From Data to Strategic Intelligence: Makueni County's Institutionalization of the County Statistical Abstract for Evidence-Based Planning

County:	**Makueni**		
Sector/s:	**Planning and Monitoring, Finance**	**Sub-sector/Theme:**	**County Statistical Abstract**
Keywords: (for search in the online platform)	**County Statistical Abstract, Planning, Makueni County, Maarifa Centre, Success Stories**		
Target Audience:	**County Governments, policy makers, development partners, Citizens, NGOs**		
Authors (contacts and their institutions can be included as well)	• **Grace Kimani – Knowledge Management Officer, Council of Governors** • **Brian Akatsa – Monitoring and Evaluation Assistant, Council of Governors**		
Resource Persons (include their designations)	• **H.E Mutula Kilonzo Jnr. CBS** - ***Governor, Makueni County*** • **Damaris Mumo Kavoi** - ***County Executive Committee Member – Finance, Planning, Budget and Revenue*** • **Cyrus Mutisya Ngonyo** - ***Chief Officer – Planning, Budget, Revenue and M&E*** • **Stanlus Makau Matheka** - ***Director, Socio-Economic Planning and Statistics*** • **Mathias Mbweli** - ***Senior Statistician*** • **Cynthia Mulee** - ***County Statistics Officer – KNBS*** • **Winfred Wausi Kithome** - ***Knowledge Management Champion*** • **CPA (K) Agnes Mwongeli – Council of Governors**		

Introduction:

How can a County Government make informed development decisions without reliable data on the people it serves, the resources available and the gaps that require attention?



Figure 1: H.E Mutula Kilonzo Jnr. CBS, County officials and Council of Governors Officers during the CSA documentation exercise

For Makueni County, this question has shaped a deliberate effort to strengthen the production and use of official statistics. Rather than treating data collection as a one-off exercise, the County has increasingly embedded it within planning, budgeting and performance management.

County Governments require accurate and timely statistics to understand development needs, distribute resources and monitor progress. However, producing such data consistently can be difficult. Data is often spread across departments and institutions and differences in reporting formats, staff transitions and limited technical capacity often affect its availability and reliability.

Makueni has responded by prioritizing the production of the County Statistical Abstract (CSA), a publication that brings together key demographic, social, economic and sectoral statistics to provide an overview of the County's development status and progress over time. The CSA consolidates statistical information from various departments and institutions into a single reference document, enabling policymakers, planners, development partners and the public to understand development trends, identify service delivery gaps and make informed decisions on planning and resource allocation. Through collaboration with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), dedicated financing and structured departmental coordination, the County has established a more predictable process for collecting, validating and publishing statistical information.

The first Makueni County Statistical Abstract was prepared and published by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) in 2015. Building on this foundation, the County Government of Makueni, in collaboration with KNBS, has prepared the 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 editions of the CSA and is currently preparing the 2026 edition. This demonstrates sustained commitment to institutionalizing statistical production and progressively strengthening the availability of reliable County statistics.

Implementation of the practice:

