

COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF TAITA TAVETA



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS BY H. E. GOVERNOR ANDREW MWADIME, ON TUESDAY 20TH FEBRUARY 2024 AT THE COUNTY ASSEMBLY - WUNDANYI

The Deputy Governor,

**The Honourable Speaker of The County
Assembly,**

The Honourable Deputy Speaker,

Honourable Members of the County Assembly,

County Executive Committee Members,

County Chief Officers,

**Advisors in the Executive Office of the
Governor,**

National Government Officials,

County Government Officials,

**The Chairman and Members of the County
Public Service Board,**

Members of the Clergy,

Members of the Civil Society,

Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is with a deep sense of duty and responsibility, that I stand before you today, to present the State of the County Address. As we convene to reflect on the past year and chart the course for our future, our gathering here today, embodies the spirit of transparency, accountability, and community engagement that form the foundation of our governance.

The past year has been marked by significant challenges that have tested the resilience and resolve of our great county. The prolonged drought, the adverse impacts of relentless El Niño rains, and the economic hardships occasioned by the strain of inadequate financial resources, coupled with a huge backlog of pending bills, have presented formidable obstacles to our progress and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker Sir, Taita Taveta County does not exist in isolation : I am alive to the fact that I am delivering this **State of the County Address**

against a background of enormous economic, political and social challenges, both nationally and globally. In the face of these challenges Sir, my Government nevertheless, has, and still is, navigating through the best available avenues of improving our economy and delivering service to our County, in line with the **County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2023-2027**, and guided by my campaign Manifesto, whose rallying call is **AMANI, UPENDO NA MAENDELEO KWA WOTE**.

As I embark on this humbling legal duty, I note with great satisfaction, and appreciation, the critical duty this County Assembly has continued to play, in facilitating and driving the realization of our mission by **appropriating necessary resources**, **legislating** on critical laws and policies; and by **oversighting** the Executive arm of Government, which I lead. I convey my deepest gratitude to you **Mr. Speaker Sir**, and all **Honourable Members**, for your expeditious consideration of my nominees to various offices, including Boards.

Indeed **Mr Speaker Sir**, the cooperation that this **Honourable House** has extended to the

Executive has, and will undoubtedly continue to be, a key pillar towards our success in our collective efforts to serve the citizens of this great County, who have entrusted us with the mantle of leadership. A wise person once said : “If you want to walk fast, walk alone: But if you want to walk far, walk with others”. Thank you, and thank you again, Honourable Members, for agreeing to walk together. **CHAWUCHENYI NANDIGHI!!! HAIKA!!!**

I extend my deepest appreciation to all stakeholders and Development Partners, who have remained steadfast in their support of our county through these trying times, and I look forward to engaging in meaningful and productive deliberations, with each and every one of them in the coming years. Together, let us embark on this journey with a renewed sense of purpose, with our sights firmly focused on a future where every resident of Taita Taveta experiences and enjoys tangible benefits of our collective efforts.

As you are well aware, the state of the County address is provided for in section 30(2) of the

County Government Act, 2012. In delivering this State of the County Address, I will be reporting on measures taken and progress thus far achieved, in the realization of the devolved government aspirations of Articles 174, 175, 186 and 189 of our Constitution, from the time I took over the mantle of leadership of this great County. My address will contain; a report on measures taken and the progress achieved in the realization of the national values; a report on the implementation status of the county policies and plans; a report on the performance reports of the county executive committee and public service based on the performance management plan, and a report on citizen participation in the affairs of the county government.

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members, in my address, I will highlight achievements in each department as follows :-

1. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, LIBRARIES AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRES:

I am proud to share with you the progress we have made in advancing education and providing opportunities for our students. Our commitment to education and the well-being of our youth has always been steadfast, and I am pleased to announce the remarkable achievements in this noble field of education, in the past fiscal year.

Needless to say, as a result of the harsh economic times faced by the majority of our population, bursaries have been the only means by which thousands of students can access education. In the fiscal year 2022/2023, a total of Kenya Shillings One Hundred Million (100M) was disbursed, with each Ward receiving a significant amount of Kshs Five (5) million. This essential funding has had a direct impact on the lives of 21,705 students across secondary schools, colleges, and universities. We take pride in knowing that our investment in education is shaping the future of our county.

Mr Speaker Sir, today I stand before this house with the good news that, one of the fruits of the seamless cooperation between the Executive and the County Assembly is the collective decision to double our bursary kitty from KShs 100 million, to KShs 200 million. Only a patriotic County Assembly like this one can go out of their way and assent to such a magnanimous deed. I once again congratulate this Honourable House.

Furthermore, scholarship programs have played a pivotal role in providing more substantial support to our students. In the same fiscal year, a total of Kenya Shillings Thirty (30M) million was expended to provide full scholarships to 400

students, ensuring that their fees were fully paid up to term three of 2023. This commitment to enabling talented and deserving students to pursue their education without financial barriers, is a testament to our dedication to nurturing academic excellence.

In addition to bursaries and scholarships, our efforts in providing education loans have been instrumental in assisting 472 students with a total expenditure of Kenya Shillings twelve million, two hundred and thirty-nine thousand (12,239,000.00). Notably, a significant portion of this expenditure, amounting to Kshs 2,239,000.00, was a result of recovered loans, demonstrating the sustainability of our investment in the future of our students.

Equally important is the successful recovery of loans, amounting to Kenya Shillings Eight million, thirty-three thousand, three hundred and ten shillings and forty cents (8,033,310.40). This demonstrates the responsible management of resources and the establishment of a system that promotes accountability and the continuous support of future students seeking educational assistance.

It is with great satisfaction that I report an impressive absorption rate for the Education Fund Board, with 99.7% of the budget of Kshs 147,840,000.00 in the fiscal year 2022/23 being utilized for its intended purpose. This exceptional absorption rate underscores our commitment to efficient and effective allocation of resources in advancing education within our county.

I. Enhancement of VTCs

One of the key focuses of the department has been the enhancement of Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) to ensure the delivery of quality training. Initiatives such as equipping Marungu, Kambugu, and Mata VTCs are testament to our commitment towards improving the quality of vocational training across the County.

II. Certification of VTC Trainees

Our efforts have also been directed towards ensuring the certification of VTC trainees through NITA and NAVCET examinations. The successful participation of our trainees in the December, April, and August examination series of 2023, is a reflection of the dedication and hard work put in by both the trainees and the trainers.

III. Governance and Management

The inauguration of all VTC Board of Governors is a crucial step towards ensuring the proper running and management of these centers. Good governance is paramount in guiding the direction and operations of these educational institutions.

IV. Ufundi Plus Training

Enrolling Ufundi Plus trainees in Kiloghwa and Mwanda VTCs for part-time training in various courses is indicative of our efforts to provide diverse learning opportunities to our youth, catering to their varied interests and aspirations.

V. Regulatory Compliance

The renewal of registration certificates for 28 VTCs and the registration of 3 new VTCs by TVETA underscores our

commitment to regulatory compliance and the expansion of vocational training opportunities across the County.

VI. Specialized Training Opportunities

The enrollment of youth in Maritime courses at Bandari College and the piloting of the Aquaculture program at Taveta VTC highlights our initiative to provide specialized training in emerging industries, equipping our youth with relevant skills for future employment opportunities.

VII. Economic Empowerment

The addition of a mining course at Mwanjila VTC is aimed at offering capacity building on value addition and empowerment to the community. This is aligned with our goal of contributing to the economic growth and sustainability of our county.

VIII. Employment Terms

Mr Speaker, and Honourable Members, it goes without saying that a motivated workforce is key towards the optimal output of workers and the achievement of deliverables. The conversion of 72 VTCs trainers' contract terms from 3 years to permanent and pensionable is a testament to our commitment to providing stability and security to our dedicated educators, recognizing their invaluable contribution to the development of our youth.

IX. Partnerships for Skill Development

Our partnership with CAPYEI through GIZ and the European Union to train GoBlue project courses at Voi VTC has resulted in the successful training of 421 trainees in key areas such as Maritime Security, Maritime Transport and Logistics, Tourism and Hospitality, and Entrepreneurship.

X. Infrastructure Development

My Government has made significant strides in infrastructure development, with the handover of stalled projects such as the Bungule VTC dormitory to new contractors for completion, marking our commitment to creating conducive learning environments for our students.

