

KENYA SENIOR

Digital Health

READINESS INDEX

A Research-Based Assessment of Digital Health Access, Inclusion, and Readiness for Older Adults in Kenya

2.8/10

OVERALL READINESS SCORE — CRITICAL GAPS

KEY FINDINGS

- No national digital literacy programme for older adults
- Fewer than 5 in 10 Kenyans over 70 own a phone
- Community health devices offline for 2 consecutive months (2025)
- Zero certified geriatric specialists in Kenya's public sector
- Only 14% of older persons hold any health insurance
- Accessibility standards exist — enforcement has not begun

OVERVIEW

Overall Readiness Score: 2.8/10 — Critical Gaps

Kenya has emerged as one of Africa’s leading digital economies. Mobile money innovation, expanding internet connectivity, digital government services, and national digital transformation initiatives have earned the country recognition as the "Silicon Savannah." However, digital progress has not been experienced equally across all age groups.

This report evaluates Kenya’s readiness to support older adults through digital health technologies, telemedicine services, AI applications, digital literacy programmes, and age-friendly healthcare systems. The findings reveal a significant gap between national digital health ambitions and the lived experiences of many older adults, particularly those in rural communities.

While Kenya has established important policy foundations — including the Digital Health Act (2023), the National eHealth Policy (2016–2030), and the Healthy Ageing and Older Persons’ Health Strategy (2021–2026) — implementation challenges continue to limit the practical benefits available to older citizens.

- No national digital literacy programme specifically designed for older adults.
- Significant age-related disparities in mobile phone ownership and digital participation.
- Persistent implementation challenges affecting telemedicine and community health technology systems.
- Limited availability of geriatric-focused healthcare services and training.
- Emerging AI healthcare innovation, but little focus on age-related health challenges.
- Accessibility standards exist but implementation remains at an early stage.

METHODOLOGY

The Kenya Senior Digital Health Readiness Index evaluates six dimensions considered critical to successful digital health participation among adults aged 60 years and above. The framework draws on government policy and legislative documents, national statistical datasets (KNBS, CA Kenya), international healthy ageing frameworks (WHO, ITU, UN DESA), peer-reviewed research, healthcare implementation reports, and community health system evidence.

Scores were assigned using a qualitative benchmarking framework evaluating policy availability, implementation maturity, population coverage, accessibility, workforce readiness, technology availability, and measurable outcomes. They serve as advocacy and policy indicators designed to identify gaps and stimulate public discussion.

WHY THIS REPORT MATTERS

Kenya’s population of older adults is growing. At the same time, healthcare systems are increasingly relying on digital tools to deliver services, manage patient records, monitor chronic conditions, and support public health interventions. If older adults are excluded from digital transformation efforts, the result may be increased healthcare inequality, reduced access to services, and poorer health outcomes.

Digital health readiness is a public health issue, a social protection issue, and a national development issue.

01 Digital Literacy

2.5 / 10

The Global Context

Globally, digital literacy among older adults (65+) is significantly lower than among youth. The OECD (2023) reports that elderly digital literacy is approximately 40% lower than youth levels. Major national-scale interventions exist globally, such as Australia's "Be Connected" programme (reaching 1 million seniors) and the EU Digital Education Action Plan. The ITU's 2024–2027 Strategic Plan prioritises digital inclusion for older persons through its framework Ageing in a Digital World — From Vulnerable to Valuable.

The Kenya Reality

Kenya's flagship digital skills programme, Ajira Digital, has trained 50,000 freelancers but explicitly targets youth, women, refugees, and ASAL communities. There is no mention of older adults in its curriculum. Kenya's Directorate of Adult Learning Education handles basic literacy, not digital health systems. The Ministry of Health's Healthy Ageing Strategy (2021–2026) acknowledges that "data and information systems are weak while data on ageing and health is limited."

THE HARD TRUTH

Kenya has no national, senior-focused digital literacy programme. The elderly remain largely invisible in the national digital transformation agenda.

Sources: Kenya Ministry of Health Healthy Ageing Strategy (2021–2026); ITU Strategic Mainstreaming (2026); OECD Digital Literacy Data (2023); Ajira Digital Documentation.

02 Internet Access

4.0 / 10

The Global Context

Sub-Saharan Africa averages 81% mobile broadband coverage. Kenya leads broadly with mobile money subscriptions climbing toward 85 million by March 2025.

