

THE SHELTER IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE CURRENTLY IN ITS EIGHTH PHASE TARGETS THE MOST VULNERABLE IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY

County:	Kakamega		
Sector/s:	Social Services	Sub-sector/Theme:	Housing
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Target Audience:	County Governments, County Departments in charge of Social Services, development partners in the social protection space		
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Introduction

An 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 clothing¹.

The 2009 census put the poverty index in Kakamega County at 49.2% and approximately 809,500 people lived below the poverty line and could not access the most basic needs, including housing — the population (especially the elderly, widows and child-headed households) was prone to living in poor/dilapidated houses².

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.

To cushion the aged and vulnerable, the County Government needed to find a

¹ <https://catalog.ihns.org/index.php/catalog/1472/download/42105>

² <https://www.knbs.or.ke/download-category/population-and-housing-census-2009/>

sustainable solution to housing, a right guaranteed in the Constitution.

Implementation of the practice

- The poverty rates in Kakamega necessitated the introduction of welfare and social protection programmes, especially for vulnerable persons. Thus, in 2015 the County Government introduced the Shelter Improvement Programme as one of the flagship programmes under the Social Protection Programmes in the Department of Social Services, Youth, Women Empowerment, Sports and Culture, to improve the living standards of the most vulnerable people in Kakamega County by constructing decent houses for them.
- The County Government contracted the County Polytechnics Directorate to construct the two-roomed semi-permanent houses for the vulnerable residents because of the following reasons:
 - **Less costly:** County Polytechnics charge less compared to prevailing market rates.
 - **Saves time:** Less time is spent on the procurement process since it is government to government.
 - **Sustainability:** Partnership between the arms of government ensures the sustainability of the program.
 - **Building capacity:** Using the County Polytechnics is a way to empower them through involvement in Income-Generating Activities (IGAs).
 - **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.
- Implementation of the Shelter Improvement Programme commenced in the Financial Year 2015/2016 and the construction continues to be done in phases; phases 1–7 (2,520 houses) have been completed, and currently, the County is implementing Phase 8.

Phase	FY	No. of houses
1	2015/16	360

2	2016/17	360
3	2017/18	360
4	2018/19	360
5	2019/20	–
6	2020/21	720
7	2021/22	360
Total		2520

** Phase 8 2022/23 is ongoing.*

- Construction of Phase 5 houses was deferred to the following year due to COVID-19. Thus, in 2021/22, 720 houses were done.
- The selection of beneficiaries is based on wards. There are 60 wards in the 12 sub-counties and every phase includes 6 houses per ward, i.e. 6 beneficiaries per ward. During the commissioning of the programme by the then Governor H.E. Wycliffe Oparanya, he added two blankets, a mattress and a token of KSh 2,000 to each beneficiary.

Key implementers and collaborators and their roles

- To identify the 6 most vulnerable beneficiaries per ward, the Department of Social Services works closely with the Department of Education, County administrators and local opinion leaders. Specifically, the Department requests Ward administrators to forward names of potential beneficiaries. Community representatives (community area administrators, church leaders, MCAs and the national government) propose names from which the Department of Social Services picks the first 6 most vulnerable persons who do not have decent housing.
- The Department of Public Works is engaged during the implementation phase to ensure the houses are constructed as per the Bill of Quantities. All the beneficiaries have to do is show the construction site.

Resource implications

The programme is fully funded by the County Government of Kakamega whose annual budgetary allocation varies and is inadequate. In 2021/2022, the County spent KSh 90 million to build 720 houses and give the beneficiaries mattresses, blankets and

KSh 2,000 tokens. In 2022/2023, the cost of one unit was KSh 115,000. A unit is a two-roomed house with a cemented floor.

Sustainability

The County Government plans to:

- expand the programme by enhancing the budgetary allocation to benefit more vulnerable people and to construct bathrooms and pit latrines.
- collaborate with development partners in implementing the programme.

Results of the practice



(L-R) One of the beneficiaries alone and flanked by the area Sub-Chief, his grandchildren and Social Services Director, Ms Yvonne Atsenga

- Most families that had separated due to poverty/poor housing have reunited as a result of proper housing. However, most beneficiaries do not have access to bathrooms and toilets and there is still a considerable number of vulnerable people in need of shelter.
- One of the beneficiaries we talked to while documenting the story was a 70-year-old widower who lives with two of his grandchildren. He has 10 children who reside and hustle in different parts of the country. Prior to the construction of the new house, he lived in an old dilapidated structure which was not habitable, especially during the cold and rainy season. Besides the house, he was given KSh 2,000 and was immensely grateful to the Governor for the kind gesture.

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

Lessons learnt

- Many vulnerable citizens in rural parts of the County and require social welfare support from the County Government, but the resources available are limited.
- Programme planning is a key component to success as well as stakeholder involvement as they play a key role in the implementation of the programme.
- Construct more durable/permanent houses instead of the low-cost semi-permanent houses, which require frequent renovation.
- Collaboration between the County Government agencies has reduced the time taken, lowered the cost of implementation and improved the sustainability of the programme, an aspect that should be replicated while implementing such programmes in future.
- Using the County polytechnics to construct the houses has availed them an opportunity for income generation, reducing their dependence on county government funding, and for the trainees to gain practical skills.

What did not work well

Construction of pit latrines was not done in the previous phases and is yet to start due to budgetary constraints. There is a need to increase the budgetary allocation and bring on board development partners.

Recommendations

- The County Government should always allocate more funds to programmes that enhance the well-being of vulnerable people.
- Programme implementers should mobilise resources from development partners in case of limited financial allocations from the County Government.
- It is important to avoid political interference in the programme.



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- Efforts should be made to increase alternative income-generating activities for the youth and to enrol vulnerable elderly persons on cash transfer and universal health insurance coverage to improve their livelihoods.

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Further reading:

1. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2010). *The 2009 Kenya population and housing census*. Nairobi: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
<https://www.knbs.or.ke/download-category/population-and-housing-census-2009/>
2. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. Basic Report on Well-being in Kenya of April 2007: Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey 2005/06
<https://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog/1472/download/42105>