XI. Industry Partnership

The partnership between the County Government of Taita Taveta and Generation-Kenya to train EPZ industrial sewing machine operators at Kikambala has seen the successful training of multiple cohorts and the ongoing recruitment of over 400 trainees, contributing to the development of a skilled workforce catering to the needs of our local industries.

XII. Digital Skills

Recognizing the importance of digital skills in the modern world, the department has made significant strides in integrating digital literacy into our educational initiatives, ensuring that our youth are equipped to thrive in the digital age.

XIII. Library Services

I am thrilled to announce that we have acquired 30,000 library books, meticulously processed, and distributed to schools across the county. This initiative aims to foster a robust reading culture amongst our Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) learners, laying the foundation for a lifelong love for literature and learning.

In line with our commitment to providing stability and growth opportunities for our library staff, we have made significant

changes to the terms of service for three librarians, transitioning their employment from contract to permanent and pensionable status. This move not only acknowledges the invaluable contributions of our library personnel but also ensures their long-term welfare and dedication to the vital role they play in shaping our educational landscape.

Furthermore, I am pleased to announce the successful incorporation of 17 staff from the Kenya National Libraries into our county's library workforce. Their seamless integration into our payroll paves the way for a strengthened and collaborative library network, geared towards providing even greater value to our communities and educational institutions.

As we continue to prioritize the development of our library infrastructure, I am delighted to report the successful facilitation of the smooth transition of assets for our three key libraries – Wundanyi, Werugha, and Voi. This transition encompasses the transfer of buildings, furniture, computers, and a vast collection of approximately 50,000 books. These efforts are pivotal in ensuring that our libraries are well-equipped to serve as vibrant hubs of knowledge and learning for our residents, young and old alike.

2. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Speaker Sir, Honourable Members, for the last one year, we have achieved significant progress and development in various critical areas in healthcare sector. I am proud to report the following accomplishments:

1. Human Resource for Health (HRH)

To address staff shortage and attrition, ensuring that critical positions are filled and services are maintained at optimal levels:-

We have recruited 30 new medical professionals in different cadres and renewed contracts for 125 medics under the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) programme hence reinforcing our commitment to accessible healthcare for all people in all levels of care.

To address historical injustices and stagnation of employees and succession management issues, we have promoted 330 healthcare workers, acknowledging their dedication and commitment to serving our people.

We have further converted the terms of employment for 33 healthcare professionals, from contracts to permanent and pensionable terms, thus cementing our commitment to ensure long-term stability and security for our valued human resource. We have renewed contracts for 80 support staffs whose contracts had expired and showed a lot of commitment in their work.

To mitigate severe staff shortage in our health facilities which has been undermining service delivery and become a security threat leading to loss of some medical equipment, we increased more support staff cleaners and enforcement officers. Current staff count in the County Department of Health Services stands at 1,542 both medical professionals and those offering support services.

The efforts to strengthen our healthcare workforce have yielded positive outcomes, with highly motivated employees and a notable absence of industrial strikes. Timely payment of salaries and medical health insurance support has been instrumental in ensuring the well-being of our healthcare professionals and generally employees in different departments. Additionally, the clearance of pending bills for statutory deductions such as health insurance contributions, Pay as you earn (PAYE), and retirement benefits for staffs, among others further signifies our commitment to address financial obligations and supporting our healthcare workforce.

2. Health Financing

Full operationalization of the Facility Improvement Fund (FIF) has been achieved, providing a crucial mechanism for ring-fencing hospital resources to facilitate a rapid and effective response to health needs and gaps.

Appointment of a Facility Improvement Fund secretariat within the Health Department to ensure the prudent use and utilization of collected resources, promoting accountability and efficient management of funds.

Significant increase in Facility Improvement Fund collections, surpassing the target by achieving a collection of 172 million in FY 2022/2023, a testament to the success of our financial management strategies and the commitment of our healthcare facilities. To eliminate inefficiency and corruption, we have gone cashless in payment of all medical services by embracing technology through AlgoHealth System.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members, I am delighted to inform this Honourable House that our prudent utilization of resources, has re-ignited the confidence of our strategic partners, not only in Health, but across all departments. Our

successful collaboration with various development partners through Public-Private collaborations, has resulted to mutually beneficial initiatives to strengthen our healthcare systems.

Furthermore, we have spearheaded various health projects, including the construction of Eye unit in Moi County Referral Hospital, in close collaboration with Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation through Salus Oculi Kenya. This eye care facility which is awaiting to be equipped with state-of-the-art eye treatment and care equipment, will significantly enhance eye care service delivery for people from across Coast and Lower Eastern region.

In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, a number of health infrastructure projects have been successfully supervised to completion across various wards in the county. These projects are a testament to our unwavering commitment to enhancing accessibility and quality of healthcare services for all residents of Taita Taveta.

One of the key accomplishments is the establishment of the Comprehensive Care Centre in collaboration with the Aids Healthcare Foundation (AHF). This center not only enhances HIV and tuberculosis services but also plays a crucial role in reducing stigma and discrimination among individuals living with HIV.

In addition, through the invaluable partnership with Wildlife Works through funds generated from the Kasigau Corridor REDD+ Project, we have successfully carried out overhaul renovation and expansion of the the Sagalla Health Centre and Kajire Dispensary, ensuring that our communities have access to quality healthcare services at grassroots.

In addition to these achievements, I am delighted to report on the ongoing projects that are set to further revolutionize healthcare in our county. The construction of the Cancer Centre at Moi County Referral Hospital, the Njoro Dispensary in Taveta Sub County, the Bughuta Dispensary Maternity Block in Kasigau Ward, and Shelemba Dispensary Maternity wing in Rong'e Ward are all progressing well, with significant completion milestones already achieved.

Moreover, recognizing the importance of well-equipped medical facilities, we have made substantial investments in medical equipment, pharmaceutical and pharmaceutical commodities. We have diligently cleared an inherited debt of Ksh 89 million owed to the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) and Kes. 8.5 million owed to Mission for Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS) thereby lifting the ban which had blocked Taita Taveta County from getting medical supplies on credit. This has resulted in regular supply of pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical medical supplies. As a result, the availability of essential medicines and supplies in all healthcare facilities across the county has significantly improved.

To further enhance healthcare services, we have procured medical equipment worth millions of shillings, including four new dialysis machines, an ECG machine, and two Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (C-PAP) machines. Yesterday, we got a brand new hematology analyzer from crown healthcare for Moi County Referral Hospital to improve accurate and efficient diagnosis for effective treatment and management of various blood disorders. These significant investments are pivotal in expanding and improving dialysis

services and diagnostic capabilities in our healthcare facilities.

To further bolster Universal Health Coverage, we have made significant strides in Primary Health Care (PHC) services. These efforts include sensitizing stakeholders at the county level on Primary Care Networks (PCN) and setting aside Kshs. 24.4 million as stipends for Community Health Promoters (CHPs) which is part of our contribution to this initiative.

In collaboration with the National Government, we launched the UHC-PHC on 20th October 2023, during Mashujaa Day celebrations. To facilitate support supervision in this programme, we flagged off 4 motorbikes and distributed 1,288 kits among CHPs across the county, further demonstrating our commitment to expanding access to primary healthcare services.

Additionally, our county has significantly expanded the range of specialized medical services offered at Moi County Referral Hospital. By employing and remunerating 19 medical specialists, we have enhanced the hospital's capability to offer a wide range of specialized services such as plastic surgery, thereby reducing the cost of seeking specialized services in Mombasa and Nairobi.

Last month, I presided over groundbreaking of a Kes 114 million medical waste microwave disinfection facility at Mwatate Sub-County Hospital we are implementing in conjunction with the Ministry of Health with support from the government of Belgium through a co-financing strategy where we are contributing Kes. 14 million. Already, ultra-modern medical waste microwave disinfection equipment were

delivered last week at the hospital awaiting completion of the facility which will be use emerging technology to treat medical waste from all public health facilities in the county.

Mr Speaker Sir, despite the gallant efforts of our health professionals and it is unfortunate that, sometimes, unfortunate acts of omissions, commissions, or accidents, may end up with grievous results. A case in point is the recent arm amputation of a new born Baby Andrew Baraka, whom I had occasion to visit last week at the Coast Referral and Teaching Hospital. I was deeply touched by the baby's plight, and empathized with the mother's anguish. I wish to report to this Honourable House that relevant professional bodies are handling the case, and anybody found culpable would be met with due repercussions. But it should be noted that, the unfortunate case was the exception, rather than the rule. Our healthcare professionals have been very competent and dedicated in line with their calling of saving lives.

3. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, FISHERIES, IRRIGATION AND BLUE ECONOMY

Hon Members, I am delighted to present to you the commendable progress in the livestock development interventions implemented in our county. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in advancing agricultural productivity, uplifting livelihoods, and fostering overall economic growth within our communities.

Livestock Extension Services Delivery:

I am pleased to announce that the county's livestock extension services have been significantly bolstered through the recruitment and deployment of six new field extension staff. These dedicated professionals have been strategically placed in key wards, including Saghala, Ronge, Chawia, Wundanyi, Mbale, Wumingu, and Kishushe.

Livestock Feed and Pasture Development:

Another remarkable achievement is the successful distribution of over 10 tons of pasture seed to more than 100 farmer groups, farms, and ranches. Through this endeavor, the beneficiaries have cultivated over 1000 acres under high-value forage grasses, legume fodder, and hay grass. In addition to the provision of grass cutting machines and forage chopping equipment, the department has imparted extensive training to empower farmers to engage in value addition activities such as silage and hay production. Notably, the conservation of over 50 tons of silage and hay has resulted in a significant enhancement of the quality of pasture available to dairy cows, leading to an impressive increase in milk production by at least 10%.

I am also pleased to report on the remarkable progress and initiatives that have been undertaken in the commercialization of pasture and the development of the dairy sector in our region. A total of 3008 farmers, including 1249 males and 1759 females, have been trained and supported with pasture and fodder seeds. Furthermore, we have engaged and trained 873 youths, comprising 377 males and 496 females, and supported them with 18 tons of various varieties of pasture and fodder seeds. This concerted effort has led to the establishment of 1200 acres of land with pasture and fodder, along with the provision of small-scale fodder and pasture harvesting and conservation equipment.

In our commitment towards building resilience and mitigating the impact of drought, we are supplying 5000 bags of 50kg range cubes to support livestock keepers in the arid and semi-arid areas that have been affected by drought. Additionally, over 1500 farmers have been trained and supported with 3 tonnes of pasture seeds of various varieties.

The commercial production of pasture and fodder has received significant attention and support, with the provision of machinery and equipment to three ranches—Kasighau, Lualenyi, and Mgeno. This includes equipment for commercial pasture production, harvesting, and conservation of fodder and pasture, such as hay balers, mowers, and chisel ploughs. These investments are essential in ensuring sustainable and efficient pasture management, which will undoubtedly translate to improved livelihoods for our farmers and increased productivity in the agricultural sector.

In parallel to these efforts, the development of the dairy sector has also been our key focus. The department has extended its

support to dairy farmer cooperative societies such as Wundanyi, Mbale, Werugha, ASDSP, and KCSAP. This support is critical in fostering collaborative and sustainable dairy farming practices, which will elevate the dairy sector and contribute to the economic growth of our region.

Our collective efforts and strategic investments have led to significant transformations in the livelihoods of our farming communities, as well as the overall economic prosperity of our region.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am also delighted to share the success of the six milk aggregation and chilling centers that have become pivotal hubs for dairy farmers in our region. These centers are collectively aggregating an impressive daily total of 5000 liters of milk. The economic significance of this cannot be overstated, as it has enabled our farmers to generate an annual income of Ksh 88 million through the chilling centers, establishing a sustainable foundation for their financial well-being.

Furthermore, our collaboration with New KCC has proven to be fruitful, with the successful linkage of dairy farmers' cooperative societies to New KCC resulting in the collection of approximately 6500 liters of milk every three days. This achievement not only bolsters the income of our farmers but also strengthens our dairy industry, positioning us favorably in both local and export markets.

In the realm of value addition, our department has procured and provided milk value addition equipment to two dairy cooperative societies. These essential tools will soon facilitate the pasteurization of milk and the development of yogurt and Mala milk for the market. This venture represents a critical

step in enhancing the value chain of our dairy products, increasing their appeal and competitiveness.

In addition to these advancements, our commitment to livestock breeding stock improvement has yielded notable results. We have distributed over 3200 Galla goats to more than 2000 farmers across our county, aiming to elevate the prevalence of Galla goat breeds among small-scale farmers. By doing so, we are not only fortifying the capacity of our local farmers but also fortifying our ability to supply quality meat goats to both domestic and international markets.

Moreover, we have ventured into promoting alternative livelihoods through apiculture, supplying 305 bee hives and harvesting kits to 59 villages. This initiative not only diversifies the income sources of our communities but also underscores our commitment to sustainable and holistic development.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the poultry sector has also experienced a remarkable uplift, with the distribution of over 5100 improved chickens to beneficiaries across our county, thereby amplifying the commercialization of superior poultry breeds. Alongside this, we have provided training to 11 lead farmers in the production of F1 KARI improved chickens, with a focus on achieving fertile egg production, incubation, and hatching of day-old chicks within our county.

I am immensely proud of the collaborative efforts undertaken by various organizations and stakeholders, such as FAO, Red Cross, KALRO, Wildlife Works, ASDSP, and NDMA, which have been instrumental in supporting and implementing these transformative initiatives.

Livestock Market Development:

We recently hosted a delegation from Indonesia and the State Department of Livestock, who visited our region to assess our potential to supply beef animals for export. I am thrilled to share that the Government of Indonesia has expressed keen interest in sourcing 50,000 to 100,000 heads of cattle annually, with a minimum weight requirement of 350kg live weight. This presents a tremendous opportunity for our ranchers, and we are fully committed to supporting and empowering them to meet this demand. This partnership not only promises economic benefits but also establishes our region as a reliable supplier in the global market.

Bachuma Livestock Multiplication Unit:

In our ongoing efforts to bolster livestock development, the Bachuma Livestock Multiplication Unit has made significant strides. The unit has generated over Ksh 1M in own-source revenue through the sale of breeding and culled animals to farmers. This success serves as a testament to the hard work and dedication of our stakeholders and demonstrates the potential for further growth and prosperity in the livestock sector.

Promotion of Aquaculture and Capture Fish:

Our commitment to diversifying agricultural opportunities led us to host a successful World Fisheries Day at Lake Chala. This event provided a platform for farmers and stakeholders to showcase the rich potential of our county in fisheries. The promotion of aquaculture and capture fish not only contributes to food security but also presents opportunities

for economic empowerment and sustainable livelihoods for our communities.

Policy Framework Development and Animal Feed Strategy:

We have taken a momentous step forward with the completion of our first Taita Taveta County Animal Feed Strategy 2022-2032. This comprehensive 10-year guide is poised to address livestock feed and nutrition, paving the way for the sustainable development of the livestock subsector. The collaboration and support from various organizations, including SNV, ASDSP, FAO, Mastercard, and KALRO, have been invaluable in achieving this milestone.

Crop Development Project Interventions:

Our commitment to agricultural development encompasses various initiatives aimed at empowering our farmers and promoting crop productivity. Notably, we have provided substantial support to farmers across different wards, including the purchase of fertilizers for rice farmers of the Uswi cooperative, the distribution of green gram seeds in Marungu, and the supply of farmyard manure to beneficiaries in Werugha, Wumingu, and Kishushe. These interventions have directly impacted the lives of hundreds of farmers, fostering resilience and prosperity in our agricultural communities.

Furthermore, I am delighted to announce the completion of the Policy Framework Development and the launch of Taita Taveta County Animal Feed Strategy 2022-2032. This ten-year strategy serves as a comprehensive guide in addressing

livestock feed and nutrition for sustainable development of the livestock subsector. The collaborative efforts of the county-wide CGTT, along with the support from SNV, ASDSP, FAO, Mastercard, and KALRO, have been pivotal in achieving this milestone. This strategy will play a crucial role in ensuring the optimal nutrition and health of our livestock, thereby bolstering the overall growth and productivity of the livestock sector in our county.

We have consistently demonstrated our commitment to supporting our farmers by providing essential resources to enhance their agricultural practices. One significant initiative is the purchase of fertilizers for rice farmers in the Uswi Cooperative. The provision of 16.35 tons of SA and urea fertilizers has greatly benefited 200 farmers in the Mboghoni ward. This intervention, funded by our dedicated County Government Transformation Team (CGTT), is a crucial step in ensuring the success and sustainability of rice farming in the region.

Furthermore, we have made substantial contributions to the promotion of green gram farming by supplying 1.332 tons of green gram seeds to 333 beneficiaries in the Marungu ward. This effort, which was fully completed through the support of the CGTT, has significantly empowered local farmers, contributing to the economic growth of the region.