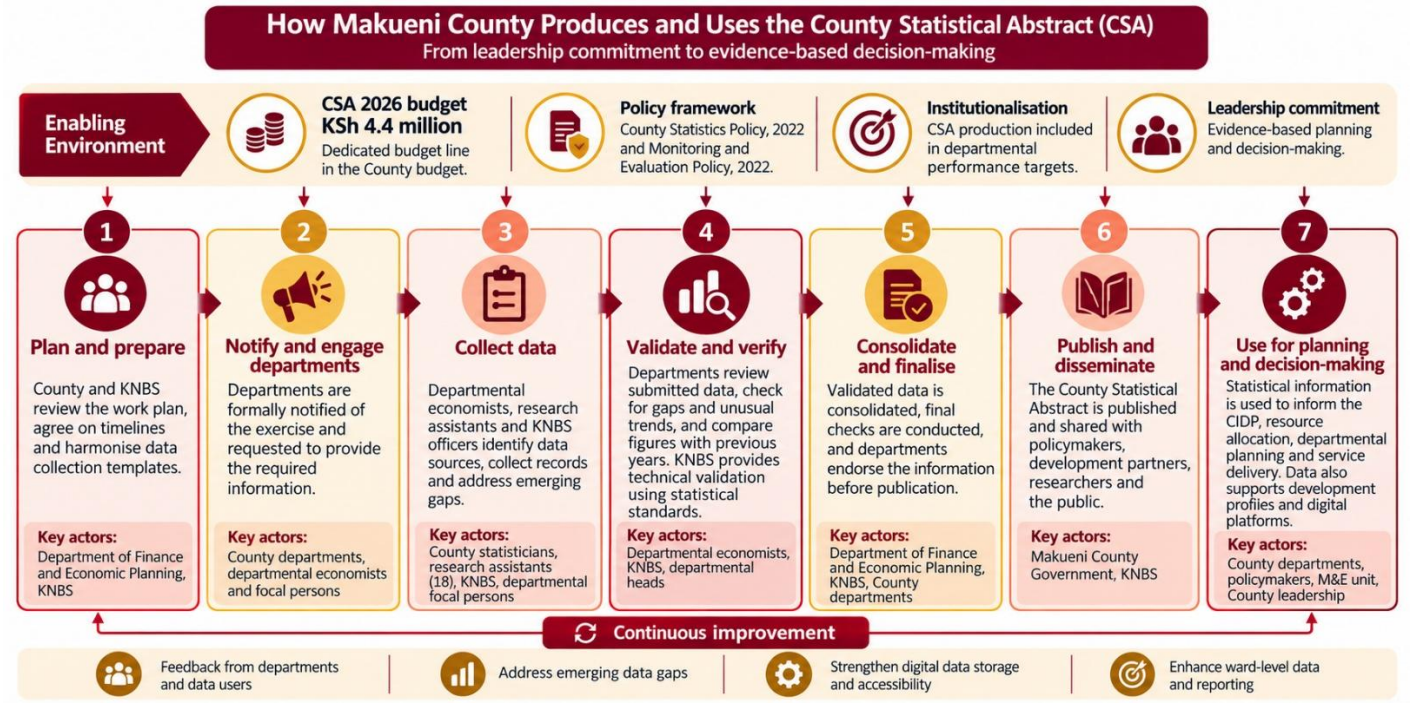


Figure 2: Institutional Process for CSA Production and Utilization in Makueni County

The above CSA production process illustrates the progression from data to strategic intelligence. Departmental data is collected and validated before being transformed into statistical information through consolidation and analysis. The interpretation of this information generates knowledge of development trends and service delivery gaps, which can subsequently inform strategic decisions on planning, budgeting, policy formulation and resource allocation.

To further illustrate the operational requirements of CSA production, Figure 3 presents a twelve-week implementation calendar organized into six phases. The calendar outlines the sequence of activities, estimated timelines, responsible actors and expected outputs, providing a practical reference for County Governments seeking to institutionalize and sustain CSA production.

