

GENOWA ECHO

ENDLESS POTENTIAL

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News Highlights

- *Boost for Local Manufacturing with the opening of Pads Industry*
- *Vaccination on Animals Begins Countywide*

- *From Borehole to Supply, County Talks Shift in Water Distribution*
- *Managing Sickle Cell Disease Gets Better*

Industrial Revolution: County Gets Region's First Local Manufacturer of Sanitary Pads

By Communication Team



Homa Bay has achieved a significant milestone in local manufacturing and women's health with the inauguration of its first sanitary pad factory.

The Galentine Care Sanitary Pads Factory, located in Kasgunga, is designed to provide affordable menstrual hygiene products while generating employment opportunities and promoting dignity for women and girls in the region. This social enterprise focuses on producing sanitary pads locally, thereby reducing reliance on costly imported products that may be inaccessible for many families.

The launch ceremony, presided over by Governor Gladys Wanga, assisted by Suba North legislator Hon. Millie Odhiambo, attracted various stakeholders, including county leaders, national government representatives, community members, women's groups, and local youth.

Governor Gladys Wanga highlighted the factory as a clear indication of Homa Bay's commitment to fostering meaningful investment. "This facility meets a vital community need and demonstrates Homa Bay's commitment to investment and community development," stated Governor Wanga, adding that the initiative aligns with the county's broader agenda to enhance manufacturing, create jobs, and improve residents' quality of life.

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“Our goal is to ensure no woman or girl is held back by lack of access to quality menstrual care.”

The factory will produce the Galentine Care Pad, which is designed to be ultra-thin, leak-free, and comfortable for daily use. Peter Omondi McOdida, the founder, emphasized that the project was born out of the challenges faced by girls who miss school and women who struggle to afford sanitary products. "Our goal is to ensure no woman or girl is held back by lack of access to quality menstrual care," McOdida said.



Community residents are optimistic that the factory will enhance living standards in Kasgunga and its surrounding areas. A community elder remarked, "We have watched our daughters struggle for many years, and today we see a real solution coming to our doorstep."

The factory is anticipated to create jobs in production, packaging, distribution, and administration, while also benefiting small businesses such as transporters, suppliers, and retailers through the economic ripple effect.

Health advocates have emphasized that affordable and accessible sanitary products can significantly reduce school absenteeism among girls and improve overall health outcomes.



Water Services:

Governor Wanga Announces Plan to Escalate Water Reticulation in the County

By Lawrence Magware



For longevity and sustainability, we are focusing on reticulation systems moving forward, rather than depending exclusively on boreholes ”



The County Government of Homa Bay is actively pursuing water reticulation as a sustainable, long-term solution to improve water supply for its residents.

During a recent event to officially launch several community water projects, Governor Gladys Wanga highlighted a strategic shift in her administration's approach, from relying on borehole drilling to a more effective model of supplying piped water, particularly aimed at urban and peri-urban areas within the county.

"We are in the process of forming partnerships aimed at developing robust water projects that will enable direct water supply to households across the community," Governor Wanga stated at the commissioning of the Mango Community Water Project located in Central Karachuonyo ward. "For longevity and sustainability, we are focusing on reticulation systems moving forward, rather than depending exclusively on boreholes."



The Mango Community Water Project, implemented in collaboration with the non-profit organization Ubuntu International, is set to benefit not only the local school community but also over 4,000 households situated in the Kamanga, Wagwe, and Waswa locations. This initiative is poised to effectively tackle the persistent water shortage that has long plagued the area. In addition to this project, Governor Wanga also inaugurated the Amoso Water Project in Kochia ward, marking a crucial step toward addressing water scarcity in both the Amoso and Oneno regions of Kochia.



The Governor's commitment to enhancing water reticulation in Homa Bay has gained further support from Dutch development partners Dunea and Vitens Evides International. Their representatives, Piet Heij and Myrko Webers, recently paid a courtesy call to discuss collaborative efforts to achieve last-mile water connectivity in the towns of Oyugis and Kendu Bay within the coming year. This partnership is expected to significantly improve water accessibility for residents, reinforcing the county's goal to create a more reliable and efficient water supply system.

