



NCCK YOUTH POLICY



NCCK
National Council of Churches of Kenya



NCCK

National Council of Churches of Kenya

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FOREWORD

This Youth Policy and Engagement Framework are the official documents of the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) and the common guides for its Member Churches/Organizations on youth. The Council recognizes that young people are the most important resource in any society and therefore, has developed these documents to set forth the authority by which NCCK will design its interventions and future programmes for youth at all levels. The development of both the Youth Policy and the Youth Engagement Framework was inspired by the 2021 theme of NCCK, “*Wholesome Youth for a Wholesome Society*” (1 Timothy 4:12). NCCK is the largest umbrella church organization in Kenya. Formed in 1913, it serves as a Secretariat to its Protestant member Churches and Organizations to implement their development and ecumenical initiatives. It brings together 32 Member Churches and 18 Christian-based Organizations and since its formation, NCCK has been a key player in mobilizing Kenyans for social, economic, and political development issues that have confronted the nation.

According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, 75% of Kenyan population is composed of people below 35 years. The youth aged 15 – 34 years constitute 36%; the children below 14 years constitute 39% of the total population. The NCCK in her planning and programming takes cognizance of the implications of this youth bulge on the socio-economic and political development of the country. Admittedly, Kenya's youth bulge presents an opportunity for economic, social, and political development while at the same time portending risks and threats to the country's social cohesion and stability if not adequately empowered and supported. It is evident that over the last decade, the youth of Kenya have been going through difficult social, economic, and political challenges, and NCCK is aware that unless pre-emptive steps are taken, the youth bulge may become a curse instead of producing a development dividend for our country.

In this regard, both the Youth Policy and Engagement Framework will facilitate NCCK to integrate the youth voices into its structures, programmes, and activities; promote public and private partnerships in youth engagement/empowerment; and enhance community understanding and participation on issues affecting the young people. It will stimulate effective coordination and maintain standards of youth programming within NCCK and its membership. It is envisaged that the policy and the engagement framework will offer direction on diverse issues affecting youth, streamline the operations of NCCK and enable young people to advance their own livelihoods and help solve their country's development challenges. It will provide the basis for resource mobilization, capacity building and mentorship for youth by NCCK.

We are grateful to the Lord God Almighty for enabling us to develop these documents and continue to rely on His provisions as we embark on its implementation. Special gratitude goes to the consultants that walked with us on this journey - Dr Katindi Sivi and Vincent Kimosop.

Rev Canon Chris Kinyanjui
General Secretary

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ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMNS

AU	African Union
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
CoK	Constitution of Kenya
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations (FBOs),
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GoK	Government of Kenya
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
KYDP	Kenya Youth Development Policy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations (NGOs),
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
YSOs	Youth Serving Organisations

KEY DEFINITIONS OF TERMS¹

Youth/Young People

The Kenya Constitution 2010 and the Nation Youth Policy 2019 defines the Youth as a person aged 18 years and who has not reached the age of 35 years. However, to ensure that youth issues are addressed comprehensively, this Policy also proposes some interventions for young people aged between 15 to 17 years. The policy interchangeably uses the term youth and young people, because of the broader focus that it has taken

The Policy uses the term 'youth' to refer to both age and youth-hood. With respect to age, a youth will be defined as a person, male or female, in the age bracket of 15 to 34 years; while youth-hood will be looked at as the specific stage between childhood and adulthood when people have to negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and socio-economic and cultural changes to manoeuvre the transition from dependence to independence, take effective control of their lives and assume social commitments.

The Policy recognizes youth-hood as a period of transition and vulnerability when the youth have to undergo learning, transition to work, staying healthy and safe, forming families, exercising citizenship and adherence to national values and principles of governance. Success in this period of transition requires development of human capital of the youth, empowering the youth to productively contribute to sustainable development both nationally and internationally; take up leadership roles, make informed and competent choices, and develop a sense of wellbeing. The Policy recognizes the fact that youth is not a homogenous group. Although young people experience some common developmental issues, their backgrounds, experiences, interests, gender, requirements, and cultures are diverse.

Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is both a means and an end, an attitudinal, structural, and cultural process whereby youth gain the ability, authority, and agency to make decisions and implement change in their own and other people's lives both now and in their adulthood while bearing responsibility for the consequences of those decisions and actions.

Empowering youth means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which youth can act on their own behalf and on their terms, rather than the direction of others (The Commonwealth Youth Programme Plan of Action). These enabling conditions include:

1. Economic and social based
2. Political will and commitment for mainstreaming youth issues at all levels, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative framework
3. A stable environment for equity, peace, and democracy; and,
4. Access to knowledge, information, and skills.

Youth empowerment is therefore addressed as a gateway to intergenerational equity, assets enhancement, civic engagement and democracy building and all programs that focus on positive youth development.

¹ Adopted from the Kenya Youth Development Policy, 2019

Youth Participation

Youth participation refers to the youth having influence on and shared responsibility for decisions and actions that affect the lives of the youth within a context that acknowledges and respects their talents and strengths and supports them in finding ways to deal with the issues that affect them.

Youth Development

This Policy aligns itself with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) human development perspective which emphasizes the richness of human life and focuses on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people. The term Youth Development therefore means improving the lives that the youth lead, giving them more freedom and opportunities to live the lives they value. It means developing the abilities of the youth and giving them a chance to use these abilities to flourish. This Policy therefore intends that the youth lead healthy and creative life, are knowledgeable, and have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. The Policy also intends to create the requisite conditions that guarantee youth their rights and security, supports their participation in political and economic life, contributes to environmental sustainability and ensures gender equality.

Government

The Policy applies to the two levels of Government. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) has provided for two levels of government: The National Government and the 47 County Governments.

Stakeholders

These include private sector, development partners, Faith Based Organisations (FBOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Youth Serving Organisations (YSOs) and individuals.

To achieve the Policy objectives and priorities, the following institutions are fundamental:

- Government (National & County)
- Faith Based Organizations
- Private Sector
- Civil Society

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) has been concerned about the bulging youth population in Kenya. NCCK is aware of the short window of opportunity and blessing this phenomenon presents as more young people enter the working age and the country's dependency is reduced thus increasing incomes, savings, and investments. In addition to economic opportunities, it also contributes to social and political development of the country through meaningful social and civic engagement. However, large youth numbers can also present a demographic time bomb if this young working age group is not adequately empowered, supported, or gainfully employed. It creates a large mass of frustrated youth because of high unemployment which translates to a high dependency ratio, and low savings which impacts on the investments that can be made. The youth also put a strain on resources directed towards health, security, and education and this makes it difficult to channel resources to long term development projects - an issue likely to become a potential source of social and political instability.

Article 55 of Kenya's Constitution requires that the State undertakes measures to ensure that the youth are gainfully engaged in economic, political, and social spheres of the society. The Devolved System of Government has also accorded them a great opportunity to participate

NCCK has focused on and supported the youth in Kenya to live wholesome lives for more than 100 years!

in the development and implementation of programmes and projects that address their priorities at the local level. Whereas there are numerous policies, legal and institutional provisions created for young people to engage, and whereas young people have been at the centre of driving some notable innovations, these have not been effective in comprehensively resolving youth concerns in Kenya. NCCK and the church at large recognizes that unless more pre-emptive steps are taken and urgently, the youth bulge may become a curse instead of producing a development dividend for our country.

I.1 Background

NCCK has focused on and supported the youth in Kenya to live wholesome lives for more than one hundred years in line with her motto, "For Wananchi". The focus on the youth has always been inspired by the message of God to the youth recorded in 1 Timothy 4:12

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

This inspiration to the youth is repeated in the words of the elder of the early church, Apostle John, who wrote:

I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one

Recognizably, the youth are expected to be actively involved in the spiritual and social-political life of the society. The past NCCK engagements include the campaign

against recruitment of boys to work away from their homes in 1913; advocacy against inadequate housing in townships in 1918; advocacy for provision of equal education opportunities for boys and girls in 1919; establishment of Alliance High School, the first one for native Kenyans, in 1920; establishment of a rescue center for women in the 1920s; the Urban Mission in the 1950s; advocacy against the Emergency Laws in 1950s; and establishment of the Village Polytechnics in the 1960s. Prior to setting up the Village Polytechnics, the NCKK carried out a study titled “After School, What?”, which continues to influence government policy on technical training.