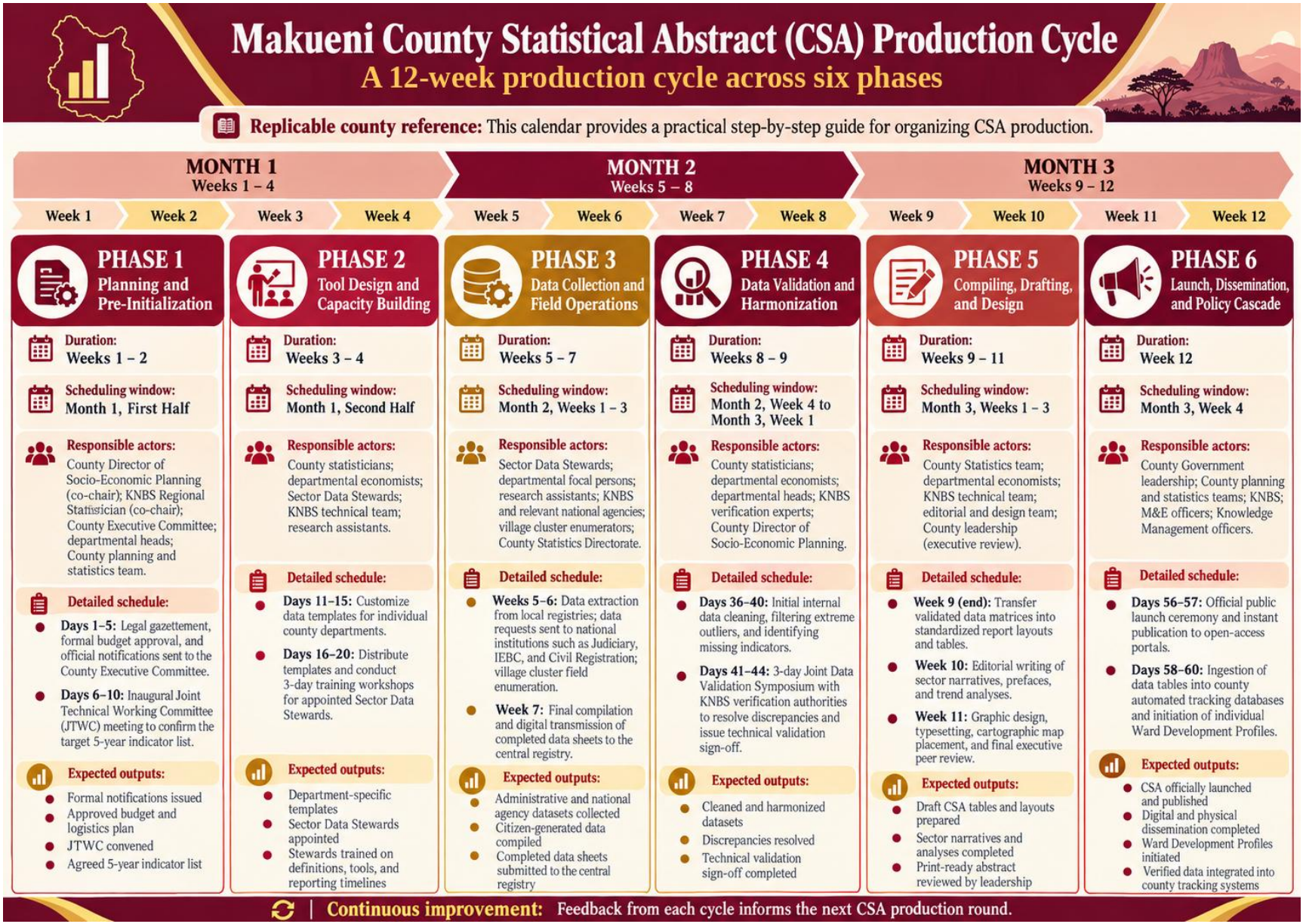


Figure 3: 12-Week Implementation Calendar for CSA Production in Makueni County

1. *Making statistical production an institutional priority*

Makueni's approach is anchored in strong and sustained leadership commitment across successive County Government administrations, reflecting a shared recognition that development interventions should be guided by reliable evidence rather than assumptions. This commitment has been translated into concrete institutional measures, including a dedicated budget allocation of KSh 4.4 million for the 2026 CSA production cycle and the integration of CSA production into departmental performance targets to strengthen accountability.

To further institutionalize these efforts and ensure continuity beyond individual leadership regimes, the County has established supportive policy frameworks through the County Statistics Policy, 2022, and the Monitoring and Evaluation Policy, 2022. The County Statistics Policy provides a framework for coordinating statistical production across departments, promoting standardized data collection, quality assurance and dissemination, while the Monitoring and Evaluation Policy strengthen the demand for reliable statistical information to track development performance and inform planning, budgeting and decision-making.

