



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

THE GOVERNMENT OF THARAKA NITHI COUNTY

A Prosperous, Industrialized and Cohesive County

**STATE OF THE COUNTY ANNUAL
ADDRESS**

2019

By

HON. MUTHOMI NJUKI

H.E THE GOVERNOR

30th July 2019

Theme:

Sustaining Development through Economic Transformation

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

THE STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON. MUTHOMI NJUKI, GOVERNOR- THARAKA NITHI COUNTY, DELIVERED ON 30TH JULY 2019 AT THE COUNTY ASSEMBLY CHAMBERS IN KATHWANA

© Annual State of the County Address 2019

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*The Right Honourable Speaker of the County Assembly,
Honourable Members of the County Assembly,
The Deputy Governor,
Honourable Members of Parliament
County Executive Committee Members,
County Chief Officers,
The County Commissioner and National Government Officials present,
Our Development Partners,
Invited Guests,
The People of Tharaka Nithi,*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members it gives me great pleasure for the opportunity to address this 2nd Assembly and deliver the annual state of the county address as required by Article 183 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Section 30 of the County Government Act, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to sincerely appreciate the unwavering support and good relations accorded by this House to my government. I applaud the County Assembly for expeditiously carrying out both legislative and oversight roles thereby enabling us to execute our programmes within the required timeframes. It is my

humble request that we continue in the same spirit of mutual respect and collaboration.

Further, I laud the residents of Tharaka Nithi County for participating in development planning, putting leadership of the County on constant check and utilizing investments made so far.

Additionally, I would like to recognize members of the private sector who have taken up the challenge and established operation in our headquarters, Kathwana. I wish to especially highlight Dr. Nyamu Kamwara, who recently opened a state-of-the art hospital, the Komarock Modern Healthcare Hospital in Kathwana. This is only the beginning. We want Kathwana to become a model of futuristic development, establishing our headquarters as a destination for world class services for all surrounding Counties.

During my inauguration and in my manifesto, I promised to embark on a journey to transform Tharaka Nithi into a thriving, industrialized County whose people are inspired to achieve tremendous progress. I also swore to use our relatively small geographical spread as an asset, ensuring that development touches all corners of our great County.

Over the last two years, we have made tremendous progress and achieved extraordinary success, despite facing numerous challenges. We continue to share in the highs of victory and the pains of hardship. Through it all we continue to see the beauty of our great county.

Mr. Speaker, our shared clarion call is to transform the lives of our people by unlocking our county's great potential. We are

progressively achieving this by initiating socio-economic developments to improve the living standards of our people in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Vision 2030. For proper planning and decision making we require vital statistics for the different development indicators. In this regard, the Kenya Population and Housing Census of August 2019 is very important. I therefore call upon all the residents of Tharaka Nithi to avail themselves, cooperate and participate by giving accurate information for this very crucial national exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to highlight the progress made by my government in priority areas. We have adopted a paradigm shift in governance to deliver citizen oriented services.

The review of past experiences has progressively informed our planning and implementation of development programmes. In September 2017, I initiated a process to review the first County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) for the period 2013-2017. The critical lessons learnt from the review were incorporated in formulation of the second CIDP for the period 2018-2022 which was approved by this Honourable House. In developing the second CIDP, my administration guided by the principles of public participation involved members of the public in contributing ideas and views that informed the final document now published on our website. This document serves as our development blueprint.

Mr. Speaker, we have made tremendous progress. The Gross County Product (GCP) Report of 2019 reveals that Tharaka Nithi is the fastest growing county in the country. Our county recorded the highest per

capita GCP growth of 7.2 percent as compared to the average 2.8 percent per capita GCP growth for all counties. Most importantly, we were among the best counties which recorded over 3.5 percent growth in economic activities. Additionally, in the recently published quality healthcare survey by AMREF-Health Africa, our county was recognized as having the second best managed healthcare after Makueni County. It was also awarded as the county with the second best improved access to primary healthcare services.

