

- 16)** In 2022, Vihiga County was ranked 3rd among 47 County Governments in localization and reporting of SDGs by the SDG National Consortium composed of SDG Kenya Forum, State Department of Devolution, Council of Governors, State Department of Economic Planning, UN-Habitat, WFP among other agencies and organizations. This year 2024, Vihiga is favored to lead again among the key counties in mainstreaming SDGs in County Development Programmes.
- 17)** Vihiga County recorded a Gross County Product (GCP) of KES 101. 8 billion contributing to 0.8 % of the GDP mainly supported by the agricultural sector and Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises. The Vihiga County economy grew by 5.6% up from 4.9% registered in 2022. The growth was mainly driven by a rebound in the agriculture sub-sector which benefitted from favourable weather conditions coupled with the implementation of the subsidized farm input programme.

Honourable Speaker,

- 18)** The county government made remarkable efforts in settling historical pending bills. The total cumulative pending bills as at 1st July 2023 was **KES 1,438,889,539.12**. During the Financial Year 2023/2024, we were able to make payments totaling to **KES 635,853,752.69** for pending bills, bringing down the figure to **KES 803,035,786.43**. The delay by the National Treasury to release the exchequer for the month of June 2024 largely contributed to increase in the pending bills in the financial year 2023/2024 by **KES 573,630,879.67** resulting in a closing total figure of **KES 1,376,666,666.10** as of **30th June 2024**.
- 19)** In our budget for the 2024/2025 financial year, we have allocated **KES 512,992,350** towards the payment of these pending bills, with considerations for additional allocations to be made through subsequent supplementary budgets. Out of this budgetary allocation, we have already paid **KES 169,005,734.67** as of 30th November 2024.

- 20)** Additionally, with the concerted efforts to increase our Own Source revenues and timely exchequer releases from the National Treasury; the above figure of pending bills should considerably reduce by more than 50% at the close of the Financial Year 2024/2025.
- 21)** Going forward, my administration has put in place stringent measures guiding budget implementation in the departments to deter further accumulation of pending bills. My administration is committed 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 a pending bills committee to review pending bills from time to time; and complete elimination of manual LSOs and LPOs in procurement. Additionally, my administration aims to complete project procurement processes by the end of February each year.
- 22)** The department has drastically improved in its Financial and Procurement processes that has led to our achievement of qualified opinion by the Office of the Auditor General, for the consecutive fiscal years of 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years.

B. Good Governance and Accountability Systems

Honourable Speaker

- 23)** The County Government of Vihiga acknowledges the critical importance of good governance and accountability in public sector management. During the period under review, efforts were concentrated on enhancing systems that uphold human rights and the rule of law; increasing public participation and multi-actor engagement; promoting political maturity; and instilling accountability and transparency in the management of the public sector.
- 24)** Accordingly, my administration continued to promote collaborations and partnership with the National Government and other partners including signing of MOUs with various State Agencies and professional bodies; towards fostering collaboration and partnerships that enhance good governance, development, and service delivery. During the year under review, the following MoUs were signed and operationalised with different entities.

- 1) **Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD)** to help in building capacity of our staff in efficient resource mapping and data analysis for rational planning and implementation of development projects.
- 2) **Kenya Space Agency (KSA)** to support in capacity building and application of satellite technology in resource mapping, planning and decision making for sustainable development.
- 3) **Ajira Digital** focussing on promoting innovation and digital skills.
- 4) **West Media** to promote Information dissemination and Communication, enhancing public awareness and engagement.
- 5) **Kaimosi Friends University (KAFU)** and the **Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA)** towards Strengthening Education, Research Capacities and Policy Development.
- 6) **State Department of Fisheries and Blue Economy, Agricultural Business Development Program (ABDP), Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Investment (KNCCI),** and **Tupande by One Acre Fund** offering support to Agricultural and Economic Development - Collaborations with the aim to promote economic development, agricultural productivity, and business growth.
- 7) **Amref Health Africa, The Water Project,** and **WASH Alliance Kenya** towards improved health services, water access, and overall social well-being.
- 8) **Planet Gold in the State Department of Environment and Climate Change** – this partnership will support environmental conservation and safe gold mining in the County.

By entering into these MoUs, the County Government of Vihiga aims to leverage the expertise, resources, and support of various partners to achieve its socio-economic development goals, enhance good governance, and improve the quality of life for its residents.

- 25) The county government, in collaboration with EACC, trained selected staff on anti-corruption strategies, conducted corruption risk assessments, and established departmental anti-corruption committees. The committees report their anti-corruption activities and initiatives monthly to the County Anti-corruption committee for action and reporting to EACC.
- 26) During the period under review, my administration engaged and worked with partners like GIZ, TWaweza, Rural Outreach Africa, and The Institute of Social Accountability (TISA) to promote open governance systems. Policies and

legislation were created to guide devolved functions per Kenya's Constitution, Fourth Schedule. These include the County Records Management Policy, Communication and Public Relations Policy, Disaster Management Act 2020, Public Participation Act 2020 (Amendment Bill), Gazettement of enforcement committee under the Vihiga County Alcoholic Drinks Act 2014, Vihiga County PSB Bill, Enforcement standing order Bill, Enforcement bill, and draft scheme of service for enforcement officers.

