

Nakuru County Turns Youth Potential into Skills, Creativity and Livelihoods through the Menengai Empowerment Centre

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity does not always follow. For some young people in Nakuru County, limited access to practical training, equipment, mentorship and markets has made it difficult to turn their abilities into sustainable livelihoods. The challenge is particularly pronounced among young mothers, persons living with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. At the same time, emerging fields such as digital work, music, fashion and entrepreneurship are creating new opportunities for those equipped to seize them.



Figure 1: Trainee working on a reflector at the Textile Hub

Recognizing this gap, the County Government of Nakuru, through the Directorate of Youth Affairs, established and supports the Menengai Empowerment Centre as a practical space where young people can develop their abilities and explore economic opportunities. The facility brings together a Digital Hub, Textile Hub and Music Studio, enabling beneficiaries to access training, equipment and industry exposure under one roof. This arrangement also gives participants room to pursue

different interests, whether in technology, creative production, fashion or enterprise, without having to look for separate facilities for each area.

The Centre's programmes are built around practical application rather than classroom instruction alone. Beneficiaries receive training in digital skills, music production and recording, textile and fashion design, and entrepreneurship, while accessing computers, sewing machines, music production equipment and podcast facilities. At the Textile Hub, trainees go beyond learning techniques by participating in garment production and client-oriented assignments. This allows them to work on actual tasks, understand client expectations and gradually build confidence in their craft.



Figure 2: Practical session training at the Digital Hub

The same principle extends to the Centre's creative spaces. The Music Studio provides emerging artists with equipment and a place to record and develop their work, while the Digital Hub gives participants access to computers and facilities for building digital competencies. By making these resources available within a shared facility, the County is helping remove some of the practical barriers that can prevent young people from progressing from interest to active participation.

Learning at the Centre is also supported by mentorship and exposure to the wider industry. Participants receive guidance on marketing, intellectual property, licensing and business development, areas that are essential for anyone seeking to turn a creative or technical ability into an income-generating activity. The County further facilitates connections with clients, markets, partners and potential employers, helping beneficiaries understand where their capabilities can fit beyond the Centre. Partnerships with organizations such as Daraja 360 and the Permanent Presidential Music Commission (PPMC) have strengthened this approach by bringing additional technical expertise, mentorship and industry knowledge.



Figure 3: Workshop on Music Copyright, IP, Royalties and Licensing

The results are beginning to demonstrate the value of this model. More than 300 young people have been trained in digital skills, while over 250 have gone through the Textile Hub. The Music Studio has supported artists to record more than 500 songs, giving emerging creatives access to production facilities that may otherwise be difficult to afford. These figures reflect not only uptake of the programmes, but also the

demand for accessible spaces where young people can develop their abilities and gain practical exposure.

Beyond the numbers, the Centre is helping bridge the gap between acquiring knowledge and putting it into practice. Training can be difficult to translate into a livelihood when learners lack the equipment, space, mentorship and market connections needed to apply what they have learnt. At Menengai, these elements come together, giving beneficiaries an opportunity to practise their craft, produce work, receive guidance and gain exposure to real-world demands.

This approach offers an important lesson for youth development: training is most effective when it is supported by the right environment and practical linkages. Access to tools, mentorship and industry networks enables learners to build confidence and better understand how their abilities can be applied beyond the training setting. Partnerships further strengthen this model by bringing additional expertise, industry knowledge and connections to the Centre.



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For the County Government of Nakuru, the Menengai Empowerment Centre is therefore more than a physical training facility. It is part of a deliberate effort to create practical pathways for young people to participate in the economy, regardless of whether their interests lie in digital work, creative industries, fashion or enterprise. By bringing these different avenues together in one setting, the County is creating room for learning, practice, collaboration and enterprise to grow side by side.

Further reading;

1. <https://www.nakuru.go.ke/governor-kihika-signs-an-mou-for-youth-training-as-she-commissions-a-youth-empowerment-center/>
2. <https://susankihika.com/empowering-nakuru-youths-through-innovation-menengai-social-hall-podcast/>

When young people have talent but lack the skills, tools and spaces to turn it into opportunity, how is your County creating practical pathways for them to learn, create and earn? We would love to hear your story.

Visit <https://maarifa.cog.go.ke/> to learn more about the successful initiatives on service delivery our Counties are undertaking.

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