In addition to seed provision, we have prioritized the supply of farm yard manure, recognizing its vital role in enhancing soil fertility and supporting sustainable farming practices. The successful distribution of 875 tons of farm yard manure to 175 beneficiaries in Werugha and 1,400 tons to 280

beneficiaries in Wumingu/Kishushe has yielded positive results. These initiatives, fully completed under the leadership of the CGTT, have substantially improved the agricultural productivity and livelihoods of our farming communities.

As part of our broader efforts to advance agricultural development, we have further provided support to 500 farmers across the county, supplying them with 1 ton each of green gram and maize seeds. This comprehensive initiative, implemented collaboratively by the CGTT and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has significantly bolstered the farming capabilities of our beneficiaries, making a tangible impact on their agricultural output and economic well-being.

Moreover, in a bid to enhance water resource management, we have successfully supplied dam liners to seven locations across the county. This initiative, completed in collaboration with the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (KCEP) and the Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow (CRAL) program, has played a pivotal role in facilitating water conservation and irrigation practices, creating a conducive environment for sustainable crop production and agricultural development.

One of our most significant achievements is the expansion of the Rice scheme in Burumba, where we have successfully increased the rice cultivation area from 18,000 acres to an impressive 30,000 acres. This expansion, spearheaded by the County Government Transformation Team (CGTT) and the National Irrigation Authority (NIA), represents a substantial

leap forward in our efforts to enhance rice production and capitalize on the agricultural potential of the region.

In line with our commitment to boosting rice production, I am thrilled to announce the successful establishment of a state-of-the-art 2.5 Ton/hr Rice Processing Plant in Mboghoni and Mahoo. This significant milestone, achieved through collaborative efforts, reflects our dedication to modernizing the rice processing infrastructure and ensuring the efficient processing of our agricultural produce.

Furthermore, our steadfast efforts in agribusiness and market development have yielded tangible outcomes, as evidenced by the successful compensation of crop insurance valued at 7,284,769 shillings to 2,808 farmers county-wide. This achievement, driven by the partnership between the CGTT, Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (KCEP), and Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow (CRAL) program, underscores our commitment to supporting and protecting the interests of our farmers in the face of agricultural challenges.

We have also made significant strides in farmer profiling and registration, with an impressive 91% achievement in registering 51,017 households across 20 wards. This comprehensive initiative, carried out with the support of the World Bank (WB), Government of Kenya (GOK), and the CGTT, reflects our commitment to empowering and safeguarding the welfare of our farming communities.

In conjunction with these efforts, we have successfully conducted training programs for 5,000 farmers county-wide, aimed at equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful agricultural practices. Through the collaborative efforts of the CGTT and our esteemed partners, we remain dedicated to providing essential training and capacity-building opportunities to our farmers.

Furthermore, our commitment to engaging and empowering our farmers is evident in the successful organization of field days, where we have reached over 500 farmers in Mwanguwi, Msau, Wesu, and Mboghoni. These initiatives, conducted in collaboration with our partners, have provided a platform for knowledge-sharing, networking, and the dissemination of best agricultural practices, thereby contributing to the overall growth and development of our agricultural sector.

In our unwavering dedication to irrigation development, I am delighted to announce the completion of the Irienyi/Kokua Waterpan, Mwambiti Waterpan, and Mwataru Waterpan projects. These vital irrigation infrastructure projects, with the potential to benefit thousands of beneficiaries across various regions, represent a significant leap forward in our efforts to ensure sustainable water management and bolster agricultural productivity.

I am delighted to announce that we have distributed over 70,000 tissue culture banana seedlings to approximately 1000 farmers across the county. This strategic endeavor has significantly contributed to the improvement of banana productivity, resulting in increased acreage under banana cultivation by 175 hectares. As a result, productivity has also

surged, rising from 20 tons per hectare to an impressive 30 tons per hectare. Areas such as Mboghonyi, Chala, Mahoo, Mata, and Mbololo have particularly benefited from this initiative, transforming the landscape of banana farming.

In line with our commitment to advancing and modernizing agricultural practices, a momentous partnership has been established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Taita Taveta University and the Micro Enterprises Support Programme Trust (MESPT). This collaboration is aimed at establishing a Tissue Culture Banana Laboratory at the Ngerenyi campus, an endeavor which is currently underway. When completed, this facility will ensure that our farmers have access to high-quality banana seedlings at an affordable cost, further bolstering the growth of the banana farming industry in our county.

Moreover, I am pleased to announce the successful installation of refrigerated banana ripening chambers in Voi. These chambers have been instrumental in value addition and the production of superior quality ripe bananas. As a result, we are now ripening approximately 10 tons of bananas per week, consequently creating a readily accessible market for our farmers' produce. This achievement not only ensures the satisfaction of consumer demand but also significantly enhances the economic prospects of our farmers.

In our continuous efforts to diversify agricultural opportunities, we have also advanced the promotion of nuts and oils through the distribution of 600 coconut seedlings.

This initiative, in partnership with the Agriculture and Food Authority (AFA), aims to harness the potential of our agricultural landscape, offering an avenue for alternative revenue streams and agricultural development.

Furthermore, I am excited to announce the conclusive development of the Taita Taveta County Agrinutrition Strategy 2023-2027. This imperative strategy, developed in collaboration with the Department of Health, serves as a comprehensive 5-year guide for the execution of nutrition-sensitive agriculture across our county. The alignment of agriculture with nutrition-sensitive practices is fundamental to ensuring the well-being of our communities, and this framework stands as a testament to our dedication to holistic development. The broad support and contribution from the County Government Transformation Team (CGTT), USAID, and the Kenya Crops and Dairy Market Systems (KCDMS) have been invaluable in realizing this pivotal initiative.

As we reflect on these exceptional accomplishments, we recognize that they are a result of collaborative efforts and the unwavering dedication of our agricultural and livestock development partners. Through the support of organizations such as CGTT, ASDSP, MESPT, TTU, KCDMS, AFA, USAID, and others, we have been able to achieve these remarkable milestones.

4. DEPARTMENT OF ROADS, PUBLIC WORKS, TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

It is with great pleasure and pride that I stand before you to share the remarkable accomplishments achieved in the Public Works, Roads, Transport, Housing, and Infrastructure sector of Taita Taveta County during the 2022/2023 financial year.

Under the Annual Road Maintenance Program, the county has made significant strides in enhancing the accessibility and quality of our road network. I am pleased to report that substantial improvements have been made through the routine maintenance of key roads in various sub-counties, directly impacting the lives of our citizens.

The successful formations and grading, and slabbing of these vital roads has opened up previously-inaccessible areas and have greatly aided farmers and traders operate with ease. This has been boosted by our efforts to revive previously stalled machinery and equipments, such as graders, back hoes, tippers, and excavators. A number of grounded vehicles have also been reconditioned and are back on the road. The department is in the process of revitalizing operations at the Wundanyi Garage, a crucial step in enhancing our operational capabilities to better serve our communities.

Our efforts in the Public Works, Housing & Infrastructure sector have also yielded notable accomplishments. In the Housing Section, we have facilitated the repayment of a long-standing debt owed to the National Housing Corporation by the County Government, amounting to Ksh. 20 million. This successful repayment has enabled the handing over of Mbela Estate back to the County Government, marking a significant

milestone in our pursuit of sustainable housing solutions for our citizens.

The Fire Section has also seen substantial progress and partnerships that have enhanced our firefighting capabilities. We partnered with the European Support Team (EST) from Germany to provide modern skills training and equipment for our firefighters. The three-week training program resulted in our firefighters being awarded certificates, reflecting their dedication to enhancing their skills and competencies. Additionally, through an exchange program with EST and the County Government of Taita Taveta, two firefighters benefited from a two-month training program in Germany, further equipping them with valuable knowledge and expertise. We are also eagerly anticipating the arrival of a donation of modern firefighting equipment from EST, which will significantly enhance our firefighting capabilities.

In line with our commitment to ensuring public safety, I am pleased to announce the successful revival of a fire engine in Taveta, which is now fully operational. This further strengthens our emergency response capacity in that region.

5. DEPARTMENT OF WATER, SANITATION, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members, I am pleased to present the commendable progress and achievements of the Department of Water and Sanitation in Taita Taveta County for the financial year ending 30th June 2023. The department has undertaken various ward development projects aimed at enhancing water provision and sanitation infrastructure, thus uplifting the living standards of our communities. I am proud to share the status of these projects as at the end of the financial year.