In line with this rich history of youth engagement, NCKK commissioned a Youth Fragility Study in December 2020 which sought to assess levels of youth fragility, vulnerability, and participation in governance processes in Kenya. The study included a literature review and nine focus group discussions of one hundred and sixty-four (164) young people organized by the Regional Offices of the NCKK. The study revealed that youth in Kenya are not adequately involved in governance and decision-making processes and are not adequately given opportunities to assume positions of leadership and responsibility. The insufficient opportunities for skills development and training for appropriate livelihoods consigns the youth to a perpetual life of poverty. This makes them amenable to manipulation by political and business actors so that they act both as perpetrators and victims of violence in the society. More specifically, the young people identified eight main issues which include:

-
- i. Poverty, which encapsulates challenges related to unemployment, underemployment, lack of opportunities, lack of support for young entrepreneurs and talented youth
 - ii. Poor education and training
 - iii. Crime and insecurity, which they experience as both victims and perpetrators, high-handed treatment and harassment by security agencies and government officials, as well as their increased indulgence with drugs and substance abuse
 - iv. Exclusion from governance, politics, and decision-making processes
 - v. Mental Health issues leading to stress, depression, suicide, and murders
 - vi. Family Life Challenges marked by moral decay, marital breakdowns, casual sex, teenage pregnancies, and illicit sexual relations
 - vii. Sexual and Gender Based Violence including Female Genital Mutilation
 - viii. Health related challenges especially sexually transmitted diseases
-

I.2 NCKK's Strategic Response

Based on these concerns and the future implications for young people and the country, NCKK has resolved to theme the 2021 64th General Assembly as 'Wholesome Youth for a Wholesome Society'. The conference will profile the key role that the youth play in promoting the wellbeing of the society as well as in the County Coordinating Committees, Regional Conferences, NCKK Month, The Youth Pre-Assembly and during the inter-assembly years (2021 – 2024). Apart from reflecting on the initiatives and engagements NCKK has had that target and empowers the youth, NCKK developed a Youth Policy and a Youth Engagement Framework to provide general guidelines as well as practical interventions that will facilitate it to integrate the youth voices into its structures, programmes, and activities. Through these interventions, NCKK envisages that it will: get direction on diverse issues affecting youth, streamline the operations of NCKK and enable young people to advance their own livelihoods and help solve their country's development challenges. More specifically, NCKK envisions that it will foster public and private partnerships in youth engagement/empowerment; enhance community understanding and participation on issues affecting the young people; help streamline the operations of NCKK and stimulate effective resourcing and coordination while maintaining standards of youth programming within NCKK and its membership; as well capacity build and mentor young people. We hope that through this elaborate youth engagement process, we shall contribute to solving the country's development challenges.

2. THE YOUTH POLICY

The youth policy provides general guidelines on investing in young people, to help develop their full potential and facilitate their meaningful engagement for their transformation and that of their communities. The policy therefore serves as the point of reference for all NCCK structures and leadership to:

- 1) Provide overall guidance when engaging and developing young people
- 2) Ensure consistency when designing youth engagement programmes
- 3) Provide a framework for engaging other stakeholders and partners in the process

For accountability, NCCK structures and its leadership shall adhere to this policy by adapting it to their context, and by aligning their decisions, programmes, and activities to the policy provisions. NCCK affirms that it is devoted to upholding meaningful youth engagement and inclusive decision making as a central issue. NCCK fully recognizes that deliberate, holistic, and systematic approaches are necessary to successfully attain youth empowerment from the local levels to the national level. To this end, NCCK is committed to:

- 1) Working with families and communities to have a positive attitude toward the value of youth, their leadership and decision-making ability
- 2) Advocating for effective implementation of government policies, laws, budgets, and programs, to realize equitable and inclusive outcomes; and/or advocating for new ones where there is absence or need to review these policies, laws, budgets, and programmes to accommodate the relevant changes in the society
- 3) Strengthening the capacities of youth serving community systems and institutions like education, health, or justice systems to offer quality, inclusive, and relevant youth interventions
- 4) Facilitating effective coordination of stakeholders implementing programmes targeted at young people
- 5) Building the individual capacity of youth and mentoring them to effectively tackle the challenges that limit their active and meaningful participation and involvement, so that youth can in turn drive the attainment of development
- 6) Developing and implementing programmes which invest in youth, promote their wellbeing, and include them in meaningful engagement

2.1 Vision:

“A nation where young people have an equal opportunity to realize their full potential and aspirations in different spheres of their lives”

2.2 Mission

“To accelerate the further integration and implementation of policies, laws, programmes and projects targeted at empowering young people through partnerships, coordination and mentorship in order to realize wholesome youth for a wholesome society””

2.3 Overall Goal

To promote holistic development of young people and their effective participation in different spheres and sectors of society.

2.4 Specific Objectives

- 1) To profile the necessity of increased and concerted focus on young people in the nation
 - 2) To rally the energies, resources and programmes of the institution, members, and partners towards the concerns of young people
 - 3) To halt the rising levels of despair and desperation among young people
 - 4) To advocate for improved quality services rendered and targeted at young people
 - 5) To increase informed demand for interventions targeted at young people
 - 6) To expand and align partnership and collaboration for effective delivery of commitments to young people
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2.5 Strategies

- 1) Align investments and coordinate plans for development of young people within NCK member churches and leadership to ensure high impact and sustainability
- 2) Generate evidence and promote increased use of information in the development of programmes, projects and initiatives targeted at young people
- 3) Monitor and evaluate the interventions made towards young people and make timely changes to ensure effectiveness and optimal use of resources
- 4) Build sustainable partnerships and collaborations at all levels to facilitate ownership, learning and synergy in implementation of interventions

3. POLICY DIRECTIONS/GUIDELINES

The policy directions or guidelines are at different levels

- 1) Governance/Leadership
- 2) Institutional
- 3) Programming

3.1 Governance/Leadership level

- Increased awareness among church members and local communities about the importance of meaningful youth engagement and NCCK's pivotal role in shaping the future.
- Commitment to develop the necessary capacity within the church structure to mainstream youth and youth issues skills and acquire the knowledge which enables youth to take on an active role and positively influence their meaningful contribution in their communities.
- Participation, Collaboration and engagement of other youth and student-led organizations and entities to promote a cohesive and interdisciplinary youth action.
- Advocacy and to increase and setting up of opportunities for meaningful youth engagement in local and national settings.
- Involvement of youth in decision-making processes at all levels.
- Promoting a culture of learning and continuous improvement of policies, programmes and initiatives

3.2 Institutional Level

- Providing for adequate financial and budgetary resources to support effective implementation of youth centred programme
- Legal provisions that provide for institutional commitments and obligations for the prioritization of youth programmes
- Deliberate programmes to mentor and place young people in positions of responsibility and decision making
- Strengthening the capacity of youth ministries in the church structures to facilitate the capacity building of young people and adequately address their issues or deliver relevant service to them
- Leveraging on information systems is a key plank that can be used to reach and engage young people
- Commitment to develop youth competent and motivated workforce responsible for handling the youth docket

3.3 Issue based /Programming Level:

3.3.1 Identity

Goal: To develop young people who are godly, confident, and proud of their identity

Interventions

- Empower church leaders and clergy to respond and tackle to emerging issues effectively and promptly from theological and social approaches
- Develop mentorship programmes that support the development of young people through their different stages of life
- Partner and support the implementation of 'Rites of Passage' programmes at the community level for both the boy and the girl child
- Develop and publish documents/materials that are youth friendly that facilitate open and honest conversations, anchored in God's word on emerging issues like personal debt, gambling, mental health, technology addiction etc
- Generate knowledge through research to support and monitor the impact of the interventions

