

BUILDING BRIDGES INITIATIVE



ABSTRACT

It has been called a Political ploy by the political elite to stay in power, yet, does the BBI hold any opportunities for the Youth?



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1. Introduction

The president of the Republic of Kenya appointed a Taskforce by Gazette Notice No. 5154, published on 31 May 2018, right after the famous Political Handshake between the President Uhuru Kenyatta and ODM Party leader, Raila Odinga.

The Taskforce was mandated to evaluate the national challenges outlined in the Joint Communiqué of 'Building Bridges to a New Kenyan Nation', and thereafter, to make practical recommendations and reform proposals that would lead the country in building lasting unity in Kenya.

From the onset, the report sought to address nine points' agenda. The BBI report sought to address the following issues:

- a) ***Lack of a National Ethos;***
- b) ***Responsibilities and Rights of citizenship;***
- c) ***Ethnic antagonism and Competition;***
- d) ***Divisive elections;***
- e) ***Inclusivity;***
- f) ***Shared prosperity;***
- g) ***Corruption;***
- h) ***Devolution; and***
- i) ***Safety and Security.***

Even before the release of the BBI report, there were many divergent views by various pundits on what impact the BBI report would have. To one extreme BBI report was viewed as offering a platform to address all the social, economic and political problems that have been ailing Kenya. Succinctly it was viewed as a panacea to all the problems that ails Kenya.

On the other hand, some pundits believed that the country need to address underlying social-economic issues that have their origin from the colonial time. To them the handshake and the resultant Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) report was not going to yield a set of political reforms that will fix our socio-economic problems once and for all.

To the pundits, the BBI is not designed to address the fundamental economic, political and social problems facing the country. It was meant to yield an elite pact that will allow our self-appointed ethnic chiefs to share power and to further solidify their misrule of the country.

Those in between argued that BBI will only be meaningful if our governance was dotted with the adherence to the rule of law and good governance. Some Kenyans argued that our leaders are not about to start respecting the provisions of Chapter Six of the constitution due to BBI and that it is impossible to legislate our way to good governance.

Time will tell, the resultant outcome of the process and its future impact on the democratic governance of the country.

First things first...

2. How palatable is this BBI Report?

The BBI report is clearly not meant to be read or understood by the average Kenyan. The thing is 156 pages long, and in a tight and crowded font, no aesthetics there.

So, how is *Mama Mboga pale nche ya plot*, supposed to understand it? The making of the document is obviously not targeted at Kenyans who are the key stake holders to the process.

Key questions:

- Is there a 1-page summarized version? No
- Is there a 1-page summarized Kiswahili flier? No
- Have you, a relatively well educated Kenyan actually read the BBI? No
- So, who was it drafted for? Certainly not you.

The Young people in Kenya, just like any other Kenyan, has been locked out of the BBI by its sheer size and drafting language. It wouldn't have made a difference if the BBI had been written in Greek. And so, the Kenyan citizen will now rely on what politicians say, and their decision will not be an informed decision.

3. The question of Youth Engagement

The taskforce asserts that it conducted 'comprehensive' public consultations that included meetings with citizens in all 47 counties. They may have heard views for elected leaders at the National and County levels, senior state officers, constitutional commissions, civil society and professional organizations, cultural leaders, the private sector, and subject-matter experts.

The Taskforce asserts that over 7,000 citizens from all ethnic groups, genders, cultural and religious practices, and different social and economic sectors were consulted. *(Preamble)*

However, this does not amount to proper and comprehensive engagement. First, because it is a well-known fact that the politicians do not necessarily speak for the Mwananchi. Further, there have been rallies, and lobby groups calling for adoption of the BBI, and hardly have we seen any meaningful engagement with the youth, especially at the grassroots level.

We can only wait to see how public participation will be enhanced in the coming days, since the time frame has been extended.

4. Political Whims for Individual gains

We are still paying the price for a political monopoly that was established right after independence. We still struggle under a now sophisticated form of colonialism that is so well thought out, to an extent that we will change systems and Laws, without exception to the constitution, to please and appease the big boys of politics.

Let's face it, we are now paying for the Handshake. The Handshake that was held at our necks, a handshake that we were begging with the blood of Kenyan people, threatened by violence.

If the handshake happened to prevent looming bloodshed, now we pay it with our Constitution. We pay the price with We must ask ourselves as Kenyans, whether this is really a reasonable price to pay for democracy, where deals are hacked behind closed doors.

WHY THE BBI MATTERS TO THE YOUTH—VIJANA NA BBI??

The BBI might have its shortcomings, and it may not be centered around the youth, but a few key issues affecting young people in Kenya have been brought to the limelight.

a) Youth Unemployment — (Chapter 1)

Kenyans aged 15–24 make up 20.3% of the population, far above the world average of 15.8%, and they are all aware of the acute shortfall in opportunities to gain decent employment.