C. Public Sector Reforms

Honourable Speaker,

27) The Public Service Sector is vital for policy direction, leadership, and service delivery. During the year under review, the sector-initiated reforms to promote good governance and service delivery

Key achievements included implementing results-based management, Performance Contracting (PCs), and Performance Appraisals (PAs) in county departments and agencies. Other milestones were targeted recruitment, training, staff promotions, strengthening the Service Delivery Unit, and enhancing the County Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting, and Learning (MERL) framework. Regular review meetings with senior staff were also held to assess performance and provide feedback for policy decisions.

28) Further, the County participated in the County Peer Review Mechanism (CPRM) that focussed on commitment to good governance, accountability and continuous improvement. The review was undertaken by NEPAD/APRM Kenya Secretariat. The recommendations of the report are currently being implemented by different department of the County Government of Vihiga. In collaboration with the national government, the Kenya School of Government Campus is currently under construction at Boyani in Vihiga County.

The sector further achieved the following:

29) Establishment of a centralized integrated Human Resource data base and operationalized Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) for management decision support on HR Matters; establishment of an e-platform for sharing of payroll with accounting officers for verification as prescribed

under Public Finance Management regulations; establishment of a skills database to inform appropriate deployment and enhancement of professionalism in the County Public Service , succession management, promotions and staff development matters; constructed Hamisi Sub-county Administration office and commenced construction of Sabatia Sub-county office to improve work environment of sub county administration officers; commenced the construction of Ebutanyi resource centre; organized County Dialogue Forum at the Municipal grounds on 11th of August 2023 that preceded the biannual devolution conference held in Eldoret the same month at lion's club; enhanced the enforcement of the Alcoholic drinks control regulations 2018 that resulted in increased revenue collection from KES 5 million in 2022/23 FY to KES 8.5 million in 2023/24 FY; and strengthened corruption prevention mechanism through the establishment corruption prevention committee for the department and training of County executive in collaboration with GIZ on corruption prevention.

- 30)** The department further established a call centre to enhance emergency grievance and corruption reporting as well as help in revenue collection. The Toll-free call centre number is **0800 723 938**.

D. County Legal Services

Honourable Speaker

- 31)** The Office of the County Attorney is an institution established by the County Attorney Act No. 4 of 2020. This office is not just a beacon of justice but also a cornerstone for the provision of essential legal services in our county.
- 32)** Litigation against the government hampers development, often leaving the legal office inoperative and affecting service delivery. I encourage the community, especially civil society, to use alternative dispute resolution methods like negotiation. Unlike litigation, these methods promote progress and constructive outcomes for all parties.
- 33)** To further this initiative, I have directed the Office of the County Attorney to draft relevant legislation for our County Assembly's consideration. This legislation will **establish the Office of the Ombudsman** and other necessary systems and structures to resolve disputes that would ideally be settled

through alternative dispute resolution, as provided by Article 159 of the Constitution.

- 34)** I am pleased to report that the Office of the County Attorney is now fully operational. During the Financial Year 2023/2024, we achieved significant milestones:

In the area of legal advisories, we have handled 10 bills, 7 of which are complete and delivered to the relevant departments, while 3 are nearing finalization; the legal office reviewed and approved 14 MoUs, facilitating partnerships between various departments and relevant organizations. In the realm of court cases, we managed a total of 68 cases. Out of these, 35 were concluded with judgments or rulings issued. I am proud to announce that 18 cases were ruled in our favor, although 17 were against the county government. Currently, 33 cases remain active, and from the 17 cases ruled against us, we have appealed a total of 4 cases - 1 case in the Employment and Labour Relations Court (ELRC) and 3 cases at the Court of Appeal.

- 35)** It is also noteworthy that in the year under review, we recorded fewer new cases against the county, which can be attributed to the competent legal advice provided to our departments and county agencies.

E. Agriculture and Livestock Development

Honourable Speaker,

- 36)** Agriculture is a major part of the economy in Vihiga County, Kenya, with about 85% of the population relying on farming for their livelihood. The agriculture sector contributes 34% of the Gross County Product (GCP) and is a significant source of food, nutrition security, and poverty reduction. During the review period, the county department responsible for agriculture implemented various policies and strategies aimed at increasing agricultural production and productivity. These initiatives included promoting modern agricultural technologies, transitioning from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture, and enhancing the productivity of key value chains.
- 37)** Key achievements realized during the reporting period include - the commencement of the establishment of an Agriculture Training and Innovation

Centre (ATIC) at Musinaka. The commercialization of selected value chains, supported by the Agricultural Sector Development Programme (ASDSP), was promoted through training and the issuance of assorted seeds. These chains included dairy farming, African Leafy Vegetables (ALVs), avocado, bananas, and poultry farming. Additionally, a banana aggregation centres was constructed at Munoywa in Sabatia and at Ivola Hamisi. Youth participation in food production systems was encouraged by recruiting young individuals as mentors, supported by Practical Action and GIZ projects. To date, over 4,000 youth have been trained in agriculture as a business venture.