3.3.2 Employment

Goal: To empower young people with marketable skills that facilitate them to gainfully engage in the economy

Interventions

- Partnership with the National and County level to develop and consolidate market access and value chains
- Partner with the private sector to provide access to credit programmes targeted at supporting initiatives by young people
- Establish youth centres in churches where young people can come share ideas and shape them
- Support young people through trainings, exchange programmes and promoting talent search initiatives that offers them an opportunity to showcase their potentials
- Support members to develop linkages, learning and exchange programmes at the national, county, and local levels on best practices and working models

3.3.3 Education and Training

Goal: To shape positive attitudes among young people on technical trainings and skills development

Interventions

- Partnership with the National and County level to develop and consolidate market access and value chains
- Partner with the private sector to provide access to credit programmes targeted at supporting initiatives by young people
- Establish youth centres in churches where young people can come share ideas and shape them
- Support young people through trainings, exchange programmes and promoting talent search initiatives that offers them an opportunity to showcase their potentials
- Support members to develop linkages, learning and exchange programmes at the national, county, and local levels on best practices and working models

3.3.4 Sexual and Reproductive Health

Goal: To empower young to make informed and responsible choices on their reproductive health

Interventions

- Partner with the Ministry of Health and County Governments in the provision of health services
- Promote holistic approach/integrated healthcare provision including mental health
- Advocate for family centred health services and with a special focus on young people
- Mobilize resources to support our work and partners in the health sector
- Empower church leaders to provide holistic ministries and through their platforms

3.3.5 Family Life

Goal: To support families to effectively raise and engage young people

Interventions

- Champion and support the implementation of the National Family Policy
- Establish family strengthening programmes and raise resources to facilitate effective execution
- Engage members and partners to mainstream family in their programmes and budgets
- Partner with faith-based organizations, academic institutions, and government to carryout research to inform family programmes
- Advocate against negative cultural practices including FGM, early marriages and drug abuse

3.3.6 Political Engagement

Goal: To support effective political engagement of young people

Interventions

- Carryout civic education and voter education to support young people to effectively engage in politics
- Partner with civic society and donors to support young people who are engaged in politics
- Build linkages between young people in active politics to foster mentorship and peer learning
- Advocate for policy changes to remove barriers against young people in political processes
- Work with political parties to develop mentorship for young people in political leadership and development

3.3.7 Faith & Religion

Goal: To nurture and develop values-based youth (shaped by the word of God)

Interventions

- Partner with different ministries to develop and disseminate bible study guides and materials targeted at young people
- Partner with the government in rollout of spiritual formations programmes
- Advocate for the appointment and establishment of chaplaincy departments in different levels of education
- Engage church leaders to overcome challenges faced by young people in marriage processes
- Partner with the media to promote correct reporting and coverage of family and faith matters

4. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The policy will require implementation strategies. In addition to the principles laid out in the policy engagement framework and the contextualization of the documents at a later state including the drawing up of implementation plans, the policy provides general action points to guide that implementation. These include but are not limited to:

- Capacity building
- Monitoring performance measures
- Resourcing the policy

4.1 Capacity Building

A youth engagement framework has been developed to accompany this youth policy. The framework documents general practical ways of implementing the policy and customizing it to the different contexts to engage diverse views, experiences and needs of young people and mainstream their concerns in all NCK member churches, leadership, organizational activities, and strategies. Specific principles and administrative actions have been provided to achieve effective youth development and youth inclusive outcomes. Given the number of issues raised or the complexity of youth issues in general, NCK will need to build the right implementation capacity, equipped with a shared vision of how this policy and implementation framework will be rolled out to the lowest level of NCK structures. A general training of trainers will be carried out on how to interpret the policy and use the youth empowerment framework. The trained youth officers will then be guided on how to customize the engagement framework to their local contexts and produce a document that will be used to further train sub-regional youth officers to the lowest level.