The Kenya Reality

According to the CA/KNBS 2023/24 Kenya Housing Survey (surveying 25,000 households): national individual mobile phone ownership stands at 53.7% (64.6% urban vs 48.6% rural). Critically, 11.3% of Kenyans use mobile phones without owning them, highlighting shared-device inequality. Internet usage peaks sharply among individuals aged 25–34 (59.3%).

UN Women Kenya data highlights the severe age cliff: mobile ownership peaks at 85% for ages 35–39 but plummets to just 45% for Kenyans aged 70+. Within that 70+ bracket, women face deeper exclusion, comprising only 46% of device owners.

THE HARD TRUTH

Kenya's internet statistics look impressive when aggregated. But disaggregate by age, and the picture shifts dramatically. For every 10 Kenyans over 70, fewer than 5 own a phone. The devices powering modern digital health are simply not in older adults' hands.

Sources: CA/KNBS Analytical Report on ICT (2023/24); UN Women Kenya Mobile Phone Ownership Analysis; Kenyan Wall Street (May 2025).

03 Telemedicine Access

3.0 / 10

The Global Context

Telemedicine has become a cornerstone of global healthcare, moving into advanced spaces like AI-powered motion tracking and remote rehabilitation post-COVID-19.

The Kenya Reality

Policy foundations are robust, led by the Digital Health Act (2023) which established the Digital Health Agency (DHA), the National eHealth Policy 2016–2030, and the national deployment of the Electronic Community Health Information System (eCHIS), which equipped 107,000 Community Health Promoters (CHPs) with devices by mid-2024.

However, an investigative report by Nation Media Group (December 2025) and reports from Living Goods exposed deep operational failures:

- **Device Failures:** Provided Neon phones frequently freeze, crash, and suffer from poor connectivity, forcing CHPs to travel physically to hand over logs.
- **Data Costs:** CHPs pay for data bundles out of pocket from their Ksh 2,500–3,500 monthly stipends to sync heavy records.
- **System Outages:** Hosting failures triggered complete nationwide system downtime for nearly two consecutive months in early 2025, forcing a fallback to paper tools.
- **Siloed Architecture:** Data routes to a centralised national server instead of flowing directly to local facilities where immediate medical action is needed.

THE HARD TRUTH

Kenya has the policies and distributed devices. But the localised infrastructure, technical support, data compensation, and reliable connectivity to make telemedicine operational for older adults on the ground do not exist.

Sources: Nation Media Group (Dec 2025); Living Goods eCHIS Report (June 2025); PATH Kenya Nyamira County Intervention Framework (2024–2026); Digital Health Act (2023).

04 Senior-Friendly Healthcare

2.0 / 10

The Kenya Reality

The Ministry of Health's Healthy Ageing Strategy document provides a candid critique of the public health setup:

- **Workforce Vacuum:** There are zero practice guidelines and no formal training pathways for geriatric medicine or gerontology in Kenyan medical training colleges.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** No specialised care units for older persons exist within public health facilities; infrastructure remains fragmented and disease-oriented.
- **Financial Barriers:** Only 14% of older persons possess health insurance. Most insurance frameworks strictly exclude chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which account for over 50% of Kenyan hospital admissions.
- **Social Protection Limits:** The Inua Jamii safety net provides KES 2,000 per month to 1.2 million beneficiaries, unadjusted for inflation in a decade.

THE HARD TRUTH

While the constitution guarantees elder care, Kenya lacks public geriatric training, specialised hospital units, or chronic disease coverage. Social protection stipends are consumed by basic food costs, leaving healthcare completely unfunded.

Sources: Kenya Ministry of Health Healthy Ageing Strategy (2021–2026); Nation Media Group Inua Jamii Review (2026); Kenya Social Protection Act (2025).

05

AI Adoption in Healthcare

3.5 / 10

The Kenya Reality

Kenya hosts a highly innovative AI cluster. Notable examples include IBM Research Africa (epidemiological tracking), Wazi AI (mental health chatbots), Medic Mobile (patient monitoring platforms), and LifeBank Kenya (blood supply chain optimisation). The AI in Health, Kenya Convergence 2026 formalised a Community of Practice and introduced the local ALIVE governance framework.

However, a critical gap remains: zero senior-specific applications. The market focuses heavily on youthful demographics, maternal healthcare, or broad institutional supply chains.

THE HARD TRUTH
Kenya possesses exceptional local AI talent and development. However, the tech ecosystem does not view older adults as a viable user group. Older Kenyans are completely excluded from predictive care, fall detection, or vocal health tools.