- 38)** During the year under review, the department developed the Wemilabi – Central Bunyore Irrigation Scheme. The scheme has 172 beneficiaries focusing on horticulture crops and African Leafy Vegetables.

Honourable Speaker,

- 39)** It gives me great pleasure to share with you the remarkable strides we have made under the NAVCDP initiatives. With dedicated efforts, we have successfully mapped and profiled numerous farmers and provided substantial support to 20 SACCOs, fostering growth and sustainability in our communities. We have formed and registered new SACCOs, elected new CDDCs/Subcommittees, and recruited 175 Agri-preneurs, who are poised to lead the future of agribusiness. Our commitment to education and training has seen 250 elected CDDCs and 75 SACCO leaders undergo comprehensive training, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive. In addition, agribusiness program has mentored young entrepreneurs, established centres of excellence, and developed strategies to ensure the success and commercialization of priority value chains. It is through these collective efforts that we continue to empower our farmers, innovate in agribusiness, and build a resilient and prosperous future for all.
- 40)** With over 600 farmers profiled and mapped, we are now more equipped than ever to address the needs of our fish farming community. Our collaboration with Norway, formalized through a newly signed MOU, will benefit 450 practicing fish farmers, providing them with cutting-edge aquaculture technology. I am also thrilled to announce that two schools will soon benefit from these innovative aquaculture techniques, fostering a new generation of informed and empowered agricultural leaders.

41) The department organised the 1st Vihiga County Agricultural Exhibition and Conference held at Hamisi Stadium from 29th - 30th April 2024. The two-day event provided a learning and interactive forum for farmers across the County. The conference called on farmers to revert to Conservation type of Agriculture and use of organic fertilizer as one way of improving soil fertility for better harvests.

F. Healthcare Delivery

Honourable Speaker,

42) Industrial strikes in Kenya's healthcare sector have significantly impacted on the provision of healthcare services, including in Vihiga County. My administration supports the national Universal Health Coverage (UHC) program, and we are strongly committed to its implementation. Consequently, our government has engaged the services of 1,450 community healthcare promoters and 145 community health assistants across all community health units, to provide real time health services at the community level. I confirm that over 86% (1,247) of our community health service providers are well-equipped with smartphones and receive an enhanced stipend from KES 3,000 to KES 5,000 to ensure the delivery of quality and comprehensive health services at community level.

43) My administration continues to maintain and facilitate a substantial technical healthcare workforce of approximately 1,250 healthcare providers across all public health facilities. During the year under review, we recruited six ambulance drivers to support client referrals and confirmed 16 medical officers into permanent positions following the completion of their contracts. Regarding performance management, I wish to confirm that 91% of all staff within the health department were properly appraised, and reports were submitted to the Department of Public Service and Administration for their promotion and redesignation considerations.

44) We are committed to providing quality, equitable, and affordable healthcare to all, adhering to the highest possible standards. Key achievements during the 2023/24 financial year included the expansion of healthcare infrastructure, which encompassed the near completion of the Hospital Plaza and completion of the modern funeral home at the County Referral Hospital; construction of

Givigoi Health Centre and Jebrongo dispensary; upgrading of Emusire Health Centre to Level 4; and the installation and equipping of the morgue at the facility. We constructed and operationalised medical waste incinerator plant at the County Referral hospital and commenced construction of a Microwave Medical Waste Plant at the same facility.

Honourable Speaker,

45) As we roll out the Social Health Authority (SHA) in Vihiga County, we are committed to enhancing access to affordable and quality healthcare through a community-driven approach. This initiative, which aligns with our national health goals to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), focuses on mobilizing community resources, registering households, and strengthening community health systems. To date, we have successfully registered 73,098 individuals to Social Health Authority (SHA), representing 12.4% of our target population of 590,013. Furthermore, we have engaged all 162 Community Health Units, ensuring comprehensive coverage and support for our healthcare efforts. I **take this opportunity to appeal to the people of Vihiga County who have not yet registered with SHA to do so promptly to access free healthcare services.**

46) Vihiga County boasts of a non-communicable disease (NCD) clinic, established through the collaboration of the County Government of Vihiga, the Ministry of Health, and the Non-Communicable Disease Alliance Kenya (NCDAK). In partnership with the NCDI Poverty Network, NCDAK developed a clinical model known as PEN-PLUS. This innovative model addresses neglected NCDs such as type 1 diabetes, sickle cell disease, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases (including asthma and COPD), and mental health conditions. The increasing number of enrolled clients with these diseases is evidence of this success. While the residents of Vihiga County are the primary beneficiaries of these services, the clinic also attracts patients from neighbouring counties, including Kisumu, Nandi, Bungoma, Busia, Migori, and Kakamega. I **once again take this opportunity to appeal to our people including our elected and nominated leaders to go for NCD screening in this specialised clinic in our county.**

- 47) To date, nearly 800 clients living with NCDs have been enrolled and are receiving continuous follow-up care at the clinic. The dedicated staff provides patient-centered care to effectively address the burden associated with NCDs.
- 48) My administration with support from various partners, has received equipment which will enhance service delivery in our facilities. These equipment have been distributed to our County Referral Hospital and our sub-county hospitals. Also, through the Council of Governors, we have placed an order for medical equipment for all our registered health facilities.