4.2 Performance measures/M&E

Monitoring and evaluation shall be an integral part of the Policy. Monitoring and evaluation of the Policy will establish whether its intended purpose is being achieved, challenges facing its implementation, what corrective actions may be needed to ensure delivery of results and whether it's making any positive contribution to the sustainable development of the country. The context specific Youth Engagement Frameworks will be the basis for monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes to ensure successful and impactful implementation. We shall also establish mechanisms for tracking progress and having corrective measures to update and reviewing implementation plans as need arises as well as provide regular feedback to the umbrella body.

4.3 Financing the policy

To implement this policy, NCK together with its partners will have to re-strategize to achieve an increased funding allocation for youth programmes. We will engage governments at the National and County levels for them to prioritize and increase budgetary allocation to

support young people. Some of the proposed resource mobilization strategies will include but be not limited to:

- a) Increased internal budgetary allocation for youth programmes.
- b) Joint programming with government (national and county) to implement youth programmes and projects
- c) Engage with private sector and industry stakeholders to develop co-financing strategies for some youth programmes (scholarships; internship; mentorship; apprenticeship; the manufacture and production of sports products; construction of sports facilities.
- d) Sensitize Churches to increase budgetary allocation and support the implementation of youth-centered programmes during their regular planning and budgeting processes
- e) Strengthen coordination of partner and donor-supported youth initiatives to enhance resource mobilization

5. CONCLUSION

This policy represents a commitment by NCCK towards improving the welfare of young people in Kenya. It has been informed by the study that was carried out to seek the perspective of young people on different issues and challenges facing them. We value the place of evidence in shaping our interventions and programmes

The policy proposes a comprehensive and innovative approach to addressing matters touching on young people. It builds on ongoing provisions as captured in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Vision 2030, Kenya Youth Policy 2019, and Kenya's global commitments.

6. MEMBER CHURCH COMMITMENT

To affirm that as a member of NCKK, we are devoted to upholding meaningful youth engagement and inclusive decision making of young people, we hereby endorse the implementation of this youth policy in our church structure.

NCKK Members

Name of Member Church / Institution	Head of Church / Institution	Signature
1) Africa Brotherhood Church		
2) Africa Christian Church and Schools		
3) Africa Church of the Holy Spirit		
4) Africa Interior Church		
5) African Independent Pentecostal Church of Africa		
6) African Israel Nineveh Church		
7) African Orthodox Church in Kenya		
8) Anglican Church of Kenya		
9) Church of Africa Sinai Mission		

10) Church of Christ in Africa		
11) Church of God in East Africa East Africa		
12) Coptic Orthodox Church		
13) Episcopal Church of Africa		
14) Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya		
15) Free Methodist Church in Kenya		
16) Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya		
17) Friends Church in Kenya in Kenya (Quakers)		
18) Full Gospel Churches of Kenya		
19) Kenya Assemblies of God		
20) Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church		
21) Kenya Mennonite Church		

22) Lyahuka Church of East Africa		
23) Maranatha Mission of Kenya		
24) Methodist Church in Kenya		
25) National Independent Church of Africa		
26) Overcoming Faith Centre Church of Africa		
27) Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa		
28) Presbyterian Church of East Africa		
29) Reformed Church of East Africa		
30) Salvation Army		
31) Scriptural Holiness Mission		
32) Zion Harvest Mission		

NCCK Associate Members

Name of Member Church / Institution	Head of Church / Institution	Signature
33) Bible Society of Kenya		
34) Christian Churches Educational Association		
35) Christian Health Association of Kenya		
36) Christian Hostels Fellowship		
37) Fellowship of Christian Unions		
38) Kenya Ecumenical Church Loan Fund		
39) Kenya Students Christian Fellowship		
40) Kenya United Independent Churches		
41) Public Law Institute		
42) Scripture Union of Kenya		
43) St Paul's University		

44) Young Men's Christian Association		
45) Young Women's Christian Association		

NCKK Fraternal Members

Name of Member Church / Institution	Head of Church / Institution	Signature
46) African Evangelistic Enterprise		
47) Daystar University		
48) Trans World Radio		
49) Trinity Fellowship		
50) World Vision		



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