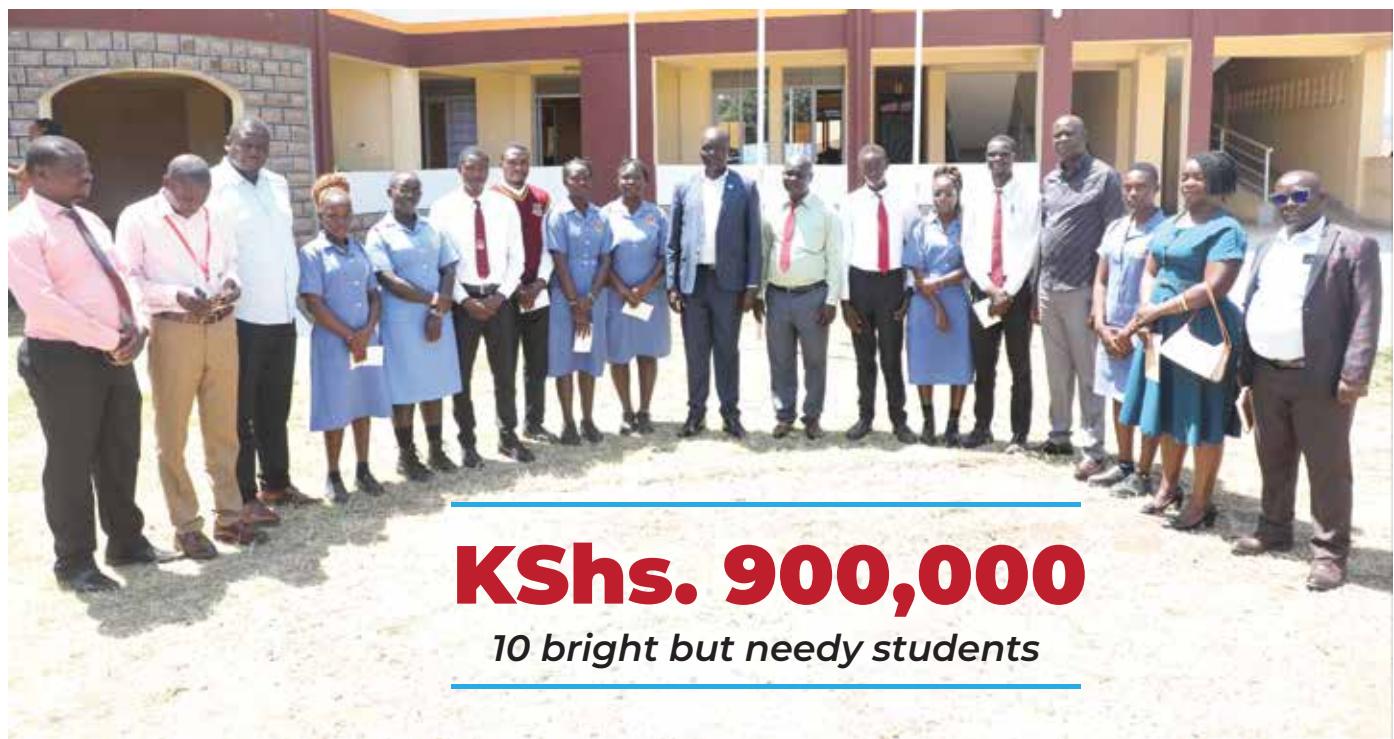
Human Capital Development: Government Rolls Out Targeted Training to Boost Human Resource Pool

Homa Bay County Supports Medical Trainees with KShs. 900,000 in Scholarships

By Collins Ongutu

In a bid to bolster healthcare training and empower vulnerable youth, the County Government of Homa Bay recently handed over cheques totaling KShs. 900,000 to 10 bright but needy students at the Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC), Mbita Campus. The ceremony was presided over by Hon. Martin Opere, the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Education, Human Capital Development & Vocational Training.