Together, these measures have helped embed CSA production within regular County Government functions, supported by sustained collaboration with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS).

2. *Building a coordinated data production process*

The Department of Finance and Economic Planning coordinates CSA production in collaboration with KNBS and County departments.

At the beginning of each production cycle, the County and KNBS review the work plan, agree on timelines and harmonize data collection templates. Departments are then formally notified of the exercise and requested to provide the required data.

Departmental economists and designated focal persons play a central role in coordinating sector data. They work alongside County statisticians, research assistants and KNBS officers to identify information sources, collect records and address emerging gaps.

To strengthen this process, the County recruits and trains research assistants, drawing on interns and other available personnel. At the time of the documentation exercise, 18 research assistants were supporting statistical work.

These arrangements have helped establish a clearer division of responsibilities. They also allow the County to draw on existing departmental records while maintaining technical support from KNBS.

3. *Strengthening data quality and accountability*

Collecting data is only one part of the process. Makueni places considerable emphasis on checking whether the data is accurate, consistent and suitable for publication.

After data collection, departmental economists review submissions and identify gaps or unusual trends. Figures are compared with previous publications, particularly where indicators are presented across a five-year period.

Where discrepancies arise, the relevant departments are required to explain or verify the figures. KNBS officers provide additional technical checks using established statistical standards.

The process also includes feedback and validation meetings. Departmental heads review and endorse the data before it is incorporated into the publication.

This helps ensure that the figures are traceable and that responsibility for their accuracy remains with the institutions producing them.

4. *Connecting statistics to planning and public access*

Makueni's model extends beyond the production and publication of statistics to their interpretation and application in development decision-making. Through the County Statistical Abstract (CSA) and County Development Profiles, validated data is transformed into statistical information that enables the County to understand development trends, assess service delivery gaps and evaluate emerging priorities. By interpreting these findings, the County generates knowledge that informs strategic decisions on the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP), departmental planning, budgeting and resource allocation.

Ward-level statistical information is particularly important in this process. Through Ward Development Profiles and public participation, the County identifies disparities in service access, poverty levels and infrastructure needs across communities. The County Development Profiles document 1,430 development projects valued at approximately KSh 10.26 billion, implemented across the County's wards and sub-counties. In the water sector, the County reported an increase of 900,000 cubic metres in water storage capacity, benefiting over 225,000 residents, while the average distance to water sources reduced from 5 km to 4 km and household access to potable water reached 44.6%. These statistics provide a basis for assessing development progress and identifying service delivery gaps.

Further analysis at the ward level can generate knowledge of underserved areas and inform targeted interventions and more equitable resource allocation, demonstrating the application of statistical information as strategic intelligence in development planning.

The practical application of this approach is also reflected in the County's use of statistical evidence to inform sectoral priorities and policy formulation. County officials reported that poverty data informed the development of the Ultra-Poor Graduation Policy, aimed at addressing the needs of vulnerable households. In education, the County's statistical information documents approximately 40,000 Early Childhood Development Education (ECDE) learners and 2,100 teachers. These figures provide a basis for assessing teacher requirements, identifying staffing gaps and informing resource planning for early childhood education. Similarly, health statistics support planning for maternal health, nutrition and access to services. These examples illustrate how the interpretation of statistical information generates knowledge that can inform policy decisions, prioritize investments and strengthen service delivery.

The County is also strengthening digital access to development information. Its initiatives include the Project Management and Tracking System, monitoring and evaluation dashboards and sector-specific data platforms. These systems support access to development information and the monitoring of implementation progress, strengthening the connection between statistical reporting and performance management.

Building on these systems, the County has identified the development of a continuously updated CSA data portal as an important next step. The intention is to improve access to statistical information while enabling departmental economists to update relevant datasets. This would further strengthen the County's capacity to generate timely knowledge and support evidence-informed strategic decisions.