Mr. Speaker, since the onset of devolution there has been an increased need of accountability and prudence in handling public resources by the citizenry. In the FY 2017-18 the Auditor General's opinion on our financial statements indicated a significant improvement in our financial management compared to previous years. Thus, the County Government will benefit from donor projects like Kenya Devolution Support Programme and Kenya Urban Support Programme, both financed by World Bank, that only consider funding counties with a qualified or unqualified opinion. Tharaka Nithi County has never benefited from such funding since the inception of these programmes due the previous audit reports. It is also important to note that the Auditor's opinion is one of the parameters used by Commission of Revenue Allocation (CRA) in determining sharing of revenue nationally, and both executive and county assembly reports are critical, and both must be qualified and above for us to benefit. Therefore, the County Assembly must ensure there is positive improvement in this field if we have to benefit from the bonus factor of fiscal effort.

Mr. Speaker, as of August 2017 the County Government had employees transitioned from the defunct local authorities, others seconded from devolved units as well as those directly engaged by the County Public Service Board. These three sets of employees brought on board different organizational cultures and experiences at the workplace. My administration has significantly delivered in ensuring successful integration of all employees in the county public service, giving equal opportunities and ensuring harmony in service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, policies and laws make an integral pillar of any government since legal framework facilitate formulation and implementation of County Government functions. To date the county executive has managed to draft bills and policies which have been approved by the County Executive Committee and some of these have been forwarded to the County Assembly.

I hail this Honorable House for having scrutinized the legislative proposals without delay and passed them into county legislations. Some of the key legislations enacted include the Finance Act of 2018, Bursary (Amendment) Act of 2018, Climate Change Fund Bill of 2018, Emergency (Amendment) Act of 2018 among others. Mr. Speaker and Honourable members, I humbly request you to consider fast-tracking the various bills and policy documents already tabled including Tea Bill 2019 and Finance Bill 2019.

Public participation is a key promise enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya Article 118 and imbued in the national values and principles of governance provided in Article 10. My administration is committed

to strengthen citizen engagement in governance and development. In view of this, the County government has an elaborate plan to strengthen this process through the proposed public participation and civic education policy that will operationalize the already existing Public Participation Act of 2014. The policy will strengthen and affirm the need to empower *Ciambai* on community action planning at all levels through creation of ward level development committees, sub-county development committees and project management committees.

Mr. Speaker, my government has established disaster management services for proper management of hazardous events and improve response to unanticipated emergencies in Tharaka Nithi. The County Government has acquired through donation three state-of-the-art fire engines since 2017. This was after successful negotiations and signing of a MOU with our development partners in the UK where the County Government was to cater for shipment, clearance and continuous maintenance costs. The recruited staff have received continuous training in partnership with the people of Bedfordshire, United Kingdom and obtained uniforms and protective gear for their safety. Further, many lives have been saved by up-to-date community outreach through social media platforms, formed to sensitize the public on the active hotline numbers to reach the department of fire services. In order to invigorate triumphs made so far, we are establishing a 24/7/365 CUSTOMER CARE CENTER to support response to disasters like fire and water scarcity.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest looming threat is hunger and starvation for our people due to threats of crop failure for the second season

running. My Government proposes a Kshs 20 million kitty to be included in first supplementary budget to mitigate the anticipated calamity. Further, to avoid this in future, since we are always faced with seasons of plenty followed by long periods of scarcity, my Government proposes to operationalize and embrace warehousing ticketing in all our grain stores namely Mitheru, Mukuuni and Mukothima. This will enable us buy farmers produce at ideal market price during harvest and release back the produce during scarcity at a reasonable price that beats market price.

Mr. Speaker, in FY 2017/18 the county total revenue basket was Kshs 4.46 billion which rose to Kshs 5.72 billion in the FY 2018/19 representing a 28.3 percent increase.

In FY 2017/18, the total amount of County Own Revenue collected was Kshs 143.0 million, an increase of 81 percent from Kshs 79.0 million realized in FY 2016/17. In the FY 2018/19, the total County Own Revenue collected rose to Kshs 242.9 million, an increase of 67.7 percent from FY 2017/18.

This upward trend in County Own Source Revenue collection is attributed to well-coordinated enforcement, effective supervision, staff reorganization and automation of revenue collection hence minimizing pilferage.

My government has instituted and operationalized laws to streamline revenue collection such as Finance Act 2018, Enforcement Act 2016 and Liquor Regulations of 2018.

Going forward, mechanisms such as improvement of oversight along CESS collection points are bound to yield results and prevent

incidences of non-compliance from those remitting the charges in every part of the county. We have installed CCTV cameras for surveillance in key CESS collection points to improve enforcement and coordination efforts in revenue administration.

