

The KENYA INSTITUTE for PUBLIC
POLICY RESEARCH and ANALYSIS

Thinking Policy Together

Leveraging Non-Motorized Transport for Youth Employment in Kenya



Introduction



Non-motorized transport (NMT)—including walking, cycling, and animal-drawn transport—offers a low-cost, eco-friendly mobility option that can help address Kenya’s twin challenges of urban congestion and high youth unemployment. Although historically central to Kenya’s transport system, NMT has declined due to urbanization and the rapid expansion of motorized transport.

Strategic investments in NMT infrastructure and services can create employment opportunities for young people, especially in urban settings. With rising urbanization and strained job markets, leveraging NMT not only supports sustainable urban mobility but also unlocks green job opportunities in areas such as infrastructure development, bicycle production, and

Key Messages



1. NMT Can Drive Youth Employment in Urban Areas

- Activities like building and maintaining NMT infrastructure, bicycle manufacturing, and operating bike-sharing programs have untapped employment potential.



2. Urbanization is Outpacing Infrastructure and Jobs

- Kenya’s urban population grew from 24.7% to 29.5% (2013–2023), and continues to expand at 4.3% per year, placing immense pressure on transport systems and labour markets.



3. Motorization is Rising, while Bicycle Use is Declining

- Registered motor vehicles increased by over 116% from 2014 to 2023, while bicycle imports have declined, signalling underutilization of affordable transport options.



4. NMT Investment Remains Low and Uneven



• With a county-level average of KES 6.78 million annually, NMT investment is highly inconsistent and may be too low to generate meaningful employment impact.



5. Transport's Contribution to Economic Output Varies Widely

• The average transport contribution to Gross County Product (GCP) is KES 107 million, with significant variation, suggesting unequal development and investment impact across counties.



6. Data Gaps and Lack of Integration Hinder Policy Effectiveness

• Inconsistent data on NMT usage and employment links makes it difficult to design evidence-based policies that can fully exploit NMT's potential.

Policy Recommendations



1. Structure NMT Projects with Employment Linkages

• Design NMT programs that connect with job centres, integrate with public transport, and support businesses—turning infrastructure into employment engines.



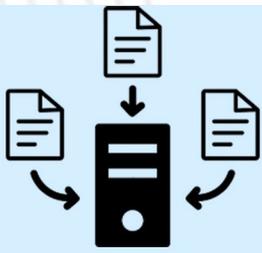
2. Increase and Standardize NMT Investment

• Allocate consistent and adequate funding to NMT projects across counties, with special focus on high-density urban areas where demand and impact are greatest.



3. Promote Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

• Encourage partnerships in areas like bicycle-sharing services, cycling hubs, and training centres for bicycle mechanics to drive youth entrepreneurship and jobs.



4. Enhance Data Collection and Use

- Standardize data on NMT investment, usage, and employment outcomes to inform planning and maximize impact through evidence-based decisions.



5. Incentivize Local Manufacturing and Repair Ecosystems

- Support local industries through tax incentives and capacity-building to stimulate bicycle production, parts manufacturing, and maintenance services.