The funds are part of the county's ongoing efforts to support students pursuing critical health courses, including Health Care Assistance and Orthopedic Trauma Management. The initiative is facilitated through the Directorate of Human Capital Development, emphasizing the county's commitment to developing a skilled health workforce.



“Without this support, I’m not sure how I would have managed. It has given me hope and the motivation to succeed,

*19-year-old Flovera Maganda
from Rusinga Island,*

During the handover, Hon. Martin Opere underscored the county government's dedication to empowering youth through education. "Our administration is committed to investing in education and skills development to ensure our youth have access to opportunities that can transform their lives and serve our communities," he stated.



Among the beneficiaries was 19-year-old Flovera Maganda from Rusinga Island, who was visibly overjoyed. She narrated how the scholarship had come at a crucial time, helping her to continue her education smoothly. "Without this support, I'm not sure how I would have managed. It has given me hope and the motivation to succeed," she said. She added that the scholarship should be expanded to reach more vulnerable girls who are unable to achieve their goals by financing their education journey.

Similarly, Amoko Daniel from Kochia Ward, pursuing a Certificate in Health Care Assistance, shared how the scholarship has



inspired him to work harder towards his career goals. "This support has boosted my confidence and reassured me that my community cares about my future," he remarked.



Homa Bay County Unveils KShs. 1.7 Million Investment in Learning and Play Materials to Enhance Early Childhood Education

By Collins Ongutu

The County Government of Homa Bay, in partnership with Sightsavers International, officially launched a consignment worth KShs. 1.7 million in learning and playing materials. The event was presided over by Hon. Martin Opere, the CECM for Education, Human Capital Development & Vocational Training.

The initiative is part of a joint intervention aimed at benefiting approximately 3,200 pupils across 81 schools supported by the program.





The deployment of high-quality learning and play materials underscores the county's unwavering commitment to strengthening early childhood education and fostering holistic development among young learners.

The consignment included a variety of educational and play items designed to promote interactive learning, creativity, and physical development. The initiative aims to provide a more stimulating and supportive environment for children, ensuring they receive the best start in their educational journey.



The partnership with Sightsavers International highlights the county's focus on enhancing early childhood education through collaboration and continuous support. The County leadership hopes that this investment will translate into improved learning outcomes and a brighter future for the young generation.

Following the launch, the materials were later distributed to all 81 schools, marking a significant step in boosting early learning and development in the county.

County Graduates 390 Teenage Girls After Special STEM Program

By Collins Ogutu

The STEM Education for Empowerment Project (STEEP), an innovative initiative by CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (CAP-YEI), marked a significant milestone with a vibrant graduation ceremony at Sero Vocational Training Centre (VTC). The event celebrated the successful completion of training by 390 adolescent girls from vulnerable communities, equipping them with practical skills in plumbing, pipefitting and food and beverage services.

STEEP aims to empower young girls by providing them with essential STEM and life skills, opening pathways toward employment, self-reliance, and community development. The project is implemented in collaboration with the County Government of Homa Bay through Sero VTC, reflecting a shared commitment to fostering inclusive growth and youth empowerment.



The graduation ceremony was officiated by Hon. Martin Opere, the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Education, Human Capital Development & Vocational Training and attended by industry stakeholders, community leaders, parents, and representatives from partner organizations, all gathered to celebrate the achievements of the graduates and encourage them as they step into new opportunities.

In his speech, Hon. Martin Opere commended the graduates for their dedication and resilience. "Today, we celebrate not just a graduation but a new beginning for these young girls. Equipped with practical skills, they now have the tools to build brighter futures for themselves and their communities," he said.

The success of STEEP is made possible through strategic partnerships with organizations committed to youth empowerment. CAP-YEI's collaboration with Humber International Development Institute, supported by Canada's International Development - Global Affairs Canada, and the



Barrett Family Foundation, underscores the importance of local-global cooperation in addressing vulnerable populations' needs.

The project's success demonstrates the potential of targeted skills development programs to uplift vulnerable populations and promote sustainable development. As these young girls embark on their journey toward skilled employment, the community and partners remain committed to supporting their growth and success.



