

A-MAIZE-ING

By Louise Peggy Rasiga Nyambori, Maasai Mara University

Kazi ni kazi ukijikaza! [Heshimu hustle yangu as I respect yours.]

Hardworking woman

Poor man



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This meme was placed under topical area *E—social media as platforms for an inclusion that pays*. It was sourced from X platform under the user with the link <https://x.com/TheDamiForeign/status/1972575671776911408?s=03>. Peggy tied at the first position with Joyfridah Mumbi, also from Maasai Mara University, and was a co-recipient of the Golden Pen Award—2nd Collaborative Writing Experience and Symposium.

My name is Njenga A-maize-ing. I sell cobs of maize *-motomoto na soft-*along Ufanisi Road. For ten years, this has been my hustle. I wake up early to go look for good stock or have it delivered just in time for the 4 o'clock buzz for *mahindi choma*. And how can I forget the firifiri! My customers love its tantalising flavour and tell me I am *a-maize-ing!*

A few months ago, Njeri opened her own maize roasting stand along this road. I had seen her scout for a place, but I assumed it was for mitumba. A few weeks later, equipped with her own charcoal stove, grill and umbrella, she opened her establishment.

The first few weeks were hard for her. She barely sold a cob, and I suspect her customers were her friends with whom they shared banter for longer than was needed. I could see the disappointment in her eyes. Ufanisi hasn't always been kind. She would sometimes have to stay open for longer so that she could earn half of what I earn in a day.

One day, she came with a contraption that could hold her phone while she spoke to it. I was amazed. Some Gen Z's who frequent my stall told me it is called live-streaming on TikTok. I still do not understand what tap-tap the

screen means, but I hear her shout it a few times.

Ever since that day, Njeri's business is booming. She has attracted a new crop of customers. People travel for hours just to eat maize from her stall. She has made people see that this job can be done with the introduction of new ideas. I respect her so much. I might not tap-tap the screen, but what people do not know is that I have educated my children and bought a matatu that plies several routes in this town. Njeri has opened a second stall. Kazi ni kazi ukijikaza!

Dated April 30th, 2026, in Nairobi, Kenya.

About the author:

Louise Peggy Rasiga Nyambori is a third-year Communication and Public Relations student at Maasai Mara University and the Vice Chairperson of the Maasai Mara University Economics Students' Association (MMUESA), 2024/2025. She participated in the inaugural Collaborative Writing Segment in the 3rd National Economics Debate (KESA) where her work tallied the highest points, earning her the Golden Pen Award title. In the 4th National Economics Debate, she not only retained her title but tied with fellow teammate, Joyfridah Mumbi. This twin victory, along with one of their university's teams emerging as first runner-up in the segment, is a testament to her leadership skills.

A creative storyteller with a passion for photography, she emerged as the 2nd Runner-up in the Master at Photos KE photography competition in November 2025. This achievement highlights how her mind connects different worlds, whether it is framing a photograph or structuring an argument. This creativity allows her to visualize data in a way that makes it accessible, proving that art and science are not as separate as they seem.

She has always loved writing—from 3-page compositions in primary school to weaving narratives through memes—it is an art she hopes more people will want to explore. This passion for storytelling extends beyond the frame and page as she is enthused by musical theatre.

Notes:

The original article is published by Economics Scholar Panel, and is accessible via <https://econscholaruon.wordpress.com/2026/04/30/a-maize-ing/>. The shares her insights relating to the Collaborative Writing Experience via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVOgq3VHj7g>. She author extends her appreciation to the following individuals:

- i. The coordinators, Paul Mwika (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/paul-mwika/>) and Benson Muiva (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/benson-muiva-b516a91a3/>).
- ii. The convener of the 2nd Collaborative Writing Symposium, Noel Otieno (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/noel-otieno-903191110/>), and the co-convenor, Kefa Simiyu,
- iii. The adjudication panel—Joseph Michuki (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/joseph-michuki/>), Wambua Muindi (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/wambua-muindi/>), Kelvin Mulega (<https://ke.linkedin.com/in/libweche-kevin-215574197/>), and the Writer-in-Chief, Kefa Simiyu,
- iv. Members of the Scholars Assembly—Collaborative Writing Symposium,
- v. Participants in the post-Symposium brief chaired by Paul Mwika on February 17th, 2026, and
- vi. The First Reader, Moses Muchiri (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/moses-muchiri-mwangi-220207187/>), and the Reader-in-Chief, Wambua Muindi

The author further extends her gratitude to the Economics Students Association of Kenya, and the partner, Economics Scholar Panel (<https://x.com/EconscholarU> on X) for availing the platform for minds to network, and exchange writing vibes.

Post script:

The author was motivated by the question: why are certain fields [of study and work] not accessible to certain people or groups of people? What explains this behaviour? The interest was further piqued by the notion of “Get the bag and related TikTok lives,” e.g., eating on live camera, advertising products, and dissemination of information. She then fuses environmental and political consciousness into the narration while noting that the audience matters. Drawing from economics and marketing literature, she thought, “No market is too saturated ... There is space for everyone. What matters is product appeal and signaling.” As a general comment, she calls out to everyone [who cares to listen and understand] to “take our media seriously”. She notes that it is a question of media literacy in the era of intentional disinformation, misinformation which is unintentional, and mal-information which entails maligning individuals or groups. Other issues highlighted include: the intersectionality of gender and leveraging technology, and the burden of care and wage penalty with women earning lower than men for the same tasks. Why do individuals of the same ability but belonging to different groups—i.e., men or women—face different compensation/ penalties for executing the same tasks? Last, the author draws inspiration

from the geographical relevance stemming from maize in Narok, maize as a staple crop, and roasted maize with pepper, which is a fast-food delicacy.

K. Simiyu notes, “Have you ever roasted yourself or been roasted? How did you feel? TikTok gave Njeri a tick as we ticked the box. Who knows where the checklist to success is? Some people tick many boxes; some marvel at the ticking; some have no idea where to tick; some are actually ticks, and we respect their hustle! But some, do it differently.

Where do ideas come from? How do we find new markets? How do we spot niches? The essay is about the other side of “struggle”. Is Njeri a TikToker, a-maize seller, or a-maize seller on TikTok. It is a question of malleability and ductility; or, in popular culture, a matter of “change or perish!”” Simiyu believes Wambua would say, “For she was child at heart, and work knows no tenderness.”

Reading through, Wambua Muindi draws a parallel with the Singer sewing machine which came to be associated with the Indian community in Kenya. He further raises eyebrows over some popular professions which define certain labor regimes. Overall, commends the author for stretching the constraints of feminist economics—beyond social reproduction of inequality, and redefining social development in the context of engendered labour and work. In so doing, the writer appreciates the centrality of digital cultures in rethinking the conceptualization of work. But then, do we choose work or work chooses us?

Mulega Kelvin links the meme at hand with confusion within the society arising from system norms in the corporate sector—adding value versus doing what the system demands.