Results of the practice:

1. ***Sustained production of statistical information***

One of the achievements is the institutionalization of CSA production as a recurring County activity.

The County has developed a working arrangement involving leadership, technical officers, departmental data producers and KNBS. Dedicated financing, annual work plans and performance targets have made the process less dependent on individual officers.

The publication of the 2025 County Statistical Abstract, alongside the County Development Profiles in January 2026, marked another important milestone. The two publications provide complementary information: the CSA presents verified statistics and development trends, while the profiles show how resources have been invested across the County.

Together, they provide a stronger basis for examining development needs, monitoring expenditure and assessing progress.

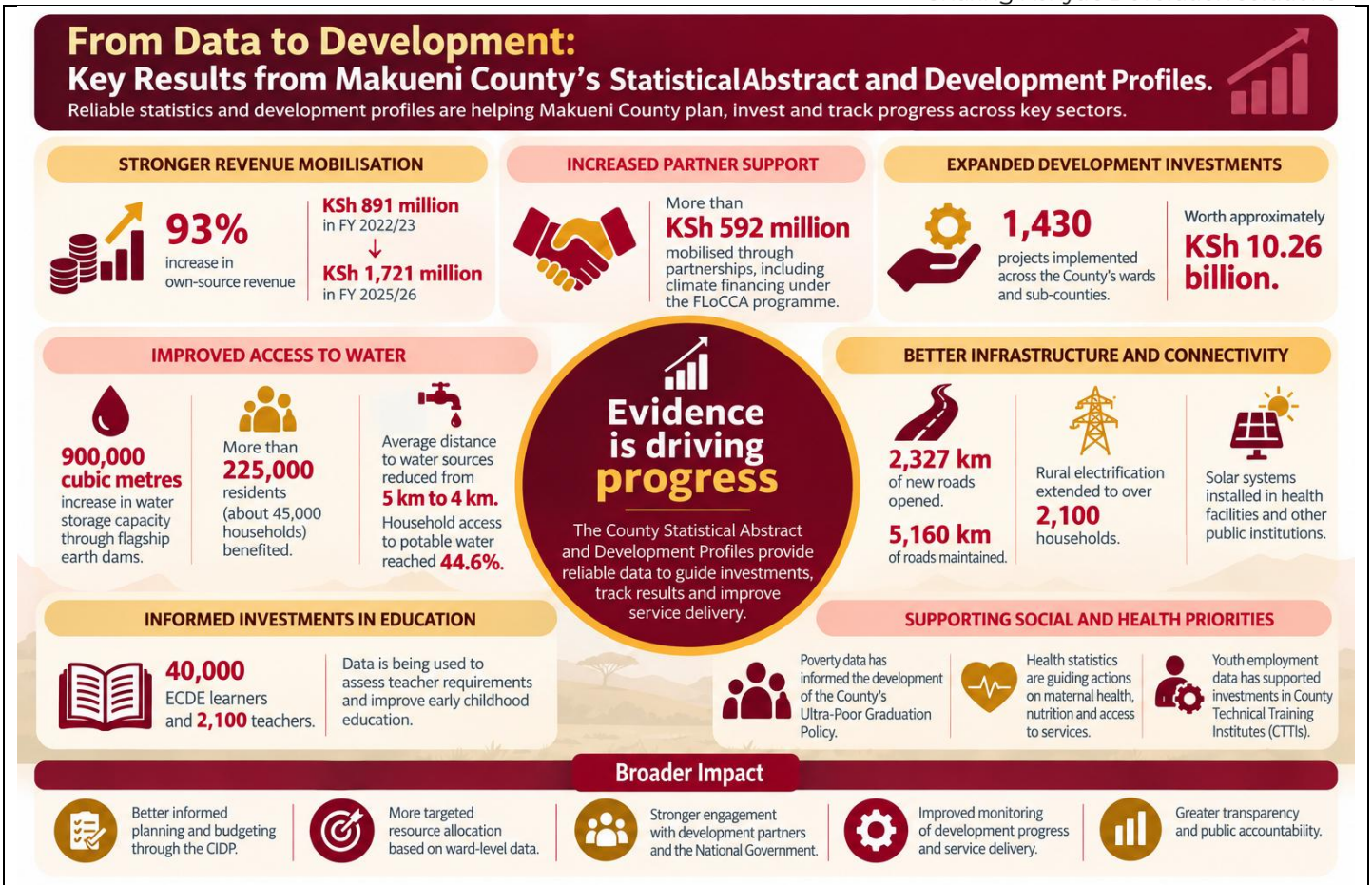


Figure 4: Key Development Results from Makueni County's Statistical Abstract and Development Profiles.

2. *Making development investments more visible*

The County Development Profiles demonstrate the scale of investments that can be documented and examined through a structured approach to development reporting.

According to the County Government's January 2026 report, 1,430 projects valued at approximately Ksh. 10.26 billion were implemented across the County's wards and sub-counties.

Over the review period, the County also reported allocating more than Ksh. 3.2 billion annually to development expenditure.

These figures give policymakers and residents a clearer picture of the resources directed towards development. When considered alongside sector statistics, they can also help identify where investments are taking place and where service gaps remain.

3. *Tracking improvements in water access*

Water is among the development priorities that Makueni has sought to address using information on community needs and service gaps.

The County Development Profile reported an increase of 900,000 cubic meters in water storage capacity through flagship earth dams. These investments benefited more than 225,000 residents in approximately 45,000 households.

The average distance to water sources reduced from 5 kilometers to 4 kilometers, while household access to potable water reached 44.6%.

Beyond demonstrating investment results, these indicators provide useful evidence for identifying communities that still face long distances to water sources and prioritizing future interventions.

4. *Providing evidence on infrastructure and connectivity*

The County's development reporting has also made progress in infrastructure more visible.