Mr. Speaker, pending bills affect current and future capital investment and service delivery in the county. My government inherited pending bills amounting to Kshs 1.1 billion. In order to determine whether the claims were payable I appointed a task force to closely scrutinize and analyze the alleged pending bills and make appropriate recommendations. In summary, the committee recommended payments of Kshs 728 million. We have endeavored to settle these pending bills out of which a tentative balance of Kshs 100 million remains unsettled and we will continue making budgetary provisions to off-set the same.

Mr. Speaker, corruption in Kenya is systematic and goes beyond individuals to the structural and institutional level. The former Vice President of United States Joe Biden defined it as a cancer that eats away a citizen's faith in democracy, diminishes the instinct for innovation and creativity, crowding out important national investments. Mr. Speaker, it wastes the talent of entire generations. It scares away investments and jobs. My government will progressively, without fail, ensure transparency in all its operations and ensure equity in sharing of resources, jobs and tenders. I strongly condemn this vice and declare Tharaka Nithi a corruption free county. I urge the people of Tharaka Nithi as such to report any officials of my administration involved in corrupt deals and they will be brought to book.

Mr. Speaker, access to quality and affordable health care services is critical to the social well-being of our society and one of the fundamental responsibilities of any government. Tharaka Nithi County Government is committed to offer world class health care services to its residents. To achieve this, my administration is focusing on standardizing and equipping the existing facilities as well as strengthening the county referral system.

In the last two years, we have initiated numerous projects including up scaling Chuka Level IV Hospital to a fully-fledged County Referral Hospital with the aim of getting Level V accreditation. We are also upgrading Magutuni, Marimanti, and Kibung'a Level IV hospitals, 5 health centers and 18 dispensaries in order to offer the highest attainable standard of healthcare services. The County Government has partnered with Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) Board towards construction of a tuition block within Chuka Referral Hospital. This will increase the number of health care practitioners training within the county which goes a long way in easing the burden of health care provision.

The key flagship projects in the health department include construction of an outpatient block at Chuka and Marimanti hospitals, installation of Computerized Tomography (CT) scan at Chuka hospital, modern laboratory and theatre at Magutuni hospital, maternity ward at Chuka hospital, radiology and dental unit at Kibung'a hospital and pathology unit at Marimanti hospital.

As a way of boosting revenue and offer world class Medicare to our people, we are completing an amenity ward at Chuka Hospital that

will offer services that can compete effectively with top class private hospitals in this country at a quarter price of the same. I urge our people to try us before going to the Agakhan, Karen and Nairobi Hospitals of this world.

We are also extending specialized services to boost the value of services offered in level II and level III health facilities to cater for special needs, for instance the dental unit at Nkangani in Ganga ward which was a proposal by the Honourable Member of County Assembly for the ward. I offer it as a challenge and ask you Honourable Members of this second County Assembly to be proactive and go further in spearheading development initiatives in your respective wards.

Mr. Speaker, in order to streamline and improve referral services in the County, two state of the art ambulances have been procured and we are in the process of acquiring a third one. This will ensure timely referral of patients. To solidify our commitments to improve healthcare, my administration has consistently allocated sufficient funds for the procurement of medical supplies and commodities. In this regard, we have procured two vehicles to facilitate their efficient and effective distribution to all health facilities.

Mr. Speaker, the health services department has the highest number of employees accounting for approximately 50 percent of the entire county workforce. However, in pursuit of excellence in the sector we have absorbed into permanent and pensionable terms 82 nursing staff who had been hired on contract term which expired in April 2019. In addition, we have recruited two specialists, an

ophthalmologist (eye specialist) and an orthopedic surgeon to the County Referral Hospital. A number of medical staff have also been released to pursue further studies both locally and abroad. This will enable us to increase their capacities and also integrate new developments in provision of healthcare to the residents.

Mr. Speaker, we are cognizant of the vital role played by Community Health Strategy (CHS) to improve primary health services. The CHS structure provides for creation of 100 Community Health Units (CHU) as the basis of primary health provision. These units will be manned by 1000 Community Health Volunteers that I inaugurated on 7th February 2019. This has enabled the county to achieve, *inter alia*: mapping of Community health units; sensitization of County and Sub County Health management teams; training of Community Health Extension workers; recruitment and training of Community Health Committee and Volunteers; household registration and procurement of community Health Volunteers working tools.