Animal Husbandry: County Launches Animal Vaccination Exercise, Keeping Tabs on Commercial Beekeeping

By Oketch Bernard

The County Government of Homa Bay has officially launched a countywide subsidized Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) vaccination exercise, marking a major milestone in the county's livestock disease control and agricultural transformation agenda.

Speaking during the high-level launch in Ramba, Kabondo West, Governor Gladys Wanga described the vaccination drive as a critical intervention aimed at safeguarding farmers' livelihoods, strengthening food security, and unlocking greater economic value from the livestock sector. She announced that the exercise will be rolled out across all sub-counties and will continue until all eligible cattle in Homa Bay County are fully vaccinated.

“

This is not a one-day event. From today, our trained teams will move across the entire county to ensure that every registered animal is vaccinated. We are committed to protecting our farmers' livelihoods and positioning Homa Bay as a hub for healthy, market-ready livestock," said Governor Wanga.

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Implemented under the National Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (NAVCDP), the programme will see the County Government subsidize Kshs. 110 per cow, with farmers contributing only Kshs. 50, significantly lowering the cost of disease control for livestock keepers.





The county is targeting 206,000 captured in the Kenya Integrated Agriculture Management Information System (KIAMIS) database. The vaccinations are being conducted by trained paravets through a transparent eSubsidy E-Voucher system and will continue for the next two months across the county.

Governor Wanga emphasized that the initiative is a strategic investment in the livestock value chain, noting that effective disease control is key to increasing productivity, improving household incomes, and opening access to both regional and international livestock markets. She urged farmers to register their animals and cooperate fully with vaccination teams to ensure complete countywide coverage.

The launch follows a successful two-day capacity-building training for paravets and data assistants, equipping frontline officers with skills in vaccination procedures, animal identification, farmer registration, and efficient E-Voucher redemption; ensuring a smooth, accountable, and impactful rollout.

The countywide FMD vaccination drive stands out as a significant milestone in Homa Bay County's agricultural calendar, reinforcing the county government's commitment to resilient livestock systems, farmer empowerment, and sustainable economic growth under NAVCDP. Through enhanced animal identification and nozzle scanning during vaccination, the initiative will also strengthen livestock traceability and help curb cattle theft, offering farmers added security while improving disease control and market readiness across the county.



Homa Bay, Slovenia Relations Aim to Enhance County's Apiculture Take-off

By Oketch Bernard



The County Government of Homa Bay, through the Department of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock Development, has successfully concluded an intensive apiculture training for farmers and agricultural extension officers, conducted in partnership with a high-level delegation from Slovenia. The initiative follows last year's visit by the President of Slovenia, H.E. Nataša Pirc Musar, who pledged support towards transforming beekeeping in the county.

The training brought together farmers and extension officers from Homa Bay Town, Ndhiwa, Suba North, Suba South, Rachuonyo East, Rachuonyo North, Rachuonyo South and Rangwe sub-counties, while also attracting participants from Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, Mt. Elgon, Kakamega, Siaya, Bungoma and Kirinyaga counties, providing a strong platform for inter-county knowledge exchange on modern apiculture practices.

Participants underwent practical and technical sessions on hive management, bee selection and breeding, identification and management of common bee diseases and pests, as well as value addition through various bee products including honey, beeswax, propolis, bee venom, royal jelly and pollen. The training emphasized modern, climate-smart beekeeping techniques aimed at improving productivity, quality of produce and access to markets.

The trained farmers and extension officers will now serve as Trainers of Trainers (ToTs), cascading the acquired knowledge and skills to more beekeepers across the county to scale up adoption of improved apiculture practices.

During a courtesy call by the delegation, Dr. John Agili, speaking on behalf of the County Executive Committee Member for Agriculture, Eng. Danish Onyango, reaffirmed the County Government's commitment to strengthening apiculture as a key agribusiness value chain in Homa Bay County.

"Apiculture presents immense opportunities for income generation, youth and women empowerment, and environmental conservation. As a county, we are keen on equipping our farmers and extension officers with the right skills and technologies to unlock the full potential of the beekeeping value chain," said Dr. Agili.

