



**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

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**SPEECH BY H.E. GLADYS NYASUNA WANGA, EGH  
DURING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025  
AT TOM MBOYA UNIVERSITY  
ON 08.03.2025**

**Theme: "Accelerating Action" for Gender Equality in Homa Bay  
County**

## **Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honor to stand before you today as we join the world in commemorating **International Women's Day 2025** under the theme "*Accelerate Action.*" This theme is both a call to action and a challenge to all of us—to quicken the pace of change, to break down barriers, and to create a future where no woman or girl is left behind.

As we gather here, we acknowledge that gender equality remains one of the most pressing global issues of our time. According to the World Economic Forum, at the current rate of progress, **full gender parity will only be achieved by 2158—five generations from now.** This is unacceptable. We cannot afford to wait that long. We must act now, with urgency and purpose, to accelerate the realization

of gender equality in our communities, our workplaces, and our institutions.

### **Beijing at 30: Renewing Our Commitment**

This year, as we celebrate International Women's Day, we also mark **30 years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**—a landmark global commitment to advancing women's rights.

Three decades later, we reflect on the progress made and the road ahead. While we have seen significant strides in women's political representation, education, and economic participation, the promise of Beijing remains unfulfilled for millions of women and girls. In Homa Bay, we reaffirm our commitment to the Beijing principles by accelerating action—strengthening policies, increasing investments in women-led initiatives, and ensuring that our

daughters inherit a county free from gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality.

Let **Beijing+30 be a renewed call to action**. Let us commemorate history and make history by ensuring that gender equality is not a distant dream but a lived reality for all.

### **The Status of Women and Girls in Homa Bay**

Homa Bay County, like many regions in Kenya, has made significant strides in promoting gender equality, but challenges persist. Let me share some sobering statistics:

1. **Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** Our county has one of the highest reported cases of gender-based violence in Kenya. Studies show that **over 40% of women in Homa Bay have**

**experienced physical or sexual violence** at some point in their lives. This is a crisis that demands immediate and decisive action.

2. **Maternal Health:** The maternal mortality rate in Homa Bay stands at **583 deaths per 100,000 live births**, significantly higher than the national average of **495 deaths per 100,000 live births**. Many of these deaths are preventable with better healthcare access and interventions.
3. **Early Marriages and Teenage Pregnancies:** Nearly **half of the women aged 25-49 in Homa Bay were married before their 18th birthday**. Additionally, the county has **one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in Kenya, with over 35% of girls becoming mothers before the age of 18**. These alarming

statistics highlight the urgent need to keep girls in school and protect them from early motherhood.

4. **Economic Disparities:** While women form the backbone of our informal economy, many still lack access to financial resources, land ownership, and business opportunities. Studies indicate that **less than 20% of women in Homa Bay own land**, despite being the primary food producers.

### **Accelerating Action: What Homa Bay is Doing**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite these challenges, we are not standing still. The Homa Bay County Government, under my leadership, has implemented

several key interventions to **Accelerate Action** toward gender equality:

### 1. **Eliminating Gender-Based Violence:**

- We established a **recovery centre** at the Homa Bay County Teaching and Referral Hospital, providing comprehensive services to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), including medical treatment and psychosocial support. This initiative has enhanced access to essential health services for women and girls.
- The county government has enacted the **Homa Bay Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy**, providing a legal framework to protect victims and prosecute offenders.

## 2. Empowering Women Economically:

- **Economic Inclusion:** We empower women economically through financial literacy for the women traders in the markets and the Beach Management Units. Women-led cooperatives have also benefitted from targeted allocation of farm inputs and resources
- We support women-led agribusiness ventures, ensuring access to capital, training, and market linkages.

## 3. Investing in Education and Leadership:

- Our administration has launched programs to support girls' education, reduce dropout rates, and ensure equal opportunities for all genders. **Fundi Mangúla** (Talented

artisan/craftsman) **Scholarship** supports over **260 girls** accessing technical skills in our vocational training centres. We have also distributed **bursaries** to over **10,000 girls**, and **271 girls** have benefitted from the **Fins to Swim Scholarship**.

- Through the **girl mentorship program**, we support over **5,000 young girls annually**, encouraging them to venture into leadership, STEM, and entrepreneurship and to be vigilant towards triple threat
- Through the G7 declaration, we are advocating for **50% female representation** in county leadership positions, recognizing that when women lead, societies thrive.
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#### 4. Improving Healthcare for Women and Girls:

- We have expanded **maternal health services**, ensuring that every expectant mother has access to skilled birth attendants and quality prenatal care.
- Our investment in **Community Health Volunteers (CHVs)** has enhanced reproductive health education, particularly in rural areas.
- The county is rolling out **cancer screening programs**, focusing on early detection of cervical and breast cancer.

## A Call to Action

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While these efforts mark progress, we cannot do this alone. Achieving gender equality requires **collective responsibility**—from government, civil society, private sector, and community leaders. I challenge all of us today:

- **To men and boys:** Be champions for gender equality. Stand against GBV, support women in leadership, and promote shared responsibilities at home and in the workplace.
- **To parents and guardians:** Encourage your daughters to dream big. Education is the most powerful tool we can give them.

- **To businesses and organizations:** Create equal opportunities for women. Ensure fair pay, flexible work policies, and equal representation in leadership.
- **To the youth:** Use your voice and platforms to advocate for gender equality. Digital activism and community engagement can drive change.

## **Conclusion**

As we celebrate this International Women's Day, let us commit to **accelerating action**—not tomorrow, not next year, but **now**. Let us be the generation that fast-tracks gender equality in our lifetime. Let us create a Homa Bay where every girl is free to pursue her dreams, every woman is empowered to thrive, and every

individual, regardless of gender, is given a fair and equal opportunity to succeed.

The time is now. The action is urgent. Together, we can make gender equality a reality in our communities, our workplaces, and our world.

**Happy International Women's Day!**

Thank you.