Sources: HELINA AI in Health Kenya Convergence (2026); Acalytica AI Healthcare Africa Reports.

06

Digital Accessibility

2.0 / 10

The Kenya Reality

On paper, progress is landmark. In May 2022, KEBS launched the first-ever Inclusivity ICT Standards in Africa (DKS 2952-1:2021). In May 2025, President Ruto signed the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025. However, implementation is bound to a slow 5-year rollout reaching into 2027–2030. Current health applications remain English-centric, lack support for low vision, hearing impairments, or low dexterity, and feature no explicit enforcement or senior design panels.

THE HARD TRUTH
Accessibility for older adults is treated as an afterthought. Standards exist within government gazettes, but active market enforcement and age-inclusive UX design have not begun.

Sources: KEBS/inABLE ICT Standards Announcement; Kenya Persons with Disabilities Act (2025); LF Legal Kenya Analysis.

INDEX SUMMARY

DIMENSION	SCORE	CLASSIFICATION
Digital Literacy	2.5 / 10	CRITICAL
Internet Access	4.0 / 10	LOW
Telemedicine Access	3.0 / 10	LOW
Senior-Friendly Healthcare	2.0 / 10	CRITICAL
AI Adoption in Healthcare	3.5 / 10	LOW
Digital Accessibility	2.0 / 10	CRITICAL
OVERALL READINESS	2.8 / 10	CRITICAL GAPS

THE PATH FORWARD

Strategic Milestones to 2028

Moving Kenya’s score from a critical 2.8 to a baseline 5.0 requires targeted, measurable milestones across all pillars. The following six milestones define the minimum threshold for meaningful inclusion of older adults in Kenya’s digital health ecosystem.

- 01

DIGITAL LITERACY

Partner with Ajira Digital to establish elder-specific cohorts and deploy voice-first Kiswahili learning modules across county adult literacy hubs.

Target: 50,000 digitally literate older adults by 2028
- 02

INTERNET ACCESS

Introduce smartphone subsidies paired with zero-rated senior data bundles via Safaricom and Airtel, integrated into Inua Jamii channels.

Target: 70% device ownership among persons aged 70+ by 2028
- 03

TELEMEDICINE INFRASTRUCTURE

Formalise localised technical helpdesks, mandate county budgets for CHP device updates, and compensate data costs for eCHIS synchronisation.

Target: Functional telemedicine for 60% of rural older adults
- 04

GERIATRIC HEALTHCARE

Introduce formal gerontology modules into the Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) curriculum and establish dedicated elder care units in county referral hubs.

Target: At least 500 formally certified geriatric care professionals
- 05

AI HEALTHCARE ALIGNMENT

Incentivise tech startups to build localised voice-first health diagnostics, Kiswahili-driven conversational agents, and automated medication management systems.

Target: 3 senior-specific AI health tools rolled out nationally
- 06

ACCESSIBILITY ENFORCEMENT

Accelerate enforcement timelines for KEBS DKS 2952-1 standards and require all public health applications to pass senior accessibility audits before deployment.

Target: 100% compliance for public digital health portals by 2028

CONCLUSION

A Pivotal Junction

Kenya stands at a pivotal junction. The technology exists and the policy templates are drafted, but a massive implementation gap stands between structural frameworks and community realities.

A nation's digital health maturity cannot be measured by aggregate macroeconomic performance. It is defined by how it serves its most vulnerable citizens. When 107,000 Community Health Promoters are equipped with devices that crash and go offline, when older adults queue at Huduma Centres because digital portals were not designed for them, when geriatric medicine has no training pathway in a country of 55 million people — these are not statistics. These are policy failures with human faces.

Senior Citizens Tech Haven (SCTH) remains committed to pioneering the community hubs, voice-first frameworks, and policy advocacy required to close this gap permanently. The data exists. The roadmap is clear. The only remaining question is whether Kenya's institutions will act before the window narrows further.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Kevin holds a Diploma in Television Programmes Production and a BA in Communications and Public Administration. He founded Senior Citizens Tech Haven (SCTH) — Kenya's first senior digital inclusion platform — and rebuilt it in 2026 as a Progressive Web App featuring AI assistant Elsah. He is also the creator of SautiSahihi Civic Edition, a civic technology platform for Kenyan older adults in six languages, and Founder of Elmac Communications Limited.

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