The County Government of Homa Bay continues to pursue strategic partnerships that promote sustainable agriculture, enhance farmer incomes and position apiculture as a viable enterprise for socio-economic transformation.



Feature Story:

How the Ndhiwa Sickle Cell Clinic Is Transforming Care in Homa Bay

By Abnery Pajero

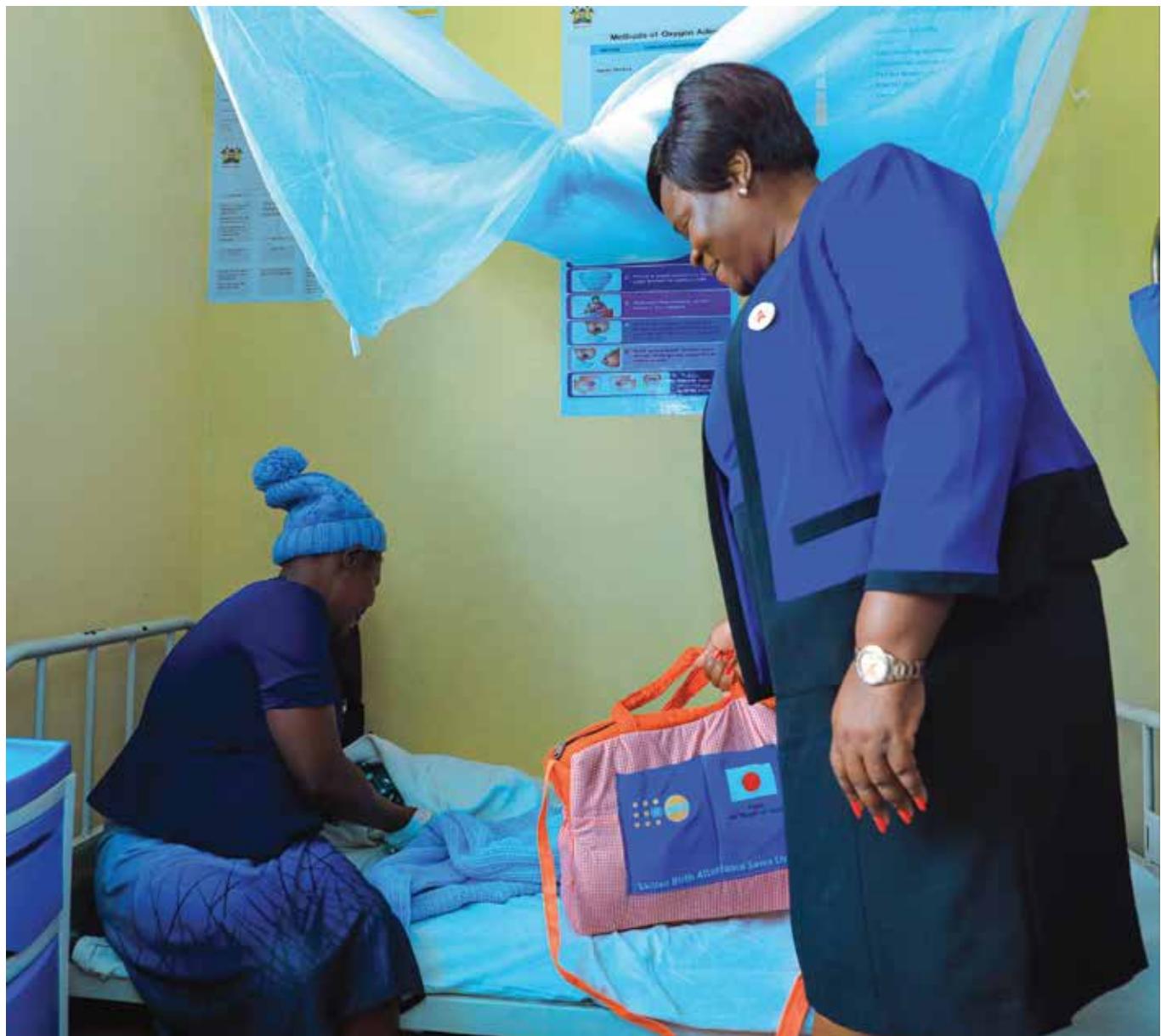
They learn early that pain has a schedule of its own. Not birthdays. Not school terms. Pain arrives unannounced, settles into bones and blood, and demands attention. For many children living with sickle cell disease in Kenya, childhood is not measured in years, but in crises experienced. And yet, even in lives shaped by hospital corridors and whispered prayers, resilience finds a way to bloom.

