

IN BRIEF

TYOLOGY AWARE PREVENTION MODELS FOR FEMICIDE IN SELECT COUNTIES IN KENYA

Executive Summary

This technical brief emerges from Kenya's socio cultural analysis of femicide (UN Women Kenya report, 2026) and advances typology aware prevention as a core strategy for reducing femicide at county level. The evidence shows that femicide in Kenya is not uniform; it follows distinct, location specific patterns shaped by social norms, economic pressures, and local power structures. Witchcraft accusation killings disproportionately affect older women in Kilifi; transactional and youth relationship femicides cluster in urban counties such as Nairobi and Kiambu; and land, property, and inheritance disputes drive widow targeted killings in Bungoma and Makueni. These typologies present predictable escalation pathways and visible early warning signs that are often missed by generic, one size fits all interventions. The brief demonstrates that effective prevention requires county tailored approaches combining social norm change, typology specific early warning systems, targeted protection measures, and coordinated institutional response. By integrating typology aware planning into county action plans supported by dedicated financing, robust monitoring, and public dashboards counties can move femicide prevention upstream, transform early warnings into protection, and significantly reduce preventable killings of women and girls.

1. Introduction — Why Typology Aware Prevention Matters

Kenya's femicide landscape is heterogeneous, shaped by social norms, economic drivers, cultural belief systems, and localised risk patterns. The UN Women socio cultural analysis demonstrates that counties experience distinct forms of femicide, such as witchcraft linked killings in Kilifi, transactional/youth relationship killings in Nairobi and Kiambu, and widow targeted killings linked to land disputes in Bungoma and Makueni.

Independent research corroborates this variation:



- ◆ Heinrich Böll Stiftung's 2025 femicide mapping identifies strong county clustering and concludes that preventable killings occur because warnings specific to local typologies were ignored.
- ◆ Africa Data Hub shows Nairobi, Nakuru, Kiambu, Kisumu, Bungoma, and Kilifi consistently topping femicide counts each with different underlying motives.

Thus, an effective prevention architecture must be typology specific, risk triggered, and grounded in the differing ecosystems of violence.

This typology requires a prevention model based on early warning + rapid protection + norm disruption, not just prosecution.

A one size fits all model cannot address:



- ◆ witchcraft accusation violence born from communal belief systems,
- ◆ urban interpersonal femicide involving digital-age dynamics,
- ◆ rural inheritance-related killings tied to land governance failures.

Typology aware prevention is therefore the backbone of targeted county action.

2. County Specific Patterns (Expanded)



a) Kilifi – Witchcraft Accusations and “Cleansing” Femicide

The UN Women study highlights that older women in Kilifi face highly predictable escalation cycles: accusation ► threats ► mob attack ► displacement or killing.

External evidence magnifies the scale:

- ▲ Global Sisters Report (2025) found over 160 documented killings and thousands displaced, noting that most victims were widows whose deaths enabled relatives to seize land.
- ▲ Accusations are often instrumentalised violence: cultural rhetoric hides economic greed.



b) Nairobi and Kiambu – Transactional, Dating and Youth Relationship Femicide

Urban counties face a different ecosystem of violence:

- ▲ Femicide occurs in private rental units, hostels, and short term rentals.
- ▲ Young women (18–34) are most affected, aligning with Africa Data Hub findings that over 70 per cent of killings happen in homes or private spaces, and perpetrators are overwhelmingly known to victims.
- ▲ Radio Baraza (2025) links these killings to harmful masculinities, jealousy, predatory digital behaviour, and “online-to-offline” intimacy dynamics.

Unique triggers in these counties include:

- ▲ Social media stalking,
- ▲ Revenge porn,
- ▲ Romantic jealousy,
- ▲ Financial expectations in transactional relationships (“sponsor” dynamics),
- ▲ Escalating IPV when women attempt to leave.

This requires youth centred, digital focused, masculinity transformation interventions.



c) Bungoma and Makueni – Land, Inheritance and Widow Targeted Femicide

UN Women’s report documents cases where widows resisting land dispossession were murdered, with killings framed as “family matters” or “clan decisions.”

Additional external evidence:

- ▲ The 2026 Technical Working Group on Femicide identifies land disputes as a leading national motivator for femicide, alongside intimate partner conflict.
- ▲ Global Sisters Report and Africa Data Hub both highlight the close relationship between property, inheritance, and lethal violence in rural counties.
 - ◇ ADH notes that rural femicide is underreported due to clan-enforced silence.

This typology requires land-governance interventions in addition to GBV measures.

3. Prevention Approach Blueprint (Deepened)

Effective prevention must address three layers: social norms, early warning indicators, and targeted interventions.



A. Social Norm Change – Differentiated by Typology



Kilifi: Witchcraft Norms

- ◆ Challenge witchcraft accusations as a legitimate basis for community action.
- ◆ Engage kaya elders, religious leaders, and county governors in unified messaging.

- ◆ Link public education to evidence that killings are economically motivated, not spiritual.
 - ◇ (Global Sisters Report confirms property-grabbing as the real motive.)