During the review period, Makueni reported opening 2,327 kilometers of new roads and maintaining 5,160 kilometers. Rural electrification was extended to more than 2,100 households, alongside the installation of solar systems in health facilities and other public institutions.

Documenting these achievements allows the County to assess infrastructure coverage, identify underserved areas and support decisions on subsequent investments.

5. *Supporting revenue planning and resource mobilization*

Reliable information also contributes to financial planning by helping the County understand its revenue position, expenditure needs and development priorities.

The County's own-source revenue has demonstrated sustained growth, increasing from KSh 891 million in FY 2022/23 to KSh 1,045 million in FY 2023/24, KSh 1,291 million in FY 2024/25 and KSh 1,721 million in FY 2025/26. This represents cumulative growth of approximately 93% between FY 2022/23 and FY 2025/26.

The County further reported mobilizing more than Ksh. 592 million through partnerships, including climate financing under the Financing Locally-Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) programme.

Although these gains cannot be attributed solely to the CSA, they demonstrate the importance of maintaining reliable financial and development records. Such information strengthens revenue analysis, partner engagement and decisions on resource allocation.

6. ***Informing social and sectoral priorities***

The practical value of statistics is also reflected in how Makueni identifies challenges affecting specific population groups.

During the documentation exercise, County officials explained that poverty data had informed the development of social protection interventions, including the County's Ultra-Poor Graduation Policy.

In education, data on ECDE enrolment and staffing has helped the County examine teacher requirements and plan improvements in early childhood education.

Similarly, health indicators have informed discussions on maternal health, nutrition and access to services. Statistics on youth employment and skills development have also supported consideration of investments in County Technical Training Institutes.

These examples illustrate how statistical information can help the County connect broad development priorities to the needs of particular communities.

Challenges:

Despite the progress made, Makueni County continues to face challenges in sustaining reliable statistical production.

Data availability and consistency remain important concerns. Some departments and institutions maintain records in different formats or publish data at different intervals. This complicates consolidation and can delay the production process.