The Christian Blind Mission is one major development partner that has supported the establishment of our Eye Clinic at the County Referral Hospital. The equipment received from CBM will go a long way in supporting screening and management of eye conditions in Vihiga and beyond. Equally, my administration received assorted equipment from the Government of Poland to support specialized maternal and child health care in our county. Momentum, Country Global Leadership (MCGL) and Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine are also notable partners that have supported our healthcare systems by donating assorted medical equipment.

- 49) Other notable partners that continue to support health service delivery in Vihiga County are: PATH **Nuru ya Mtoto - Policy and advocacy programme**; Impact Research and Development Organization (IRDO); Breakthrough ACTION Kenya; Nutrition International; USAID M-RITE; Evidence Action, Mildmay Kenya; White Ribbon Alliance Kenya; NCD Alliance Kenya; Amref Health Africa; Access to Medicines Platform; JHPIEGO (TCI); Marie Stopes-Kenya; Medtronic Labs; WASH Alliance Kenya; KCCBACTS & KCCB Komesha TB; Canadian Nurses for Africa; PROPEL Health (USAID); IPAS; PMI REACH Malaria; MAAYGO; Living Goods; KMET; Tiko Kenya; Maziwa Breast Pump LTD and KOELAB.
- 50) The County Government of Vihiga has also negotiated partnership with the Safaricom Foundation towards the construction and partial equipping of a Maternal and Neo-Natal Block at the County Referral Hospital for a proposed grant KES 60.3 million. We are looking forward to groundbreaking for the development of this momentous facility.

- 51)** During the year under review, the department also finalised the Food and Nutrition Security Bill 2024 which the cabinet has approved. The bill is now with this County Assembly for consideration before enactment.
- 52)** The department during the year under review, applied and received a donation of 2 ambulances from Great Britain. The ambulances are being equipped before being operationalised for use at the County Referral Hospital and Sabatia sub-county.

G. Education and Training

Honourable Speaker,

- 53)** The county government recognizes that education is vital for inclusive economic growth. To support this, we have consistently implemented programs to improve access to education and training in pre-primary, vocational, and technical institutions.
- 54)** During the year under review, my administration completed construction of 34 ECDE classrooms across the county; equipped 10 ECDE centres with child friendly chairs and tables for better learning environment. We also Equipped 11 VTCs with teaching and learning tools - namely Electrical and Electronics, Hair Dressing and Beauty Therapy and ICT equipment.
- 55)** The department also disbursed KES 6,836,899 and KES 98,500,000 as the Governor's scholarships and bursary respectively, to over 78,000 students across all the 25 wards of Vihiga County. During the year under review, we increased the annual Governor's scholarship beneficiaries from 153 in 2022/23 to 160 in 2023/24; while each ward received KES 4 million from the Vihiga County Education Fund (bursary).
- 56)** The department constructed 4 new child-friendly ablution blocks in Lugaga-Wamuluma Ward and signed Memorandum of Understanding with Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO) to support VTC trainees training. SHOFCO is currently supporting by paying full school fees to 533 students in different VTCs in the county.

- 57)** My administration also enhanced co-curricular activities by supporting both ECDE and VTCs in drama, film and music festivals up to National level. In drama and film festivals, Emmutsuru, Ebulonga, Emuhaya, Mulele and Vihiga ECDE Centres competed up to the regional level. Maseno, Mwambeba, Keveye and Gimomoi VTCs competed up to the national level and were awarded trophies in 10 items namely cultural creative dance, modern creative dance, narrative, play, stand-up comedy, spoken word, mime, solo verse, solo dance and choral verse. In music, Ebusakami, Mulwanda, Ebukuya Special, Emmutsa, Emululu and Mahanga ECDE Centres competed up to the national level. Keveye VTC also competed up to the national level.
- 58)** Vihiga is among the first Counties in Kenya to actualise the establishment of the County Early Childhood Education Committees (CECEC) which will oversee proper management of ECDE centres in the County.
- 59)** Other notable achievements include the following: digital literacy was introduced in 50 ECDE centres in collaboration with **Futures Infinite**; implemented a pilot school feeding and nutrition program in 42 ECDE centres with support from SOFDI; partnership with Stanbic Bank, Generation Kenya, American Towers Corporation (ATC), Master Card and Microsoft Kenya led to the training of 20 VTC instructors as Trainers of Trainers (ToTs) on digital skills. The Governor's scholarship program was expanded, increasing the number of beneficiaries from 153 to 160 in the 2022/23 financial year, and KES 100 million in ward-based bursary funds were distributed, with each ward receiving KES 4 million.
- 60)** The County Government of Vihiga in collaboration with ACCESS International, provided 44 scholarships to the Governor's Scholarship program beneficiaries who had been admitted to various Universities for graduate studies.