Nairobi and Kiambu: Youth Masculinity and Digital Culture

- ◆ Engage male peer groups to challenge jealousy norms tied to masculinity.
- ◆ Educate youth on digital age risk: stalking, doxxing, online manipulation.
- ◆ Promote community accountability for rental unit violence common in urban settings (highlighted in ADH and Radio Baraza).



Bungoma and Makueni: Patriarchy and Inheritance Norms

- ◆ Counter norms that treat widows’ land claims as illegitimate.
- ◆ Educate families about constitutional land rights and property equality.
- ◆ Challenge clan “settlements” that pre-empt justice.



B. Early Warning Signals – County Specific Indicators

Early warning systems must be tied to typology specific triggers.



Kilifi

- ◆ Naming accusations publicly
- ◆ Presence of clan meetings (“cleansing meetings”)
- ◆ Threats or harassment of elderly/widowed women
- ◆ Sudden displacement to shelters
- ◆ (These precede most killings according to both UN Women and GSR.)



Nairobi / Kiambu

- ◆ Digital stalking or online threats
- ◆ Jealousy or surveillance incidents by intimate partners
- ◆ Break up attempts (Heinrich Böll confirms lethality peaks during exit attempts)
- ◆ Suspicious meeting arrangements in rentals or Airbnbs



Bungoma / Makueni

- ◆ Land boundary conflicts
- ◆ Widow eviction notices
- ◆ Property interference immediately after funerals
- ◆ Clan “inheritance meetings”
- ◆ (UN Women + TWG confirm these precede violence.)



C. Targeted Interventions – County Level Action Packages



Kilifi

- ◆ One Hour Witchcraft Response Protocol: Chief -> DCI
- ◆ Ban all clan hearings until police secure statements & forensic evidence
- ◆ Safe relocation of targeted women to county-funded shelters
- ◆ Land protection orders for vulnerable widows



Nairobi / Kiambu

- ◆ Establish rapid digital-threat units within DCI Cybercrime & Gender Desks
- ◆ Geo fenced no contact orders monitored via mobile tech

- ◆ Partnership with rental platform operators (Airbnb, hostels) to flag repeat violence sites
- ◆ Male youth counselling and diversion programmes



Bungoma / Makueni

- ◆ Probate fast track clinics and joint sessions with land boards
- ◆ Automatic land transaction freezes when widow safety risk is reported
- ◆ Community paralegal networks to protect widows
- ◆ Surveillance of high risk clan meetings

4. Institutional Alignment — Roles Must Shift



NGAO (Chiefs, ACCs)

- ▲ Log threats by typology in OB books
- ▲ Trigger DCI within 1 hour for high risk indicators
- ▲ Issue protection letters for relocation, land injunctions
- ▲ Lead norm change through barazas (UN Women identifies chief inaction as a critical failure.)

NPS / DCI

- ▲ Prioritise the highest risk categories (women 18–34; widows; elderly women) per Africa Data Hub.
- ▲ Improve forensic response, particularly in rural femicides

GBVRCs

- ▲ Integrate forensic readiness for femicide precursors
- ▲ Provide evidence kits tailored to urban/remote contexts

County Gender Sector Working Groups

- ▲ Convene quarterly typology review meetings
- ▲ Maintain multi-source dashboards (police + media + health + CSOs)

5. Financing and Monitoring



Financing

- ◆ Safe houses and relocation hubs (critical in Kilifi, Nairobi, Bungoma)
- ◆ County legal aid and paralegal networks for widow land disputes
- ◆ Masculinity programmes and digital safety campaigns
- ◆ Resource DCI and GBVRCs for typology specific response



Monitoring and Evaluation

Counties should track:

- ◆ Number of early warning flags per typology
- ◆ Response times
- ◆ Successful relocations
- ◆ Injunctions issued in land-related threats
- ◆ Reductions in county specific femicides

Heinrich Böll Stiftung highlights that lack of data transparency hides the true scale of femicide.

6. Recommendations — 12 Month County Plans

Each county should develop a typology specific annual plan that includes:



- 1 Typology mapping for hotspots and high risk profiles



- 2 First Hour Response Protocols, differentiated by typology



- 3 County Protection Network (shelters, escorted transport, safe houses)



- 4 Survivor & widow protection pathways



- 5 School based gender norms and masculinity programmes



- 6 Digital safety and interpersonal-violence campaigns (urban counties)



- 7 Community “myth breaking” campaigns (e.g., on witchcraft)



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Public County Femicide
Dashboard updated quarterly

- ◆ Early warning signs are visible,
- ◆ Most killings are preventable,
- ◆ Institutional inaction not lack of evidence is the biggest barrier.

7. Conclusion

Typology aware prevention is not a theoretical framing it is the single most actionable strategy Kenya's counties can adopt to reduce femicide. Evidence from UN Women, Africa Data Hub, Global Sisters Report, and independent national reviews reveals:

- ◆ Femicide typologies are predictable,
- ◆ County drivers are distinct,

A county system built on typology specific detection, immediate protection, coordinated institutional response, and strategic financing will dramatically reduce femicide across Kenya.

References

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