The number and quality of jobs available to young Kenyans is far less than what is required. The gap is so serious that it is taking on the proportions of a crisis, one that has serious implications for our country. Young people, broadly speaking, feel that their needs and aspirations are not being met by the economic, social, and cultural structures in place today. Yet they are the majority.

The BBI taskforce has acknowledged that It is not enough to merely improve on the status quo; but a full economic revolution is necessary.

b) A Family Crisis (Stress and Mental Instability) ---and maybe parenting classes



The Taskforce noted that the breakdown in traditional forms of authority in the raising of children; the despair that was leading to elevated levels of depression and suicide among young people; the prevalence of domestic violence; and the occurrence of child abuse and incest.

The fact that most of the population is young makes it imperative that as a nation we undertake a major effort to strengthen parenting skills, in a way that blends tradition and the needs of a dynamically changing Kenya. Who would have thought that the Government would want to give parenting classes to our folks?

I don't know about you, but this is not a national issue to be addressed through a document such as BBI. There are special groups established for social support, and these fall under those institutions.

The big question really should be: Who, of our corrupt leaders, shall we hang first? Because if leaders stopped stealing public funds, the stress levels in the home would drastically reduce because we would all have easy access to money and resources...shouldn't that be the recipe for a happy people?

c) Young People Living with Disabilities

Young people living with disability are often patronized and denied access to public services and facilities. They do not fully benefit from opportunities due to negative attitudes towards them.

The Taskforce puts in place measures for equal rights and equal opportunities as guaranteed by the Constitution, for instance, proper representation of People living with disabilities in public (national and county) appointment.

The BBI Taskforce notes that it is also important that people living with disabilities choose their own representatives and not have nominated representatives be chosen for them by parties.



GENERAL GAINS PROPOSED BY THE BBI

The BBI report has mooted some positive recommendations that will go a long way in addressing the decade-old marginalisation of Arid and Semi-Arid Land Counties such as Marsabit County. Some of the proposed that have been recommended which are beneficial to the communities living in Marsabit are as follows;

➤ ***Make resource distribution to be fair and felt to be fair;***

The per capita share of national resources for every Kenyan should be carefully balanced to account for every Kenyan being treated as equal, as the Constitution makes clear, while ensuring that those who have been marginalised in the past, or are being marginalised at present, are given extra help where they need it.

➤ ***No Kenyan Left Out — The ‘Kubadili Plan’*** the Taskforce proposes ***a Kubadili Plan*** to bring marginalised wards to the level generally enjoyed by the rest of the country. The plan will be to identify the Wards which are most

marginalised, at present and historically. Implementation should start with the Wards ranked last. Develop a plan to build schools, health facilities, roads, water, electricity, and police stations, in a way that the people of the whole Ward have access to them; and ensure that the facilities are built in all the Wards within a period of three years.

➤ ***The marginalised should not marginalise others***

Evident from the Taskforce’s consultations in the counties was a strong sentiment that some communities that complained about marginalization at the national level were themselves guilty of marginalizing minorities in their respective Counties. It became clear that the reforms to increase inclusivity at the national level should be equally reflected at the County level.

➤ ***Ensure that recruitment into the Public Service reflects the Face of Kenya***

Where there is no candidate, required to attain the Face of Kenya, with the right qualifications, the Public Service Commission and County Governments should be empowered to undertake professional search and development for minority candidates to increase their chances of qualifying for the positions.

- **Minimise taxation of new and small businesses by giving them a tax holiday of at least 7 years as a support to youth entrepreneurship and job creation**

This proposal is a great step in the right direction for the unemployed youth in Marsabit County who can consider establishing businesses with the introduction of the 7 year- tax holiday which aims to boost business investments among unemployed youth in Kenya.

- **Employment conferences** — The Taskforce has proposed that employment conferences to be held jointly held in every County with the senior representation from relevant National Government to address unemployment and find ways to raise numbers of jobs available to young Kenyans.

- **Build the economy from the grassroots**

Expand agricultural and livestock extension and advisory services and ensure that they include advice on clear standards and market linkages. Improve market linkages for farmers/livestock keepers that enable them to gain a greater share of the retail price through information. Provide the proper incentives to the private sector and cooperatives, and the necessary coordination, to build a cold chain system throughout the country.

Pastoral livestock production in Marsabit is still subsistence-oriented. Sales of animals for slaughter or fattening do not guarantee a sufficient income during dry seasons and drought years to stimulate a market-orientated livestock production hence this recommendation will enable pastoralism thrive with establishment of market linkages with proper incentive.