H. Access to Water and Sanitation Services

Honourable Speaker,

- 61)** The Department is responsible in promoting a secure environment and universal access to adequate, clean, safe water and sanitation services for sustainable development. During the period under review, the county

government implemented various policies, programmes, and projects aimed at enhancing access to clean and reliable water supply, while also improving sanitation services.

- 62)** The key achievement reported during the year under review include, rehabilitating and expanding five (5) existing piped water schemes (Mudungu, Igogwa, Givole, Wanduati, and Ipali, benefiting over 500 households; increasing last-mile water connectivity to 1,800 households by laying 21km of pipelines across the county; and drilling and equipping 15 new boreholes.
- 63)** Towards improvement of sanitation services, the County Government of Vihiga signed an MoU with The Water Project in January 2023 towards implementing water and sanitation interventions in Vihiga in the areas of borehole drilling, protection of natural water springs, rainwater harvesting for vulnerable communities and institutions, provision of sanitation facilities and hygiene promotion. To date, through the Water Project we have achieved the following: drilling and equipping 33 boreholes with hand pumps in 33 primary schools, construction of 120 latrines in 20 schools, and protection of 20 springs in villages.
- 64)** Under the ward-based development program, various water projects were undertaken across the county, mainly focusing on rehabilitation of existing water schemes, protection of community springs and extension of water distribution lines of existing water supplies.
- 65)** An urban decentralized unit sewerage system was established at Ehedwe, and 12 waste holding skips were procured to support routine cleaning services in 63 markets and urban areas. Additionally, 10 monthly clean-up exercises were conducted in Mbale, Luanda, Chavakali, Esibuye, Majengo, Gambogi, Serem, Mudete, Ekwanda, and Kilingili.
- 66)** To improve efficiency and accountability in the operations of Amatsi Water Services Company, we have recruited a new Managing Director and Internal Auditor. We are also instituting policies to deal with the existing challenges of Non-Revenue Water in our efforts to reduce wastage and introduced new water tariffs to improve financial income of the company. Further, we have prepared in collaboration with the North Victoria Water services Works, a

project proposal and submitted to Africa Development Bank for last mile distribution of Vihiga Cluster Water Project.

- 67)** Vandalism of our water supply infrastructure continues to be a big challenge in our efforts of ensuring reliable supply of water to Vihiga County households. We are working to address this issue in partnership with our stakeholders/communities. We call on this County Assembly to support us in this endeavour.
- 68)** The department has also completed preparation for the Vihiga County Water and Sanitation Bill 2024 which is currently undergoing the legislative processes in this County Assembly.

I. Environmental Management and Climate Change

Honourable Speaker,

- 69)** The Environmental and Climate Change sub-sector envisions residents of the county living in a clean and secure environment. Conservation efforts are vital in preventing habitat destruction, safeguarding endangered species, and maintaining ecosystem balance. Furthermore, environmental conservation minimizes ecosystem degradation, reduces pollution levels, and promotes sustainable development.
- 70)** Climate change is a significant reality in Vihiga County. These changes affect food security, public health, disaster risks such as flooding, landslides, road destruction and water quality and availability.
- 71)** During the 2023/24 financial year, the county government implemented various programmes aimed at environmental conservation, mitigation and adaptation to climate change. To align the climate change legislative framework with the National climate frameworks, the Vihiga County Climate Change Bill 2024 was developed and is currently undergoing the county assembly legislative process. The Bill shall enable the county to tap into emerging climate financing opportunities such as the Carbon credits.
- 72)** Community resilience has been strengthened through the implementation of climate resilience projects prioritized in forums organized at the ward level.

These projects have significantly increased access to clean and safe water in various areas throughout the county, including Egogwa in Central Maragoli Ward, Givole Water in Jepkoyai Ward, Mmakhondo Ipali Water Project in West Bunyore Ward, Wandwati Water Project in Wemilabi, and Mudungu Water Project in Wodanga Ward, among others.

- 73)** The County has implemented the Financing Locally Led Climate Action Program (FLLoCA) in collaboration with the National Treasury. The county has been recognized as one of the top performers in this program. Currently, the county is undertaking eight projects: the Mutave Jepsesi Bridge, Kegondi Water Project, Vigena Water Project, Kaila Water Project, Mwala Kaptis Water Project, Ekamanji Water Project, Ebukhaya Water Project, and the reforestation of 70 acres of Maragoli Hills Forest.
- 74)** The County government has established a Climate Change Center of Excellence at Kaimoisi University to facilitate the integration of research in climate action.
- 75)** Other notable achievements in the sector included the following: Surveying, mapping, gazettelement, and protection of six wetlands; reforestation of ten acres of Ebusiekwe Hills; protection of four community forests in Hamisi - Jeptoror (0.9475 acres), Gidagadi (0.625 acres), Jegereni (0.5175 acres), and Gidimo (0.4425 acres). Additionally, 75 acres of Maragoli Hills were rehabilitated. In collaboration with Kenya Forestry Services (KFS) and other partners, the department undertook the fencing of Kakamega - Kibiri Forest, completing 1.2 km of the planned 15 km. The second phase of the school greening program was implemented by distributing and planting 12,000 assorted fruit seedlings and 10,000 exotic seedlings across 267 schools in Vihiga. Furthermore, 25 community awareness campaigns on climate change and sustainable environment practices were conducted. Conservation efforts for water catchment areas and sources were also undertaken.
- 76)** We trained 500 gold miners on mercury-free techniques in collaboration with the State Department for Environment, Forestry, and Climate Change through the Planet Gold Project. The goal is to manage and phase out mercury use in artisanal mining in Kenya. In collaboration with the Ministry of Mining, plans are underway to build analytical laboratory in our county.