Mr. Speaker, food and nutrition security remains a key pillar of the Kenya Vision 2030 and Big Four Agenda. As you are aware, agriculture forms the backbone of the Kenyan economy contributing to over 70 percent of the workforce and 25 percent of the annual GDP. In our county, agriculture forms a proportion of about 60 percent of the county economic activities.

Mr. Speaker, new and innovative initiatives that will lead to 100% food security include increasing acreage under food production, increased irrigated agriculture, deployment of better post-harvest

technologies, support to small holder farming, redesigning the subsidy model and elimination of multiple levies to farmers.

In the last two years, my government has continued to provide reforms in agriculture sector focused on improving both crop and animal productivity. Key among them are extension services, capital infrastructure projects and capacity building. Notably, the county has facilitated the provision of certified farm inputs and materials under the county subsidized arrangements. The inputs provided include seeds, fertilizer and chemicals especially during the fall army worm invasion. I thank the national government through the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) for complementing our efforts by availing 140,600 bags of planting and 96,550 bags of top dressing subsidized fertilizers this year. As County Government, we have constructed a cereal storage facility at Mukothima to address the post-harvest loses among our farmers.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the agriculture sector is currently facing a myriad of challenges key among them climate change effects. This has brought about unpredictable weather patterns, increased animal and plant pests and disease leading to delayed planting, crop failure and diminishing returns and a severe threat to food security in the county. It's no doubt that we must adopt the necessary measures to combat the challenges and avert the imminent disaster and cushion our people. One of the measures that we are implementing to address these challenges is irrigation expansion. This will reduce over-dependence on rain fed agriculture. We have also prioritized implementation of the policies, programmes and projects under ending drought emergencies initiative.

Investments in irrigation, water abstraction through construction of dams will mitigate effects of climate change and the constraints of rain fed agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, in order to empower farmers through training programmes, my administration has constructed an Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) at Itugururu in Igambang'ombe. I now instruct the County Executive Committee Member in charge to fast-track its operationalization.

We are also promoting enterprise diversification to cushion farmers from loses resulting from specialization. Model farms have been established to disseminate new technologies and best practices of agriculture. This involves promotion of integrated farming such as horticulture farming, bee keeping and promotion of drought resistant crops.

Tea and Coffee are the major cash crops in our county. However, coffee production has been adversely affected by the coffee rust epidemic. To address this, we have carried out interventions towards the management of the disease that affected about 3,000 acres of coffee in the county. The infestation level which was at 30 percent was brought down to below 13 percent. In view of this, there's need for all stakeholders in coffee value chain to collaborate in finding a lasting solution to the problem because the disease continues to pose a threat to this income generating crop for our people.

In order to reap more benefits from coffee, we need to support entrepreneurship within the sub-sector. My Government through Tharaka Nithi Coffee Mill at Mitheru has installed a coffee mill that

will have our coffee roasted and milled for packaging thus attracting better prices for our farmers. We shall soon have our coffee brand available in our local supermarkets and other hyper stores elsewhere. Kindly let us buy our products to build our farmers. In addition, the County Government is going to support coffee societies in rehabilitating coffee factories to ensure improved drying quality and Kshs 10 million has been set aside this financial year 2019/2020 for this programme.

Mr. Speaker, tea farmers will not be left behind. My government working in partnership with Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA), through Weru Tea Factory, is in a programme of rehabilitating all tea buying centres to improve quality of tea by minimizing losses through contamination and handling at buying centres.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know livestock rearing is a very important sub-sector in our county as it is a key economic activity for most households in the lower ecological zones of our county. Most of the farmers from Tharaka South, Tharaka North and Igambang'ombe rely much on livestock rearing. The sector equally faces several challenges, key among them being livestock diseases and low prices for the animals. Some of notable livestock disease in the county include: anthrax, ringworms, foot and mouth diseases, rinderpest and tick fever among others. In the recent past, the county has experienced disease outbreaks which have called for timely response in order to prevent further loses. In view of this, we are building a veterinary laboratory in Marimanti which will provide diagnostic

medical testing for infectious, toxins and other causes of disease in animal diagnostic samples.