- **As measure to protect the Youth and needy Kenyans**, the Taskforce has proposed to properly regulate **loan applications** which are driving up indebtedness of poor Kenyans to destructive effect with their shylock-level interest rates and borrowing from multiple platforms. In addition, the private betting industry be replaced with a Government-run national lottery whose proceeds, as is the case in other countries, are used for activities that uplift the youth, sports, culture and other social activities beneficial to citizens.

- ***Retain the 47 Counties and support the voluntary process of Counties forming regional economic blocs.***

Conditional grants can be used to encourage collaboration between Counties, and the formation of blocs that improve development planning and delivery

- ***Increase the resources to the Counties by at least 35% of the last audited accounts***

CRA, in its allocation formula, should focus on the distance from the center of the County to its furthest area as opposed to the general size of the County. It should also target key areas such as agriculture, health and the rapid urbanisation occurring in all.

- ***Commission on Revenue Allocation to change its revenue allocation formula —particularly in allocating funds for the marginalised — to target Wards in the County budgets.***
- ***The Commission on Revenue Allocation should assess what Counties should be collecting and factor it into the annual allocation.***

- ***Public resources should follow people not land mass;***

The increase of monies to the Counties must be guided by a revenue allocation formula that is informed by population, and then ***takes into account devolved and urgent needs such as health; agriculture, which accounts for the majority of livelihoods and includes livestock and fishing;*** education (ECD); and the provision of a basic share for all Counties to share equally. ***In addition to the formula, areas that have hitherto been marginalised should be uplifted through the Equalization Fund for a set period.***

- ***On women empowerment and to achieve the Gender rule;***

The running mate of every candidate for the position of Governor should be of the opposite gender.

- ***County Government spending;***

Financing the development of each Ward to at least 30% of the County development budget within the five-year term.

The ratio between development spending and recurrent expenditure in the counties should match the national one at 70:30 (70% Development versus 30% recurrent expenditure).

➤ ***Biashara mashinani***

There should be high-priority efforts by every County to support local groups to develop businesses through partnerships. The County Government should ensure that small and emerging businesses are easy to start, and that they find it easy to navigate regulations and bureaucracy and to get their goods to market in a timely way.

➤ ***More cohesive Counties and the role of elders***

Strengthen dialogue and integration of communities in the Counties, especially those that are multi-ethnic, with a focus on ensuring minorities are heard and respected. Utilise Elders to strengthen cohesion and mediate conflicts.

Marsabit County can tap on this recommendation and lead in the areas of traditional dispute resolution mechanism given its rich knowledge in the said area.

➤ ***More shared development and dialogue projects by communities that have had histories of conflict.***

➤ Lower vulnerability to resource conflicts, disasters, emergencies and food insecurity— Ensure Kenyans are less vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters and emergencies by taking the following measures:

- ❖ Operationalise a comprehensive National Emergency, Disaster and Crisis Management Strategy rooted in law that is linked to County, sub-County and Ward level disaster response plans that are renewed periodically.
- ❖ Link the National Disaster Risk system to the Contingencies Fund (Article 208) in the Act establishing it.
- ❖ Put in place preemptive and prompt response strategies to common major disasters such as flooding and drought.

SPECIFIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUTH

1. Championing Civic Education

Young people can plug into the implementation of the BBI because there is an urgent need for continuous and widespread civic education on rights and responsibilities established under the constitution and on the proposals and implementation of the BBI.

The BBI recommends that Civic education will be prioritized in Government policies and initiatives, both nationally and in Counties. This includes a specific ongoing civic education campaigns that is continuous and is based on innovative approaches that do not utilize the typical workshopping model; for instance, the use of barazas.

Experts and educators ought to come from all demographics, and youth should take that opportunities to become **Citizenship/Civic educators** at all stages of education through to the undergraduate level.

2. Participate in Leadership

A wide range of political offices will be put in place under the BBI, including Prime Minister, Majority Leader, Cabinet Ministers, all the way to the county level. Young people should seize these political offices and demonstrate their ability to serve.

3. Access to more job opportunities created under the BBI Report

Employment conferences —Employment conferences will be held in every county with senior representation from relevant National Government actors, to determine the steps in regulation and economic management needed to immediately and sharply raise the number of jobs available to young Kenyans. Young people will be better placed to secure employment through this collaboration between the National Government and counties.

4. BBI Implementation Checks and Balances

Implementation of the BBI will require checks and balances, and youth will be pivotal to assessing, monitoring and evaluating the impact both at the National and County level.

5. Participate in the Presidential Advisory team: Baraza la washauri

A newly established Council of Advisors will be made up of highly skilled personnel from various demographics and areas of expertise. The **Council of Advisors** on a non-salaried basis, and will be the advisory think tank for the President.

