ITC

BILATERAL PARTNERSHIP BRIEF

KENYA COUNTRY BRIEF

CONFIDENTIAL
PREPARED FOR ITC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S VISIT
March 2026

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1. COUNTRY SNAPSHOT - REPUBLIC OF KENYA

Item	Detail	Item	Detail
Capital	Nairobi	Population	56.4 million (2025 est.)
GDP (2024)	USD 118.1 billion	GDP Growth Rate	5.4% (2024)
HDI Ranking	147 / 193 (UNDP 2024)	GNI per Capita	USD 2,080 (Atlas method)
ITC Member Since	1964	Current ITC Country Programme	ICPSD 2023–2027

2. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Kenya is East Africa's largest economy and a regional hub for trade, finance, and technology. The country is governed under a devolved system established by the 2010 Constitution, with 47 semi-autonomous counties holding significant authority over service delivery and local development. President William Ruto's administration, in office since September 2022, has prioritised the 'Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda' (BETA), which emphasises support for MSMEs, agricultural value addition, affordable housing, and universal healthcare.

Kenya's industrial sector accounts for approximately 17% of GDP, with manufacturing contributing 9.2%. The government's Medium-Term Plan IV (MTP IV, 2023–2027) identifies manufacturing, agro-processing, and the digital economy as priority growth sectors. Kenya has ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and is positioning itself as a gateway for regional trade, with the Nairobi International Financial Centre and the Konza Technopolis as flagship investment platforms.

Key political note: The ITC Executive Director's visit coincides with Kenya's preparations for the 2027 general elections. Government officials may be sensitive to any programming perceived as politically aligned. ITC should emphasise its technical, non-partisan mandate and its direct contribution to the government's BETA agenda.

3. ITC–KENYA PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

ITC has maintained a continuous presence in Kenya since 1974. The current ITC Kenya Country Office (KCO), established in 2003, is headquartered in Nairobi and serves as the regional hub for ITC's operations in East Africa. The KCO currently manages a portfolio of 8 active projects with a combined budget of USD 28.4 million, spanning agro-processing, sustainable trade, trade capacity building, and women's economic empowerment.

Project	Sector	Budget (USD)	Duration	Status
EMPOWER Programme	Women's Enterprise / Value Chains	5,500,000	2026–2029	Active — Year 1
Kenya Agro-Processing Competitiveness (KAPC)	Agro-processing / Food Safety	4,200,000	2024–2027	Active — Year 2
Renewable Energy for Trade (RET-Kenya)	Renewable Energy / Efficiency	6,800,000	2023–2027	Active — Year 3
Trade Capacity Building Programme (TCBP)	Standards / Metrology / SPS	2,100,000	2025–2027	Active — Year 1
Leather Value Chain Upgrading (LVCU)	Leather / Light Manufacturing	3,500,000	2024–2026	Active — Year 2
Digital Skills for Trade (DST)	Digital Economy / E-commerce	1,800,000	2025–2026	Active — Year 1
Green Trade and Sustainability (GTS)	Environment / Circular Economy	2,900,000	2022–2026	Active — Year 4
Institutional Capacity for Trade Policy (ICTP)	Policy / Institutional	1,600,000	2023–2026	Active — Year 3
TOTAL ACTIVE PORTFOLIO (8 projects)		USD 28,400,000		

4. KEY GOVERNMENT COUNTERPARTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Institution / Official	Role in ITC Partnership	Relationship Status
Ministry of Industrialisation, Trade and Enterprise Development CS: Hon. Grace Wanjiku	Primary government counterpart for all ITC trade programmes; signatory to ICPSD 2023–2027	Strong — regular quarterly meetings; CS personally championed EMPOWER launch
State Department for Trade PS: Dr. James Kariuki	Technical focal point for ITC–Kenya cooperation; chairs the ITC–Kenya Joint Coordination Committee	Strong — technically engaged; supportive of AfCFTA agenda
Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) DG: Prof. Mary Otieno	Key implementing partner for KAPC and DST projects; provides laboratory and testing facilities	Good — MOU signed 2023; capacity constraints noted
Kenya National Bureau of Standards (KEBS) DG: Mr. Bernard Njiraini	Partner for TCBP project; responsible for standards and conformity assessment	Good — active collaboration; seeking expanded ITC support
National Treasury and Economic Planning CS: Hon. John Mbadi	Approves ITC project agreements and co-financing arrangements	Functional — engagement primarily at technical level
Council of Governors Chair: H.E. Anne Waiguru	Entry point for county-level EMPOWER and KAPC implementation	Emerging — formal engagement initiated January 2026

5. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS — 2023–2025

Achievement	Project	Impact
1,240 MSMEs trained in food safety and quality management standards	KAPC	23% average increase in product quality scores; 180 enterprises certified to KEBS Grade A
Solar energy systems installed in 45 agro-processing enterprises	RET-Kenya	Average 34% reduction in energy costs; 2,100 tonnes CO_2 equivalent avoided annually
320 enterprises supported to obtain SPS certificates for export	TCBP	USD 4.2 million in new export revenue generated; 12 enterprises entered EU market
Leather Cluster established in Machakos County (28 enterprises)	LVCU	Cluster enterprises report 41% increase in revenue; 340 new jobs

		created
EMPOWER pilot phase completed in Kisumu County (200 enterprises)	EMPOWER	28% average revenue increase; 85 off-take agreements signed; 1 enterprise entered EAC export market
National Trade Policy (NTP 2024–2034) technically supported	ICTP	NTP adopted by Cabinet in July 2024; includes ITC-recommended gender-responsive trade development framework

6. CHALLENGES AND RISKS

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Government counterpart capacity constraints limit joint implementation	Medium	High	Dedicated capacity-building component in all projects; secondment of ITC staff to Ministry
Foreign exchange volatility increases project costs	High	Medium	Quarterly budget reviews; contingency reserves of 8% maintained in all projects
2027 election cycle disrupts government engagement	Medium	Medium	Accelerate key deliverables to Q1–Q2 2026; build relationships at technical level
Donor priorities shift away from trade development	Low	High	Strengthen ITC's green trade narrative; align all projects with climate finance

7. FUTURE COLLABORATION AREAS

This section identifies strategic areas for deepening the ITC–Kenya partnership beyond the current project portfolio. These areas are based on Kenya's National Trade Policy (NTP 2024–2034), the BETA agenda, ITC's global strategic priorities, and consultations with the Ministry of Industrialisation and key private sector stakeholders conducted in January–February 2026.

Collaboration Area	Strategic Rationale	Proposed Modality	Indicative Budget
Green Trade and Circular Economy	Kenya's NDC commits to a 32% GHG reduction by 2030. ITC's Green Trade Platform and EWB's sustainable enterprise tools offer direct support.	New project under EU Green Deal for Africa financing; technical assistance for circular economy policy framework	USD 8–12 million
E-commerce and Digital Trade	Kenya's digital economy is growing at 14% annually. ITC's ecomConnect platform is directly applicable.	Technology needs assessment for 500 MSMEs; establishment of an ITC-supported Digital Trade Hub at KIRDI	USD 4–6 million
Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Development	Kenya has 6 operational SEZs and 12 planned. SEZA has formally requested ITC technical support.	Technical assistance to SEZA for SEZ governance framework; investment promotion support	USD 3–5 million
Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Trade	Post-COVID, Kenya has committed to producing 60% of its essential medicines domestically by 2030.	Feasibility study for Kenya pharmaceutical trade cluster; GMP compliance support for 20 manufacturers	USD 6–9 million
Women's Economic Empowerment (EMPOWER Scale-Up)	EMPOWER pilot and Year 1 results are highly promising. The government has requested national scale-up.	EMPOWER Phase 2 (2030–2033): national scale-up to 47 counties, 10,000 enterprises; integration with Kenya's Women Enterprise Fund	USD 15–20 million

7.1 Recommended Priority Actions for the Executive Director's Visit

Meeting / Engagement	Recommended Action / Ask
Meeting with CS Wanjiku (Ministry of Industrialisation)	Request formal endorsement of EMPOWER Phase 2 concept note; seek government co-financing commitment of KES 500 million over 5 years; agree on joint launch of Green Trade Policy dialogue
Meeting with PS Kariuki (State Department for Trade)	Sign MOU for ITC–KIRDI Digital Trade Hub; agree on e-commerce needs assessment scope and timeline; discuss SEZA technical assistance request

Meeting with EU Ambassador van der Berg	Brief on EMPOWER Year 1 results; explore EU interest in Green Deal for Africa financing for green trade programme; discuss EMPOWER Phase 2 co-financing
Meeting with SEZA Director General	Receive formal request letter for ITC SEZ support; agree on scope of feasibility study; identify potential donor for SEZ programme
Media Engagement / Press Conference	Announce EMPOWER Year 1 results; launch ITC Kenya Annual Report 2025; announce Green Trade dialogue

8. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TALKING POINTS FOR MEDIA

- Kenya is one of ITC's most important and dynamic partners in Africa. Our current portfolio of USD 28 million across 8 projects reflects the depth and breadth of this partnership.
- The EMPOWER Programme is a landmark initiative, and the early results from our pilot phase in Kisumu show that when you give women entrepreneurs the right tools, training, and connections, they deliver extraordinary results.
- ITC is committed to supporting Kenya's green trade transition. We believe that Kenya can be a global model for how developing countries can grow their trade sector while reducing emissions.
- We are here to listen to Kenya's priorities and to align our support with the government's BETA agenda. ITC is not here to impose solutions, we are here to co-create them with our Kenyan partners.