Taveta Sub-County

Challa Ward

1. Solarization of Uthiani Borehole

The project complete, reflecting our commitment to providing sustainable water solutions to the community.

Mahoo Ward

1. Desilting of Kasokoni Irrigation Scheme has been successfully completed, thus improving the efficiency and functionality of this vital irrigation infrastructure.

2. Langata Borehole

All required materials have been delivered to the site, positioning us for the next phase of work.

3. Drilling of Lang`ata Borehole

The drilling has been completed.

Mboghoni Ward

1. Rehabilitation of Water Flyover (Lambo-Marodo Scheme)

This project has been completed.

2. Supply and Delivery of Casings for Riata Kubwa Borehole Has been done. This now awaits the next phase of drilling.

3. The Drilling of Big Riata Borehole In Taveta Subcounty is ongoing.

Mata Ward

1. Pump Installation at Kasaani Borehole
This project is complete.

2. Ndilidau Water Project
This project is complete.

Mwatate Subcounty

Chawia Ward

1. Supply and Delivery of Plastic Tanks

The successful supply and installation of 6 10-cubic meters tanks and 1 5-cubic meter tanks is complete.

Mwatate Ward

1. Supply and Delivery of Casings for Mdindinyi Kireti Borehole is ongoing.

Wusi/Kishamba Ward

1. Mwambisa Dam is complete.

2. Kisaghala Water Project is complete.

3. Dembwa Reservoir Tank project is ongoing.

4. Maintenance of Josa-Modambogho Water Project is ongoing.

Wundanyi/Mbale Ward

Wundanyi–Mbale Ward Water Projects (Kwa Hebron Water Project)

Is still ongoing.

Mbololo Ward

1. Construction of Mkwachunyi 100-cubic meter Tank, Pipes & Fitting is ongoing.

2. Rehabilitation of Mwaminja Water Project Is ongoing, currently standing at 90%.

3. Mrema Water Project is complete.

Marungu Ward

1. Extension of Itinyi Water Project is complete.

DONOR SUPPORTED PROJECTS:

1. Rehabilitation of Tausa – Mwandau Water Project – NDMA

2. Expansion of Kambito Water Pan – NDMA

3. Mwaroko Sinai Water Project – 90% Donor funded by KRCS

4. Kishenyi Kishushe-Mlilo Water Project – (ongoing) WSTF

5. Manga Public Sanitation Facility – (Ongoing) WSTF

6. Preparation of County Water Masterplan – (Ongoing) WSTF

7. Ablution Blocks, Water Distribution works - WSDP

8. STAWI – Approved by USAID

9. Improvement of Kaloleni-Gimba-Kalambe-Mnaoni-Kirumbi Water Project (approved by WSTF)
10. Scattered Borehole Equipping and Piping - FAO
11. Rong'e Nyika Sand Dam Construction – FAO
12. Msau Rahai Sand Dam and Canal Lining - FAO
13. Kiundu-Mata Water Project – 80% Donor funded by Nature Kenya
14. Kidondonyi Water Project – 95% Donor funded by KRCS
15. Mata Canal and Diversion Works – Donor funded by FAO
16. Mwangaza Kidong Water Pipeline – Donor funded by KRCS

Climate change

The substantial progress in these projects signifies our collective dedication to sustainable development, community empowerment, and the provision of essential services to our people. The unwavering support from our valuable partners and donors has been pivotal in driving these initiatives forward, positively impacting the lives of our citizens and transforming our communities for the better.

I would like to acknowledge the significant achievements in climate change interventions and actions in our county. The gazettelement of the Taita Taveta County Climate Change Act stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to combatting climate change. This milestone, which came into force in January 2023, has established an institutional framework to streamline operations in climate change interventions and actions. It provides the legal framework for implementing climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, allowing us to coordinate efforts, allocate resources, and

enforce regulations to build community resilience to climate change.

Furthermore, the establishment of climate change planning and steering committees at the county and ward levels is a pivotal accomplishment. These committees play a crucial role in coordinating and implementing locally-led climate actions. The ward-level committee ensures that climate risks are identified, and priority adaptation measures are proposed, while the county planning committee ensures that the proposals tabled are sound, justified, and in line with the climate change action plan. The steering committee approves and provides oversight of all activities and projects, ensuring the mainstreaming of climate change into county planning and development processes.

However, amid these achievements, it is crucial to address the challenges that hinder project implementation in our county. The presence of huge pending bills often deters eligible and capable contractors from taking up county tenders and jobs. Additionally, the delayed and failure to disburse funds to the department further diminishes the contractors' willingness to work on already contracted works. We recognize the impact of these challenges and are committed to finding sustainable solutions to address them.

Additionally, the absence of county-specific legislative, policy, and regulatory frameworks for water and sanitation governance, infrastructure development, and service provision management presents a significant hurdle. We are dedicated to addressing this challenge through the

formulation and implementation of robust frameworks that will guide and facilitate the efficient management and development of water and sanitation infrastructure in our county.

We have initiated the development of the Participatory Climate Risk Assessment (PCRA) report and the County Climate Change Action Plan (CCCAP) for the period of 2023-2027.

The PCRA framework serves as a critical tool in assessing climate risks, hazards, and impacts, while identifying resilient investment opportunities. It focuses on addressing food and water security through strategic interventions such as infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, tree planting initiatives, Climate-Smart Agriculture projects, and the promotion of renewable energy sources such as solar power, biogas, and efficient cooking stoves. These efforts are essential in building resilience and addressing the pressing challenges posed by climate change.

The PCRA report will form the foundation for the development of our County Climate Change Action Plan (CCCAP), outlining the resilience investments that will be undertaken to address the impacts of climate hazards and enhance sustainable, low-carbon, climate-resilient development in our county. Furthermore, the CCCAP aims to attract climate financing to support these initiatives, creating a sustainable and resilient future for our communities.

In alignment with these efforts, we have also commenced the development of the Climate Change Finance policy at the

draft stage. This policy seeks to address climate change issues at the grassroots level by supporting both mitigation and adaptation actions. It aims to create an enabling framework that will attract investors and promote a business-friendly approach and regulatory environment, recognizing that substantial financing is required to effectively tackle the challenges and impacts of climate change on our local communities.

By mainstreaming climate change considerations, our county is acknowledging the urgent need for climate action and resilience building. These initiatives are in line with global goals to mitigate the effects of climate change and promote sustainable development. I express my gratitude to all stakeholders, partners, and the community for their unwavering support and collaboration in realizing these crucial initiatives.

Promoting Renewable Energy:

The Climate Change Finance policy places significant emphasis on encouraging investments in renewable energy. The transition to clean, renewable energy sources plays a pivotal role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change. By supporting and financing renewable energy projects, the policy aims to expedite the adoption of clean energy technologies, contributing to the global transition to a low-carbon economy. This strategic investment in renewable energy aligns with broader efforts to combat climate change and reduce reliance on fossil fuels, fostering a sustainable energy landscape for the County.

Supporting Sustainable Agriculture:

Investing in sustainable agriculture is another vital aspect of the policy. Climate change poses substantial challenges to agricultural systems, including changing weather patterns, increased frequency of extreme events, and shifts in rainfall patterns. By promoting investments in sustainable agriculture practices such as organic farming, agroforestry, and climate-smart techniques, the policy aims to enhance food security, build resilience in agricultural systems, and reduce emissions from the agriculture sector. These investments are essential for the adaptation of agricultural practices to changing climate conditions, ensuring the sustainability and productivity of the agricultural sector while mitigating its environmental impact.

Addressing Drought Management:

Drought, a major consequence of climate change, can have severe impacts on communities, particularly those reliant on agriculture. The policy recognizes the importance of investing in drought management strategies to build resilience and reduce vulnerability to drought conditions. This may involve investments in water infrastructure, water conservation methods, and early warning systems to improve preparedness and response to drought events. By allocating resources to drought management, the policy aims to enhance the county's capacity to withstand and recover from drought, safeguarding livelihoods and agricultural productivity in the face of changing climatic conditions.

By seeking investments in these key areas, the Climate Change Finance policy aims to mobilize the necessary financial resources to effectively address climate change at the grassroots level. It underscores the importance of scaling

up and robust financing to meet the challenges posed by climate change and its impacts on local communities. This strategic focus on climate finance reflects the county's commitment to sustainable development, resilience-building, and climate action,

I am delighted to announce that Taita Taveta County has made substantial progress in accessing funds through the Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) program. This World Bank-backed initiative provides devolved climate finance at the grassroots level, enabling counties to access funds for climate-related projects and initiatives. Our successful access to these funds underscores our commitment to addressing climate change and implementing impactful projects that benefit our communities.

