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## Kakamega County improves the living standards of its vulnerable residents through the Shelter Improvement Programme

County:	Kakamega		
Sector/s:	Social Protection, Culture and Recreation	Sub-sector/Theme:	Social Protection
Keywords: (for search in the online platform)	Social Welfare Programme		
Target Audience:	County Departments of Gender & Social Services, development partners		
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### Introduction (**Context and Challenge**):

In 2013 when the County Government of Kakamega was established, the County population was estimated at 1,789,989 ( 859,195 males and 930,794 females) with a population growth rate of 2.5 %. Among this population, 65,481 were aged 65 years and above, representing 4.3 %% of the County population.

Analysis of the *Basic Report on Well-being in Kenya* of April 2007 showed that the dependency ratio for ages 65 years and above in Kakamega County was 4.5 % which was higher than the national average. In the report, the overall poverty level stood at 51.3 % with the majority of this population not able to afford basic commodities like food, shelter and clothing.



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### Implementation of the practice (**Solution Path**):

These poverty rates called for the introduction of welfare and social protection programmes, especially for the vulnerable residents and the aged. It is against this background that in 2015 the County Government introduced the Shelter Improvement Programme under the Department of Social Services, Youth, Women Empowerment, Sports and Culture, to help the vulnerable and aged by constructing for them decent housing units and providing them with beddings (mattress and two blankets).

The Department partnered with the County Polytechnics Directorate to construct the two-roomed semi-permanent houses for the vulnerable residents.

Six (6) houses are constructed across the 60 wards, translating to 360 houses per financial year. Contracts for the construction of the houses are given to County Polytechnics which source materials, and use the labour and skills of the trainees and their instructors to construct the houses. Materials used are sourced locally from the surrounding community.

The County polytechnics were selected to implement the Program for the following reasons;

- i) **Less costly:** Construction by the County Polytechnics is less costly compared to prevailing market rates.
- ii) **Saves time:** – Less time is spent on the procurement process since it is government to government.
- iii) **Sustainability:** – Partnership between the arms of government ensures sustainability of the program.
- iv) **Building capacity:** Using the County Polytechnics is a way to empower them through involvement in Income-Generating Activities (IGAs).
- v) **Better Quality of Work:** There is better supervision of the projects by the local trainers whose relatives also benefit from the project hence ensuring that the housing units conform to the required standards.

### Results of the practice (**outputs and outcomes**):-



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Since the introduction of the programme, the County Government has constructed 1,800 housing units that are benefitting 1,800 old and vulnerable members of society. The decent houses constructed and the beddings provided have greatly improved the living standards of the beneficiaries.

Through the collaboration between the Department of Social Services and the Directorate of County Polytechnics, the County Government constructed the housing units within the required timelines and at a lesser cost than the market rate would demand.

Each year, except for the financial year 2019/2020 when the programme was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the County Government targets to construct 360 housing units and the target has always been met and in record time. Thus, the collaboration mechanisms of the County Government agencies have been instrumental in the programme's success.

### **Lessons learnt**

In implementing the Programme, key lessons learnt are:

- i) Many vulnerable citizens require social welfare support from the County Government, but the resources available are limited;
- ii) Collaboration between the County Government agencies has reduced time taken, lowered the cost of implementation and improved the sustainability of the programme;
- iii) Using the County polytechnics to construct the houses has availed an opportunity for the trainees to gain practical skills;
- iv) Involvement of the County polytechnics has provided an opportunity for income-generating activities and reduced their dependence on county government funding.

### **Recommendations (Conclusion)**

Efforts should be made to increase alternative income-generating activities for the youth and for the vulnerable residents, vulnerable residents, efforts should be increased to enroll them on cash transfer and universal health insurance cover in order to improve their livelihoods.



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The 1,800 housing units constructed have greatly improved the living conditions of the vulnerable and old members of the County who cannot afford basic amenities. The collaboration between the County Government's Department of Social Services and the Directorate of County Polytechnics has greatly improved the performance of the programme, an aspect that should be replicated while implementing such programmes in future.

### Further reading:

Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan, 2018–2022.



*One of the units constructed under the Shelter Improvement Programme*