77) A sand harvesting policy is being developed to regulate activities in Vihiga County. The county has started collecting revenue from sand harvesters to fund the restoration of degraded areas.

78) During the reporting period, we planted 6,000 water-friendly tree seedlings at Ebukhaya, Evojo, Egogwa, and Mugogo wetlands as part of our land restoration initiatives.

J. Lands, Housing and Urbanization

Honourable Speaker,

79) Land reforms are critical at promoting competitive and sustainable land management to provide a foundation for other economic activities. During the period under review the National government in collaboration with the county government continued with the implementation of the National Land Management Information System (NLMIS) to provide transparent, decentralized, affordable, effective and efficient GIS-based land management. The GIS-based system has been used in the digitization of land parcels in Vihiga County, development of the Vihiga County Spatial Plan and has facilitated efficient dispute resolution of land matters in the county.

Similarly, the County Government commenced initiatives to prepare a comprehensive 10-year County Spatial Plan (CSP) intended to guide sustainable development, proper land use and resilient urban development.

80) Housing is a fundamental need with significant social and economic benefits. The sector can boost economic growth, especially in Kaimosi, Luanda, Chavakali, Maseno, Majengo, and other urban areas due to the rising demand for decent housing. Urbanization attracts investors, promotes entrepreneurship, and fosters development and job creation. In the 2023/24 fiscal year, the county government prioritized several projects to meet housing and urban development needs. In collaboration with the national government, the construction of 200 housing units at Vihiga under the Affordable Housing Program is underway. Further, more housing units are planned to be built at Hamisi and Lunyerere in Mbale town.

The County Government made an application for consideration in funding urban development under the Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Project (KISIP II) program. The team conducted surveys in two informal settlements - Mji wa Ajabu in Serem and Mjini in Mbale, as part of the KISIP II funding consideration.

- 81)** During the period under review, this County Assembly approved the proposal to upgrade Luanda and Cheptulu – Kaimosi to municipalities. My administration is in the final stages of officially declaring and awarding charters to the two new municipalities.

Honourable Speaker,

- 82)** The County Government of Vihiga is in preparation for assessment in readiness for the implementation of the second phase the Kenya Urban Support Program (KUSP II). So far, Vihiga has qualified for the initial Institutional Urban Grant (IUG) of KES 35 million. These funds are geared towards capacity building of urban areas in readiness for the Urban Development Grant (UDG).

- 83)** Other achievements realized during the reporting period include substantial completion of the Governor and Deputy Governor’s residences; Completed the construction of a wetland and bio-digester system in Mbale - behind Mbale Prisons, for improved waste management and environmental sustainability; Developed a departmental Strategic Plan, Risk Management Strategy, and gazettelement and transfer of function to the new Vihiga Municipal Board.

K. Infrastructure Development

Honourable Speaker,

- 84)** Infrastructure development is pivotal in facilitating and accelerating socio-economic development in the county. The County Government has continued to develop efficient and effective and sustainable infrastructure in the county as enablers for other sectors as envisaged in the Kenya Vision 2030 and the CIDP.

During the period under review, investments in infrastructure focussed on expansion and maintenance of road systems to enhance county

competitiveness to ease markets connectivity, street and lighting of markets to improve security as well preparedness to disaster preparedness.

- 85)** The key achievements realized during the period under review included: Human resource capacity enhanced through recruitment of 9 technical personnel to support the sector; 123.6 Km access roads were expanded and maintained across the county; 8 bridges, box culverts and river crossings to improve intra county connectivity were constructed; 10 High mast flood lights and solar streetlights were installed in collaboration with the Department of Commerce at – one 15M high mast at Chamakanga, one 15M high mast at Jebrok, one 20M high mast at Essongolo, one 30M high mast at Magada, two 10M high mast at Emabungo and three 10M high mast at Wondanga.
- 86)** To facilitate the upgrading of additional roads to bitumen, we have strengthened collaborative engagements with the National Government and Roads Authorities. During the year under review, the Kenya Urban Roads Authority (KURA) successfully upgraded the Mbale Shell – NHC – Mbale Prisons Road to bitumen standards. In the upcoming 2024/2025 work programme, KURA will also partially upgrade the Mbale Equity Bank – Mukuli – Kesee Road to bitumen standards. We will continue to foster strategic partnerships to achieve further road network enhancements within Vihiga Municipality.
- 87)** During the year under review, we intensified our engagement with the Kenya Rural Roads Authority (KeRRA) and the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA) to complete all ongoing road projects and address stalled ones. Vihiga County continues to receive limited resource allocation for roads and infrastructure despite its high population density. My administration has been advocating for increased resources for roads in the County by collaborating with the Kenya Roads Board (KRB) to recategorize and classify the road network within Vihiga County for onboarding by various authorities (KURA, KeRRA & KeNHA).
- 88)** The department has operationalized the mechanical unit and acquired new equipment to be used in the servicing and maintenance of county vehicles sand machinery. The unit surveyed garages used for county vehicle repairs and maintains 127 vehicles, 4 plants, and machinery.