Furthermore, our county has met the minimum access conditions and minimum performance conditions required to access FLLoCA funds. This achievement reflects our dedication to meeting specific criteria and demonstrating a strong commitment to effectively tackling climate change. We have shown that we are capable of achieving targets and making tangible progress in implementing climate change actions, setting a commendable example for others to follow.

In addition to these accomplishments, I am pleased to announce that Taita Taveta County has been granted access to the Climate Change Resilient Investment (CCRI) grant. This grant presents a significant opportunity for us to further our efforts in climate change adaptation and resilience. With this funding, we can support projects that enhance our community's resilience to the impacts of climate change,

fostering a more sustainable and secure future for our County.

I am deeply encouraged by the shared vision and collaborative efforts that have propelled us towards substantial achievements, even in the face of formidable challenges. As we look back on our journey, it is imperative to acknowledge the pivotal role played by the establishment of the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) “Takataka ni Mali”, at Ckaleri, stands as a testament to our unwavering commitment to transform waste management in our County.

The MRF initiative, a collaborative endeavor between the County Government of Taita Taveta and the esteemed support of UN-Habitat, represents a significant leap forward in our collective pursuit of sustainable and innovative solutions. It is a resounding affirmation of our resolve to address the scourge of waste dumping and environmental degradation, while simultaneously harnessing the inherent value and potential wealth that lie within our waste resources. By embracing the principles of recycling and waste management, the MRF not only serves as a beacon of hope in our efforts to combat pollution but also as a source of economic empowerment and sustainable development within our communities.

Notably, this facility holds the key to tackling the pervasive challenge of plastic waste, a dire threat to our marine ecosystems. By conscientiously managing plastic waste, we take meaningful steps towards safeguarding the delicate balance of our oceans and preserving the biodiversity that defines our coastal heritage.

Furthermore, I am delighted to announce the pivotal handover and operationalization of the 6-pilot ward climate change projects, a monumental milestone achieved through the collaborative partnership between the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), and the County Government of Taita Taveta. These projects stand as sterling examples of our collective resolve to confront the adverse impacts of climate change while bolstering water supply within our region.

In Taveta Sub-County, the implementation of transformative initiatives such as the Rekeke Flume in Mata Ward and the repairs in Njoro Kubwa, Mbogholi Ward underscores our commitment to fortify water distribution networks while enhancing the resilience of our water infrastructure. Meanwhile, in the Mwatate Sub-County, the Mariwe Water Supply initiative symbolizes our concerted efforts to ensure equitable access to potable water, bringing forth not just a life-sustaining resource but a source of hope and vitality for our communities.

we gather here to mark the culmination of a collaborative effort aimed at developing a comprehensive roadmap for managing municipal solid waste in our county. This strategy document outlines the action plan that will guide our initiatives in solid waste management, focusing on crucial aspects such as policy and legal framework, collection and transportation services, waste recovery and circular economy, waste disposal, financial sustainability, inclusive participation, and data monitoring.

The prioritization and mapping of projects such as the drilling of the Paranga Borehole in Wumingu-Kishushe Ward, the New Miasenyi Borehole project in Voi Sub-County, and the rehabilitation of the Bafwe Water Pan in Kasighau, were all done through a participatory procedure involving the local community. This reflects our commitment to ensuring that the voices and needs of our citizens are at the forefront of our decision-making processes.

In addition to these initiatives, I am also committed to promoting climate change mitigation, public awareness, and natural resources management, as emphasized in my manifesto. We must recognize the interconnectedness of environmental sustainability and the well-being of our communities. Therefore, these efforts in solid waste management and water supply development are integral to our broader goals of promoting sustainable and resilient communities.

I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our partners, including UnHabitat, Jumuiya ya Kaunti Za Pwani (JKP), and Civil Society Urban Organization, for their invaluable support and collaboration in the development of this strategy. Their expertise and commitment have been instrumental in shaping this roadmap for sustainable solid waste management in our County.

Moreover, in our efforts to create a more sustainable and environmentally friendly space, the Chakaleri dumpsite will be replanned to transition it into a green park and an environmental resource center. As we plan to relocate the existing dumpsite to a more suitable location, it became

imperative to envision the future of Chakaleri post-decommissioning. A dedicated team, comprising technical experts, environmental authorities, consultants, and representatives from various organizations, collaborated to develop a vision for the 10-acre site. The vision includes space for the Material Recovery Facility, a green park, and an Environmental Resource Center, emphasizing our commitment to turning what was once a dumping ground into a vibrant, eco-friendly space for our community.

One crucial development that I am proud to announce is the establishment of the County Environment Committee, in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Management and Coordination Act of 1999. This committee has been gazetted, marking a milestone in our commitment to seamless environmental conservation affairs. I extend my appreciation to all those involved in this process, and I am optimistic that the committee will play a vital role in shaping the environmental agenda of our county.

Forestry

Turning our focus to forestry, I am pleased to report on the commendable efforts in the conservation and management of our forests. The review of participatory forest management plans for Sundifu, IYAWEMBI, and NGANGAO, in collaboration with the county government and Nature Kenya, signifies our dedication to sustainable forest practices. Furthermore, the drafting of the Taita Taveta County Forest Conservation and Management Bill is a significant step towards providing a legal framework for the sustainable management of community and county forests. This legislation will serve as a cornerstone in our efforts to safeguard our precious forest resources.

In another significant endeavor, I am thrilled to share the progress made through the Forest and Landscape Restoration Implementation Plan (FOLAREP) in our ongoing mission to reverse the degradation of our forests and landscapes. This initiative, in collaboration with World Agroforestry, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and the County Government of Taita Taveta, aspires to rehabilitate an extensive expanse of 226,420 hectares of land.

We recognize and deeply appreciate the invaluable contribution of all stakeholders who have actively participated in shaping this remarkable plan. Their input has been instrumental in guiding the comprehensive approach to rehabilitating our natural landscapes and revitalizing our forest ecosystems.

6. YOUTH, SPORTS, GENDER, CULTURE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr Speaker Sir, our efforts to safeguard the Mwazindika dance through the support of the Kenya National Commission of UNESCO (KNATCOM) have borne fruit, and we are on the brink of inscribing this traditional dance as a cultural treasure to be preserved for generations to come.

Mwazindika dance now proudly stands as the second traditional dance in our country to be included in the UNESCO list, following in the footsteps of the renowned Isukuti of western Kenya. This milestone is a testament to our commitment to preserving and promoting our cultural heritage.

In addition to our efforts to safeguard the Mwazindika dance, our cultural endeavors have taken us to national events where we have showcased the vibrancy and diversity of our cultural heritage. The Goda Ya Bara Isanga traditional dance group, known for their captivating performances of the Mwazindika dance, took center stage during the Utamaduni Day Celebrations at Bomas of Kenya, Nairobi. They not only mesmerized the audience with their dance but also highlighted our indigenous food systems and their significance in today's world.

Furthermore, our participation in the 96th Kenya Music and Cultural Festivals served as a platform to promote and safeguard our culture.

Amidst our cultural initiatives, we have also sought to nurture and empower our youth through the Sanaa Kama

Biashara program. In collaboration with MMS Advocates, we have established a 7-month academy aimed at training artists and promoting various talents among the youth of Taita Taveta County. The program, designed to enable our youth to realize their creative potential and explore avenues for earning income from their talents, underscores our commitment to nurturing the next generation of cultural custodians.

I would like to highlight the significant progress made in the mapping and preservation of cultural sites within our county.

The department has successfully mapped Chawia Cultural Center at Mose in Chawia ward, Mabomani Cultural Center at Mabomani in Mbololo ward, and Kirombo Cultural Center at Ghazi in Ngolia ward. These centers stand as beacons of our rich cultural heritage, embodying the traditions and customs that have been passed down through generations. We recognize the importance of preserving and promoting these sites to ensure that our cultural identity remains vibrant and celebrated.

Furthermore, the department is actively pursuing the establishment of the Wundanyi Cultural Center & Youth Creative Arts Center at Mvumunyi in Wundanyi Mbale ward. We understand that mapping and preservation of cultural sites is a continuous process, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to this endeavor.