Joyline Awino is one such warrior. Born and raised in a small sugarcane-farming village in Ndhiwa Sub-County, Homa Bay County, her struggle began before she could speak for herself. Before she turned six months old, her mother noticed the signs: painfully swollen hands, piercing cries that would not stop, fevers that returned again and again. At first, the family thought it was malaria. In Ndhiwa, that is often the first explanation. But the sickness never ended.

The diagnosis for sickle cell disease came later, at a referral hospital in 2009, giving them a name to the suffering, but offering no cure to erase it.

Growing up, Awino learned to live between two worlds. One was school with moments of laughter, fragile friendships, and dreams of becoming a teacher. The other was hospital wards; needles, blood transfusions, and nights when pain wrapped around her chest so tightly she struggled to breathe. She missed so much school that some teachers thought she was lazy. Others believed she was pretending to be sick.

At home, the burden was heavier still. Hospital bills piled up. Her mother took up casual jobs to keep the family afloat. Her father, overwhelmed and misinformed about the disease, withdrew emotionally.



Like many families affected by sickle cell disease, they were not only fighting illness, but poverty, stigma, and silence.

What changed Awino's story was not a miracle, but access.

Through the Shikuri Project, she was linked to specialized care in Ndhiwa. For the first time, her condition was managed consistently, not just during emergencies. Treatment became structured. Follow-up became intentional. Hope became possible.

For the first time in years, days passed without pain. Then weeks. Then months. She began doing things she had forgotten were possible: walking without fear, sleeping through the night, laughing without worrying it would trigger another crisis.

Today, Awino has gone seven months without hospitalization. She has gained weight. Her strength has returned. She is back in school, training to become a community health advocate, determined to be the voice she never had growing up. Still, she knows the challenges remain. Medication is expensive. Follow-up care is constant. And not every child qualifies for advanced treatment.

"Sickle cell disease is not just a medical issue," she says. "It is economic. It is emotional. It is political."

That belief is now being translated into action across Ndhiwa Sub-County.

The dedicated Sickle Cell Clinic, established by the County Government of Homa Bay through the Shikuri Project, has become a lifeline for children from vulnerable families.

For many who once faced repeated hospitalizations, painful crises, and uncertain futures, the clinic has brought both hope and healing. Since becoming operational in March, approximately thirty children have been enrolled on structured follow-up programs, receiving a comprehensive package of care that includes medical insurance, essential sickle cell medications, digital thermometers, and inpatient services when needed.

Each child is closely linked to Community Health Promoters, ensuring continuity of care beyond the clinic walls. Alongside treatment, families receive genetic counselling, community education, and psychosocial support aimed at reducing stigma and empowering caregivers with knowledge.

The clinic is well-equipped and staffed by trained professionals, supported with critical supplies such as infusion pumps, early screening test kits, and lifesaving medications, including Hydroxyurea, Penicillin V, and Folic Acid. The impact has been profound. Since March, painful crises have reduced by more than half. Infections and hospitalizations have dropped sharply. Severe anaemia has declined dramatically. Most importantly, no child enrolled in the program has died.

The County Government of Homa Bay has strengthened efforts through partnerships, including a collaboration with Children's National Hospital in Washington, DC. This milestone partnership, made possible through the long-standing commitment of Dr. Gail Sealy and the Shikuri Foundation, builds on more than a decade of work to transform sickle cell care in the county. Together, these efforts are not only improving treatment but restoring dignity, hope, and possibility for families.







"The lake represents one of our county's most valuable assets.

We are committed to not only enhancing fish production from our waters but also maximizing the potential of the blue economy to foster sustainable economic growth within our community." ~ Governor Gladys Wanga