89) The department has also been responsible for effective and efficient delivery of emergency Fire and Rescue services for all residents of Vihiga county. The department, during the reporting period, inspected buildings across the county and ensured compliance to fire and safety codes.

L. Social Protection, Sports, Art and Creative Economy

Honourable Speaker,

The department of social services promotes the county's diverse culture and heritage and sports; as well as promotion and development of social security systems targeting marginalized groups.

90) The key achievements realized during the period under review were; the upgrade of Mumboha and Makuchi sports grounds; rehabilitation of Avugwi and Esirabe community halls and establishment of a GBV Rescue Centre in Sabatia; continued support to 13 local sports teams including - Vihiga United, Vihiga Queens and Bunyore Starlets Football clubs; establishment of the Youth and PWDs boards to address socio-economic issues affecting them; held the 4th edition of the Youth Extravaganza reaching out to 3,000 youths; coordinated capacity-building initiatives on skills and knowledge development with 150 youth benefitting; and organized the Annual Vihiga County Cultural Festivals in (Bunyore, Maragoli, Terik, and Tiriki) which enhanced cultural awareness and community engagement.

91) The department supported ECDE and VTCs learners' participation in drama, film and music festivals; organized the Annual Vihiga County Cultural Festivals in Bunyore, Maragoli, Terik, and Tiriki to foster cultural awareness, showcase our heritage and foster community engagement; and facilitated county teams' participation in the 10th edition of the Kenya Inter-Counties Sports and Cultural Association (KICOSCA) games that took place in Meru County.

M. Commerce, Tourism and Cooperatives

Honourable Speaker,

92) The department of Commerce, Tourism, and Cooperatives made significant strides during the reporting period. This includes commencement of

construction of the County Aggregation and Industrial Park (CAIP) at Luanda Railway and getting of an investor to build the Granite Processing Factory in West Bunyore. We have also rehabilitated market infrastructure, renovated Luanda market and started the upgrade of Esibuye Market, and installed six (6) high mast floodlights in key locations of Essongolo and Matope markets, Nabwani Primary School and Nabwani Tea collection centre, Chamakanga, Magada and Jebrok markets. Additionally, we constructed seventeen Bodaboda sheds distributed across the county.

93) The Directorate of Cooperatives achieved significant milestones in the year under review. Noteworthy achievements include the development of the Vihiga County Cooperative Development Policy and Bill, registration of eleven (11) cooperatives, training of 6,178 members, and auditing of thirty-five (35) cooperative societies. Through the NAVCDP program, the sector provided support to twenty agriculture-based SACCOs with an inclusion grant of KES 16,000,000.00/= with each SACCO receiving KES 800,000.00/=.

94) As a result of these efforts, Saccos mobilized additional deposits of KES 34.1 million during the year under review. The county now has 130 registered Saccos, of which 71 are well-established and expanding in their reach and compliance. These Saccos have a combined membership of 18,132 individuals, with a total share capital valued at KES45,165,669.00. The total amount of member deposits is KES 264,006,021.00, and the aggregated loan book amounts to KES252,381,659.00.

Honourable Speaker,

95) It is apparent from my presentation that despite the many challenges we faced during the 2023-2024 fiscal year, we made significant achievements across all sectors. These achievements have led to improvement in the socio-economic development of our county. The period has also marked a significant improvement in our governance system and financial management. Further, it is during the period that we introduced performance management system in our county. Last and not least, it should be noted and appreciated that we were able to mobilize most of our development resources from numerous development partners.

PRIORITIES FOR THE 2024/25 FISCAL YEAR

Honourable Speaker,

Allow me to complete my address by presenting a summary of the ongoing socio-economic development activities during the current 2024-2025 fiscal year.

96) The Public Service and Administration Department is focusing on implementing its key strategic priorities, including the establishment of a county staff welfare office, formation of a county security directorate, installation of biometrics in all offices, completion of ongoing subcounty administrators' offices construction, improvement of records management through digitization of the county registry, support for e-governance, creation of official staff email addresses, cascading performance contracting and appraisals, and enhancing county public administration, human resource management, and development as planned for this fiscal year.