On gender and social services, the department has undertaken significant activities that have fostered empowerment and advocacy for gender equality and social

welfare. We have collaborated with partners to conduct capacity-building sessions on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) for stakeholders, providing a platform to address the progress, challenges, and gaps facing GBV response activities in our county. Our collective brainstorming has yielded a comprehensive work plan to address GBV and embrace a way forward in the pursuit of a society free from such abhorrent acts.

Moreover, the department has been at the forefront of offering free trainings on ICT and garment making to young mothers and widows at the Voi Girl Incubation Hub. This initiative aims to equip these individuals with essential knowledge and skills in tailoring and dressmaking, empowering them to embark on income-generating activities and break free from the shackles of poverty. We are committed to fostering self-sustainability among our community members and uplifting them to pursue opportunities that enable them to thrive.

In addition to observing the International Day of People with Disability, I am pleased to announce the completion of the long-awaited Ngolia social hall in Ndome shopping centre, Ngolia ward. After having stalled for over 15 years, this important community facility has now been brought to completion, thanks to the diligent efforts of the department and the utilization of development funds for the fiscal year 2022/2023. Furthermore, the construction of the Mlambenyi social hall in Mwatate ward and the Sangenyi social hall in Werugha ward, both of which had also stalled, are now underway and will soon be available for public use. These developments are a testament to our unwavering commitment

to improving community infrastructure and enhancing the quality of life for our residents.

Turning to the achievements of the Youth & Sports Unit, I am delighted to share that our county hosted the Athletics Kenya Cross Country Competitions at the Dawson Mwanyumba Stadium in Wundanyi. Our county's cross country team received essential support to participate in the coast regional competitions held in Ukunda, Kwale County. I am proud to announce that our county team emerged victorious, claiming all the trophies and achieving the top position. This outstanding performance is a testament to the dedication and talent of our local athletes, and I commend them for their remarkable achievement.

Furthermore, our department has been actively supporting football teams in various competitions, including the last season of the Football Kenya Federation (FKF) County Mini League, which took place at Mahoo Primary School playground in Taveta.

In our commitment to nurturing young talent and promoting sports at the grassroots level, the county government extended support to teams participating in the 2023 Kenya pre-primary and primary schools sports activities, as well as the Kenya secondary schools games.

Additionally, I am proud to highlight the Talanta Hela Football Tournament, a national government initiative aimed at nurturing and showcasing talents across the country.

Honourable Members, I am delighted to announce the strides made in the improvement of our sports fields and the

empowerment of local teams. With funding allocated in the 2022/2023 financial year, we have initiated the process of enhancing sports facilities at the ward level. Playgrounds in various areas, including Kirumbi, Mwambiti, Kajire, and the Sagalla International Talent Academy, have received much-needed attention. Moreover, I am pleased to inform you that there is a continued commitment to the construction of the Ngerenyi High Altitude Athletics Training Centre, a vital resource for nurturing sporting talent in our region.

In line with our commitment to facilitating economic opportunities, we partnered with the Department of Finance and Economic Planning to conduct comprehensive AGPO training sessions. These sessions were designed to equip our youth, women, and persons with disabilities with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in business ventures with the government. By addressing critical topics such as IFMIS, AGPO, procurement processes, and access to credit from financial institutions, including the youth fund, hustler fund, and women enterprise fund, we are empowering individuals and groups to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations with confidence and competence.

7. DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC PLANNING

Mr Speaker Sir, I am delighted to take this opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the remarkable achievements of the Department of Finance and Economic Planning. Over the past year, the department has demonstrated unwavering dedication and exceptional performance in several key areas, laying the foundation for robust financial management and sustainable economic growth within our County.

First and foremost, the department has played a pivotal role in coordinating the preparation of all requisite planning and budgeting documents, including the comprehensive County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) for the years 2023-2027, the detailed 2023 County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP), and the meticulously crafted 2023/24 and 2024-25 County Annual Development Plans (CADPs). Additionally, the team has diligently compiled quarterly Budget Implementation Reports (BIRs) and provided insightful analyses through the 2022 and 2023 County Budget Review and Outlook Paper (CBROP). These essential documents serve as strategic roadmaps, guiding our county's development endeavors and financial decision-making processes.

In addition to these efforts, the department has successfully established, inaugurated, and operationalized two pivotal statutory bodies: The County Budget and Economic Forum (CBEF) and The County Executive Audit Committee. It is worth noting that the department has also executed comprehensive capacity-building programs, ensuring that the members of these bodies are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill their mandates effectively.

Furthermore, the department has actively engaged members of the public and various stakeholders in the preparation of planning and budgeting documents. Notably, the department organized a groundbreaking diaspora forum in Mombasa, providing a platform for our esteemed citizens abroad to contribute their invaluable feedback and perspectives, enriching our planning processes with diverse insights and experiences.

In a significant stride toward enhancing financial management, the department established and launched the County Integrated Revenue Management System (CIRMIS), a pivotal milestone that underscores our commitment to efficient and transparent revenue management practices. Additionally, comprehensive capacity-building sessions have been organized for all staff, empowering them to leverage the capabilities of this system effectively.

Recognizing the importance of financial accountability and vendor relations, the department established the pending bills review and verification committee. The committee is tasked with meticulously reviewing all eligible pending bills, with the primary objective of facilitating timely payments, fostering positive relationships with our suppliers and service providers while ensuring financial prudence and accountability.

I am pleased to announce that the department has prioritized the welfare of our dedicated staff by successfully offsetting all salary and statutory deduction arrears. This achievement is a testament to our steadfast commitment to providing a

conducive and supportive working environment for our employees.

Over the past year, our dedicated efforts have yielded significant results in two key areas: the management of pending bills and the mobilization of own-source revenue (OSR).

Mr Speaker Sir, let me now by acknowledging the formidable challenge that pending bills present to our developmental agenda. I am pleased to report that the County Government has proactively addressed this significant impediment through the full implementation of an E-Procurement cycle, enabling us to closely monitor and curtail the accumulation of pending bills. Furthermore, the adoption of a First in First Out (FIFO) policy has enhanced our ability to systematically settle these outstanding obligations in a fair and efficient manner.

As of 30th June 2022, the County Executive reported pending bills totaling Kshs. 1,447,913,870.61, encompassing all accrued payables from FY 2015/16 to FY 2021/22. Demonstrating our commitment to addressing this challenge, the County Executive successfully disbursed Kshs. 308,988,057 in the FY 2022/23, achieving a commendable 74% absorption rate against a budget of Kshs. 416,899,966.

Looking ahead to FY 2023/24, I am pleased to announce an allocation of Kshs. 230 million for pending bills, with Kshs. 75,529,160 already disbursed as of 30th September 2023. These proactive measures underscore our unwavering dedication to tackling pending bills head-on and reaffirm our

commitment to fiscal responsibility and prudent financial management.

In parallel, I am delighted to share the tremendous strides we have made in own-source revenue (OSR) mobilization. Despite the myriad challenges we have encountered, the County Government of Taita Taveta has persistently pursued innovative avenues to bolster our local revenue collections.

In the fiscal year ending 30th June 2023, the County projected total revenues of Kshs. 541,118,780, comprising an impressive own-source revenue of Kshs. 387,373,977, Mwatate Municipality's own-source revenue of Kshs. 51,716,156, and a Facility Improvement Fund of Kshs. 100,000,000. Subsequently, we achieved a remarkable milestone by realizing Kshs. 424,845,006 in actual revenues, representing an outstanding 79% performance against our projections.

Of this realized revenue, Kshs. 263,882,456 was diligently disbursed to the CRF Account, while Kshs. 161,329,405 was allocated to the Facility Improvement Fund (FIF) and Level 4 Hospitals. This substantial increase from the Kshs. 315 million realized in FY 2021/2022 serves as a testament to our unwavering commitment to fortifying our local revenue base and ensuring the financial sustainability of our county.

On our efforts to enhance our own source revenue, I am pleased to announce that the County Integrated Revenue Management System (CIRMIS) stands as a testament to our commitment to revolutionize revenue management. The significant investment made in the establishment and

operationalization of this advanced automated system sends a clear message of our dedication to enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of revenue collection. Under the leadership of the Taita Taveta County Government, the CIRMIS was launched as a deliberate measure to create a robust framework for bolstering our own source revenue generation and management.

