

FREE GUIDE · WHEELCHAIRS KENYA LTD

2026 Wheelchair Buyer's Guide for Kenyan Families

Which type fits. How to measure. What quality looks like. Real 2026 Kenyan prices. And the funding routes most families never hear about.

10 chapters

6 measurements

2026 prices

NCPWD funding

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What this guide covers

#	Chapter	Page
1	The five questions that decide the chair	2
2	Which type fits which situation	2
3	Sizing: the six measurements	3
4	Quality: what to check before you pay	4
5	Kenyan realities most guides ignore	4
6	What it really costs in 2026	5
7	Funding: who else can pay	6
8	Maintenance that doubles the life	7
9	Red flags and buying checklist	7
10	Your measurement worksheet	8

How to use this guide

Read chapter 3 and fill in the worksheet on the last page before you visit any shop. Those six numbers decide the chair more than any brand or feature. Bring the printed worksheet with you.

Why this guide exists

Most wheelchair advice online was written for Britain or America. The prices are wrong, the brands are unavailable here, the roads are smooth and there is an insurer paying. None of that describes buying a chair in Nairobi for a relative in Kitui.

This guide is written from the counter of a Nairobi CBD shop. It uses Kenyan prices from August 2026, names what the rest of the market charges, and covers the funding routes that exist in Kenyan law.

1. The five questions that decide the chair

Question	Why it decides the chair
Can the user push themselves?	Working arms and grip means a manual chair with 24 inch rear wheels. No arm strength and no full time caregiver means electric, or the chair becomes furniture.
How many hours a day will they sit?	Under four hours, a standard chair with a basic cushion. Over four hours you need recline, a pressure relief cushion, or both. This is the biggest predictor of pressure sores.
Is there a caregiver, and how strong?	An electric chair is over 30 kg. If one person lifts it into a boot daily, weight matters more than features.
Can the user walk to the toilet?	If not, a commode wheelchair replaces the bedpan and does the transport job. If they can stand and pivot, a fixed commode chair is steadier and cheaper to live with.
How wide is your narrowest door?	Measured, not estimated. This question sends more chairs back than any other.

2. Which type fits which situation

Type	Best for	Our price
Standard manual	Recovery, clinic runs, users with working arms. Most common need.	from KSh 15,000
Reclining manual	Anyone sitting over four hours. Recline shifts load off the seat bones.	from KSh 22,000
Commode wheelchair	User cannot walk to the toilet. Rolls there or uses the bucket.	KSh 18,000
Commode chair	User can stand and pivot. Stable bedside seat, does not roll.	KSh 27,000
Extra wide	Hip width leaving under 5 cm clearance in a 45 cm seat. To 150 kg.	KSh 25,000
Heavy duty chrome reclining	Heavier users to 120 kg, wet bathrooms, recline plus commode.	from KSh 30,000
Cerebral palsy / postural	User cannot hold trunk or head position. Never buy unfitted.	KSh 40,000
Pediatric	Children roughly 3 to 12. Needs free re-fitting as they grow.	KSh 15,000
Standard electric	No caregiver, user has hand control. Independence.	KSh 85,000
Reclining electric	All of the above plus powered recline for long sitting.	KSh 95,000

The honest version

An electric wheelchair is the most oversold product in this category. If there is a willing caregiver and the user goes out twice a week, a KSh 22,000 reclining manual chair plus a good cushion will do more for their comfort than a KSh 85,000 electric chair that lives in the corner because the compound is uneven.

3. Sizing: the six measurements

Wheelchair size is not set by height. It is set by six numbers, five from the body and one from your house. Take them with the person seated upright on a firm flat chair, hips and knees at right angles, in normal clothes.

#	Measurement	How to take it	Fit check
1	Seat width	Across the widest point of hips or thighs, seated. Add about 2.5 cm.	A flat hand slides between hip and side guard without pinching.
2	Seat depth	Back of buttocks along the outer thigh to the back of the knee. Subtract about 5 cm.	Two to three fingers between seat edge and back of knee.
3	Seat to footplate	Behind the knee to the heel, with a shoe on.	Thighs level on the seat, footplates about 5 cm off the ground.
4	Armrest height	Seat surface to the underside of the elbow, shoulders level.	Arms rest without shoulders lifting or user slumping.
5	Backrest height	Seat surface to the armpit.	About four fingers below the armpit for a self propeller.
6	Narrowest doorway	Clear opening of the tightest door the chair must pass.	45 cm seat is about 64 cm overall. 55 cm seat needs about 65 cm clear.

Why this matters more than the price

Too narrow presses on the hip bones and starts a pressure sore. Too wide and the shoulders overreach the push rims, which is how self propelling users end up with shoulder injuries. A seat that is too deep makes the user slide forward and slouch, which causes the back pain everyone blames on the chair being uncomfortable.