We also recognize the significant role that dairy farming plays in meeting the economic goals in our development agenda. My administration has embraced new innovations and technologies such as dairy improvement through artificial insemination (A.I), supporting of small scale dairy processing plants in value additions and setting up of milk cooling plants in partnership with National Government at Nturiri, Mugumango, Kibugua, Karamani among others. The County Government in collaboration with Kenya Genetic Resources Centre is going to open a sub-centre at Chuka in order to increase accessibility and availability of quality semen, nitrogen and other AI related services at affordable prices. This is in addition to 17 extension officers being employed with each ward getting at least one AI professional. The AI programme will lower the prices of ordinary semen from Kshs 1,200 to Kshs 200 while the sexed semen will now cost Kshs 4,000 from Kshs 7,000.

In addition, the County Government has also partnered with Muthiru Dairy in supply of subsidized animal feeds which shall be accessed through the 26 milk cooling plants. The price of dairy meal will be lowered from current Kshs 2,400 to Kshs 1,850 for a 70 kg bag. This will not only increase the average yield per cow but also set us rolling for the next step of milk processing. Currently, the County Government has advised the milk aggregators to embrace micro-processing at individual cooling plants as County Government embarks on boosting feasibility studies that will culminate in establishment of a milk processing plant. Therefore, this project is

aimed at addressing the current milk marketing challenges as well as increasing the value addition of milk and other dairy products.

Mr. Speaker, provision of clean and safe water to our people is a constitutional right and a key priority of my administration. Water supply in this county has been a monumental challenge and my government has initiated various sustainable programmes that will solve the problem. We are working on protecting our water towers through environmental protection efforts which include tree planting, protection of water catchment, riparian areas and conservation of forests.

Mr. Speaker, we have supported various irrigation and domestic water projects in addition to other projects funded by our development partners. Such key projects include Chiakamakama water project which is aimed at addressing the perennial water shortages at Chiakariga market, Mwonge Water Range Project in Magumoni, Kathwana water treatment plant in Igambang'ombe, Murugi-Mugumango in Ganga, Kibung'a-Gakimiki and Marimanti-Maragwa water projects where residents already are enjoying the benefits of piped water in addition to rehabilitation of existing rock water catchments and construction of several earth dams among others. My administration has rehabilitated and installed solar pumping systems in more than 15 boreholes and established water kiosks within the proximity of supply to save residents the long journeys to the water points. We have acquired a drilling rig with state of the art technology to accurately measure water availability in quantity, quality and depth before starting the drilling process. The cost of drilling will come down from about Kshs 2.5 million to only

about Kshs 300,000. Consequently, we plan on drilling 200 boreholes in these 5 years. In addition, we have also acquired a water bowser to be used in water tracking especially during the times we are experiencing drought.

Mr. Speaker, as part of efforts to ensure food security, the county will continue to increase the land under irrigation and reduce over reliance on rain fed agriculture. Recently, we have experienced massive crop failure due to the erratic weather patterns and this calls for urgent remedial measures as climate change becomes more pronounced. Given these realities, we have provided in FY 2019/20 budget Kshs 52.25 million to small holder irrigation programs. Going forward, we hope that the national government will actualize the plans to construct the High Grand Falls dam and the Mount Kenya High capacity dam which will provide sufficient water for irrigation.

Mr. Speaker, improvement of the road network in the county is a true testimony that Devolution is working. My administration prioritizes the improvement of infrastructure each year. We are committed to providing modern roads, bus parks, boda boda sheds, bridges and footbridges to the people of Tharaka Nithi. Heavy investment in the upgrading of roads to bitumen standards have been made since August 2017 to date leading to the improvement of roads throughout the county, including ongoing work at Kathwana Municipality. My administration has initiated tarmacking, gravelling, muramming, grading and maintenance of various roads.

It is therefore important to note that the County Government is tarmacking 44 kilometers of roads which include:

- a) Chogoria town roads,

- b) Tunyai-Nthaara road,
- c) Mitheru-Kaanwa road,
- d) Kambandi-Chera-Ruguti road,
- e) Kibugua town roads with Phase I complete, and
- f) Kathwana Town Roads with Phase I already complete.