Furthermore, the County Treasury's commitment to conducting a comprehensive baseline survey to determine our OSR potential demonstrates a proactive approach to harnessing untapped fiscal opportunities. Leveraging the findings of the survey conducted by the Commission on Revenue Allocation, which revealed an OSR potential exceeding Kshs1 Billion, we are set to capitalize on these insights and identify the optimal avenues for revenue generation.

Additionally, the completion and impending implementation of a new valuation roll represent a pivotal step forward in our quest to ensure equitable and accurate property assessment. Through the enactment and enforcement of this updated valuation framework, we aim to ensure that all properties are appropriately valued and charged at current rates, addressing previously unrated areas and enhancing revenue collection.

In addition, recognizing the immense wealth of mineral resources within our county, we are steadfast in our resolve to propose county legislation and compliance measures to maximize the benefits derived from mineral exploration. With Taita Taveta being a focal point for diverse mineral resources,

it is imperative that our county reaps the full rewards of mineral exploration through the facilitation of proportional cess and royalties.

In line with our unwavering commitment to fostering the professional growth and expertise of our personnel, the County Treasury is steadfast in its resolve to support the capacity building efforts within the Revenue Management Directorate and the Enforcement and Compliance Unit. We are dedicated to providing optimal staffing, enhanced mobility, modern equipment, and the necessary motivation to empower these vital departments. By investing in the professional development and operational resources of our skilled workforce, we are poised to elevate the efficiency and effectiveness of revenue collection and compliance enforcement.

Furthermore, recognizing the imperative nature of accurate data and streamlined insights, the County Treasury has undertaken to establish and maintain an updated database encompassing all revenue streams. Through this initiative, we aim to capture and centralize pertinent information, including the specifics of businesses and properties, their respective types and natures, detailed locations, necessary permits and rates, and other relevant details. This robust database will serve as a foundational pillar in our pursuit of informed decision-making and resource optimization.

In an unprecedented move towards decentralization, the County Treasury has strategically deployed dedicated personnel from our department to collaborate with various departments across the county. This collaborative exchange of expertise is designed to facilitate a seamless integration of

the full annual work cycle, encompassing vital processes such as annual work planning, budgeting, procurement planning, e-procurement, payment processing, and comprehensive reporting. Concomitantly, the issuance of Authority to Incur Expenditure (AIEs) to all County Chief Officers based on disbursements from the exchequer represents a pivotal step in ensuring enhanced operational efficiency, brisk supply chain management, timely payment processing, and a mechanism for robust accountability and value-for-money assessments.

8. DEPARTMENT OF LANDS, PHYSICAL PLANNING, MINING, ENERGY AND URBAN PLANNING

Mr Speaker Sir, the completion of the County valuation role stands as a testament to our commitment to enhancing revenue collection through land rates and rent. This comprehensive valuation role will play a pivotal role in estimating and boosting our revenue collection efforts, ultimately contributing to the overall economic growth of our county.

Furthermore, the procurement of state-of-the-art survey equipment has significantly bolstered our surveying and mapping activities. This strategic investment has greatly enhanced our capacity to accurately map and survey our county, laying the groundwork for effective land management and development initiatives.

In addition, the completion of the County Public utility database is a significant achievement. This comprehensive database will play a critical role in identifying and mapping the assets owned by our county. By doing so, we are better positioned to protect and manage our assets, ensuring their sustained contribution to the welfare and progress of our County.

Our department has also undertaken a transformative journey in re-engineering urban management processes, culminating in the chartering of Voi and Taveta to Municipalities. This milestone reflects our unwavering dedication to improving and streamlining urban management

processes, fostering sustainable urban development and growth in our county.

Moreover, our collaboration with esteemed development partners has yielded significant progress in the initiation of the County Spatial Plan. This pivotal policy document is poised to provide a comprehensive framework for land use in our county, a seminal initiative that embodies our commitment to prudent, sustainable, and equitable land management. Supported by organizations such as FAO, TTWCA, WWF, AWF, and the National Government, the ongoing work on the County Spatial Plan underscores the invaluable partnerships driving our shared vision for responsible land use.

I am thrilled to announce that we have secured funding under the KISIP 2 infrastructural component, marking a significant milestone in our quest for sustainable development. This funding will facilitate the improvement of road networks in Upper Kariokor, Aseko, and Mlekenyi to bitumen standard, as well as the implementation of a high mast security lighting program. These initiatives, with a total cost of 150 million, underscore our commitment to enhancing infrastructure and ensuring the safety and security of our communities.

Furthermore, we are proud to announce the successful planning and surveying of three informal settlements, including Kijiji Cha Chewa, Majengo Mapya, and Bura Ndogo, through the KISIP 2 land tenure regularization activities. This impactful program has also earmarked other settlements in our county for similar benefits, including Kaloleni Phase 1,

Soko ya Zamani, Kariobangi, Aseko, and Sofia Kati. Through these efforts, we are enhancing tenure security within our county, affirming our commitment to empowering our residents and fostering inclusive socioeconomic development.

In addition, the establishment of the County GIS Lab is progressing rapidly, with the identification of space and completion of the renovation phase. I am pleased to report that we have received furniture and ICT equipment for the lab, which are in the final stages of dispatch, thanks to the invaluable support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) under the DLGP. This initiative will undoubtedly bolster our capacity for informed decision-making and planning, marking a significant stride towards efficient and effective urban development.

In the realm of renewable energy, the county has made substantial strides towards sustainable energy access and usage. The supply and installation of a power transformer in Manga village within Ngolia ward, funded by the energy directorate, stands as a testament to our commitment to improving energy infrastructure in our communities. Additionally, our collaboration with the Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation (REREC) has resulted in the training of community groups on the production and installation of improved cooking stoves, reflecting our dedication to promoting clean cooking technologies and environmental sustainability.

Moreover, the imminent completion of our County Energy Plan (CEP) is a milestone that underscores our proactive approach towards energy efficiency and sustainable development. The plan, integrating data from key sectors

such as Health, Agriculture, Education, Water, Livestock, and Mining, will play a pivotal role in meeting future energy demands, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and promoting the uptake of renewable energy. Furthermore, the ongoing energy audit in our major county facilities is a critical step towards addressing the challenge of high electricity bills, through the implementation of energy conservation and efficiency measures.

Notably, through the Kenya Off-grid Solar Access Project (KOSAP), we have earmarked 19 public boreholes across the four sub-counties for solarization. This initiative will significantly enhance water supply to remote off-grid communities, underscoring our commitment to improving access to essential services and promoting sustainable energy solutions.

The Department of Lands, Physical Planning, and Urban Development has made tremendous strides in various areas, including the completion of the County valuation roll, the establishment of a state-of-the-art County GIS Lab, and the initiation of the County Spatial Plan. These milestones demonstrate our unwavering commitment to enhancing land use planning, infrastructure development, and overall urban management within our county.

Furthermore, our department has successfully secured funding under the Kenya Informal Settlements Improvement Project Phase 2 (KISIP 2) to bolster infrastructure improvements, a crucial step towards creating sustainable, well-developed urban areas for our citizens. We have also worked tirelessly with the Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Corporation to promote clean cooking

technologies and develop a comprehensive County Energy Plan, aiming to address energy challenges and improve access to clean and sustainable energy sources.

CONCLUSION

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members, as I bring this State of the County Address to a close, I am filled with a profound sense of gratitude for the opportunity to share our collective journey and aspirations for Taita Taveta County. We have done well, despite massive challenges – including **historical injustices** upon us from pre-independence days. Your attentive presence and active engagement throughout this address underscore the depth of our commitment to fostering a brighter future for our county.

I am heartened by the progress we have made, the resilience we have exhibited in the face of challenges, and the innovative spirit that permeates every sector of our county. The milestones we have achieved stand as a testament to our collective dedication to progress, inclusivity, and sustainable development. However, we are equally mindful of the challenges that persist and the work that lies ahead.

As we depart from this gathering, let us carry with us a renewed sense of purpose and a steadfast commitment to building a Taita Taveta County that leaves no one behind. Let the conversations sparked today continue to inspire meaningful action, collaboration, and innovation in our pursuit of a more vibrant and prosperous community.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all our residents and stakeholders for your enduring commitment to

Taita Taveta County. Let us depart from here today with renewed hope, deepened unity, and a shared determination to realize the immense potential that lies within our county.

Together, let us build a future where every resident of Taita Taveta has the opportunity to thrive, where our communities flourish, and where our county stands as a beacon of progress and unity.

Thank you, and may our collective efforts continue to propel Taita Taveta County to greater heights.

H. E. Andrew Mwadime

Governor, Taita Taveta