Fit checks follow the approach used in WHO wheelchair service training. Kenyan rehabilitation staff have been trained on the WHO eight step wheelchair service provision model; WHO's 2023 guidelines consolidated those eight steps into four, being select, fit, train and follow up.

4. Quality: what to check before you pay

Two chairs at the same price can differ by years of service life, and almost all of the difference is visible if you know where to look. Do this in the shop, before money changes hands.

- **Welds at the cross brace.** The X frame under the seat takes every impact. Look for even, continuous welds. Blobby or ground down welds are where cheap frames crack first.
- **Frame gauge.** Press the side frame firmly. Light gauge steel flexes visibly, and that flex is what fails at 18 months of daily use.
- **Chrome or paint.** Near a bathroom, chrome plating resists rust where painted steel corrodes at the welds within a year or two.
- **Tyres.** Solid never punctures and suits CBD and estate use. Pneumatic rides better on murram but needs a pump.
- **Both brakes.** Engage each and push hard. The chair should not creep. One sided bite is a fall waiting to happen during a transfer.
- **Castor bearings.** Spin each front castor. Silent and free. Grinding means the bearings are already going.
- **Upholstery.** Heavy gauge PVC or reinforced nylon, double stitched at load points. Thin vinyl stretches into a hammock and wrecks posture.
- **Spare parts.** Ask which parts the seller stocks. A chair with no parts supply is disposable regardless of price.
- **Written warranty.** Twelve months on frame and mechanism, in writing, with a physical address on it.

The single most useful question

Ask the seller: if a footplate breaks in eight months, what happens? A shop that repairs its own chairs answers immediately with a price and a timeline. A trader who imported a container changes the subject. That answer tells you more than any spec sheet.

5. Kenyan realities most guides ignore

Reality	What to do about it
Murram and unpaved compounds	Small front castors are useless off tarmac. Larger castors and pneumatic tyres beat any premium feature if the daily route is unpaved.
Matatu and car transport	If the chair travels most days, weight beats features. Heavy reclining frames do not fold into a saloon boot easily.
Walk up flats	A 30 kg electric chair carried up two flights daily will not happen for long, whatever is promised at the point of sale.
Wet bathrooms	Painted steel rusts at the welds and rusted welds fail under load with someone sitting on them. Chrome is not optional for bathroom use.
Unreliable power	Electric chairs need nightly charging. A flat battery means a user who cannot self propel is stuck in a room.

6. What it really costs in 2026

Prices across the Nairobi market, August 2026. The spread within each row is real, and is mostly frame gauge, weight rating, upholstery, and whether fitting and a written warranty are included.

Type	Market range	Our price	What moves the price
Standard manual	KSh 11,500 - 25,000	KSh from 15,000	Frame gauge, weight rating, tyre type
Commode wheelchair	KSh 13,800 - 30,000	KSh 18,000	Chrome vs paint, flip up armrests
Reclining manual	KSh 22,000 - 35,000	KSh from 22,000	Recline mechanism, headrest, footrests
Commode chair	KSh 11,500 - 30,000	KSh 27,000	Frame gauge, weight rating, height adjust
Heavy duty chrome reclining	KSh 25,000 - 35,000	KSh from 30,000	Chrome plating, reinforcement, commode
Extra wide	KSh 20,000 - 30,000	KSh 25,000	Seat width, reinforcement to 150 kg
Cerebral palsy / postural	KSh 39,000 - 50,000	KSh 40,000	Number of supports, growth adjustment
Pediatric	KSh 12,000 - 20,000	KSh 15,000	Seat size, harness, re-fitting service
Standard electric	KSh 80,000 - 120,000	KSh 85,000	Battery chemistry, motor, warranty
Reclining electric	KSh 90,000 - 140,000	KSh 95,000	Powered recline, headrest, footrests

The costs nobody quotes you

- **Pressure relief cushion, KSh 1,500 to 5,000.** Not optional above four hours of sitting. Most sellers leave it out of the quote.
- **Delivery, KSh 0 to 3,000.** Ask whether it is included before comparing prices.
- **Fitting.** Should be free. If charged, or not offered, that tells you what kind of seller you have.
- **Replacement battery.** Electric chairs, every 18 to 36 months. Ask the price before buying the chair.
- **Consumables.** Castors, tyres and brake levers over a five year life.

On very cheap chairs

A KSh 11,500 chair is not automatically a bad buy. For six weeks after a hip operation it can be exactly right. It becomes a bad buy when a daily long term user sits in it, because light gauge steel and no spare parts supply turn into a second purchase within two years. Match the chair to the length of the need, not to the budget.