97) The Agriculture Sector: the department has focused on transformation and inclusive growth through key value chains. Strategies include input financing and extension services via cooperatives, transitioning from subsistence to commercial agriculture, adopting irrigation farming and suitable technologies, and reducing post-harvest losses for food and nutrition security. Key areas of emphasis are increasing agricultural productivity, capacity building for farmers and organizations, innovative farmer extension services, climate-smart agriculture, infrastructure development, fish farming, livestock development, youth empowerment, and agri-nutrition initiatives.

98) The Health Services sector plays a vital role in the county's economy by ensuring a healthy and productive population. The sector aims to develop progressive, responsive, and sustainable healthcare systems to accelerate the achievement of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the highest standard of healthcare for all. During this fiscal year, we are focusing on several key priorities and interventions: transforming human resources in healthcare to support quality service delivery effectively; strengthening policy and institutional capacities to enhance the delivery of quality healthcare; revitalizing health infrastructure to improve access to and demand for quality healthcare; enhancing healthcare financing with an emphasis on increasing household enrolment in health insurance through the new Social Health

Insurance Fund (SHIF); improving access to health information and services through the digitization of health services; ensuring sustainable access to affordable quality health products and technologies (HPT) towards UHC; and strengthening community health interventions by scaling up high-impact primary healthcare programs and promoting health education and wellness and completion and operationalisation of the hospital plaza, county funeral home and microwave medical waste plant.

99) The Education Sector has prioritized enhancing access, quality and relevant in education and training at all levels. It will also develop capacities for Science Technology and Innovations (STI) and ICT Integration. Focus areas include recruiting more trainers for the new CBET curriculum, establishing and equipping model ECDEs (Shaviringa, Gimarakwa, Ingidi, Lotego, Ilungu, Ebusakami & Mbale Primary) and VTCs (Keveye, Kaimosi, Maseno, Emmukunzi, Solongo, St. Peter's Hambale, and Gimomoi) with modern tools and play equipment.

100) The Environment, Water and Climate Change Sector – the focus is on the following priorities: forest management; tree growing and restoration campaigns in Maragoli Hills, Ebusiekwe, Kibiri, community forests, wetlands, and other degraded lands; rehabilitation and reclamation of abandoned post-mining sites; climate change and disaster risk management programs, including community-based climate resilience projects through the FLLoCA program; expansion of water infrastructure through last-mile connectivity under the Vihiga cluster water project; and rural water and sanitation projects through K-WASH Project.

101) The Physical Planning, Land, Housing and Urban Development sector is focusing on institutional Capacity building by recruiting and training personnel for better service delivery. A key goal for the year is completing the 10-year GIS spatial plan for future land use and urban development. The department is also in the process of establishing Cheptulu and Luanda Municipalities to enhance local governance and structured urban development. It has also commenced on the implementation of KUSP II project in Vihiga Municipality.

102) The Commerce, Tourism and Cooperative sector - the ongoing projects and programmes are CAIP project in Luanda, construction of a modern market at Luanda and Esibuye, and expansion and rehabilitation of market

infrastructure in Serem and Mbale. Additionally, the department is overseeing the construction of eco-friendly toilets in Ekwanda, Kilingili, and Mahanga and creation of an enabling environment for the construction of a granite processing plant. Lastly, plans to hold Vihiga Investment Conference next year are underway.

103)The Gender, Culture, Youth, Sports and Social Services department is focused on formulating policies such as Gender Mainstreaming, sports and youth policy, sports strategy and youth service strategy. It will support county sports teams through a sports fund, establish talents and performing arts academies, hold various sports tournaments including KYISA, KICOSCA, Talanta Hela, Ward Competitions, and County Marathon. Additionally, it plans to upgrade playing and sports grounds, cultural sites, support cultural festivals and national/county celebrations, complete the works and equip the GBV rescue centre in Vokoli, help PWDs through a disability fund, and empower youth through sports, arts, training and mentorship programmes, as well as women empowerment initiatives.

Honourable Speaker, and Honourable members,

As I conclude,

104)The implementation of programmes and projects during the 2023/24 was significantly affected by myriads of challenges that including limited budgetary allocations, increasing pending bills, rising wage bill and other recurrent expenditures, and delays in exchequer release by the National Treasury. Despite these challenges, we were able to implement our projects and programs through partnership with a diversity of development partners including national government agencies.

105)Moving forward, my administration will continue to advocate for increased momentum in reforming the public service through strengthening Public Financial Management framework, enhancing public participation and civic engagements in the governance and development agenda, deepening Results-Based Management through implementation of performance contracting and appraisals, digitization of services and strengthening policy, legal and institutional frameworks and fighting corruption among others.

Last and not least,

Honourable Speaker and Honourable members,

106)I wish to thank the people of Vihiga County and this county assembly for your continued support and investment in your County Government. I also take this opportunity to appreciate our collaboration with the National Government in the implementation of national projects and activities and ensuring the security of our people. Further, I wish to thank all our development partners for their continued support and the entire staff of our County Government for all their commitment and unwavering support.

Finally,

Honourable Speaker, and Honourable members,

107)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 2025.

I Thank you.

God Bless You.

God Bless Vihiga County

God Bless Kenya.

