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Speech by H.E. Governor Gladys Wanga, EGH, CBS
During the Launch of Ondoa Kaunda EYE Classrooms
at Asumbi Comprehensive School
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My heart is full with a deep sense of pride and optimism. I remember my own childhood, growing up in “**Kano**”, where learning took place under trees. I recall the dreams we carried and the challenges we faced – struggling to listen to our teachers through the blowing wind or shifting our desks to dodge the afternoon sun.

Education is the foundation of our future, and yet, too many of our children across Homa Bay still sit in dilapidated classrooms or under temporary shelters, their potential constrained by these harsh realities. This is why we are gathered here today – to launch the 'Genowa Ondoa Kaunda Classrooms' Initiative, a game-changer for the education landscape in our county.

The Birth of a Vision

Just a year ago, we embarked on an ambitious vision. During one of my visits to a school in Kochia, I met a young boy named Otieno. His sharp mind and enthusiasm for learning were evident, but his classroom told a different story – it was a makeshift kaunda structure, barely holding together. That day, Otieno told me, "Governor, all I want is a classroom where the rains won't stop my learning." His words weighed heavily on me, and I promised myself that no child in Homa Bay would have to suffer such conditions any longer.

That promise brings us here today.

The Power of Statistics: Evidence for Change

Our county is home to over **800 Early Years Education (EYE)** centers, yet **60% of these rely on temporary or dilapidated structures.** This means that nearly **35,000 young learners** are still being taught in environments that hinder their ability to concentrate, grow, and thrive. Studies have shown that children in well-constructed, safe classrooms perform **30% better in literacy and numeracy** compared to those in makeshift environments.

We could no longer sit back and watch this generation lose out on the opportunity to reach their full potential. And so, today, we launch the construction of **163 new EYE classrooms** across Homa Bay within **10 weeks.**

Community and Economic Impact: A Shared Victory

This initiative is not just about building classrooms; it is about empowering communities. We made a deliberate decision to make this a labor-based project, where over **2,000 local artisans** and workers from within Homa Bay are part of the construction teams. This means that the people building these classrooms are also the fathers, mothers, and uncles of the children who will learn in them. Their hands are shaping the future, one brick at a time.

Through this approach, we did not only improve educational infrastructure, but also injected **Kshs. 163 million** into the local economy across all our 40 wards (about 4 in/wd) through job creation. This ripple effect will uplift thousands of families in our

communities, offering them a sustainable income while contributing to a greater cause.

Gratitude: Partners and Supporters

I want to extend my deepest gratitude to all our partners, the county education department, local fundis, PMCs, teachers, parents who have supported this initiative. This collaboration is proof that when we come together, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

To the teachers here today, you are the backbone of this vision. You shape the minds of our children, and now we are ensuring that you have the right environment to continue your vital work.

The Future: Sustaining the Dream

As we launch these classrooms today, we are not stopping here. The 'Genowa Ondoa Kaunda' initiative is a long-term commitment. Our goal is to eliminate all kaunda classrooms in Homa Bay within the next three years. By then, every EYE learner will have access to modern, safe, and conducive learning spaces.

Our children, like young Otieno, will no longer have to pause their lessons because of a leaky roof or sweltering heat. Instead, they will be given the best chance to dream big, to learn with dignity, and to become the leaders, innovators, and changemakers of tomorrow.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

Today is a new chapter for education in Homa Bay. But I must remind you – this journey is not mine alone. It belongs to all of us. Let us all continue to work together to ensure that our children inherit a future full of promise and opportunity.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.**" Together, let us arm our children with the best tool for their future. Let us build, nurture, and protect their dreams.

Thank you, and may God bless you all!