7. Funding: who else can pay

This is the section most Kenyan wheelchair pages skip, and it is worth more than any discount a shop can offer you.

NCPWD funds assistive devices up to KSh 100,000

The National Council for Persons with Disabilities provides assistive devices on application. Its published position is that it covers up to KSh 100,000 of the device cost, with the applicant meeting the balance where a chair costs more. A motorised wheelchair additionally requires a recommendation from a professional. You apply using the council's assistive device application form.

Source: ncpwd.go.ke/faq

Tax exemption on the chair itself

Under the Persons with Disabilities Act, assistive devices including wheelchairs are exempt from VAT, import duty, port charges and other government levies for a person registered with NCPWD. You need three things: NCPWD registration with a valid disability card, a disability assessment report from a government gazetted hospital, and a KRA exemption letter obtained by submitting those with the supplier's invoice. Registration is applied for through eCitizen and costs in the region of KSh 500.

On a KSh 95,000 electric wheelchair the VAT alone is real money. Very few families claim it, mostly because nobody tells them it exists.

APDK

The Association for the Physically Disabled of Kenya has run since 1958 through ten branches, in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu, Kisii, Eldoret, Busia, Machakos, Embu and Siaya, serving 37 counties. They assess, measure, fit and provide wheelchairs and tricycles alongside physiotherapy and occupational therapy. If cost is the barrier, start here and start early, because demand far exceeds supply.

Source: apdk.org

SHA: manage your expectations

When SHA replaced NHIF, the Ministry of Health indicated crutches, walking frames and wheelchairs would be covered. In practice cover has been narrow: broadly one assistive device per household per year, hearing aids restricted to under eighteens and once in a lifetime, and prosthetic limbs excluded altogether. In March 2026 more than 900 petitioners including Amnesty Kenya, the United Disabled Persons of Kenya, the Kenya Society for the Blind and APDK formally petitioned SHA to integrate assistive devices into the benefits package at its mandatory two year review.

The scale of the gap is worth stating plainly: Kenya provides roughly 5,000 wheelchairs a year across the public and private sectors, against over a million people who need assistive devices. Check your own entitlement with SHA directly, and do not delay a needed chair waiting for it.

Source: Amnesty Kenya petition, March 2026

8. Maintenance that doubles the life

How often	What to do
Weekly	Wipe the frame dry, especially after bathroom use. Check both brakes hold under a firm push. Clear hair and thread from the castor forks, the commonest cause of a chair pulling to one side.
Monthly	Check pneumatic tyre pressure. Tighten axle and footrest bolts by hand. Inspect upholstery seams at the load points.
Every six months	Light oil on cross brace pivots and the brake mechanism. Inspect welds at the cross brace and footrest mounts for hairline cracks. Rotate or replace a compressed cushion.
Yearly	Full service. Replace worn castors and tyres. Re-measure the user: weight changes and children grow.
Electric chairs	Charge nightly rather than running flat. Keep the controller dry. Expect a battery replacement at 18 to 36 months.

9. Red flags and buying checklist

Walk away if

- The seller does not ask the user's weight, sitting hours or doorway width before quoting.
- There is no physical address you could return to.
- The warranty is verbal.
- Fitting is not offered, or is charged as an extra on a postural support chair.
- The same photo appears on the listing for three different products.
- You are pushed toward an electric chair before anyone asks whether there is a caregiver.

10. Your measurement worksheet

Print this page. Fill it in before you visit any shop. With these numbers a competent seller can put you in the right chair in ten minutes. Without them, you are both guessing.

What to measure	How	Your number
1. Hip width, seated	Widest point of hips or thighs. Add 2.5 cm.	
2. Buttock to back of knee	Along the outer thigh. Subtract 5 cm.	
3. Back of knee to heel	With a shoe on.	
4. Seat to elbow	Shoulders level, trunk upright.	
5. Seat to armpit	For backrest height.	
6. Narrowest doorway	Clear opening, door held open.	

Also decide	Your answer
User's weight	
Hours per day seated	
Is there a caregiver, and how strong?	
How will the chair travel: car, matatu, or not at all?	
Will it get wet?	
Your budget, including a cushion	

Send us these numbers and we will tell you the chair

WhatsApp or call 0791 371 374 | wheelchairskenya.co.ke

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Free advice, no follow up sales calls. We will tell you when the cheaper chair is the right call.

This guide is general information, not clinical advice. For a user with spinal injury, advanced pressure sores, severe postural needs or progressive illness, get an assessment from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist before buying. Prices reflect the Nairobi market in August 2026 and will move. Funding rules are summarised from public sources and can change; confirm your position with NCPWD, KRA and SHA directly. © 2026 Wheelchairs Kenya Ltd.