In addition, the government has successfully murrammed and graveled over 200 kilometers, opened-up and rehabilitated ward roads. This has been facilitated by acquisition of heavy road machinery which include excavator, graders, tippers, low-loader, roller and dozer.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, we have experienced several cases of school going children failing to attend school and paralyzed movement across the rivers especially during the rainy seasons due to lack of connecting bridges and drifts. In this regard, we have constructed several bridges including Gakuuru in Nkondi Ward, Karocho-Gakurungu in Marimanti Ward, Gantamathina in Chogoria Ward, Riankui in Igambang'ombe, Kiroo footbridge in Mwimbi Ward, Ikumbo-Magutuni bridge, Naka bridge in Igambang'ombe ward, Naka footbridge in Mugwe ward, Ithiru bridge across River Nithi among other bridges and drifts which are now complete. This financial year 2019/20 we have allocated funds to construct a total of 10 bridges that will contribute significantly in shortening the distance covered by *Ciambai* in accessing critical services.

Mr. Speaker, the invaluable support by the Fuel Levy Fund has enabled us to maintain major trunk roads and my administration looks forward to the continuation of this fruitful relationship. During

FY 2018-19, over 120 km of roads have been maintained as a result of the Road Maintenance Fuel Levy Fund.

Mr. Speaker, my administration aspires to create an enabling business environment for the traders. To achieve this, we have constructed modern market stalls at Chogoria and Chuka towns. We have also constructed Chuka open air market, Kathangacini, Kaare, and Tunyai modern markets. Further, we are in the process of finalizing construction of more modern markets at Kaanwa, Nkondi, Magutuni and Itugururu.

In pursuit of enhancing economic activities and improve security for the small and medium scale traders, we have installed floodlights in various market centres such as Cheera, Magundu, Nturiri, Muthenge, Kathangacini, Ruungu, Kibung'a among others.

In order to ease the movement of people and goods which will spur intra county trade, my administration has progressively provided for the improvement of access roads in urban areas and markets.

Mr. Speaker, solid waste management is a problem not only in Kenya but also across the globe. This has been exuberated by increasing e-waste and use of non-biodegradable materials. In combating this problem my administration has made tremendous efforts to employ modern technologies like incineration which has considerably helped the county to effectively manage its solid waste. Some of the interventions in solid waste collection and aggregation include acquisition of a skip loader, skips and litter bins.

Mr. Speaker, Kathwana Municipality requires improvement of basic infrastructure such as sewerage, affordable and decent houses, urban roads and portable water in order to achieve the vibrancy that

should come with a county headquarter. Consequently, we initiated an ambitious programme covering the tarmacking of Kathwana roads under the Kenya Urban Support Programme (KUSP). My administration embarked on developing the Kathwana Urban Development Plan and establishing the Municipal Board which were both approved by this Honourable House making Kathwana Municipality one of the very few entities to achieve this fete.

Mr. Speaker, the county spatial plans provide a clear vision that guides long term development of the county. The plans provide an important framework for efficient, productive and sustainable use of land as advocated for in both the Kenyan Constitution and National Land Policy. The County Government in collaboration with the University of Nairobi is in the process of preparing a county spatial plan.

Mr. Speaker, consumer protection is a key component in ensuring flawless trade practices. My administration has embarked on providing a level playing ground for all traders. In the period under review our weights and measures department has made deliberate efforts to verify and calibrate all measuring equipment in the county. Notably, the liquor industry was chaotic and dysfunctional owing to the numerous legal battles and lack of good will by the stakeholders. My administration has succeeded in restoring sanity by making the Tharaka Nithi Alcoholic Drinks Control Act of 2015 operational and instituting a firm grip on the liquor industry as well as widening the tax base.

Mr. Speaker, innovation is the new promise and a frontier for development. It plays a critical role in creating opportunities and is

central in the survival, growth and success of business enterprises. In cognizance of this reality, my administration held the inaugural Tharaka Nithi innovation fair in February 2019 which attracted 120 applicants with 40 successful innovators. The Tharaka Nithi innovation fair will be an annual event to support industrialization and emerging talent in the county.

Mr. Speaker, the county government is mandated by the Constitution to provide pre-primary education and vocational training. In this regard, my administration has embarked on constructing five Early Childhood Development Education(ECDE)classes in every ward annually. To address the staffing needs, my government so far has engaged 449 ECDE care givers.

In order to embrace the new national curriculum, the 449 ECDE care givers have been trained on the competence based curriculum. Additionally, we have printed branded *skillgrow series* book for ECDE syllabus (competence based curriculum), approved by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development(KICD) from Kenya Literature Bureau(KLB).

