



The Civil Society & Social Innovation Alliance

Building a Digital Citizen Engagement System for Nairobi

How the World Bank’s CIVIC Digital Platform is helping Nairobi City County redesign citizen feedback systems and how partners can help scale this model.

Location: **Nairobi, Kenya** Pilot Launch: **April, 2026**



The Opportunity

Nairobi is piloting a digital citizen engagement system that enables residents to provide feedback, report service delivery issues, and participate in city decision-making.

The initiative integrates AI-enabled feedback systems, participatory budgeting, and multi-channel citizen engagement to strengthen transparency, accountability, and service delivery.

Digital Platforms Powering The System

Sema Nai

Enables citizens to propose and vote on local development projects

Strengthens participatory governance at the city level

WardWise Whispers

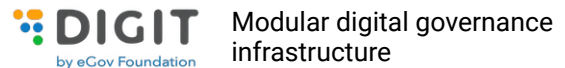
Uses AI to categorize and analyze citizen complaints

Helps local authorities respond faster to service delivery issues

Our Technology

The CIVIC Digital Platform uses **open-source Digital Public Goods** designed to be replicable across cities.

Core Technologies



Multi-channel citizen engagement



Web Platforms



SMS



WhatsApp



Voice Channels



In-person Engagement

These tools enable inclusive participation across digital and offline channels.

Implementing Partners

This initiative is delivered through a multi-stakeholder partnership, bringing together global institutions, local government, and civil society.

Through CIVIC Digital, implementing partners can help scale inclusive digital participation systems in Africa and beyond.



Civil Society Organizations



Disability Organizations



Resident Associations

The CIVIC Digital Platform

As development operations increasingly rely on data, digital infrastructure, and service delivery platforms, citizen engagement mechanisms must evolve accordingly. Yet digital participation tools are often piloted as stand-alone innovations rather than integrated into core public systems.

The CIVIC Digital Platform is an initiative under **CIVIC: the Civil Society and Social Innovation Alliance**, the World Bank's dedicated financing and support facility for partnering with civil society organizations and social innovators across Bank-financed operations. CIVIC Digital works with governments, civil society, and technology innovators to design digital systems that strengthen citizen engagement and public accountability. Through its Maker Residency model, this Platform brings together local stakeholders and international civic tech practitioners to co-design citizen engagement platforms grounded in local political and institutional realities.

The Nairobi pilot is being implemented in close coordination with the **Kenya Accountable Devolution Program (KADP)** to ensure that platform design reflects country-level governance systems rather than imported technology solutions.



The Challenge



Nairobi City County serves approximately **50,000 citizens daily**, yet citizen feedback systems remain fragmented and ineffective.



Seven separate participation channels exist across departments, but they operate independently. Residents often receive no confirmation that their input was received or acted upon, and public participation currently reaches **only 0.07%** of the population.



Structural barriers also exclude large segments of Nairobi's population. Many residents rely on feature phones rather than smartphones, consultations are often conducted during working hours, and formal language requirements can exclude citizens who primarily communicate in Sheng or local dialects.



Previous technology investments have struggled to improve participation because they addressed tools rather than the institutional processes behind them.

The result is a broken feedback loop: citizens share input, but it rarely translates into visible action.

The Solution CIVIC Digital is Supporting

To address this gap, the CIVIC Digital Platform is supporting **Nairobi City County** to build and deploy digital platforms that enable the government to engage directly with citizens and strengthen feedback systems.

Through a **Maker Residency co-design process** involving government officials, civil society organizations, and community representatives, the two-open source platforms are being developed to improve citizen participation and service delivery.

Sema Nai: Participatory Budgeting Portal

Built on the **Consul Democracy framework**, Sema Nai enables residents to propose and vote ward-level spending priorities, comment on draft policies, and track budget discussions.

Budget categories were defined during the co-design residency with community representatives ensuring that participation reflects real local priorities.



WardWise Whispers: AI-Enabled Complaint Management

WardWise Whispers allows residents to submit service complaints through five channels: web form, SMS, WhatsApp, voice call, or in-person. An AI-supported system categorizes and routes complaints to the appropriate county department, reducing delays and improving accountability.

The platform is designed to support multiple languages: Sheng, Swahili, not only formal English and Kiswahili, and low-connectivity environments, ensuring that participation is accessible beyond smartphone users.



The Solution CIVIC Digital is Supporting

Many civic technology projects fail because they focus on technology rather than institutions. The Nairobi pilot takes a different approach:



County-initiated demand

The initiative was requested by Nairobi City County itself, increasing the likelihood of long-term adoption.



Evidence-based design

Platform features were informed by a political economy analysis and designed to address real participation barriers.



Inclusive access

Multiple communication channels ensure that citizens can participate regardless of device access, literacy levels, or language.



Governance before technology

Clear operational roles and accountability structures are being established before platform launch.

Partnership Opportunities

CIVIC Digital is actively seeking partners and funders to support the Nairobi Pilot and help scale this model to other cities and countries.

Partners investing in the Nairobi Pilot contribute not only to local implementation but also **to the development of a replication toolkit**, including:



Funding Partner

Grant or co-financing for platform deployment, community mobilization, M&E, and open documentation. Funders receive co-branding, structured learning outputs, and replication rights.



Technical Co-Developer

Joint development of AI routing, language packs, accessibility features, and interoperability bridges between Consul Democracy and DIGIT. Contributions credited in the repository and publications.



Research Partner

Co-design of the M&E framework, participation in the Q3 2026 learning review, and joint publication of findings.



Implementation Partner

Leading the co-design residency model in new countries, with CIVIC Digital providing the framework, methodology, and governance toolkit.



Government Partner

Running a Maker Residency in their jurisdiction, committing to system integration and cross-country learning.



Knowledge Partner

Membership in the CIVIC AI Collective, a 60-member global practitioner network on responsible AI in civic contexts.

Learning Agenda

The Nairobi Pilot will generate evidence on key questions, including:

- » Whether digital participation increases engagement among underrepresented groups
- » How transparency and response times influence citizens trust
- » What governance mechanisms sustain participation platforms over time

The **Q3 2026 M&E** review will produce a public findings report. Partners interested in shaping the learning framework are encouraged to engage before the April launch.

Connect with us

Aly Rahim

Program Manager, CIVIC Digital
arahim@worldbank.org

Sruti Bandyopadhyay

Program Coordinator, CIVIC Digital
sbandyopadhyay2@worldbank.org

We invite partners across sectors, including donors, foundations, civil society, civic tech, academia, and governments to collaborate with us in scaling inclusive digital solutions that strengthen citizen engagement and public accountability.



civicglobal.org



Follow us and learn more on:

@civicalliancewb
 @civicglobal