Changes in personnel also affect institutional memory. When officers responsible for particular datasets leave or are transferred, accessing historical data and verifying earlier figures can become difficult.

In some cases, ***administrative procedures slow access to data.*** Research assistants may also encounter incomplete records or figures that require further clarification.

Another challenge is ***the need to improve digital data storage and accessibility.*** Although the County has introduced several information systems, officials identified the need for stronger integration and a central statistical portal.

Finally, the County recognizes that ***producing statistics is not sufficient on its own.*** Continued awareness creation is necessary to ensure that departments, policymakers and citizens know where to access the publications and how to use the information.

Lessons learnt and Recommendations:

Makueni's experience offers several lessons for County Governments seeking to strengthen statistical production.



Figure 5: H.E Mutula Kilonzo Jnr. CBS during the CSA documentation Exercise

1. ***Leadership commitment must be matched with institutional support*** - A dedicated budget, clear departmental responsibilities and performance targets help make statistical production a routine government function.

2. ***Collaboration with KNBS strengthens credibility*** - Joint planning, harmonized templates and technical validation improve the consistency and reliability of published information.

3. ***Data production should involve the institutions that generate and use the information*** - Departmental economists, statisticians and focal persons are essential in ensuring that the CSA reflects actual service delivery and development conditions.

4. ***Validation must be built into every stage*** - Comparing indicators across reporting periods, investigating discrepancies and obtaining departmental endorsement strengthens accountability for published figures.

5. ***Statistics become more useful when they are disaggregated*** - County-wide averages can conceal differences between communities. Strengthening ward-level data can support more equitable planning and resource allocation.

6. ***Digital systems are important for long-term sustainability*** - The County should continue developing an accessible statistical data portal, strengthening digital storage and enabling departments to update information regularly.

7. ***A stronger national framework could support consistent CSA production across Counties*** - During the documentation exercise, Makueni officials called on the Council of Governors to champion a legal framework that anchors County Statistical Abstract production. Such an approach could help strengthen institutional continuity, standardization and sustained financing.

Other Counties can build on these lessons by establishing annual statistical work plans, providing dedicated budgets, strengthening partnerships with KNBS and ensuring that published statistics are actively used in planning and decision-making.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Makueni County's experience demonstrates that producing reliable statistics requires more than technical expertise. It depends on leadership commitment, coordinated institutions, sustained financing and a clear understanding of how data can improve development decisions.

By embedding CSA production within departmental responsibilities and strengthening collaboration with KNBS, the County has developed a model that supports continuity and progressive improvement.

The value of this approach is reflected in the growing availability of statistical information and development profiles that help track investments, identify service gaps and inform planning.

As Makueni advances its digital data systems and strengthens ward-level reporting, its experience offers an important lesson for other Counties: statistics create greater public value when they move beyond publication and become part of how governments plan, allocate resources and account for results.

Further reading:

- https://makueni.go.ke/sandbox/site/files/2026/01/County-Dev-Profile-2025.pdf
- https://makueni.go.ke/sandbox/site/files/2023/05/Makueni-County-Monitoring-and-Evaluation-Policy.pdf
- https://makueniassembly.go.ke/download/the-makueni-county-statistics-policy-2022/
- https://repository.kippra.or.ke/items/0f5c138a-3028-4644-8bce-d57868a3562d

Photo Gallery



Figure 6: CECM in charge of Finance and Economic Planning speaking during the CSA documentation exercise



Figure 7: Chief Officer in charge of Finance and Economic Planning speaking during the CSA documentation exercise



Figure 8: Director in charge of Statistics speaking during the CSA documentation exercise



Figure 9: Knowledge Management Champion speaking during the CSA documentation exercise



Figure 10: Makueni County Government Senior Statistician speaking during the CSA documentation exercise



Figure 11: KNBS County Statistics Officer speaking during the CSA documentation exercise