6. Benefits of Regional Integration

Enjoy cross border Employment and travel opportunities-EAC Regional integration. Inter-country (EAC) business is also prioritized and measures are set to be put in place at the conclusion of the Regional Integration adoption of Treaties.

7. Better participation in political parties

Under the BBI, all political parties should be compelled to reflect the Face of Kenya in ethnic, religious, regional, and gender terms. Youth are a key demographic, and their participation will be greatly enhanced in non-ethnic political parties, and the strengthening of the office of the Registrar of Political Parties.

The BBI also has a provision for Inclusivity of all groups has been prioritized (Chapter 6) and youth are among key groups to be considered in the opportunities arising, in order to tap into that diversity, to allow different Kenyans from many backgrounds to contribute fully in our political, economic, social and cultural life. This requires that Kenya be inclusive.

8. Running Businesses

Running businesses will be easier, and measures will be put in place to support youth owned businesses. The BBI places an obligation on National and County Governments to take all actions to make starting and running of businesses easier, and policy must reflect these steps.

Starting and doing business in Kenya, particularly for youth-led small businesses, is an invitation to innumerable obstacles, unlike in other countries where entrepreneurs are encouraged and assisted to venture. It also matters who you are, who you know and where you live.

Kenyans continue to experience inequalities in access to education, health, infrastructure, clean drinking water, wastewater management, and to factors and boosters of production. These challenges are made worse by poor policy coherence, and the absence of an economic vision that can enable us to break out of our present circumstances.

9. Taxes

The burden of taxes is expected to reduce, and will be lower than neighboring countries, to propel Kenya as an investment hub.

BBI proposes that the tax base needs to be broadened, but it is crucial that overall taxation in Kenya be low relative to competitor economies regionally and globally. Consider innovative approaches to simplify taxation, including a consideration of a flat tax for every income category above a living wage. The flat tax would lower tax fraud, encourage compliance and cut down on corruption in the assessment of taxes.

10. Development for every County

In its actions to coordinate, incentivize, and invest in economic development, the National Government should make sure that it leverages unique strengths and opportunities in every County.

11. No Kenyan Left Out — The ‘Kubadili Plan’ for youth in Marginalised Areas

As part of ensuring that all Kenyans have access to quality services which are foundational to putting people onto the path of shared prosperity, the Taskforce proposes a Kubadili Plan to bring marginalised wards to the level generally enjoyed by the rest of the country.

The plan will be to identify the Wards which are most marginalised, at present and historically. Implementation should start with the Wards ranked last. Develop a plan to build schools, health facilities, roads, water, electricity, and police stations, in a way that the people of the whole Ward have access to them; and ensure that the facilities are built in all the Wards within a period of three years.

12. No Cartels

Free Kenya from cartel capture — The perception of a rigged economy is one of the greatest risks to a secure, stable and united Kenya. It serves as a major incentive for the utilisation of divisive ethnic politics.

BBI recommends a rigorous intelligence-led review of the hold of cartels in crucial aspects of the economy and the public systems of budgeting, procurement, regulation and the rigging of markets.

13. Public Officers should not be in business with the Government

We have seen numerous cases of conflicts of interest by Public officers who award business tender to their affiliated companies. The BBI recommends that there should be a ban on Public Officer involvement in business with the Government. Specifically, no Public Officer can do business with the Government.

The playing field for young people in business is therefore becoming fair, and young people can now easily compete and do business with the Government.

14. Time to reap the benefits of Digitisation

BBI recommends to Make Kenya a 100% **e-services nation** by digitising all Government services, processes, payment systems, and record keeping and ensure they are secured from criminal tampering. This will not only stem out corruption, but

also allow the youth, who are a force as far as the digital economy goes, to reap the benefits of technology and digitization.

15. Increase the resources to the Counties by at least 35% of the last audited accounts.

Money follows functions. Money for devolved functions should be for service delivery to Kenyans, meaning that the Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA,) in its allocation formula, should focus on the distance from the center of the County to its furthest area as opposed to the general size of the County. It should also target key areas such as agriculture, health and the rapid urbanization occurring in all.

This is a gain for young people in the remotest of areas within the counties, because their agenda will be considered in the allocation of revenue.

16. Biashara mashinani

The BBI recommends that there should be high-priority efforts by every County to support local groups to develop businesses through partnerships. The County Government should ensure that small and emerging businesses are easy to start, and that they find it easy to navigate regulations and bureaucracy and to get their goods to market in a timely way.

Pathways Policy Institute (PPI) is a policy and accountability think tank; meaningfully engaging communities on Population, Health and Environment (PHE).

PPI works to provide a safe space for advocates and communities to meaningfully influence public policies through research, trainings and capacity strengthening. PPI is an independent, non-partisan and Non-religious entity.



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