Mr. Speaker, there is no better way to empower our youth than through education and technical training. As a county we endeavor to strengthen the market oriented courses taken in our polytechnics to make them more responsive and functional to enable the graduates of the polytechnics to start business and positively contribute to the labour market with more innovative and creative ways. Over the last two years the County Government has undertaken development programmes to revamp our polytechnics by

rehabilitating and equipping them. Consequently, there has been an upward trend in the number of trainees enrolment from 600 in 2017 to 900 in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, my administration is committed to develop talents and boost sporting activities in the county thus harnessing the untapped talent, creating a cohesive society and ultimately promoting national unity. In my bid to achieve this, I have initiated construction of Marimanti (Nyangumi), Kathwana and Kairuni stadia where people can gather for sports and other leisure activities.

Mr. Speaker, my government has ensured that it covers all the issues affecting people gifted differently. My administration procured and distributed wheelchairs and other assistive devices that have significantly improved the lives of those who previously could not afford them. Additionally, when constructing new facilities, we will ensure that all buildings are accessible to all including those gifted differently.

Mr. Speaker we are proud of our cultural heritage. It is in this mettle we promote our common shared values and discern from those that pull us back. In this regard, the bill dealing with branding of our county will be fast-tracked so that we change our slogan 'Stronghold' to 'a haven of value addition'. We need to have a brand including a flag that resonates with who we are.

Mr. Speaker, for sustainable economic growth and development it is important to provide efficient, affordable, reliable infrastructure and public services. Energy and ICT being an enabler, all projects undertaken by the department are to ensure that service delivery is

efficient, effective, timely and consistent to spur socio-economic growth.

There has been need to ensure accountability and increased productivity of employees working for the County Government. Consequently, my administration has setup biometric system in over 120 stations across the county and all county employees have been registered and are required to clock in and out of their work stations. In this regard, a reduction of absenteeism, ghost workers and streamlined service delivery in the public service has been realized.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure smooth running of the hospitals and increased efficiency and productivity the County Government has deployed a Hospital Management and Information System in the three main hospitals: **Chuka, Magutuni** and **Marimanti**. This has enabled the hospitals to deliver expedient and efficient care, standardize their operations, minimize waiting times for the patients and improve patient data management. We have also ensured better inventory management through improved monitoring to manage wastage, shortage and pilferage.

Mr. Speaker, to provide the county with means to keep track of its fleet in a cost effective and efficient manner, the county vehicles have been fitted with fleet tracking and management system. As a result, we have managed to minimize operational costs by keeping track of fuel usage and motor vehicle routine maintenance.

Mr. Speaker, the National Government has prioritized a 100% electricity connectivity to all households through the Last Mile programme. In this regard, my government in partnership with the

Rural Electrification Authority (REA) has recently facilitated the electrification of **Ruungu** and **Kathangacini** Markets among other public facilities such as markets, health centers and schools under consideration. These facilities serve as community connection points bringing previously off-grid homes and businesses within the close reach of national grid.

Mr. Speaker, the role of development partnerships in accelerating development in our county cannot be gainsaid. Through the support of USAID – AHADI and Kenya Devolution Support programme we are able to strengthen our delivery capacity of staff in finance, human resource, economic planning, monitoring and evaluation, environment and civic education. Consequently, we have been able to improve compliance and develop key policies that have significant impact on our service delivery. We have also partnered with World bank in tarmacking of Kathwana through Kenya Urban Support Programme. The Kenya Red Cross Society partnership has played an important role in provision of water at Kajuki, Kamanyaki, Kaanwa and Gatunga while AMREF supports provision of primary health care services by training of Community Healthcare Volunteers. My administration has also worked closely with National Government Agencies in ensuring development is well coordinated and seamless.

Mr. Speaker, I have highlighted broadly our achievements and commitments towards our development agenda and our promise to the people of Tharaka Nithi. Let us remain united and find common and lasting solutions for the challenges that face our people as we lay a strong foundation for our future generations.

To this end, Mr. Speaker and honourable members, I can report to you that the State of our County is STRONG and RELIABLE. We will endeavor to make this State even stronger in the coming weeks and months for the sake of our people.

God bless you, God bless Tharaka Nithi County, God bless Kenya.

“If it doesn’t add any value to Ciambai, it’s better left undone”